

INDEPENDENTLY CHECKED

bgbatt

DATE: 20.9.2025

GRAVESHAM CHORAL SOCIETY

Receipts and Payment account 1 September 24 to 30 August 2025

	2024/2025	2023/2024
<u>INCOME</u>		
<u>General</u>		
Subscriptions	10,977.08 ✓	10,008.64
Friends	800.00 ✓	700.00
Fundraising	1,309.58	294.00
Other Income (Inc Bank Interest, Gift Aid)	6,470.86	1,912.90
<u>Concert Related</u>		
Tickets	4,953.85	5,914.79
Programmes	0.00	719.95
Music Purchase/Hire	1,388.99	2,388.81
Sponsorship	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INCOME	25,900.36	21,939.09
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
<u>General</u>		
Admin Costs	6.80	339.60
MD's Rehearsal fees	5,084.00	4,125.00
Accompanist Rehearsal fees	2,556.00	2,652.00
Rehearsal Venue	1,700.00	1,750.00
Fundraising	0.00	0.00
Subscriptions/Insurance/PRS	788.63	479.70
Other Costs	1,017.46	1,600.75
<u>Concert Related</u>		
Conductor fees	2,200.00	3,110.00
Soloist fees	1,677.20	3,375.00
Orchestra fees	2,400.00	6,170.00
Music Purchase/Hire	1,346.63	2,280.51
Printing/Design/Publicity	125.26	1,028.80
Instrument Hire/Transport	0.00	194.00
Venue Hire/Staging	832.00	800.00
Gifts for Artists		85.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	19,733.98	27,990.36
NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS	6,166.38	-6,051.27
Bank Account & cash at 1 September 2024	49,739.11	55,790.38
Bank accounts & cash to date	55,905.49	49,739.11

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 August 2025

<u>Monetary Assets</u>		
Charity Bank Bond	40,000.00	40,000.00
CAF Gold Account	12,349.45	9,662.81
CAF Cash Account	3,545.14	0.00
Cash in hand	10.90	76.30
Total	55,905.49	49,739.11
Debtors (Gift Aid)	0.00	0.00
Liabilities - None	0.00	0.00
Asset: Keyboard Purchase value 05/12/21.	1,823.00	1,823.00
Asset: Wine glasses & Crates	188.24	188.24
Podium revamp with handrails	660.00	660.00

Gravesham Choral reports for the 2024-2025 season

Music Director's report

I was delighted to be asked to become the new Musical Director of Gravesham Choral in January 2025, following a term as Accompanist from September 2024. Our first concert of Brahms' *German Requiem*, in the version for two pianos, was a wonderful start to my tenure; one of my absolute favourite choral works and something to really 'get our teeth into'. The concert was a huge success, and special thanks go to pianists Debbi Parks and Erin Sawicka, and soloists Augusta Hebbert and James Oldfield. It was a shame that there were not more audience members there to enjoy it, but there were various concert clashes that evening, which is something the committee will continue to endeavour to avoid where possible! The summer concert was a lighter affair, with a 'folk-song' element, featuring works by John Rutter (*The Sprig of Thyme*), Andrew Carter (*Horizons*) and Philip Wilby (*North Country Folk Songs*). The Carter piece has been rarely performed over the years, and the composer was especially delighted that we chose to include it. Despite some musical challenges, I was delighted with how the choir engaged with the choice of music and worked incredibly hard to conquer the notes! The result was that the concert was again another triumph, and much enjoyed by the decent-sized audience. Thanks go to Debbi for some lovely piano playing, and our lyrical soprano soloist, Janette Cattell.

We have just begun work on our uplifting Autumn programme (for St Cecilia's Day), featuring French works by Gounod, Bizet and Fauré, which I am very much looking forward to! Plans for the forthcoming year include our popular Christmas concert, a Passiontide concert featuring Stainer's famous *Crucifixion* alongside tuneful English works by Finzi and Wesley, and a summer concert featuring a number of American (or American-inspired) pieces, to be held on the 4th July. Further ahead, we hope to do Rossini's wonderful *Petite Messe Solennelle* next Autumn. We are also working hard to ensure our budget is able to accommodate the occasional concert with orchestra/instrumentalists (perhaps once per year), and also to continue to programme some 'mainstream works' alongside lesser-known pieces, which will help to draw an audience, as well as providing a variety of genres/styles for members.

Personally, I would like to thank all members for their continued commitment to the choir. We are only able to tackle the works we do with regular attendance, punctuality and many people choosing to do extra 'homework' behind the scenes, listening to the music and learning their parts independently. I am extremely grateful for this dedication and spirit of positive engagement, and having worked with other choirs who do not follow this ethos, I do not take it for granted! It helps hugely to have such an enthusiastic and hard-working Committee, and we are very blessed as a choir to have this, as well as numerous other volunteers doing a wide-variety of invaluable tasks to a high standard and with great efficiency.

We were delighted to be joined in January by Debbi Parks as our new accompanist, who is a joy to work with, and especially helps to put smiles on people's faces during her warm-up accompaniments! We are lucky also to have Erin Sawicka as a talented 'stand-in'.

In conclusion, it has been a hugely enjoyable and successful few months for GCS. Here's to more of this in the future!

Francesca Massey

MD, Gravesham Choral, September 2025

Chairman's report

This year we have performed our usual pattern of four concerts. Our November concert, was conducted by Matthew Watts and featured organist David Poulter, soprano Aimee Presswood and a small string orchestra. We included Mendelssohn's well-known piece, *Hear my Prayer* as well as Vivaldi's *Credo* and Haydn's *Missa Brevis Sancti Joannis de Deo*. The audience appreciated the concert and the choir worked very hard to ensure they were concert-ready.

We finished the term with our traditional Christmas concert which was very well attended. John MacKenzie was our guest conductor for this concert and in his inimitable style brought joy and enthusiasm to the choir. Francesca Massey played two organ pieces - *Christmas Cradle Song* by Alfred Hollins and *Toccata on Vom Himmel hoch* by Garth Edmundson - and wowed both audience and choir with her virtuosic playing, particularly in the Toccata. We hope Francesca will continue to share her exceptional organ skills in future concerts.

We performed Brahms *German Requiem* in our March concert, conducted by Francesca, with pianists Debbi Parks and Erin Sawicka and soloists Augusta Hebbert, and James Oldfield. It was a challenge for the choir to learn the German words but everyone rose to meet the demands of the piece, both linguistically and musically. We were treated to the London piano duet version which worked well for a choir of our size. The audience were fulsome in their praise of our music-making.

Our July concert *Tales of Land and Sea* was again conducted by Francesca Massey with soprano Janette Cattell and accompanied by Debbi Parks on piano. The choir enjoyed the demands of learning the programme of Philip Wilby's *North Country Folk Songs*, *Horizons* by Andrew Carter and *The Sprig of Thyme* by John Rutter. The concert was a little later in the year than usual due to accommodating other commitments by both our MD and members. As the programme had a folk-like feel to it, we decided to abandon our usual formal concert dress in favour of smart casual summer wear. This gave the concert a lighter feel together with the music. In spite of some of the programme including some well-known British folk songs, the music was nonetheless very challenging and some of the choir may not have reached the top of *Byker Hill*!! Over the weeks, the choir grew to love the Carter pieces with its unusual rhythms and harmonies. We have enjoyed Francesca's programme choices which have been different and new to most of the choir. We had a bigger audience for this concert and they were very appreciative.

The 24/25 season has not been without its challenges for the Committee. We began the season with both a new conductor and rehearsal pianist following the retirements of Alan and Roger, although Roger offered to stay on until we found his replacement. Matthew Watts was appointed as conductor and Francesca Massey joined us part way through September as our very talented rehearsal accompanist. The contract between Matthew and the choir specified a probationary period of one term. Responding to choir feedback, the Committee decided that Matthew was not the best fit for the choir. Francesca had covered a rehearsal as conductor during the autumn term and following the choir's extremely positive response to this rehearsal, the Committee took the decision to ask her to take on the role of Music Director. We were delighted when she accepted. Francesca started as MD in January 2025 and successfully completed her probationary term at the end of March 2025.

Francesca's enthusiasm and ability to engage and inspire all members, whatever their level of expertise, has led to a growth in members' confidence and enjoyment. It is very encouraging to look around during

rehearsals and see so many smiling faces. The Committee have also really appreciated working with Francesca whose administration and communication skills are first rate and very timely.

As Francesca could no longer accompany the choir, we were fortunate she was able to suggest Debbi Parks as rehearsal accompanist. Debbi joined us in January 2025. Debbi is also a very skilled pianist and her experience of playing for ballet has brought a new dimension to choir warm-ups! Her enthusiasm and positivity have been appreciated. We were also pleased that the equally talented Erin could deputise for Debbi on occasion. Both work brilliantly with both Francesca and the choir.

We want to make sure we appeal to new and younger members who may join us in the future and to this end decided that in future we would drop the dinner suits and red bow ties in favour of black shirts for the tenors and basses. We also bought some very smart black folders with our logo on the cover which are much lighter for members to hold during concerts. Informally, we have decided to drop the 'society' part of our choir name too, although officially that is still the choir name in our Constitution and is what appears in Google searches for the website or is the name on our bank accounts. We are not trying to radically change what Gravesham Choral is about or the kind of things we sing, but simply make sure we appeal to the next generation of music-makers. We do hope to see more younger members join us going forward.

Anne will give a separate treasurer's report but careful housekeeping has meant that we have finished the season with the accounts looking good. Francesca has been mindful of our desire to ensure that we did not run concerts at a significant loss. This has informed her choice of programme. We do intend to have concerts with reduced orchestras in the future and have earmarked some of the bequest money for this purpose. Attracting new members and increasing ticket sales continue to be central to our aim of breaking even financially.

We have reintroduced fund-raising activities. Every week we now have 'The 50 club' (formerly 'The 60 club'!), a chance for members to win £20, paying £1 entry each week. We had a Christmas and summer quiz together with a spring raffle at the March concert. Choir socials also raise a small sum because people are so generous with their donations. At both the Christmas and summer concerts we had drinks and nibbles for both choir and audience instead of a social after the last rehearsal of term. These were very successful and welcomed by both audience and choir members. Our thanks must go to Julia who organised these without any fuss and with great efficiency and also to the teams of people who helped her.

The Committee said goodbye to Julia at the end of the summer term. We thanked her for her considerable work and the development of the choir's social side and wished her well in her husband's retirement and their relocation. This means the Committee – already very small – could do with extra help and members are encouraged to seriously consider what help they can give particularly whether they could join the Committee. By the time you read this, the Committee will have expanded – more of that in the 25/26 season report!

Once again, members of the Committee have continued to give of their time freely to ensure Gravesham Choral continues to flourish. Lisa continues her sterling work as 'secretary' which fails to describe the many tasks she does to keep the choir working effectively and fully informed. From Wednesday night notices to website development (alongside husband, Pete), Lisa guarantees GCS is in the best possible place to continue its work. Anne's hard work as treasurer has enabled us to manage our finances judiciously and has informed programme planning. Lynne is central to ensuring the church is concert-ready and choir organized in the correct positions and David's work on programme notes has helped develop our concert programme.

We are also blessed to have so many GCS members who are happy to volunteer their skills, time and partners to help the society with tasks big and small. I thank all those who willingly give of their time. This includes Martin our librarian, who readily performs Pickford type removals of our music every term and ensures that music is returned to the hirers in good condition, Leonie with her front of house team, Mike, our membership secretary, Maureen who looks after the Friends of GCS, Steve who organises ticket sales and is our proof-reader, Alison our orchestra 'fixer', Elspeth who books the school and the church and Jane Sparks for running 'The 50 Club'. There are others who contribute to our success, not least of all you, the members. Without you there would not be a GCS to preserve for the future. Your role in welcoming new members is crucial to this aim. I hope you all enjoy GCS as much as I do and judging by the interactions we have during choir practice, I think we have the recipe for continued success. Long may it continue!

Jan Blease

Chairman, Gravesham Choral, September 2025

Treasurer's Report

For the year: 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025

Despite a difficult and somewhat chaotic start to the year, it is very pleasing to be able to report that we have ended up in a healthy financial position, having actually made a profit on the year's activities! The 24/25 Receipts and Payment Account shows the corresponding figures for 23/24. You will see that overall, 23/24's loss of £6,051.27 has now become a gain of £6,166.38. What a relief not to have to dig again into our reserves, which remain there for us to use for specific purposes when we see fit.

For those who are interested in the nitty gritty, the Concert Accounts page shows the income and expenditure attributable directly to each concert. There was an overall loss on concerts, but this was greatly reduced from the 22/23 and 23/24 concert losses (over £9,000 and £8,000 respectively). It nevertheless illustrates the importance of our subscriptions and non-ticket income for funding concert deficits, as well as all the other costs associated with running the Society.

Our recovery was achieved in no small measure by the determination of the Committee and our Music Director to keep expenditure down wherever possible. Francesca's knowledge of material to perform without incurring huge orchestral costs has helped enormously. Another important factor was fund raising – the 60 (now 50) club; the sale of refreshments at concerts; the quizzes and raffles. Collectively these activities brought in a splendid £1,309.58.

Of course, this year's outcome has to be viewed with a certain amount of caution (come on - every accountant is a wet blanket, you know that!). A significant part of our surplus – £2,306.41 - was due to gift aid claims for back years, and will not be repeated. We also benefitted from a better rate of interest on our savings last year than we can get this year.

Nevertheless, we can be proud of our efforts, especially as they have enabled us to freeze our subscriptions for 25/26, except for a minor adjustment in order to make the sessional charge a round sum – currently £5. The usual discount applies when members pay for the whole year at the start.

You may wonder, then, why each term's fees do not accurately reflect the number of weeks in the term. It is because we are bound by the wording in our Constitution, which specifies 40% of the (non-discounted) annual fee for the Autumn and Spring terms and 20% for Summer. The Committee is considering a change to the Constitution to make it more flexible, and you will hear about this at the AGM.

Last year I finished my report with the words *"It has long been clear that change is necessary in order to achieve a sustainable financial position. I am confident (reasonably!) that with the understanding of our Music Director, the creative ideas of the Committee, and the continued support of our choir members, we will get there."*

Well done everyone – we did!

Anne Streatfeild

Treasurer, Gravesham Choral, September 2025