

Dorchester Choral Society
Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Date: Monday 13th November 2023

Time: 9:00 pm

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Denise Atherton, Debbie Simpson, Heidi Jarrett and Christine Pfaff.

53 members were in attendance.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 6th January 2023

These were accepted.

3. Matters Arising

Theatre Tax Relief

The Chair informed members that unfortunately DCS was ineligible for theatre tax relief.

4. Reports: -

a) Treasurer: approval of accounts for 2022-23 and proposed budget for 2023-24

Elizabeth introduced her report remotely (via Zoom).

Her main concern overall was that we were continuing to run a deficit budget, amounting to about £9,000 in 2022/23 (when one-off Gift Aid relief was taken out of the picture), with the consequence that we stood no chance of breaking even in the current financial year, even if we were successful in attracting an audience of 200 for each of our concerts. The implications were, therefore clear: we needed to do more to be careful in our programming (smaller orchestras, reduced numbers of soloists) and to attract paying customers, since member subscriptions could do little more than allow the Society to meet its day-to-day expenditure.

Elizabeth expressed her thanks to Steve Priddy, the Society's independent examiner, for his assistance. Finally, she emphasised that while she was not stepping down from her role as treasurer, it might be helpful if the Society could recruit a member who was locally-based and able to attend the society's events regularly.

Following thanks to Elizabeth, it was proposed by Giles Watts, seconded by Mulu Thomson, that the accounts for 2022/23 , the proposed budget for

2023/24 and Steve Priddy to be asked again to be our Hon Independent Examiner. This proposal was approved unanimously.

b) Chair

The Chair had already circulated her report for 2023/24. For ease of reference it is included as an appendix.

Jane noted that in writing her report it had quickly become apparent what a busy year it had been. Not only had we held a number of successful concerts but it had been particularly gratifying to see and hear solo contributions from our own members, also from present or previous pupils of the Thomas Hardye School, with whom links continued to develop. We had been warmly welcomed on our visit to Bayeux and our summer events had received a positive reception and had afforded an opportunity to widen an appreciation of choral singing. There were of course still challenges for us: we needed for example a librarian to replace Mulu, more committee members would be appreciated and extra recruits to the soprano, tenor and bass sections might enable us to return to having some 80 singers. Jane referred to the efforts being undertaken to make economies and these would need to continue: it would be unrealistic to increase ticket prices and subscriptions also should be kept at a reasonable level. Despite these challenges, the society was in good heart and we could be optimistic about the next year. Jane expressed particular gratitude to Colin, to Heather, her committee, to the many who operated behind the scenes and, indeed to the wider membership.

Jane was thanked for her report. In answer to a question about whether we might revive "Come and Sing" events, Jane agreed that this could be considered further and she would be pleased to receive suggestions for suitable items.

c) Director of Music

Colin chose to highlight details from his full report, which is attached as an appendix.

Specifically he drew attention to the visit to Bayeux, where we had punched above our weight, and to the quality of our singing in all concerts. There were some exciting programmes being developed for 2024, including our spring concert of British music and our performances of The Messiah at Wimborne and in Lübbecke in the autumn. He had received sterling support from the committee: in particular he singled out Christine, Liz and Kevin. He had been ably assisted by Heather and, when required, by Brenda. Finally, he informed the membership that it was his intention to step down from his position in Spring 2025, by which time he would have led DCS for 10 years. Colin emphasised that he was not retiring ("musicians never do"). He would of course always retain fond memories of his time with us, including meeting Rachel to whom he was now engaged!

In thanking Colin for his report, Jane informed us that Kevin would be heading up a small search team to help with the recruitment of a new Director of Music. Individuals would be asked to join the group and it was hoped that applicants would be given an opportunity to lead a rehearsal during summer 2024 and members' views could then be taken into account when the Committee makes its final decision on Colin's replacement..

5. Election of Committee and Officers for 2023/24:-

The following committee members had indicated their willingness to serve for a further year:

Jane Howard	<i>alto</i>	(Chair)
Elizabeth Humphrey	<i>alto</i>	(Treasurer)
Mulu Thomson	<i>alto</i>	(Secretary)
Liz Adams	<i>alto</i>	
Christine Pfaff	<i>soprano</i>	
Kate Beatt	<i>soprano</i>	(<i>ex officio</i>) (Membership Secretary)
Jane Pryce	<i>soprano</i>	
Kevin Rogers	<i>bass</i>	

A nomination had been received from Susan Adams (*alto*)

It was proposed by Jenny Thomasson , seconded by Tess James, that the members named above, including Susan Adams as a new member, be confirmed as committee members. This was approved unanimously.

6. Points from the Choir

None.

The meeting closed at 9:40 p.m.

APPENDICES

Chair's Report to the AGM: 13th November 2023

I always find it difficult to remember what concert comes into which financial year and thus should form part of this report. So I had a look back and what struck me was how busy we have been.

There was Jabberwocky and Polovtsian dances (Nov), a Messiah (Dec) – both mentioned at our late-running AGM in Jan 23 -the Fauré Requiem and the Poulenc motets (Mar) and then summer outreach in Cerne Abbas and Borough Gardens (June). When we add in a joint concert in Bayeux (April) with our friends from L'Orphéon and St.-Andreas-Kirche as well as various carol singing activities and social events it all adds up to a very full year.

I know that Colin will cover more about the musical aspects of this programme so I am just letting you have a few of my personal highlights in the hope that this prompts some memories of your own.

- Seeing Stefan grow as a performer, in the lead role in our Jabberwocky concert but also in the Fauré and at our summer concerts. One of our aims as a choir is to encourage young people into choral music and here is a success story! As well as Stefan as Herod in our forthcoming December concert we have Lily singing the part of the Angel: she is a 6th former at Thomas Hardye. We will also have the school choir singing with us in our Spring concert 2024. These are good links to foster.
- Emily's performance in our Messiah. How fortunate we are to have choir members who can take on solo roles – again something we want to encourage and another feature of our forthcoming "Darkness to Light" concert. I am sure I am not the only one who was moved by the emotion of Emily's performance with her lovely rich tone
- Our high-wire act with the Poulenc motets. We pulled it off, albeit with nerves at full stretch.
- The warmth of our welcome in Bayeux – contrasted with the freezing cold of the cathedral –

no heating (not to mention no seating for the choir). We found out that Fauré's Requiem is held in such respect in France that it is taken ever -so - slowly in any performance there.

- The lovely Summer's evening in the beautiful church in Cerne Abbas where, suddenly, all our summer pieces came together in front of a large and appreciative audience. We raised a good sum of money for the Christian Aid Ukraine appeal and some more, again, in Borough Gardens. We undertake these outreach events not only to support other charities but to widen understanding of choral music and, we hope, develop new fans and ticket holders.

So, lots of positives. But we start this new year with a number of challenges:

- We really need new committee members and/or volunteers to bring in some fresh ideas and to pick up roles: librarian, sponsorship finder. Come and see me if you feel you could step up.
- It would be lovely to have some new recruits in the Soprano, Tenor and Bass sections. We are a choir of some 70 or so and it would be good to get up towards the 80 figure – what we aim for - with some younger members. Please think how we can do this: is there anyone you could invite?
- Financial. Elizabeth has reported more on this so I would only summarise:
 - o Costs have risen and are continuing to rise – for rehearsals and concerts.
 - o In difficult financial circumstances selling tickets has become more challenging and raising ticket prices we feel would bring diminishing returns. As an example of the problem, even our December Messiah concert was not a sell-out and made a small loss: unheard of for DCS performing this work.
 - o We have limited ways of raising revenue: subscriptions being the main one other

than ticket sales. This coming year, unlike previous years, our income from subscriptions probably will not cover our rehearsal costs but we recognise that members are also likely to be cash-strapped so we need to keep subs at a realistic level: this is a balancing act.

It would be helpful to have a volunteer able to focus on raising sponsorship but, again, we need to recognise that this is a poor business climate to expect much new support and we are not a fashionable cause. So the committee feels it would be wrong to factor additional sponsorship money into our budget.

We have healthy reserves but these would soon dwindle if we did not, as a committee, address how to stabilise our finances. So we are looking at how to create a concert programme that is both satisfying for the choir and our loyal fan base but is less expensive to put on eg using reduced orchestra editions of works. We are also trying to be as economical as possible: for example, asking you to advertise via local Facebook groups (rather than us paying for adverts in parish mags etc.), creating the short form programme and putting the “displaced” programme information on our website.

I do not want to end on a gloomy note because that is not how I see life in DCS: we sing wonderful music alongside friendly, enthusiastic and committed fellow members. We work hard together but we also have our lighthearted moments. We have a lot going for us..... Finally, a report like this would not be complete without some heartfelt thanks: To Colin for leading us so ably and challenging us to do new and different things; to Heather for her wonderful accompanying and sectional leading; and to my fellow committee members who work so hard behind the scenes. And then there are the numerous other volunteers who help to make things happen: booking and setting up this church, serving refreshments at rehearsals and concerts, helping erect our staging, managing our front of house etc etc etc. etc. Thank you all for your continued contributions.

Jane Howard

November 2023

DCS AGM 13 November 2023 Report by the Director of Music

My report covers the period from January to November this year, from Fauré to Schütz. It embraces our Spring concert, the twinning project in Bayeux and the summer concerts at Cerne Abbas and Borough Gardens.

The Fauré and Poulenc concert at the end of March, with soprano Georgie Malcolm as a magnificent soloist in a group of French songs - accompanied by Graham Scott - was an early high point. The confident, unaccompanied performance you gave of the Poulenc *Penitential Motets* showed to what heights the Choir can aspire when embracing such demanding and uncompromising repertoire. Both Fauré's *Cantique* and *Requiem* were afforded sensitive performances, with our Choral Scholar bass Stefan Oakes giving mature renditions of the *Hostias* and *Libera me*. Georgie's singing of the *Pie Jesu* was sublimely beautiful.

A representative group from DCS took part in our keenly-awaited twinning visit to Bayeux to sing the Fauré *Requiem* alongside our friends from L'Orphéon and Kantorei St-Andreas, Lübbecke. Our thirty-two-voice choir sang a carefully-chosen selection of unaccompanied English anthems by Byrd, Farrant, Purcell and Tallis, punching above its weight tonally and balance-wise within the great Romanesque/Gothic space of *La Cathédrale Notre-Dame*. The combined choirs, under the direction of my young colleague Romain Bastard, gave a moving and stately performance of the *Requiem*. I would like to commend the immense contribution of David Goddard, who planned the visit and liaised so patiently with our French friends. Warm thanks to all who represented DCS abroad and coped so ably with the challenging weather and travel conditions. I believe the Twinning Association is one of the finest jewels in Dorchester's cultural crown, all the more so post-Brexit. Please continue to supportfully these international ventures.

The summer saw us triumph with an Italianate and opera-inspired short programme in the rewarding acoustic of St Mary's Church, Cerne Abbas: anarchic, Bolognese madrigals by Banchieri rubbed shoulders with lusty opera choruses by Donizetti, Handel, Verdi and Wagner, plus a vibrant *Duetto buffo di due Gatti* by Rossini, with not just two fine feline singers but three, as Brenda stepped in magnificently at short notice for an indisposed Kate, so Heidi was not left on her own as *gatto solo* at the second concert in the open air at Borough Gardens. We all relished Matt Dietz's characterful solo tenor contribution as Arturo in the Donizetti, and Stefan's powerful singing of a Puccini aria from *La Bohème*.

At every turn this year, our wonderfully loyal and instinctively-musical pianist Heather Reed has been in place, often taking on sectional rehearsals in addition to her superlative accompanying duties. We are fortunate indeed to enjoy Heather's expertise, also to have the ever-reliable Brenda Stephenson willing to step in as pianist, often at short notice. Warm thanks to both our pianists.

Our programme for the coming year includes Richard Blackford's moving and powerful *Pietà* in March, with *Two Psalms* by Holst, plus string music by Vaughan Williams - his *Five Variants on Dives & Lazarus*. Many of the skills utilised in mastering the Poulenc will be required of us when preparing Richard's score. Liz Adams has worked her magic, booking and managing the players who make up our excellent professional orchestras. We look forward to the lithe playing of Sarum Baroque in December - all present and correct - as well as the fine string orchestra plus harp booked already for March. Thank you Liz for all your efficient and prescient work on our behalf.

On 19th October we will have the great joy of working again with our French and German friends in a celebratory performance of *Messiah* to be held in

Wimborne Minster as part of the next Twinning project to mark Heinz-Hermann Grube's retirement from the *Kantorei* in 2025.

In December a colourful classical mix of music by Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart centred around Beethoven's magnificent *Mass in C* will conclude this year's music-making.

All members of your Committee, so ably chaired by Jane Howard, work incredibly hard behind the scenes in all sorts of ways and it could be rather invidious to single people out. However, from my perspective, I have been particularly supported over the past year by Christine Pfaff, who remains a stalwart in many areas of our activity.

I am grateful also to Kevin Rogers for his professional support over programming, editing of resources and knowledge of instrumental matters. Penultimately, I thank you ALL, especially the central core of loyal singers, for turning out on a Monday evening in all weathers to pursue the study and mastery of some of the finest choral music: J.S. Bach, Banchieri, Bourgeois, Buxtehude, Byrd et alia, to list only the 'B's'.

And finally, I need to say something important about my future regarding DCS

Colin Howard
13 November 2023

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01-Aug-22

To

31-Jul-23

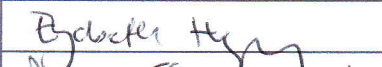

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Subscriptions	11,272	-	-	11,272	-
Concert income	10,625	-	-	10,625	-
Concert donors	159	-	-	159	-
Friends and patrons	410	-	-	410	-
Corporate sponsors	-	-	-	-	-
Gift aid	6,737	-	-	6,737	-
Miscellaneous	10	-	-	10	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	29,213	-	-	29,213	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	29,213	-	-	29,213	-
A3 Payments					
Rehearsal costs	8,106	-	-	8,106	-
Insurance and PRS	610	-	-	610	-
Other running costs	2,034	-	-	2,034	-
Concert costs	16,430	-	-	16,430	-
Scores	1,468	-	-	1,468	-
Publicity and printing	1,345	-	-	1,345	-
Other concert costs	1,482	-	-	1,482	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	31,475	-	-	31,475	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	31,475	-	-	31,475	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 2,262	-	-	- 2,262	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	-	-	-	-	-
Cash funds this year end	- 2,262	-	-	- 2,262	-

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Floats	160	-	-
	Petty cash	20	-	-
			-	-
	Total cash funds	180	-	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))				
B2 Other monetary assets	Cash at bank	24,889	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Elizabeth Humphrey	13.11.23
	Jane Howard	13.11.23



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Report to the trustees/ members of	Dorchester Choral Society		
On accounts for the year ended	31 July 2023	Charity no (if any)	285911
Set out on pages	3		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/07/2023.

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.*

Signed:

S. Priddy

Date:

25/9/23

Name: Stephen Rex Priddy

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

Fellow Chartered Certified Accountants (FCCA)

Address:

Jestys

Spetisbury, Blandford Forum, Dorset

DT11 9DF

Dorchester Choral Society Financial Statements for 12 months to 31 July 2023: Independent Examiner Notes & Queries

1. Variances

- 1.1 Subscriptions down 7% year on year. Has there been a significant number of departures? If so, why?
- 1.2 Donors are down by nearly 90% year on year. Was 2021/2 exceptional with £1,500 of donations?
- 1.3 There are no sponsors in the current year, as compared to £1,000 for the previous year. Does DCS have an active policy to search for sponsors?
- 1.4 Rehearsal costs are up 16% year on year. How much of this increase is due to inflation, and how much due to the requirements of the specific concert programme?
- 1.5 What does "Office Running Costs" comprise?
- 1.6 As for 1.4 above with regard to Concert Costs
- 1.7 In general Expenditure has increased year on year by 30%, while Income has remained static. How much of this is attributable to cost of living increases, how much to specific factors?

2. Governance

- 2.1 To what extent and how are concert programmes selected? Is a budget agreed at the outset?
- 2.2 How often does the governing body of DCS meet and are its transactions minuted?

3. Sustainability

- 3.1 Without the one off benefit of several years of Gift Aid refunds of £6,737, DCS would be reporting a deficit of £9,009 for the 12 months to 31 July 2023. This is significantly worse than the previous year's deficit of £1,729. What steps does the governing body intend to take to stem future deficits? I understand that annual subscriptions have already been increased, so there seems little leeway in that direction.
- 3.2 If not already in place, I would recommend budget setting by concert to be integrated into the planning and decision making for a year ahead musical programme

4. Record Keeping

- 4.1 I have examined bank statements, vouchers and working papers for the financial statements and am satisfied they are complete and well ordered and leave a clear audit trail. Congratulations are due to the Treasurer of the Choral Society.

Stephen Priddy FCCA

Independent Examiner

25 September 2023