

Wetherby Choral Society AGM 13 October 2025

Chairman's Report

As I come to the end of my term as Chairman of Wetherby Choral Society, I've been reflecting on what a remarkable period this has been – and what a privilege it has been to help steer this wonderful choir.

In June 2022, I was reporting on our journey through Covid, and our anxiety for the future. How to begin rehearsals as safely as possible? How to manage concerts when an outbreak could result in last minute cancellations? And how would our finances cope with fixed costs and unknown subscription numbers and ticket sales? But our resilience shone through and we managed to perform every concert to the delight of our audiences.

In October 2023, the Committee undertook a comprehensive update of paperwork, chiefly the Constitution and also the Members Handbook, largely due to Malcolm's dogged determination. In addition, four years of claims for Gift Aid were submitted to HMRC by Kathy, a huge undertaking which considerably helped our finances.

In October 24, I reported on our successful collaboration with the RNLI in the joint celebration of the Choir's 50th anniversary together with the 200th anniversary of the RNLI and their 'Sing to save lives' campaign. A fabulous souvenir programme was created as a memory of this remarkable concert. Following on from this success, I was honoured to be asked by the music charity *Making Music* to write a blog for their website, plus an article for their magazine, in celebration of our work with another charity – a great way to promote our choir to a wider audience!

And finally, this last season has been nothing short of spectacular. We've travelled through some of the greatest works in the choral repertoire: Handel's Saul, Handel's Messiah, Dvořák's Stabat Mater, and, to bring it all to a mighty close, Mendelssohn's Elijah.

Our annual Messiah was, as ever, a highlight – a true Wetherby tradition. Once again it sold out, and once again the local community told us that, for them, Christmas doesn't really begin until they've sat in our audience and heard those opening notes. Long may that tradition continue!

But the crowning moment of the year - indeed of many years - was Elijah at Ripon Cathedral, performed jointly with our friends at Ripon Choral Society. 'Epic' was how many of our members described it, and I couldn't agree more. 250 singers, a large orchestra, and that stunning cathedral setting – it was music-making on the grandest scale. It was also an emotional evening, marking the retirement of our Music Director, John Dunford, after an extraordinary 32 years of leadership. It's hard to overstate what John has meant to this choir. He has shaped our sound, challenged us, inspired us, and guided us through countless masterpieces. We gave him the send-off he deserved. Not only that unforgettable performance of Elijah, but also a wonderful farewell dinner at Wetherby Golf Club where he was presented with thoughtful gifts, including a delightful oil painting capturing him mid-rehearsal – a fitting tribute to a man who has devoted so much to live music-making in Wetherby.

One of the things that always strikes me is how Wetherby Choral Society consistently punches above its weight. Many choirs of our size content themselves with more modest programmes. Not us. We field orchestras and soloists, tackle the big works, and put on four concerts a year. That's no small feat, and it's something for which we should all be hugely proud. Your efforts in fundraising have always been magnificent, and not only has this

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provided much needed extra cash to fund our concerts, but it has brought us together as friends.

Sadly, our member Julia Cockram, and a former member Arthur Faulkner, passed away this year. They are much missed and their families are in our thoughts.

So, in my final year as Chairman I want to give a heartfelt thank you to each member of our Committee. It's been a joy working with you – though I suspect you've kept me on the straight and narrow more times than I realise. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge how marvellous Malcolm has been in keeping everyone informed and on task, and also to praise Kathy Hart for her meticulous handling of our accounts. I'm also grateful to Chris for coordinating fundraising, Christopher for handling membership, Kate for her multi-talents coordinating with St James Church, organising refreshments, and writing newsletters for the Friends group, Kathy Brownridge for organising soloist hospitality, Sarah for promoting publicity, and Liane for being that oh so useful extra pair of hands. And my thanks of course, to every single member of the choir. Your commitment, energy, and enthusiasm are what make this Society so special. Without these we could not have jointly undertaken successfully such a rigorous and inclusive process in appointing our new Music Director, Charlie Murray. I feel confident that Charlie will do an outstanding job for us. His coaching skills, his competence and temperament have already impressed choir members during rehearsals. Also, our delightful accompanist, William, has captivated members over the last year, and his shared friendship with Charlie means we are blessed with a wonderful musical team!

Naturally, there are many people outside of the Committee who I would like to thank on your behalf. Until I was on the Committee I had absolutely no idea how many things needed doing to run a choir well! Many thanks to Gill Midgley (ticket sales), Tony Gooch (rehearsal seating and staging), Pam Leaf (archivist), Enid Doyle (banners/posters around Wetherby), Julie & David Spoors (organising music hire), Hilary Marsden (concert programmes), Fiona Hogan (publicising concerts in parish/church magazines), Charlotte Meek (Soloists wine) and Lois Page (Facebook)), and Chris Bishop (whose many roles include assisting with our website, tickets, flyers and programme printing and the thankless task of being our concert manager!). Thanks too to our helpers with fundraising - Greg Warren (100 Club), Pam Leaf (making CDs for use as rehearsal aids), Bren Walter (raffle) and special events coordinators including Hilary & Stephen Clarke, Graham Reed, Jackie Faulkner, Anne Sweet, Jean Basson and Lynne Shaw. And finally I'd like to give special thanks to my husband Wayne who is my rock and my sounding board. Frequently ousted from his own home for committee meetings, always willing to do jobs for the choir, and always supportive of all our concerts. You are a star!

It has been an honour and, genuinely, a real pleasure to serve as your Chairman. I'm stepping down with a full heart, grateful for the music we've made together and excited to see where the next chapter takes us. I'm sure Chris Outram will do a fantastic job, and that you will all give her your full support.

Wetherby Choral Society is in safe hands, and with the same spirit, ambition, and sense of fun, I know the future will be every bit as bright – and every bit as joyful – as the past.

Thank you,

Heather

Wetherby Choral Society Approved Accounts - 1st August 2024 to 31st July 2025

Income	2024/2025	2023/2024	2022/2023	2021/2022
	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions	20,115	19,575	15,311	14,468
Tickets and sales	10,549	15,282	11,927	6,637
Donations	120	1065	917	183
Gift Aid	4,160	3,803	9,210	0
Fund Raising	7,149	6,145	7,069	2,606
Sundries	0	0	0	255
Gratuity collection	780	0	1261	
Social	2,205	1885	0	0
Sponsors	750	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total Income	45,828	48,755	46,695	25,149

Expenditure				
Concerts	22,090	27,974	19,303	16,942
Accompanist fees	3,960	3,960	4,100	3,300
Musical Director fees	7,155	6,710	6,370	5,725
Room and Music hire	3,118	2,744	2,419	1,623
Sundries	0	0	38	0
Gratuity payment	780	0	1261	
Social	2,334	1885	0	0
Insurance	700	675	634	622
Administration	1,125	962	519	598
Performing Rights	0	386	372	0
Fund Raising Costs	282	629	189	50
Total Expenditure	41,544	45,925	35,205	28,860
(Deficit)/Surplus	4,284	2,830	11,490	-3,711
Deduct prepaid concert costs		285		
Cashflow 23/24		2,545		

Statement of Assets as at 31st July	2025	2024	2023	2022
		£	£	£
Cash in Hand	0	0	0	0
Nat West Bank Account	15,198	15,913	13,369	11,097
Less unrepresented cheques/ uncleared income	0	0	0	-1,218
Nat West Account Total	15,198	15,913	13,369	9,879
COIF Deposit	19,382	18,497	10,137	10,130
Interest	1,098	885	360	7
Transfer from Nat West Acc	5,000		8000	
CCLA Funds Total	25,480	19,382	18,497	10,137
Total Assets	40,678	35,295	31,866	20,016

Notes relating to current year

1. Four concerts were held during the period, one a joint concert at Ripon Cathedral
2. The Society had no liabilities as at 31/07/25
3. The Charity's policy is to have 6 months cash reserves

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Wetherby Choral Society

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Wetherby Choral Society (the Society) for the 12 months ended 31 July 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Society 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 Society'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.

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; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

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: Neil Canwell

Relevant professional qualification or membership of professional bodies: ACMA

Address: 15 Gledhow Wood Avenue, Leeds. LS8 1NY

Date: 24 September 2025