



Gentlemen Songsters Male Voice Choir

Treasurers Report 2024

2024 was a reasonably successful year financially as our records indicate that we improved our finances by £11,632.60 with a "pot" of £38,422.60 available to cover future expenses.

Some members will now be expecting a "however"and here it comes. However, it should be noted that this year we have received several extraordinary one-off payments: -

1. We have to thank members of the executive for obtaining a substantial donation from Ward James Chappel in the sum of £4,500.00 (which will be repeated for the next 2 years),
2. Because of our magnificent performance at the Autumn Concert with Carley Paoli, she waived her performance fee on the proviso that we sang with her at her Nottingham Albert Hall Concert on the 21st December 2024, thereby "saving" the Choir £2,460.00.
3. The 2024 account includes £2,100.00 payments for the Norwich jaunt in July this year which obviously have to be discounted as it will be an actual expenditure this year.
4. We have also received £1,010.00 in donations from 6 funerals over the last 12 months.
5. The total of the above is £10,070.00

All the above are "extraordinary" in as much as they cannot be depended on as guaranteed incomes going forward. Even the WJC donation is not guaranteed.

Our adjusted surplus income, therefore, of £1,526.60 is a better reflection of where we are financially. It is also pleasing that we would have actually created a surplus without these windfalls.

If the additional windfalls had not materialised, our total available funds would be £28,402.60 which would probably keep us viable for 2 – 3 years, even if we have to battle through another lock-down. So whilst we are relatively "comfortable" we cannot be complacent.

Whilst that is a satisfying outcome, it has actually made us look harder at how we create our income. Over the years we have staged big concerts with notable guests at big venues such as DTH or the Civic in Brierley Hill. Given that these days we do not sell anywhere near enough tickets for these expensive venues we are looking for smaller (hence less costly) venues and perhaps aim a little lower as far as Guests are

concerned (if we invite any at all). This will, to a degree, reduce the reliance we place on Choir members to sell lots of tickets. A quickly expanding repertoire may also help for internal sales.

We made a statement last year about covering our unavoidable costs (rehearsal room hire, Concert venue deposits and music team specifically) early in the year. We need to ensure that these costs are covered early as we cannot rely on Concert incomes anymore. The only major Concert that we have made any money from for the last 2 years is the Black Country Showcase (again, thanks Phil) and that is only because the guest artists do not ask for a fee. We have to create a "financial cushion" that will cover our known expenditure at the start of the year as we are not now guaranteed to make any money from Concerts.

The issued spreadsheet actually shows a healthy balance between income and expenditure for the Concerts themselves, but much of the surplus was from Carley dropping her performance fee along with income from the smaller venues such as Retirement Villages and pubs at Christmas. Unfortunately, funerals also come into this category.

We would like to thank Mike Green and his family for raising £995 via his raffles at our major concerts this year. Bucket collections have also raised £660 which will be donated to Charity(s).

Despite this reports rather downbeat appraisal of our ticket sales, we would like to thank the Choir members for their efforts in selling tickets for Concerts over the last year and can only ask for a concerted (excuse the pun – same one as last year) effort this coming Concert season.

Our running costs are, not surprisingly, still increasing. This year, we spent £11,400 on rehearsal venue, music team and admin costs alone.

You may be aware that Tom Bate made an application to the Lottery Fund for funding of £12,000. We are sorry to say that it has been initially denied as "Applying for funding for new uniforms does not comply with making good use of public money". Other Choirs have, however, been successful with this type of application. We are going to review the other options and re-apply later in the year.

As for uniforms, we are still looking at options to renew our Concert uniform. We have looked at a number of options ranging from gawdy to plain and will report to the Choir and discuss with the members later in the year.

In line with all of the above, and following our January Executive Committee meeting, we have decided the following, for 2025:-

1. The subscription will increase from £180 to £200pa (still only £4 pw) following this AGM.
2. Members who have already been in the Choir for over 40 years will not have to pay a membership subscription.

3. Members currently in the Choir who have already completed 35+ years will NOT have to pay a membership subscription.
4. Members who achieve 35 years after the AGM on the 27th January will pay 50% of the membership subscription, including all subsequent years.
5. If any member feels that they are unable to pay this or would like us to consider accepting an alternative payment route, please talk to one of the members of the executive committee asap.

Last year we continued with our policy of Charitable Donations to several Charities. Our exec & our trustees suggested that we donate to the two of the charities we supported last year - (Ronnies Room and Brierley Hill Foodbank) - who were so impressive last year. It has been agreed that during the coming year we will actively seek & to prioritise Charities who will work with us to organise and actively raise funds jointly with us via our concerts.

The 700 Club sadly died the death of a million locusts last year. However, if anyone would like to take up the challenge and get it restarted, please let Steve Hale know. It could still be a valuable source of income for the choir.

The final account has been agreed and signed by our auditors so I will make the balance sheet and income/expenditure summary available to any member that would like a copy. I will be free to answer any questions, on a one-to-one basis, after the AGM.

Onward and upward!!!

Stephen Hale (Treasurer)
January 2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Hale', written in a cursive style.



Gentlemen Songsters Male Voice Choir

Annual General Meeting – 2025

Chairman's Report - 2024:

The past year of 2024 has without doubt been the busiest in the choir's recent history and enjoyed by all of our active members. There is absolutely no doubt that the ongoing success of our organisation is underpinned by the hardworking members of the executive committee who very capably oversee the four areas of the choir: Musical organisation; Finance; Marketing & Membership.

Music:

The principal reason for us all being members of the choir is the joy of choral singing. In this regard I'm sure you would all agree that thanks to our Musical team headed by our M.D. Ray Curran, that we have improved individually as singers & as a choral group. Ray has actively encouraged us to develop our vocal skills and introduced a 'Barber's Shop' singing group which has been willingly accepted by those who wish to join. This group have brought fun and variation to our major concerts throughout the year. Others in the choir have been encouraged to become confident enough to deliver solos and duets at smaller concerts, helping to make them more varied and interesting. Ray would be the first to agree that he has not been alone in leading us to become considered as one of the most accomplished Male voice choirs in the Midlands. He has been ably supported by our regular accompanist Neil Bolton and Steve O'Reilly, who very capably stands in for Neil and sings in the 2nd tenor section. Our grateful thanks must go to all.

One of my priorities on taking over as Chairman at the beginning of 2023 was to fully support Ray in his task to make us all better, more capable singers. In many respects he has exceeded our plans. We are worked hard during our weekly two-hour rehearsals but just as importantly they are fun & Ray's infectious, dry humour makes them enjoyable & uplifting. We now sing our regular repertoire of well-known songs better than we ever have. This improvement has been positively remarked upon by our regular audiences / attendees. I am certain this progress will continue as we bring in some of the 'new' pieces as suggested by our members via surveys. The learning process, will, I'm sure, continue to be an enjoyable process throughout 2025 & beyond.

Whilst Ray is our musical leader, it must be recognised that there is an awful lot of long-term planning and organisation involved in the arrangement of all choir events. Throughout the past year this has been the principle focus of Phil Holden who has been most ably supported by Tom Bate. I'm sure that you would all agree that their hard work & ingenuity has provided us with a year full of interesting, well organised, and enjoyable singing events. As a result, we have been able to display & improve our singing skills. In turn this has brought much joy to many. We owe them both our grateful thanks for their commitment & hard work. Thank you.

Throughout 2024 we sang no less than 24no concerts / events. This included a memorable Autumn concert at the Dudley Town Hall where we shared the stage with 'Carly Paoli' for a high-quality concert which will long be remembered by both Choir members and our enthusiastic audience. The quality of our performance in turn brought an invitation from Miss Paoli's management team to sing with her at her 'Christmas Concert' at the Royal Albert Hall, Nottingham. This proved to be another memorable experience where we wowed a large audience with the quality of our singing.

During the summer we again went on the road, this year to Bristol, where members were able to share leisure time together. On the Saturday evening and were hosted by Bristol MVC at a joint concert, another joyful experience where again we made more friends. Interestingly Bristol MVC have agreed to join us for a 'return fixture' this coming June. Unfortunately, the journey home was blighted by the late cancellation of our planned Sunday concert in Cheltenham. Despite this, however, those who made the trip thoroughly enjoyed their weekend away. Plans are well advanced for the choir to repeat the experience with a visit to Norwich this coming Summer.

These were by no means our only triumphs throughout the year. We repeated our successful Black Country Showcase concert at Dudley Town Hall & our charity concert at Springdale Church, Penn; we also sang at Stream Road Methodists in support of our 'hosts & landlords' – in support of their boiler fund; and we were again invited to sing at the 'Dudley Remembers' – Remembrance Concert at Dudley College, an event which always features highly in our calendar.

This year was a particularly busy Christmas period for the choir. During December we sang at 6no events – 4no in the week before Christmas. Our usual Christmas Concert was for various reasons, a much more low-key matinee concert at Gigmill Church, Stourbridge. Despite this it was a joyful event, thoroughly enjoyed by a packed audience. The year culminated in the memorable experience of sharing the stage again as the guests of Carly Paoli in Nottingham. There is no doubt that following this we all enjoyed a well-earned rest over the festive season.

As has become popular over recent times - we performed at two pub events, both of which proved enjoyable for the choir members (who attended) & their audiences alike. However, it should be noted that whilst these events are enjoyed by many of the choir and the audiences, these venues are not ideal places to display our choral skills, whilst they are a good place for to raise funds for our chosen charities & choir funds. We are grateful to Keith Moss & our M.C. Graham Rousell for their efforts at these events.

Sadly, we also sang at the funerals of three loyal and much missed old friends who have served the Choir so very well over many years. We sang at the funerals of Malcom Jackson (*who passed in December 2023*) & Albert Haynes in January; Peter Vaughan-Williams in April and John Smith in June. In addition, we mourned the loss of former, longstanding members: Jack Pardoe, Len Dean and the end of the year Harold Eades & Joy Brandrick (widow of our former President Joe). They will all be missed & remembered.

Regrettably, however, I must report that despite our 'on stage' successes throughout 2024, the executive has agreed for the foreseeable future at least, not to organise any more major concerts with 'high cost well known celebrity guest stars' at Dudley Town Hall or any other similar venue. I'm sure that this will be of no surprise to any of you, however I confirm the reason for this decision has been made due to our inability to sell enough tickets to cover our costs. To continue to do so would, most definitely, undermine & jeopardise the choirs' financial stability. We could not and will not allow this to continue. As an alternative we will arrange and present 'original' & well organised concerts at smaller venues with less financial risk. I am pleased to inform you that next year's calendar is already full of much anticipated / challenging events & we have much to look forward to in the coming year.

Membership:

This year Bill Hart who oversees Membership - with the assistance of Gordon Bickley - has recorded all choir members attendances at all choir events - rehearsals & concerts – throughout the year. This has produced some interesting irrefutable facts.

We currently have **64no** choir members with **54no** fully active singing members.

We held **50no** rehearsals during the year and sang at **24no** concerts / events.

52no choristers attended over 60% of rehearsals.

23no choristers attended over 60% of all concert events.

I highlight the above as this – and other statistical information – now allows us (the exec committee) to make informed decisions & guide plans for the future. It makes interesting reading !

As previously mentioned, we lost 3no members: Albert Haynes, Peter Vaughan-Williams & John Smith throughout the year. Happily, though throughout the year we've welcomed 5no new members – Dave Perry & Glyn Tebbutt (1st tenors); Bob Cutler (2nd tenor) & Roy Gadd (Baritone) + the welcome return of our old friend John Jones (2nd tenor). All have entered the 'Spirit of the Choir' & have become regular attendees since joining. It should be noted that we have been lucky to have had the assistance of Pete Hawthorne to ensure that all new recruits are properly integrated into their musical sections and made welcome into our choir family. Pete will be handing this job over to Mike Mison & Mark Powis in the New Year. Our thanks must go to Pete for his hard work for the choir – in this role and others - over many years.

In addition, our continued thanks must go to Bill and his team for all his considerable efforts throughout the year ensuring the pastoral needs of our members are properly dealt with.

Finances:

Over the past few years Steve Hale has, with quiet efficiency, managed the Choir's finances. You will find Steve's End of Year – Financial report, separate from this report. During the past 12 months Steve has introduced more in-depth budgetary management control to ensure we are better able to scrutinize & understand our financial position. Thus, we – the executive –

can make the correct decisions for the on-going benefit and welfare of the choir. You will all know - as I have repeatedly reminded you - that ticket sales at all major concerts are the difference between a successful concert and one which produces a financial loss for the choir. Sadly, this year as you will see from our published accounts that during 2024 - but for unexpected good fortune - we barely covered our costs. It is the responsibility of, us, the membership, who ultimately must make up the difference & keep our funds at a level which secures the future of the choir for years to come. With this responsibility come some difficult decisions to be made by the executive & hopefully accepted by the membership to ensure the choir continues to flourish. Steve's recommendations (supported by the executive) are documented in his Treasures report & we trust that they are positively endorsed by the membership & taken on into 2025. Without doubt we are most grateful to Steve for all his considerable efforts on our behalf throughout the year.

Earlier this year I was pleased to announce our 'Partnership' with a local family firm of solicitors - Wall James Chappel. It is intended that this will have many benefits both to our membership & to our 'Partners', throughout our three-year agreement & beyond. A seminar has been arranged at which all members - plus partners and any other interested parties - are cordially invited & can gain a greater understanding how we can help to provide necessary support to you all.

Marketing:

David Fyfe has been a member of the choir for a relevantly short period of time. Throughout his time with us he has been a most influential member of the executive and is highly respected by all members. David has concentrated his considerable professional skills to modernise & lift the choir's image and advertise our events throughout the past year. In a fast moving ever changing, modern world David's efforts to 'Market' the choir has raised our profile by using social media in a positive way and providing professional advertising materials.

David has also led the Choir's membership onto Choir Manager, this now the principal method of communication within the choir & helps us all to communicate electronically between one another. We are now able to make all members aware of events as they are added onto the system. Members are encouraged to mark their availability for each event. As we - as older men - have slowly adapted to this 'new' eco based system, we have become more accustomed and comfortable using Choir Manager and are now realising its benefits. As part of this David also helps Tony Fletcher our, ticket secretary, to sell tickets for all major events on-line.

Our choir is particularly fortunate in having Annie Hodgkinson as our President. She has made a huge impact during her short time in this role. Whilst the role of 'President' is an honorary position with no specific responsibilities, Annie has filled the position with her own her natural charm, grace & energy. She regularly attends rehearsals and is always welcomed by her many friends in the choir. She comperes shows and is an extremely competent soloist. In addition to this she has taken on the caring, pastoral duties around the choir, contacting and attending to the welfare needs of older members and long-standing friends of the choir, whose health may be failing. She is without doubt a great friend to us all - nothing appears to be too much trouble for Annie & it is a privilege to have her as our figure head.

Other members within the choir work hard within the choir carrying out other specific much needed functions, which help to ensure the choir continues to run smoothly.

Our two elected trustees - Pete Hawthorne & Richard Molyneux - who care specifically for the charitable side of our organisation.

Our two elected choir auditors - Richard Molyneux & Roger Shuttleworth

Our four section reps - Steve Waltho; Bill Hart; Chris Jones & Andy Parker - who look after individual needs within each section of the choir.

Tony Fletcher - is our long serving tickets secretary who is ably supported by David Fyfe for on-line ticket sales.

Richard Bagnall our long serving Stage Manager - who ensures we all get on & off stage in an orderly fashion and that we are seated properly.

Mike Green is our 'Social Secretary' and regularly holds luncheon afternoons at various local hostelrys. He also supervises & organises raffles for our larger concerts.

John Baker has for many years been the choir's 'Librarian' - personally keeping & looking after the sheet music for the whole choir. This a huge job which John has quietly carried out without complaint for many years & we should be most grateful for the service in this role John has given us. John has now asked to be relieved of this responsibility & that someone else in the choir takes over this thankless task. I am extremely grateful that Ian Davies came forward to take on & reorganise this function going forward into 2025. It is important to note that in early January each of you will all receive more sheet music to keep & use as required by Ray. This will become more apparent as it is explained fully to you all in the New Year.

Thank you to all those who help to keep our choir operating and functioning in such good order, we are indebted to you all.

Earlier this year it was announced that we were to be nominated by a friend of the choir - Rose Cook-Monk - for the Kings Award for Voluntary Services. This is a highly prestigious national award. I am pleased to inform you that our nomination has been accepted and will now be closely scrutinised throughout the coming year before we are informed in late November 2025 if we have been successful in winning this award.

It is quite natural to assume that our nomination for this award has been drawn from our ongoing charitable objectives which have, over the years, raised hundreds of thousands of pounds. Our natural aspiration to help others less fortunate is at the root of this nomination. Unfortunately, since 'lockdown', falling audiences and the inability to sell tickets for concerts has inevitably meant our charitable contributions have reduced. Despite this we have still helped to make worthwhile contributions to local charities throughout the year. Indeed, the Remembrance Concert (organised by Ian Rawlings) helped to raise a record amount of money for the British Legion. During our run into Christmas, the choir raised considerable sums from bucket collections. This year the two charities who we supported last year were again nominated by Peter Hawthorn for support ('Ronnie's Room & Dudley Food Bank). They will be given sizable donations shortly. Once again, the generosity and of all of you has helped with this. Thank you, all for your efforts, they have & will be gratefully, received by these needy recipients.

To be successfully nominated for the for the highly prestigious Kings Award is - in itself - an achievement and a great credit to everyone within our membership. During the nomination process I have been privileged to read some of the letters of support the choir has been given from various 'sponsors' to support our nomination. I have been deeply moved by their comments which indicate the high regard and deep affection in which the Gentlemen Songsters are held both by our local community and beyond. There is no doubt that we are highly regarded as a unique group with a common aim to share the joy of choral music for benefit of others. For me it is a pleasure & privilege simply to be a part of it all, and together with my many friends, able to take my part in helping to move our considerable achievements on into 2025 and beyond & the challenges which await us all.

Ken Crane
(Chairman)



GENTLEMEN SONGSTERS MALE VOICE CHOIR
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024 (accounts upto 23 December 2024)

EXPENDITURE	£	£	2023	INCOME	£	£	2024	2023
CONCERTS				CONCERTS				
Burns Night	£ -			Burns Night	£ 295.31			
McArthur and Stone	£ -			McArthur and Stone	£ 291.00			
Springdale	£ 294.00			Springdale (incl £1000 donations)	£ 1,570.06			
Amblecote				Amblecote	£ 60.00			
Halesowen Multi Cultural				Halesowen Multi Cultural	£ 200.00			
Halesowen + Valentines	£ 794.50			Halesowen + Valentines	£ 933.00			
Bristol 2024 (£2890 also collected in 2023)	£ 9,970.00			Bristol (£2,890 ALSO COLLECTED IN 2023)	£ 7,375.00			
Lord Lieutenant	£ -			Lord Lieutenant	£ 325.00			
BC Showcase	£ 936.64			BC Showcase	£ 2,438.54			
				BCS Bucket	£ 92.95			
Stream Road Church	£ -			Stream Road Church	£ 150.00			
October - Carley Pauli	£ 1,792.23			October - Carley Pauli	£ 4,477.26			
				October - Carley Pauli bucket	£ 69.61			
Limes	£ -			Limes	£ 280.00			
Remembrance	£ 1,040.00			Remembrance	£ 1,362.07			
Christmas (Transfer to church to be done in 2025)	£ 91.00			Christmas (Transfer to church to be done in 2025)	£ 1,330.46			
McArthur and Stone				McArthur and Stone	£ 300.00			
Old Bush	£ -			Old Bush	£ 250.00			
				DK bucket	£ 141.00			
Nottingham coach for CP Concert	£ 890.00							
Springdale 2025	£ 94.00			Bridge	£ 250.00			
				Bridge Bucket	£ 103.10			
				Norwich 2025	£ 2,100.00			
		£ 15,902.37	£ 24,971.82			£ 24,394.36	£ 29,163.61	
				REGULAR INCOME				
				Subscriptions	£ 7,563.87			
				Subs for 2025	£ 100.00			
						£ 7,663.87	£ 7,237.00	
DONATIONS				DONATIONS RECEIVED				
Brierley Hill Food Bank	£ 500.00			K Moss - CD Sale	£ 10.00			
Ronnies Room	£ 500.00			P&V Williams (Funeral)	£ 150.00			
Compton Care	£ 575.00			Albert Haynes (Funeral)	£ 200.00			
Sponsored Breaks	£ 575.00			John Mearman (Funeral)	£ 100.00			
				S Hancox (Funeral)	£ 100.00			
				Betty Banks (Funeral)	£ 100.00			
				John Smith (Funeral)	£ 350.00			
				Wall James Chapel	£ 4,500.00			
		£ 2,150.00	£ 3,650.00			£ 5,510.00	£ 3,515.00	
MISC/RUNNING/OTHER COSTS				OTHER INCOME				
Bank charges	£ 118.56			Misc	£ 68.78			
General admin expenses	£ 1,019.47			Uniform payments	£ 693.00			
Web domain				Music deposits	£ 75.00			
Insurance	£ 225.33							
New uniforms	£ 260.46							
National Association of Choirs	£ -							
Honoraria (incl Concerts)	£ 7,160.00					£ 836.78	£ 5,150.90	
Room hire	£ 1,662.50							
Music	£ 691.48							
700 club (£250 Jan '24)	£ 250.00							
		£ 11,387.80	£ 14,629.95					
Transfers		£ 10.00	£ -	Transfers		£ -	£ -	
		£ 29,450.17	£ 43,251.77			£ 38,405.01	£ 45,066.51	
Surplus		£ 8,954.84						
		£ 38,405.01	£ 43,251.77			£ 38,405.01	£ 45,066.51	
Known expenditure 2025		£ 29,450.17		Known income 2025		£ 38,405.01		

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 23 December 2024

Issued for distribution to Choir Members prior to the AGM.

CASH RESERVES

HSBC Treasurers account

Balance 12/23	£ 8,284.51	
Balance (23rd) December 2024	£ 17,239.35	£ 8,954.84

HSBC Contingency account

Balance 12/23	£ 11,128.36	
Balance (29th) December 2024	£ 11,345.69 Incl interest	£ 217.33

HSBC Futures account

Balance 12/23	£ 7,377.13	
Balance (23rd) December 2024	£ 7,520.85 Incl interest	£ 143.72

Lloyds Treasurers account

Balance 09/24	£ 1,925.86 Incl interest	£ 1,925.86
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Lloyds Social account

Balance 09/24	£ 390.85 Incl interest	£ 390.85
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Cash in hand	£ 38,422.60	£ 11,632.60
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Appointed by the Choir Management Committee, we hereby certify for the accounts to be correct for the year ending 31/12/24


Signed

Date: 13/01/25
Roger Shuttleworth

Signed

Date: 13/01/25
Richard Molyneux





Cash reserves - historical

2007	Surplus	£2,051.54	£ 27,551.43
2008	Deficit	(£9,878.63)	£ 17,672.80
2009	Deficit	(£1,326.70)	£ 16,346.10
2010	Deficit	(£1,910.84)	£ 14,435.26
2011	Surplus	£7,130.91	£ 21,566.17
2012	Surplus	£10,414.54	£ 31,980.71
2013	Deficit	(£8,593.15)	£ 23,387.56
2014	Surplus	£5,949.33	£ 29,336.89
2015	Deficit	(£2,143.46)	£ 27,193.43
2016	Deficit	(£9,685.93)	£ 17,507.50
2017	Surplus	£7,128.74	£ 24,636.24
2018	Surplus	£3,512.13	£ 28,148.37
2019	Surplus	£3,519.83	£ 31,668.20
2020	Deficit	£ (5,119.09)	£ 26,549.11
2021	Deficit	£ (6,292.26)	£ 20,256.85
2022	Surplus	£ 4,435.54	£ 24,692.73
2023	Surplus	£ 2,097.27	£ 26,790.00
2024	Surplus	£ 11,632.60	£ 38,422.60