

Islington Choral Society, Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for Year ending 31 July 25

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Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts

Islington Choral Society (ICS) was established over 50 years ago and is a popular non-auditioned community choir. Our constitution sets out our objectives as follows: to promote, improve, develop and maintain public education in and appreciation of the art and science of music and in particular of choral music by the presentation of concerts and recitals, the holding of workshops and by such other activities.

The running of the choir depends on the commitment of our enthusiastic volunteers. Governance is overseen by three Trustees, and all the organisation is managed by a dedicated group of committee members that are elected by our members.

Please see the report delivered to the Annual General Meeting held on 3 Mar 2026 by our dynamic and hardworking Chair, Kim Randall, to read about the achievements and exciting concerts held in the busy and successful year ending 31 July 2025.

The Financial accounts are diligently managed on a payments and receipts basis by our Treasurer, Vanessa Hall-Smith, see below. Despite challenging conditions and rising costs over the reporting period, we have maintained reserves to be carried forward into the next Financial Year. The reserves are reviewed by the Trustees on a term-by-term basis, ensuring we can meet any commitments and continue our operations.

More information about our activities and contact details can be found on our website, islingtonchoralsociety.co.uk.

Ruth Pyatt, Islington Choral Society, Trustee and Secretary

1. Introduction

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to our Annual General Meeting for the year ending in July 2025, our 52nd. It's brilliant to see so many members here, firstly to ensure that we're quorate – and do make sure you've signed the attendance list so that we can make sure of that - but more importantly as it reflects the commitment so many have to the Society. Now, firstly, before we come on to transacting the business side of the AGM it's worth first remembering all our achievements during the year.

2. Musical Directors

Our Director of Music, Michael Waldron, having returned from Trinity at the start of 2024, continued in post throughout 2024-25 and I'm delighted to record is very much leading ICS onwards.

In 2024-25 we had considerably more volatility with our Assistant Musical Directors: we started the year with Ben Markovic, but he sadly left in December 2024 due to an unmanageable clash with his studies at the Royal Academy. To our relief, in January 2025 Laurence Williams miraculously agreed to return once again as Acting Assistant Musical Director, leaving finally once more in the following March to take up the post of Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral in London, Ontario.

During the summer term of 2025 Michael organised a sequence of very capable deputising accompanists, and over the summer break several of these were interviewed, along with an external applicant. The appointment of John Cuthbert as our new Assistant Musical Director, was enthusiastically greeted, not least because he combines his accompanist skills with a fantastic tenor voice. John started in the AMD role in September 2025.

3. Concerts

Our first concert of 2024-25 was in November 2024, when we returned to the much-loved St Andrew Holborn for a performance of Haydn's *The Creation* with the Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra. It was not exactly a Christmas concert given the November date, but the optimism and sheer fun of Haydn's music framed within the neatly cropped story felt properly festive. Our soloists were Ellie Laugharne, Oliver Johnston, and – of course - Laurence Williams.

Our spring concert was really ambitious: a performance of Elgar's rarely-performed oratorio *The Kingdom* at Sinfonia Smith Square – the rebadged St John's Smith Square - again with the Westminster Philharmonic Orchestra. It's a magnificent venue to sing in, and we mustered our biggest-ever choir of almost 120 singers, plus brilliant soloists Claire Rutter, Katie Bray, Sam Furness and Patrick Keeffe. It was an astonishing work to sing, and we were delighted that our audience included a representative of the Elgar Society, for whose generous sponsorship of the evening we are most grateful.

We returned to the grandeur of Smith Square in the summer for a completely contrasting evening: Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*, this time with our good friends of the Hertfordshire Chamber Orchestra. A brilliant line-up of soloists was led by the hugely charismatic Simon Butteriss and included two of our Choral Scholars [of whom more later], Meg and Luke. Great fun was had by all in this finale to our 2024-25 season.

4. Committee

I'm very fortunate to have had the support of a really talented and stalwart committee throughout the year. Our Secretary, Ruth Pyatt, has provided me with consistent fast and effective support, and Frances Sawtell our Membership Secretary has fielded many enquiries from prospective members, welcomed them to trial rehearsals and signed up plenty of enthusiastic new members – some on the evening of their first trial rehearsal. With eight new members this term, plus some returning members, our membership is now well over 150.

Vanessa Hall-Smith stepped up as our new Treasurer in 2024 and was duly elected to the Committee at last year's AGM: she will present her Financial Report in a moment. In 2025 independent examination of the accounts was generously carried out by one of our tenors, Jane McNeill, who has happily agreed to reprise the role this year.

Vanessa also took on the task of redrafting and updating our Constitution. This has been a very painstaking exercise and is now almost completed.

Our new Librarian Gill Andrews gathered up the reins from Chris Rose fast and capably, supported by Mary Crampsie as her second-in command, and Gill has been working most efficiently ordering music, for us and for our orchestras, and juggling the concomitant costs.

And Luke Henderson took over the crucial task of setting up the rehearsal spaces at the Roundhouse each week, helped by his rota of volunteers.

Vanessa Easlea stood down from the committee after organising our tour to Spain in 2024 so brilliantly. Tiz Blackwell took over the role and will be formally elected tonight, having attended committee meetings all year. More on the 2026 tour in a moment.

5. Trustees

We currently have three trustees: the Chair and Secretary are trustee's ex-officio, and our third trustee during 2024-25 was Tricia George who acts as an independent – ie non-Committee – trustee, as required by our constitution. She has recently decided to step down from this role, and Catherine Crowther has agreed to stand for election tonight to take her place. Our thanks go to Tricia – currently in Cape Town, so we'll thank her in person next week - for her dedicated service and doughty support, and to Catherine for bringing her depth of experience of ICS and her judgement to the role.

6. Volunteers

Besides committee members, the vast amount of legwork required to make our concerts run so smoothly relies on many diligent ICS volunteers: Sarah Castle, who led the Front of House team so efficiently throughout the year, and has now stood down, replaced by Kate Price and Paula Denton; Alan Rickett who coordinates with the staging providers, Alison Rice [who is also on the committee] and Jeffery Pike who produce and print our programmes including writing much of the copy, and Hazel Macmillan, soprano and brilliant graphic designer, who produces a suite of dramatic and intriguing graphics each year for use as programme covers and flyers, and for our socials and website. Our multi-talented Treasurer Vanessa also runs the bar when we sing at St Andrew's. Our concerts couldn't happen without their behind-the-scenes hard work.

7. Choral Scholars

At the start of the 2024-25 season, we appointed our first four Choral Scholars. Auditions were held over the summer and four scholars appointed: Alex Cooper [soprano], Meg Webb [alto], Roshan Patel [tenor], and Luke Muschialli [bass]. They provided support during our weekly rehearsals, sang solo lines to help us with our entries, and gave five short but sparkling recitals during the year. As mentioned earlier, Meg and Luke also performed solo roles at our summer concert. We wish them all well for their future musical careers.

We had plenty of talented applicants for the 2025-26 season and auditioned a number of candidates. The four appointed were Elisabeth Cullen [soprano], Isabel Benson [alto], Zeshaan Shain [tenor], and Sam Gray [bass], and we've extended their role this year to include running additional sectional rehearsals and leading vocal technique sessions.

8. Workshop

In January 2025 we held a singing workshop, working on Mozart's *Solemn Vespers*, at St Mary Islington. Having had to change the date late in the day, it was less well attended than hoped, but we learnt many lessons. These bore fruit last month, February 2026, when we held a workshop for over 100 singers – more than 30 from other choirs - here at the Roundhouse, notable for a fine performance of Fauré's *Requiem*, and too for the quantity of excellent cake provided.

9. Website

Early in 2025 we appointed a website designer – the versatile baritone Sam Pantcheff – and established that it would be more efficient to replace our current website than to upgrade it. Michael, Helen Brown, Hazel Macmillan and I worked together over several months, and our stylish new website was launched on 13 August 2025. This has enabled us to set up dedicated ICS email addresses which is a huge help with the copious admin involved in running the Society.

10. 2026 Tour

2025 was not a tour year – we tour every two years – and as noted above Vanessa Easlea stood down as our tour organiser, passing the tour baton seamlessly to Tiz Blackwell, who immediately started working with our tour company, One Stage. We identified Prague as our 2026 tour destination and agreed two splendid concert venues – a grand baroque church in the centre of Prague, and a newly restored riding school – think Spanish Riding School of Vienna – in Western Bohemia. I'm delighted to report that over 90 singers signed up before the year end and we will be setting off on May 1.

11. Conclusion

Vanessa, our Treasurer, will present the accounts next. Overall, with membership numbers high and well attended concerts – almost 370 tickets sold for our *Purcell and Mozart* concert in November 2025 - our financial position remains strong, for we have a good level of reserves which are efficiently invested. But it is not all plain sailing – available venues are increasingly expensive, and additional rehearsals, coaching, musicianship and repertoire talks, plus the support of our brilliant Choral Scholars are driving up costs.

Despite this we are determined to maintain ICS's position as one of the most accessible choral societies in London in terms of subscription costs. As part of this, next year we will introduce a 'real' concession rate, enabling students and others who would struggle with our current lower rate to become members. Rather than drive up our standard subscriptions we are now seeking donations alongside ticket bookings, and in August we will be enabling donations to be made alongside subscription renewals. We hope that those of us who feel able to pay more will support these initiatives.

We are already planning next year's programme and look forward to another ambitious and rewarding year of collaborative and creative music.

Kim Randall

Chair, Islington Choral Society

54 Harcombe Road London N16 0SA

3 March 2026

Income and Expenditure 1 August 2024 – 31 July 25

	Year ending 31.7.2025 £	Year ending 31.7.2024 £	Difference £	Notes
INCOME				
Membership subscriptions	26,535	23,367	3,168	1
Donations	3,910	2,320	1,590	
Gift aid	5,620	5,505	115	2
Tour Income	30,425	30,941	(516)	3
Advertising/sponsorship	1,000	0	1,000	4
Concerts 1,2 and 3	17,852	14,487	3,365	5
Miscellaneous	2,846	916	1,930	6
Total Income	88,188	77,536	10,652	
EXPENDITURE				
Musical Director and Assistant Musical Director	16,513	12,383	(4,130)	7
Rehearsal Venue Hire	8,343	6,342	(2,001)	8
Concert 1,2,3	34,388	29,689	(4,699)	9
Choral Scholarships	6,920	0	(6,920)	10
Music Hire	1,502	2,633	1,131	
Making Music subscription	574	471	(103)	
Tour expenses	0	60,875	60,875	11
Miscellaneous expenditure	929	807	(122)	12
Bank charges	111	160	49	13
Total Expenditure	69,280	113,360	44,080	14
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	18,908	(35,824)	54,732	

Notes to Income and Expenditure 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2025

1. Membership subscriptions are now requested from 1 August to fit with the financial year.
2. Gift aid is claimed for qualifying payments in the previous financial year.
3. Tour income and expenditure are now included in the main accounts which are prepared on a receipts and payments basis. While deposits were received in the 2024.5 financial year, the expenditure will take place during the 2025.6 financial year. See also note 11.
4. £1000 was received from the Elgar Society. This was treated as restricted income and used for the purpose for which it was given, namely in support of our performance of The Kingdom in April 25.
5. Concert income includes ticket sales for the July 24 concert received in September 2024, the November 24 and April 25 concerts (£14,879), bar and programme receipts (£2,370) and fees for the February 25 workshop (£603).
6. Miscellaneous income includes bank interest accrued on our main account, Money Markets account and BMM account ending 6194 (£1503)) Easy fundraising (£278) reimbursement for non-return of music (£138.24) contributions towards leaving and thank you gifts (£235) and contributions towards Choral Scholar recitals (£692).
7. Musical Director and Assistant Musical Director fees include concert fees, talks, choral scholar support and workshop fees.
8. Increase in venue costs partly attributable to additional use for choral scholars and talks.
9. Concert expenditure includes concert venues (£8,037), staging (£4,858), orchestra (£12,040), soloists (£7,900), programmes and concert bar (£1,045) and workshop costs (£508).
10. Choral scholarship expenditure includes scholarships (£6,000), recital fees (£800) and German language coaching (£120)
11. Tour expenses will be incurred during the 2025.6 financial year.
12. Miscellaneous expenditure includes drinks for choir social events (£179), reimbursement (£75) leaving/thank you gifts (£275) website (£250) piano cover (£50.25) Fund Filer (£99)
13. Bank charges main account (£66) and tour account (£45).
14. Taking away the tour income received during 2024.5 the choir ended the year with a deficit of £11,517.

FUNDS FLOW FOR THE YEAR 1st August 2024 – 31 July 2025

	Balance carried forward from 31 July 2025	Balance brought forward from 31 July 2024	Difference	Notes
Total	72,346	53,438		
Represented by				
HSBC Charitable A/C ending 5910	3,905	3,207	698	
HSBC BMM A/C ending 6194	6,948	19,118	(12,170)	
HSBC Money Markets ending 2243	30,000	30,000	0	15
HSBC BMM overseas tour ending 6186	0	0		16
HSBC Charitable overseas tour ending 5929	31,493	1,113	30,380	

Notes:

15. Money Markets account ending 2243 (incorrectly referred to as ending in 2245 in accounts for year ending 2024) remained invested during 2024.5 on a fixed term expiring June 2025. It was reinvested for a further term of 3 months in August 2005 and for a further term of 4 months in November 2005.

16. The Overseas Tour Accounts operate to manage the receipts and payments of the Choir's overseas tours and are kept separate from the ICS main accounts 5910 and 6194 The next tour in Prague will take place in May 2026. Payments were made into the tour account during the 2024.5 financial year as tour deposits. No expenditure was incurred during the 2024.5 financial year and will appear in the accounts for 2025.6.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the
accounts

Report to the trustees/
members of

Islington Choral Society

On accounts for the
year ended

31 July 2025

Charity
no (if
any)

1068263

Set out on pages

5-7

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 /07 / 2015

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent examiner's
statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Islington Choral Society
Charity no. 1068263



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Signed:

Je McNeill

Date:

15/4/26

Name:

ELIZABETH JANE MCNEILL

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

UNREGISTERED (RETIRED) BARRISTER

Address:

10, ST PAUL'S PLACE
LONDON N1 2QE

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

No matters of concern.