

Co-Chairs Report for AGM 2023 25th September 2023

Jane Hall and Tricia Findley

It has been an honour to be involved in leading this wonderful choir. When we took on the roles of co-chairs exactly one year ago our aims were simple - to carry through the planned concert programme, to boost the financial reserves if we could, to have a fun time and, if possible, to avoid falling out. We can report that last season we did in fact succeed in all four of those objectives.

Last season was a memorable one in many ways. Despite illness and absence amongst members, we still succeeded in pulling off two superb concerts, both at St Mary's Church.

It was a pleasure to work once again with Harrison Cole, the excellent young soloists from Cambridge University and in particular Philip Smith and Lynsey Docherty. We are most grateful to Christopher Moore for cheerfully and professionally stepping in at the last minute to replace Andrew Leach when he became ill. Christopher was marvellous but Andrew you were much missed.

The whole choir was saddened by the death of long standing member Pete Clay who passed away peacefully at home on 16th January. Pete was a stalwart of the Choral Society and will be greatly missed by members and the wider community.

Not long afterwards, we were once again saddened by the death of Ian Kegel on 24th February. Ian was a member of the Choral Society for over 20 years. For much of that time, he was an extremely valued member of the committee as Stage Manager as well as ensuring that much of the IT ran smoothly. Ian faced the challenges of his illness with bravery and dignity and is sorely missed.

The committee learned at their September meeting that Ian has left the choir a wonderful legacy of £2,000.

Concert programme 2022-23

1. December - Bernstein, Britten and Elgar, with Christmas songs from Latin America

Despite being in competition with football on the telly and freezing temperatures outside - and in - we still sold 180 tickets, all credit to the publicity machine and your persuasive tactics - as the works were not especially well-known. Reactions from the audience were varied - many were impressed that we had tackled such complex works, others that it was the best concert they had heard us sing. It would certainly qualify towards fulfilling our charitable aim to educate.

2. April - Brahms Requiem

The church was almost full for Brahms with a healthy audience of over 200. Sadly, on the week of the concert, the choir itself was not so healthy and we had a significant drop off in choir numbers with Covid and other ailments hitting us hard. The audience's comments on the performance were very positive.

Committee

At the end of September 2024, Tricia will have completed 5 years on the committee and Jane will have completed 4 years. We intend to step down as co-chairs in September 2024 but are both keen to continue to help and support the choir as much as possible after that.

We really do have an exceptional group of people on the Choral Society's committee and we thank each and every one for their loyalty to the choir, hard work and support of us as the choir's first co- chairs.

Annie Owen has decided to step down as Vice Chair. We thank you Annie for all you have done to help our choir, for your help in putting on the fundraising piano recital and for all your support with furniture removal for the concerts and in particular, the provision of stage lighting.

Sara Woolstencroft our Secretary, is a much valued and hard working committee member. We all look forward to her eloquent and informative 'mailchimp' newsletters. She knows every member of the choir and sorts out all our paper work and queries with admirable efficiency. The smooth start to each term is enabled because of Sara's hard work with ordering and distributing musical scores, communications with new and existing members and all the related administrative tasks which she carries out most ably.

John Foster steps down at this AGM after several years as the choir's Treasurer. The choir was delighted to be able to present John with a gift and we thank him for all he has done. We hope he now finds more time to enjoy some of his 'other' hobbies.

We are delighted that Joanna Crowe has agreed to be Treasurer and thank John and Joanna for ably working together over several months to ensure a smooth handover. We particularly thank Joanna for the hard work she has put into the presentation of the accounts for the last financial year and for her work in preparation for this AGM.

Joanna was of course already a much valued, efficient and hard -working member of the committee as she was Social Secretary for several years and we have her to thank for all our excellent social occasions and welcome supplies of food and drink, much enjoyed by all.

Dawn Gilmour is a long serving, much valued member of the committee. She runs the 'Friends' scheme in a friendly, efficient manner and has been a tremendous help for many years with 'front of house' roles at concerts and supporting stage management tasks and stage organisation in more recent months.

We would also like to thank David Pearce for his valued contributions in committee meetings, support and advice. David liaises with organisations who wish to place adverts in our concert programmes and secures valuable advertising revenue which helps to pay for the many costs involved in putting on our concerts. He has recently been able to secure £1000 from Shell UK who awarded the grant in support of voluntary work undertaken by a former employee. Well done and many thanks David.

Ken Odam works skilfully and efficiently behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of our website. His knowledge and experience are much valued and he is always willing to provide help and support whenever it is needed, even at short notice. He has uttered many a wise word in committee meetings.

William Wickham provided welcome and much appreciated help with ticket sales for the April concert and support at the piano recital fundraiser event. He has also helped others to kick start our new sponsorship and supporter scheme. We look forward to having him back on board in his role as orchestra fixer for our concerts this season.

BOOSTING RESERVES

We did increase our reserves last season as our Treasurer will report in a moment. This was largely due to tickets sales and so again we must thank ourselves for putting the word out by whatever means we can and encouraging our friends and neighbours to support us. Well done everyone.

For this current season, as a committee, we felt the need to consolidate our position by performing sure fire winners to bring back singers and to help boost audience numbers. Well, we have been successful, having more than 90 singers and in December, with a very popular concert, we are hoping for a capacity crowd. In March at Snape, we will need work even harder to reach a viable audience, preferably topping 600 - that is our target for Snape - it is achievable and we have done it before.

Fund raiser - March 2023

There was generosity in abundance for our fund raiser last March, with Andrew treating us to a piano recital of 'party pieces' and Jackie entertaining us with her thought-provoking and amusing quotations. Thank you to both. In addition, a raffle and promises auction and a really good afternoon tea were enjoyed by all.

We raised £3800 in one afternoon and more or less wiped out the deficit carried over from the previous season. So many of you can be thanked for your contributions to this event, as well as the committee and some local businesses. A great big thank you to all involved.

Increasing our reserves like this gives us more confidence when choosing repertoire. This season, we have chosen well known, frequently performed work eg Messiah, Mozart Requiem, alongside little known shorter works. That is absolutely right at the moment but, if this continued, we would be missing some wonderful masterpieces that are not so well known. Hoping soon to share some ideas with you.

We would like to thank all our Voice Captains for last season, Gillian Barella, Nicky Bridgland, Chris Heptinstall and Neil Clayton, with deputies Peter Bridle and David Ruddock. They have provided a valuable contact for all our members old and new, and they provide much needed help and support for our concerts.

Many others, both members and non-members, continue to help the choir behind the scenes, providing additional support at concerts and throughout the year. The jobs involved in putting on a concert are numerous and plentiful and we would particularly like to thank Stephanie and Paul Walker, Jenny Auber, Dennis Crowe, David Findley, Phil Hall, John Owen, Diana Foster, Peter Bridle, Rob Young, Hugh Browton, Trish Turner and Jackie Leach for all the extra tasks they carry out at concert time and for their help and support throughout last season.

New Supporter Scheme

WCS was founded in 1883 which means that this term we are completing our 140th year. This seems a good moment to try to boost our financial reserves in order to secure many more years for the choir. The aim is to encourage donations from choral music lovers, perhaps our own concert goers, and others, who recognise the value of having a great choir in the town.

Three amazing people all Friends of WCS - Paul Walker, David Findley and Dennis Crowe - have been at work devising a new Supporter/ Sponsorship scheme which will operate alongside our Friends of WCS Scheme, run by Dawn. Tricia, Joanna and Sara have also been involved in planning the new scheme, originally proposed and driven by our resident 'ideas man' on the committee, William. Big thanks to William for pushing us forward!! Many meetings later - we are nearly ready to launch and further news will follow in the coming weeks.

Work is also going on towards acquiring corporate sponsors. This scheme will have more generous benefits in return for a larger donation. Do you know any local businesses that you think might be interested? Let us know.

We are so very grateful to the Paul, Dennis and David for coming forward to help us.

THANK YOU

We sincerely thank our Musical Director Andrew Leach who celebrated his Silver Jubilee at the 2022 Christmas concert, a most memorable occasion. We thank both Andrew and pianist Peter Willsher for their loyalty and commitment to the choir, enjoyable rehearsals, tireless preparation for concerts and inspirational playing and teaching.

We would also like to thank our president Julian Royle and his wife Sarah for their ongoing support of our choir. It was wonderful to see them both at our two concerts last season and at the piano recital. We thank Julian in particular for all his recent help with our new supporter and sponsorship scheme.

We have been honoured and delighted to serve as co-chairs since September 2022. We look forward to another successful season together and intend to work hard to make it one of our most successful yet.

**TRICIA FINDLEY
JANE HALL Co-chairs**

WOODBRIDGE CHORAL SOCIETY

Registered charity no 276627

Profit and Loss account 2022 – 2023

YEAR ENDED 31st MAY 2023

INCOME	2021/2022	2022/2023
Interest	1.26	56.91
Total concert receipts	9995.80	12165.35
Subscriptions, grants and donations:		
Subscriptions	8698.48	7538.64
Friends	423.45	964.45
Grants		2000.00
Patrons and other donations	2375.00	1240.00
Gift aid	1315.05	
Score sales	394.20	681.20
Miscellaneous:		
choir members' donations		610.00
RAH concert payment refunded	966.00	
TOTAL INCOME	24169.24	25256.55
EXPENDITURE		
Professional fees	21919.94	7368.12
Other performance expenses	2210.02	2462.80
Score purchases		556.76
Rehearsal expenses, sundry expenses and admin	2405.99	3299.40
Miscellaneous expenses	828.00	546.84
Social expense costs		439.40
Expenses for extra fundraising concert		934.87
TOTAL	27363.95	15608.19
Excess of income over expenses	-3194.71	9648.36
TOTAL	24169.24	25256.55

Notes:

This year was a year for recovery from the significant loss we made in the year ended 31st May 2022. The society ensured this recovery in a number of ways:

The society did not hold a concert at Snape, which significantly increases our costs. Inevitably an orchestra is needed, hence the large difference in professional fees between

2022 and 2023. The Society planned a programme for which no orchestra was required and which was appropriate for our home venue of St Mary's Church in Woodbridge.

This had the potential of making membership less attractive to new members. The society hosted trial rehearsal evenings with refreshments to encourage new members. Our musical director offered to give a piano recital to help raise funds. The Society booked a suitable venue and organised refreshments including wine, as well as a raffle and an auction of generous lots offered by members, advertisers and friends, leading to a significant rise in concert receipts.

The society has been helped in its efforts to recover by the generosity of our Friends. The Friends scheme raises a modest amount of income each year, which was boosted this year by over £500 due to generous donations from friends.

In addition we have been successful in gaining a number of grants to support our concerts: The Arts Society Woodbridge supported us with a grant of £500. We managed to obtain a Tesco Community Scheme grant of £500 as well as another £500 from the Scarfe Trust who have supported us before. We are also grateful for the grant of £500 from the Elizabeth Harwood Memorial Trust towards soloist professional fees.

In addition to these grants we are grateful for generous donations from a number of individuals who are supportive of the society.

Our advertising manager has been successful in maintaining loyalty from local companies who advertise regularly to support our concerts. We owe thanks to these loyal companies which include The Anchor, Barker Gotelee, Boydell and Brewer, Burrows and Sunaway, E B Button, Deben Travel, Dummett Copp, M & R Cars, Mullins Dowse, Natural Health, P & R Locksmiths, Racalia, Travel Quest, Woodbridge Violins, Woodbridge Greengrocers, Deben Inns, Fenn Wright, Light House.

Balance sheet

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Opening balance	£26,557.15	£23,362.44
Excess of income over expenses	-£3,194.71	£9,648.36
Balance carried forward	£23,362.44	£33,010.80
Represented by:		
Cash in hand in Lloyds account	£11,362.44	£21,010.80
Balance on deposit account	£12,000.00	£12,000.00
Total cash and investments	£23,362.44	£33,010.80

Independent Examiner's Report:

I have undertaken a review of the Society's receipts and payments for the year 2022-2023 and can confirm that the statement as presented to the members at the AGM is an accurate reflection of the transactions undertaken during the year.

M D Bullock

5th September 2023

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