

Legal and administrative details

Charity's full name:	Exeter Chamber Choir
Charity Registration number:	1078475
Principal address:	1 The Mannings Downeshead Lane Crediton EX17 1HE
Trustees:	Madeleine Gordon (Treasurer) Susie Howells Rachel Jermyn Simon Milner (Chairman) Henrietta Vercoe Norman Waldron (Secretary)
Musical Director:	Andrew Daldorph

Objectives and Activities

As set out in the Choir's Constitution: "The object of the Society shall be to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals."

The year saw a programme of concerts that delivered both musical and financial success, consolidating the choir's standards of performance and restoring our bank balance to robust health following the setbacks of the Covid pandemic.

A tentative enquiry to Exeter Cathedral in late 2022 elicited an offer of a prime Saturday evening concert in the pre-Christmas period of 2023. The trustees were faced with a delicate balance of financial risk and reward given the high expenses and the choir's relatively low bank balance at the time. Several mitigations were put in place to bring the trustees to a position where we were comfortable in grasping the opportunity. These included: a "first mover" publicity and booking strategy; securing cash sponsorship and programme advertisements; creating a candle-lit setting; and an attractive mixed programme with instrumental forces alongside the choir. Key elements were designed to set our event apart from the well-established traditional carol concerts offered in the Cathedral every year by other local choirs. We also decided to dedicate the whole of the autumn term to rehearsals to ensure a reliably high standard of performance.

The mitigations proved extremely successful, particularly the early marketing push; for a couple of months, our concert was the only Christmas choral event advertised at the Cathedral. The concert sold out six weeks before the performance. The programme included ingenious arrangements by Andrew Daldorph for a mixed ensemble of instrumentalists accompanying the choir in an extremely diverse sequence of pieces from the romantic delicacy of Elgar's "The Snow" with solo violin, through a

capella carols to Andrew's jazz-infused arrangement of "The Twelve Days of Christmas", a riotous closer. Bach, Berlioz, Britten, Howard Blake and Andrew's own music further extended the range. Audience reaction was extremely positive throughout and the programme overall was a great showcase for the choir's versatility.

The event demanded a huge amount of administrative and logistical preparation. Particular thanks are due to Henrietta Vercoe and Rachel Jermyn for their patient and meticulous liaison with the Cathedral events office and to Henrietta for leading the publicity and sponsorship campaign. The trustees have carried out and documented a review of "lessons learned" which will guide planning for similar events in the future. Apart from a financial surplus of nearly £8,000 the event also had a very positive impact on the choir's local profile through social media engagement and additions to our mailing list. As in recent years, a version of the programme was presented in the more intimate setting of the Great Barn in Higher Ashton, alongside seasonal readings by pupils of Maynard School. The trustees are grateful to Emma and John Birkin for their hosting of this event in aid of local charities.

The spring term's concerts in Buckfast Abbey and Ottery St Mary Parish Church focussed on core sacred repertoire from Purcell to Walton via Bach, Lotti, Duruflé and Messiaen with good audiences at both venues. The performances achieved pleasing standards from the choir, complemented by excellent instrumental interludes from our regular cello collaborator Hilary Boxer. The concerts were supported by sponsorship from Canonteign Falls; our contact there was very pleased with the result and is open in principle to further support for the choir. The concert at Ottery St Mary was very well promoted by the hosts, who made us feel very welcome. The engagement of the audience at Ottery was particularly warm. Both concerts produced useful financial surpluses.

Summer saw the choir tackling a characteristically mixed programme from European madrigals to new close-harmony arrangements by Andrew. To further vary the concert experience for the audience, groups of madrigals in different languages were performed by smaller self-directed groupings of the choir. This created a few challenges both in our rehearsal space – with groups occasionally exiled outside – and in keeping the exposed lines of some intricate music flowing well whilst maintaining communication with the audience. The experience in rehearsal may not always have been comfortable for everyone but concentration and discipline produced some attractive results and made a wider contribution to the choir's performance when singing at full strength. Andrew's new arrangements linked by themes of moon and sun (*Moon River, Blue Moon, Paper Moon, Sunshine of My Life, What a Wonderful World*) were greatly enjoyed by singers and audiences alike. We were delighted to be joined by outstanding young cellist Eugene Lee for instrumental interludes accompanied by Andrew. The programme was given twice: at St James's Church in Exeter and at Thorverton Parish Church, where again a local organising team, headed by former choir members Allison and Stephen Toogood, made us feel very welcome. Again, both concerts produced a financial surplus.

A sub-group of the choir travelled to sing a weekday Evensong service at Wells Cathedral in mid-July, with Tina Guthrie acting as cantor and Nigel Guthrie masterfully controlling the erratic Cathedral organ (a major re-fit of the instrument is planned subject to funding). The music included Andrew's own Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis from 2023, previously heard at both Winchester and St Paul's Cathedrals. As for our previous visit, the vergers and clergy at Wells were warmly welcoming. While not all choir

members are able or wish to participate in a weekday liturgical event, the musical disciplines involved are valuable for those who are able to embrace the opportunity.

Consultations with members during the year about rehearsal breaks and choir socialising prompted the organisation of a “bring and share” end-of-year social evening kindly hosted by Susie Howells – including an impromptu al fresco performance of Bruckner’s *Locus Iste* from memory. The trustees receive regular feedback from members on the value and enjoyment of opportunities for socialisation and will keep this in mind when laying plans. But we will equally be happy for members to take their own initiatives!

Following consultation with members last year, we implemented the revised vocal review process for all members during the year. The trustees believe that members found this to be an appropriate and not unduly stressful exercise, which will be repeated periodically.

Financial Review

At the end of the year, the choir’s finances have returned to a robust position with £16,763 in the bank, up from only £4,274 last year. This is largely due to the surplus generated by the concert in Exeter Cathedral (£7,974) though all concerts in the year produced a surplus (total £1,705).

Choir members will remember with affection Diana Nightingale who sang in the choir from its beginnings until shortly before her death in March 2022. The trustees were deeply touched to learn that Diana made a bequest to the choir of £2000. This bequest was received during this last year and is included in the accounts. Diana made no direction about how the funds should be used but in recognition of her deep love for the music of Bach, the trustees have nominally assigned the funds to support the performance of Bach’s St John Passion in Exeter Cathedral in March 2025.

General running costs for the choir remain closely balanced against the income from members’ subscriptions. This year, the reduced cost of our rehearsal venue at St James’s Church (compared to previous venues) has been fully felt but a new cost is being incurred in rental of storage space for the music library, including up-front expenses for robust, damp-proof storage boxes. The trustees are also committed to ensuring that the Music Director’s fees are not eroded by the impact of inflation. A modest increase in subscriptions is likely to be needed in 2024-25.

The trustees are now in the fortunate position of being able to plan future events with confidence and are in the early stages of considering options that might not have been wise or possible with less money in the bank.

Reserves policy

The Charity’s policy on reserves is to maintain a reasonable positive bank balance. We do not have a specific minimum figure for reserves, but the trustees believe that an adequate level, consistent with perceived levels of risk, must be available before promoting major concerts such as those in Exeter Cathedral. As an indicative figure, the expenses for the Cathedral concert in December 2023 were a little under £8,000. With the return this year of both a healthy bank balance and reasonably

good interest rates, the trustees resolved to open an interest-bearing deposit account and keep most funds in that account. This action was completed following the end of the financial year.

External scrutiny of the accounts

Section 17 of the Constitution of Exeter Chamber Choir requires that: “The financial accounts shall be audited or examined to the extent required by legislation or, if there is no such requirement, scrutinized by a person who is independent of the Committee and then submitted to the members at the Annual General Meeting.”

Where the gross annual income of a charity exceeds £25,000, charity law requires an independent examination of the accounts according to specific standards set out in regulations. With income of just under £30,000, that requirement applies to this year’s accounts.

The trustees are very grateful to Ian Campbell, who has carried out the independent examination of the accounts according to the regulations. His report to the trustees is included below the accounts.

This report is presented to the Annual General Meeting of Exeter Chamber Choir on 22nd October 2024.

Exeter Chamber Choir

Annual Report of the Trustees and Accounts for the year ended 31 July 2024

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31st July 2024			Last year (22/23)	
	£		£	
Opening balances				
Bank Account Bank of Scotland	-		807	
CAF bank account	4,274		4,431	
Total accounts:		4,274		5,238
Income				
Members subscriptions	5,340		5,243	
Tax rebate	2,277			
Concert income	20,173		4,146	
Other income	58		410	
Other donations/sponsorship	2,138		1,000	
		29,986		10,798
		34,260		16,037
Expenditure				
Choirmaster's fees	4,243		4,488	
Hire of rehearsal venues	1,390		1,755	
NFMS subs, Insurance and PRS	321		296	
Concert expenditure	10,544		3,283	
Miscellaneous	-			
Music hire	775			
Choir library	67		781	
Website, printing, postage, publicity	97		599	
Bank fees	60		60	
<i>Christmas 2023 venue deposit</i>			500	
		17,497		11,763
		16,763		4,274
Closing balances				
Bank account Bank of Scotland	-			
Bank Account CAF	16,763		4,274	
		16,763		4,274
Assets at 31st July 2024				
Bank Account		16,763		4,274
Library valued at cost less depreciation (10% reducing balance+new purchases)		3,578		3,901
		20,341		8,175
Madeleine Gordon, Treasurer				
Notes:				
Cost to choir of reduced subscriptions in this year (1 claimant)				65
Choir Subs income includes income re 22/23 only received 23/24				98
Tax rebate is Gift Aid income re 22/23 only received 23/24				2,277
Summer Concert cash income banked Aug 24 to be recognised in the 24/25 accounts				609
There is a concert expense relating to Autumn 24 concert (venue deposit)				50
Music hire includes charges for storage of library to be separately recorded in future				560

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Exeter Chamber Choir Trust

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Exeter Chamber Choir Trust (the Trust) for the year ended 31 July 2024.

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 all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I do not have any relevant qualifications but prior to retirement I was a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Concerning potential conflict of interest; I am a member of Exeter Chamber Choir and whilst I know the Trustees I do not have interests or involvement which would interfere with me carrying out an independent examination. I was treasurer of the choir for some 9 years up until 2019 and I am therefore well placed to understand the accounts and the business.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act.
2. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Signed:



Name: Ian Campbell

Address: Woolmans Orchard, Drakes Farm, Ide, Exeter EX2 9RL