

Note that these minutes are “Draft” until approved at the AGM in July 2020

**HARROGATE CHORAL SOCIETY (1164776) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2019 IN CHRIST CHURCH PARISH CENTRE, HARROGATE**

PRESENT: Paul Jackson and Amy Wall (Co - Chairs), Gill Walsh (Treasurer), Ruth Pridmore (Secretary), Andrew Padmore (Music Director), Marilynne Davies (Deputy Music Director) & 74 members

APOLOGIES: were received from Elizabeth Danskin, Jennifer Goodwin, Carolyn Johnston, Val Saunders, Celia Selway, Jenny Travena, Fiona Young, Carol Bracher, Anne Brownlie, Christine Collier, Jill Harris, Dawn Hey, Jennifer Kimpton, Tessa Mobbs, Judy Walters, Julia Watts, Elizabeth Wearing, Ken Anson, Simon Berger, Philip Heyes, Bruce Jagger, John Littlewood, Mark Denyer, Philip Goodwin, Simon Hawkesworth, and Andrew Sloane

MINUTES of the Annual General Meeting held on 5 September 2018 had been distributed in hard copy with the agenda. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by David Hutton, seconded by David Cork and approved unanimously. There were no matters arising.

MUSIC DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Andrew’s report reads:

“This has been another musically successful, but busy year for the Society. The varied programme of 8 concerts (including the one in Lincoln), with Brian Kay conducting the Mozart Concert, the Parry Celebration Concert, 2 Messiahs, Creation – sung without scores and the Rutter/Faure concert in Ripon, was embraced with a sense of purpose, enthusiasm and executed with confidence and a high level of artistry. I think the Choral Society gave some exceptional performances with a real sense of commitment, rising to the challenge of each concert. The Messiah and the last 2 performances (in The Royal Hall & Ripon Cathedral) have been the best performances that I have heard this choir give, and have taken it to a new higher artistic level.

The absolutely fantastic trip to Lincoln ticked ALL the boxes – meticulous organization from Anne and Chris, a superb meal and the opportunity for members to get to know one another. These are the MUST boxes for a successful trip and a most important aspect to develop the esprit de corps that transmits to better singing and ensemble within the choir. But the cherry on the top of the cake that day was the splendid concert - really exciting, vibrant and committed singing at a very high artistic level in a most sympathetic and complementary acoustic.

Success breeds success, and we have a firm footing from this last season to project us into an exceptionally fulfilling season in 2019 – 2020.

I would however like to reiterate what I said last year regarding repertoire.

When the music is planned, there are so many considerations to take into account, a few being:

1. Suggestions of works from choir members (which are seriously considered). Not all are suitable for a choir of this size and type, but all are thoughtfully considered within the 3- 5 year period of variety and balance, particularly in terms of musical period and genre.
2. Costs and finance available for orchestra and artistes as well as music hire.
3. Venue costs availability and appropriateness for the chosen works
4. Audience appeal and commerciality, including what the audience expect from a choral society as opposed to other structures of choir.
5. Challenge for the choir

The balance between all these considerations is not easy to achieve, and we will not always get it perfect. However, you can be assured that as a committee we work to provide something for all of our members to enjoy and something to challenge each one of us. It is all a matter of balance, and we try to take into consideration the tastes and abilities of our various members, as well as our audiences. We know it is not possible to please every member all of the time, but hope that we can get a balance which caters for the tastes of those wishing to belong to a choir of this type and size.

We are still in a critical situation regarding the lack of new recruits in the tenor section, and generally we need to attract more male voices (of either inclination)! There has been a significant number of excellent new recruits, but mainly in the female departments! We cannot be complacent about this, and we all have a part to play in spreading the word about this very fine team to which we belong and others could join.

I wish to pay tribute to Marilynne for her constant support and wise council: Marilynne does more than anyone will ever know in the background for the good of this choir. There have been members concerned about coping with challenging repertoire, or the stress of reassessments or even initial auditions, and Marilynne gives freely of her time and expertise to assist and encourage them. She has a passion for choir outreach and always enthusiastically organizes and conducts the Family Christmas Concert. She always has the best interests of this choir at heart. Marilynne is also an enormous help to me in taking rehearsals – I know that when she takes

the rehearsal, the work in hand will be covered thoroughly. That was particularly necessary this year when the 'work in hand' would not work in MY hand!! So a very big THANK YOU to Marilynne!

Also, as a society we are enormously lucky to have the amazing keyboard skills of Tom – his confident support throughout every minute of the rehearsals had built a greater sense of confidence within the choir, and has played a very significant part in the success of our performances. We have also been able to witness his colorful and imaginative organ playing in Lincoln and Ripon as well as his 'fortepiano' playing for Creation. We are extremely fortunate to have such a highly talented and highly regarded musician as part of our team! Very few choral societies can boast that their accompanist is a Cathedral Organist – and one of the finest! So a very big THANK YOU to Tom!

I have always maintained that for any choral society, the most important figure is the accompanist – they determine the speed of learning and the accuracy of the choir in subtle ways that we are often not aware of. I would also like to thank our assistant accompanist – Christine Alp who has played when Tom has been unavailable, and who also has great keyboard skills and can sight-read ANYTHING.

A society like this only works as a team effort – it is the pulling together of all the strands, and if we are all pulling in the same direction, great things happen! Thank you to the Committee chaired by Paul and Amy for all the time and effort they put in to make the affairs of the Society run smoothly. The Chairmanship of a choir such as this is no small task, and both Paul and Amy have given unstintingly to develop the structure and plan for the long-term future of an organization in a world that is changing at an alarming rate.

Thank you to all those in the society who are regular, loyal members supporting our aims to produce high quality musical performance, and to those who give in so many other ways to support our aims (whether on committees, fund raising, publicity, concert management, or just persuading people to buy tickets to our concerts). Thank you all for your friendship and thoughtfulness – comments, cards, letters, emails etc during the year mean a great deal, and I greatly value your support.

My wish is for a happy and fulfilling year ahead, with programmes of great English, Italian and Anglo-German composers and a rather different programme next summer including much variety in our collaboration with other Harrogate-based musical bodies.”

There were no questions.

DEPUTY MUSIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Marilynne's report reads:

“Chairmen, Andrew, Fellow singers.

Some years seem to roll by with increasing speed and others when dominated by uncertainty not quite so fast! However in HCS we look back on a Season of challenge, of contrast and of community.

Our Autumn programme included a concert of the music of Parry and the Magic of Mozart Concert which was conducted by our President who has, in his inimitable way, the knack of conveying to choirs his unease with a passage with consummate and winning charm.

HCS Messiah is a fixture in the diary of so many people so this year we did it twice once in Leeds at St Aidens where we were made so welcome, and once in Harrogate. The same work but very different performances in two very different venues. It was a challenge doing two consecutive performances but we are very adaptable

Probably the biggest and the most controversial concert was the performance from memory of Haydn Creation in March. Never have we been more dependent on our Conductor, never have we watched him so carefully never have we watched his hand swell with every beat. The result for the audience was a very special performance and one which reached out to them very powerfully and serves to reinforce the idea that we need to look up when we sing and thus communicate with the audience more effectively.

Our June concert took us to Ripon Cathedral where we have not been for a while and it felt good to be back. It was a concert which I think we all enjoyed thoroughly and some of you felt moved to move Maybe that was because we had recently been together in Lincoln and sung some of the same repertoire to a very appreciative audience.

It is always good to go out together in a bus! Thanks to Ann and Chris Shovelton our Lincoln trip was a great success due to their meticulous preparation even providing activities for the very youngest people in the group. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

THE Christmas Concert was, as ever, a very happy occasion with 350 excited school children all really waiting for the arrival of the special guest Mr. S Claus! As always I am greatly indebted to those member of HCS who support this concert regularly, sing with joy and amaze me with their imaginative and outrageous head gear. Thank you.

Beati have given three Concerts this year beginning in January on a freezing cold evening at St Roberts Church in Pannal where in spite of the weather we managed to raise £800 for this Church which makes us so welcome each year and which generously charges us very little for all our other concerts for charity. We have ventured to the North East to join the Ryton Male Voice Choir who were celebrating the long service to the Choir of one of their members Howard Taylor – Fiona Young's Grandfather. This weekend we go to Osmotherley to St Peters Church to give a concert for Macmillan Cancer Research. Quite a daunting prospect as we follow some very prestigious choirs e.g. The Chapter House Choir. We have appointed Jack Littlewood as our resident percussionist and we have found a double bass player who is happy to play with us. So our jazzy numbers will be greatly enhanced in future. I am very grateful to Jean Clay who has been our rehearsal accompanist and to Beryl Pankhurst and Christine Alp who accompany our Concerts. We depend enormously on these three ladies who kindly give of their expertise to us. Thank you. Beati are always grateful for the support that you, the members, of HCS give us by your attendance at our concerts. Thank you.

Every year I never ceased to be amazed by our Music Director – Andrew – who ensures that we are always well prepared for a concert through his own meticulous planning and his attention to detail. This year we saw from him his dedication exemplified as he conducted Creation with an injured hand. A real manifestation of the "show must go on" Thank you SO much Andrew.

This is our first season with Tom as our accompanist. I am quite convinced he has at least three hands for his command of the vocal score and the rhythmic energy in his playing is amazing. Thank you Tom

Many members invest a considerable amount of time and energy in HCS. I think particularly of our Officers , Amy Paul, Gill and Ruth and to all those who volunteer willingly to run the library, the cake stall, be voice reps etc. Thank you to you all.

I have often said that I am not convinced we are necessarily a very friendly and welcoming society. This season I feel that things have changed and are continuing to change as new members join us and we care about each other more. Long may this continue.

We move into the 2019/2020 Season with some challenges:

- Increased competition from other local choirs some of whom now have waiting lists, are performing with orchestra repertoire the same if not similar to us
- Increasing numbers of smaller singing groups.
- The need for more Tenors to join our elite group.

But there are opportunities too as some choirs cease to exist and new people move into the area.

We are all ambassadors of the Society and we must not be shy about the fact that we promote fine choral singing and perform with professional orchestras and soloists in interesting and prestigious venues.

Thank you all for your continued support of me personally. I value it greatly and I look forward to the 2019/20 season together."

There were no questions.

CO - CHAIRS

Paul and Amy's report (read on the day by Paul) reads:

"I would like to open with one word.....ENJOYMENT.... If there is a word which sums up what it is that Amy and myself aspire to, on behalf of all of us, in what has been an entertaining and often interesting (!) first year in our joint chairmanship, then it's ENJOYMENT. Not just enjoyment of the music, but enjoyment of the choir, of being part of a group sharing a passion for choral music, of enjoying each other's company and friendship. Of enjoying singing together.

We have tried to approach this past year in that spirit. Not to take ourselves too seriously (if indeed such might be possible!), to be friendly, to keep things light, and to be open in communication with the choir. If nothing else we would like to think that we have gone some way towards achieving this. We think it has been an enjoyable year, a very good year. The overall feeling from our discussions with choir members is that they have enjoyed this year.

There will always be exceptions and we know there are those in the choir who are less happy. This we choose to view in a positive light, as an indication of interest in and commitment to the choir and its future. If there is one thing that we have learned it is that there exist as many opinions within the choir as there are members, and that we are never going to be able to satisfy everyone all the time.

There are as ever ongoing informal discussions with choir members and with Voice Reps, on all manner of issues, not least general artistic ambition and the future general direction of the choir. Let no one think that we are not listening. We are. Equally let no one assume that we will automatically undertake to do what they wish us to do. We can't.

Artistic Ambition

Over the last year as we settled into our first term as Co-chairs we felt it wise to concentrate on business and structural issues. How the choir is managed. Sponsorship, fundraising, succession planning. Personnel. Publicity. Recruitment. And other matters. The coming 12 months will certainly see us continuing to move further forward with regard to all these matters, but we intend to focus far more on artistic ambition. In what direction should we progress? Where do we see ourselves in five or ten years time? We are very open minded on this issue.

Not just as to the music we perform, but with whom, in front of whom, where, and when. The future direction of HCS is yet to be determined. We are very open to experimentation. We respect tradition but that does not mean doing something just because HCS has always done it.

Over the summer break we will be building upon the already ongoing general discussion with individual members, with groups of members, with the Voice Reps, with Andrew and with Marilynne. By the start of the 2019/2020 season we hope to have at least a blueprint of where, in terms of our artistic aspirations, we think might like to be in five years time, ten years time. Nothing will be out-with the bounds of discussion. Furthermore nobody should feel excluded from the discussion.

Before I leave the issue of artistic ambition, I want to pay tribute to Andrew. Andrew works phenomenally hard in bringing us to performance level, and in leading us in concert. The response to our performances from the public, and from within the choir, is overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. A number of senior members voice the opinion that Andrew is quite simply the best music director that HCS has ever had. We're sure that such is the case. He has brought this choir over a period of fifteen years to a level that it has not previously achieved. Our sincere thanks go to him for leading us through yet another successful season. Thank you Andrew.

A few words about management

Over the last year we have increased recruitment efforts, reinvigorated our publicity machine in the the very successful appointment of Kathy Carr as Press Officer, we have secured vital sponsorship, begun work, together with Friends Sec. Carolyn Johnston, on the expansion of the Friends Group, changed the shape of the management structure, begun to address succession issues, started work on the Italian adventure. And much more. All in addition to the general running of HCS

It's only when one becomes part of the management and the support structure of an organisation that one begins to realise how much hard work (and time!) goes into the running of that organisation. Andrew's image of a swan gliding apparently effortlessly across the water whilst below the surface in fact it's paddling furiously is one that is equally apt when describing the management of the choir.

The Committee works very hard to support the ongoing success of the choir. We would however like to single out two people.

Marilynne has been a tower of strength. She has been very supportive of the two of us, and her experience and wise counsel have been invaluable. She has incredible stamina. I checked my emails at 7.00 am on the morning of the Ripon concert to find that she had left Aberdeen station 30 minutes beforehand. She flew overnight I seem seem to recall from Ireland on another occasion to be with us. Such dedication. We are very fortunate to have her. That has been said often. It remains more than ever true. Thank you Marilynne.

Ruth has as always been indefatigable. I wanted to pay particular tribute to Ruth for reasons that will become apparent in a moment or two. Ruth has carried the day to day administration of HCS, that is to say the organisational side, for some years. She is nominally the Secretary but in reality her role has spread far wider. Her contribution in this regard has been remarkable. All roads have lead to Ruth. In reality this is because she has taken on the work when there was nobody else prepared or able to do so. This year has been no exception. Thank you Ruth.

Changes made

Amy and I have changed the way the Trust is managed. HCS is run by The Committee, being the Trustees t/w Andrew. We felt it was more efficient to separate the day to day admin work from the professional musical input. The full Committee now meets only three times yearly, whereas the so-called Executive and Artistic Groups, four people in each, with Amy and I having a foot in both camps, meet much more frequently, every month or so. This makes us more flexible..... meetings are easier to arrange, shorter, more enjoyable and thus more productive.

The Trustees themselves have changed in identity this year. One Trusteeship, that of Peter Wilmott was terminated by us, and two new Trustees, Kate Rogata and Dee Walsh have been appointed. The pattern of appointment has changed. We are now identifying the need for certain roles to be undertaken and then approaching members who we think would be good at and importantly would enjoy those roles. So Kate Fundraising and the Italian trip, Dee ... Recruitment. We think this is a better approach, rather than a general invitation to come and join us. This brings me on to two important issues.

Succession. Forward planning.

I was very conscious of the fact that when I joined the Committee, and after Peter Thompson had been elevated to Vice-President only one Trustee had any real experience of the great majority of the admin work. That left us, and still leaves us, very vulnerable to accusations that we were not safeguarding the interests of the Trust. So, we amended the Risk Policy to include the requirement for planned succession. The Trustees have agreed in principle (this will go before the EGM early in 2020 when Gill deals with budget issues) that henceforth the Officers, that's Chair, Treasurer and Secretary will serve a maximum of three terms, that's nine years in total.

This should we hope combine, permanently, both experience and new, fresh ideas. It will be more dynamic. The first Officer to step down, at the end of her current three year term, in the summer of 2021, will be Ruth, who will relinquish her role as a Secretary. Many of the functions she performs will be redistributed. A new Secretary will be appointed. A much more manageable role.

Recruitment

I mention this critical subject probably too often (as it's my responsibility) but the statistics demonstrate that we have retained as auditioned new singers since the inception of the new website in Dec 2017 a total of 18 new members. That is the same number as had previously taken 3 years to recruit. That's excellent. We have doubled our intake rate. It's not just the new website, it's also the way in which we have all, Voice Reps, Anna our new members' mentor, Ruth, Dee, everyone in fact, we have focussed on looking after new members. We are so much better at it then we used to be. Thank you all for your response and your efforts.

The disappointments are threefold. Firstly of those 18, only 3 are men. I updated you all on this in my recent Membership Matters email. The rate of recruitment of male singers since the new website was set up has not increased. At all. It's exactly the same, two new recruits every year. That has to improve. Now that Dee is with me to help with recruitment we will increase our efforts. It remains a priority.

Secondly, and it's not for lack of trying, we are retaining less than half the number of people who express interest, via the website, in joining us. There have been about 45 or so enquiries since 2017. We try to find out why people don't stay. There is no clear pattern.

Thirdly we don't seem able to retain any of the very youngest people who express interest and come along. That issue requires serious thought and consideration. We have however attracted some very good, and very loyal, new singers.

Finally, there are four people I would like to mention. The first two are Ann and Chris Shovelton, who are planning a trial separation.....no, not from each other, but from us(!) They are going to spend a period of a year away from choir, and as much as possible of that time abroad, in warmer climes, the better for Chris's health. We wish them well but we aren't saying goodbye. They have been a cornerstone of our choir. We hope very much indeed that they will be back.

I said four people....the other two are our 'other other halves', Andy and Sally, who have been very understanding of Amy and myself constantly texting, emailing, WhatsApping, phoning, meeting for coffee, meeting for a discussion over ice-creams with young Tom, meeting for a discussion whilst taking Tom to the swings in the Valley Gardens. Thank you Andy, thank you Sally! They also serve who put up with us!

So, we're looking forward to our second year. We would like to think we have made a reasonable start, but it is only a start. There is much still to be done. Thank you all. !!!!"

There were no questions

TREASURER'S REPORT

Gill had distributed summaries of finances for the year 2018-19 but noted that several figures relating to the most recent concert were estimates as the bills had not yet arrived. However the figures for the earlier concerts are more or less accurate. Our bank 'balance' at the start of new season 2019/20 is estimated to be approximately £25,000.

Our reserves continue to be held partly in an easy access account and partly in a short term fixed rate account. The 'short term' ends in early 2020. Due to the cashflow for the Parry concert we drew down £10,000 from Cambridge and Counties into the current account, Gill hopes to be able to return some of this money in the near future.

This year we are sponsoring Halcyon singers to attend a choral course. Ed, Fran and Niamh all applied and have been accepted on the Rodolfus Foundation course at Queen's College, Oxford in August (1 week). The end of year balance on the Halcyon account is £4709.89 after paying for this will be. Gill noted that she has not included this in the summary page.

HCS was pleased to have renewed sponsorship from the Bramall Foundation for 2019 and the next 4 seasons.

We were also kindly given a donation of £1000 from the Latter family. This has not yet been allocated although a concert equipment purchase is under consideration. Also under sponsorship Gill noted that for the Mozart concert we have included £5000 bequest made last season and not needed for the Opera Gala concert balance. We wanted it to be used for a particular performance and this was thought to be a suitable alternative.

The Parry concert was run the same way financially as the Christmas concert – ie both organisations shared the various tasks and associated finances. The final profit or loss was then balanced equally. In this case the outcome was a deficit of £2367 each.

The Harrogate Christmas Concert 2018 itself shows a shared loss this season, partly due to a slightly smaller audience than hoped for and partly due to other increases in costs. It has been agreed by both HSO and HCS that the adult admission charge will rise by £1 for 2019.

In respect of various items - for the 'Lincoln day out' participants were asked to pay for transport, castle tour and lunch. The final balance cost to HCS was just under £500, this had been agreed by the Committee; under 'HCS non-concert' a charity donation of £1054 is for Royal Hall new curtains which was agreed a number of years ago – the actual curtains took a while to be completed and installed!

Gill added that we usually aim to break even with Choral music income and expenditure, but again this season – mainly Parry – we have tried to retain a fair outlay for members so have a deficit in this section. Thanks to our Librarian team for the hard work sourcing the works this season.

For the 2019-2020 season subs will rise slightly to £160 for a member and £290 for joint members, this was the first increase since the 2015-16 season. She closed by asking all members to continue to support our internal fundraising activities, including Easyfundraising and Gift Aid, as the total contribution from all these is significant.

There were no questions

APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINEERS

Scrutineers were not needed for the election of the Executive Officers or Committee members.

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES FOR 2019/2020

There being no further nominations Peter Stretton proposed that the nominations for the Trustees be accepted. This was seconded by Judith Greenwood and accepted unanimously.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

We have been paying the Barker Partnership in Ripon for the past two years to support Gill Walsh and also to be our independent examiner. Peter Thompson proposed that we continue to use them for the 2018-19 season, this was seconded by Daniel Hutton and approved by all.

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

To remove the following section as it is no longer relevant

12. CHARITY TRUSTEES

(4) First charity trustees

The first charity trustees of HCS are –

Bruce Noble
Gillian Walsh
Ruth Pridmore
Amy Wall
Nick Brown
Charles Nightingale
Simon Hawkesworth
Peter Wilmott
Judith Hamilton

This amendment was proposed by Ruth Pridmore, seconded by Sheila Boyle and approved by all.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

David Hutton thanked all Committee members for their hard work.

At 9.40 pm Paul thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting

**EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
CONVENED AT 9 20 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY ????**