

Thame Choral Society Annual General Meeting

held on Wednesday 26th September 2018

1. Apologies were received from Ruth Chelmick, John Brown, Bella Henman and Joe Hodge.
2. Minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and read. The minutes were agreed to be a true account of the last meeting.
Acceptance of minutes proposed by Mark Bond, seconded by Neil Shepherd-Smith
3. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's report

The accounts were circulated and Michael Heybrook made a few points.

There was a surplus of £1238 and the bank balance is currently £6,734.

The Christmas concert made a profit.

The May concert made a loss.

The Summer concert held with the Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir at Haddenham was a fund raiser for Christian Aid.

Michael proposed a rise in subs to £105 if paid by the end of October. If not paid until after the 1st November this will increase to £110. This is a rise of £5 for the year.

He said that the subs should cover the cost of Helen and Rowena's fees plus the hire of the Methodist Church.

David Frances pointed out that Michael had paid for Helen's fee and this wasn't intended so we are due a refund. The invoice had been sent to the wrong person.

Judith queried that the Elijah workshop had only made a profit of £60. It had been intended as a fund raiser as well as to recruit extra singers. The figures are correct.

Neil requested a breakdown on costs eg. orchestra costs, church hire etc. Michael said he would look into this for the future.

Mark said that anyone with a building society account would automatically make them a tax payer. However care must be taken regarding how much money would be involved in case the amount of tax paid does not cover the amount that would be taken by HMRC as Gift Aid.

Sponsorship was discussed in order to raise more funds. Some businesses make charitable donations and local companies could be approached for this purpose with free tickets being offered as at least one perk.

Sonja said that Thamenews.net would be happy to be sponsor. Helen asked if the Mayor ever attends events. It was agreed that he/she should be invited to all concerts.

Ideas for sponsorship were requested from the choir.

Judith thanked Michael for his hard work.

Acceptance of accounts proposed by Mark Bond, seconded by Vicki Edwards.

4. Conductor's Report

Helen's report was as follows:

"Well what a year we've had. I think you should all be pretty proud of yourselves, we've worked really hard and made some amazing music together.

We start each season with a Come and Sing and this September was the same. Please, please encourage somebody to come and have a sing. Generally in the past I have been saying especially if they are a man, however I am delighted to be removing any gender bias. I could even do with more sopranos!! It is such a joy to be increasing our numbers and we are delighted to welcome new people and people back each year. I hope that we can continue to grow in stature and confidence.

So our Christmas concert this year was based around the Mozart Spaztenmesse and Handel's Coronation Anthems which went down very well. I especially enjoyed the culmination of the concert with the audience joining in for the Halleluia Chorus. This is what it is like in Wales at a funeral or wedding, everybody in the congregation sings out with real vigour, but often here people hold back and don't want to be heard so it was a real joy to hear the audience enjoying being heard. I would love to keep finding opportunities to allow them to start using their voices more. The concert weaved the pieces around the different moods of the pieces and the combination of the choir with the soloists worked really well, especially in the Vaughan Williams. Many of you were apprehensive at the beginning but you pulled it off in the end, phew!

Next we had our workshop and Elijah concert. Wow, what a piece. There were certainly a lot of notes in there and we had our work cut out to get our teeth around some of the texts. It was like a blockbuster movie and a cracking good sing. The testament to the piece was that even though it was extremely long we were all loathe to cut any of it because we all loved singing it, but for our sanity and the audience's derrieres a couple of cuts were necessary. It was wonderful to have a fabulous team of soloists and an amazing orchestra. Thank you so much to David for organising all the players and the music for them. The wonderful thing about performing and working on fantastic music is that musicians generally love to do it. I had been warned that orchestras don't like playing the Mendelssohn because it's got too many notes in it for the string players but the leader Margot, who wonderful to work with, said that she finds it exhilarating and so led the orchestra in that vein. The reason I mention this is because I think it is an extremely large compliment that other musicians are genuinely excited about performing with you and are often prepared to go to great lengths in order to do it justice. I'd like to thank the whole team for organising the staging and refreshments, publicity and all the other myriad of tasks that go into putting on such a big concert. The church was really well attended, although not quite packed to the rafters but the audience loved the concert. We worked jolly hard to pull it off and we should be extremely proud of ourselves. We are ever building a wonderful reputation for ourselves.

Lastly in the summer we had several singers from the Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir to join us for a British Isles concert in St Mary's Haddenham. In previous years we have had glorious summer concerts in gardens and most recently in Michael's wonderful barn which have been amazing and for which we are very grateful. This year was a bit of a departure as it was a full concert and the church was packed. We sang a wonderful variety from around the British Isles and joined the gentlemen for quite a lot of pieces and certainly raise the roof in the church. Thank you very much to David Francis for all his work in organising and coordinating that concert and to our lovely piper Richard Jaspas who so effectively kicked the concert off for us. Thank you ever so much to all who gave so generously of their time and skills and raised a lot of money for the charities. The concert was greatly enjoyed by all and I hope that you enjoyed singing with the gentlemen of Oxford again, they certainly love singing with you. Every single week somebody sends me an article telling me about the benefits of singing and learning

music. It is super, but I do already know the benefits. It certainly keeps my brain active and gives my body a good workout. It is a real privilege and benefit to us all at times to work with other choirs, musicians and organisations and I think it is really important to build on links in our community with artists and musicians and the community as a whole which is something I want to continue to look at.

I would like to thank lots of people who help us throughout the year. To Rowena first. You support us and humour us when we're getting lost and fishing for notes. It's a lot of responsibility to take on and people don't always appreciate why they are singing well, a lot of time it is because they are enabled to. You work extremely hard and the choir as a community greatly appreciate you and love you. Can we please all show Rowena our thanks?

To Joe who works so hard at sourcing all our music and sorting it all out. It's a mammoth task and can be quite time consuming. However, without any music we wouldn't be here so thank you! To David for bringing his keyboard each week when we are having split rehearsals, it really enables us to move quicker and is a big effort on his part, so thank you. To Mark, Claire and Michael who tirelessly work to keep everything going weekly and in the run up to, right through and after the concerts, thank you very much. Lastly to Judith and Liz. Crikey, I don't give you an easy time sometimes I know, but you are amazing at supporting me with all the things that need to be done. They have both constantly been enthusiastic, helpful, diplomatic, the list is absolutely endless and they all do it with such good grace and enthusiasm. I am very, very grateful, thank you. Thank you also to Vicky and Mark who will be taking up the mantle and I very much look forward to this year.

Lastly I would like to thank you the choir (and your families at home, who come and support us). You are an amazing group of people and I know I am genuinely very lucky to be able to work with you each week. I love that you are so giving of your talents and energy and support to each other. This is very precious and hopefully you all realise that.

Bill Coleman a double bass player said the other day that he was once told by a clinical psychologist that he had Paradise Syndrome. He thought that he was always happy and she said that he was deluded. He said that he thought that in this case she was simply not seeing the truth, he had music in his life so he was truly happy and I don't think I can disagree with him.

Thank you for a wonderful past year and I look forward to a jolly good sing this year. “

Neil commented that some people do not want to sing as they say they have come to listen. However, Sonja then said that her friends had said how much they enjoy being able to take part. Judith said that carols at the Christmas concert has always been part of the choir's ethos and it was agreed that not everyone can be satisfied all the time.

Helen said that it would be good to have more links with other groups such as children's choirs, other ensembles etc. Corinne said that she is involved with the Oxfordshire music service and there is a jazz band that could maybe attend an event in the future.

It was agreed that TCS should move into the community more.

Sonja said that Thame's link with Montesson in France is still ongoing and their choir have shown an interest in joining forces with us again. Accommodation would be needed for some of the singers if this took place. This may be looked into.

Acceptance of Helen's report was proposed by David Francis and seconded by Ruth Harman.

Chairman's report

Judith's report was as follows:

"I can't quite actually believe that this is my last report as Chairman of Thame Choral Society. I also can't **quite** believe I woke up in Kefalonia this morning!

However, again we've had a splendid year. We've had some amazing concerts and our membership continues to grow so I feel content I leave the choir in a very good place.

We couldn't achieve this success without some amazing people. I have to thank Helen for her continued determination to make us better. A lesser person would make do but she strives relentlessly to make us better. She is ably assisted by the wonderful piano playing of Rowena, making our rehearsals so very effective.

The committee continue to work hard and selflessly. They've all worked with me for so many years and I am extremely grateful to them. Claire, Mark, David F, David H, Joe and Michael – thank you very much. I couldn't do what I do without Liz. I'm the mouth and she's the quiet back up one. We've become very good friends and she thinks I'll leave the choir now but I'm saying publicly, I'm here to stay. It's not that easy to get of me! Thank you Liz, for everything. I know both of us are very much looking forward to just coming along to sing.

I'd like to thank all of you too, the choir, for coming along every week and singing so well. We have a tradition of scaring Helen in the final weeks of rehearsal then bringing it on for concerts. I think she would prefer it if we didn't do that actually, for what are probably obvious reasons. Thank you for all that you do with refreshment and the raffle, and for helping with concerts and workshops. I need to thank Neil who has recruited so many new members for us. Our bass line is now so huge so please can you find us some tenors?! I'd also like to mention Liz Byrne, Bella Henman and Ruth Chelmick who unfailingly acknowledge me for what I do as chair. It means very much.

The new year ahead looks great. We've some wonderful concerts planned again and I'm so excited for the Mozart in the spring. Being Chair has filled me with pride and despair in equal measures. It's been a long time and I really do think with Vicki and Mark at the helm, we are in for an even better time. We desperately need some youthful energy and a different direction in which to head.

With the team we have in place I'm sure Thame Choral Society will continue to flourish and exceed."

Acceptance of Judith's report was proposed by John Drysdale and seconded by Ruth Harman.

5. Election of officers.

Judith is standing down as Chairman and Liz as secretary.

Vicky Edwards has agreed to stand as Chairman with Mark Bond as Vice Chairman. Other members of the committee are still happy to stand, Michael Heybrook, treasurer, Joe Hodge, librarian, David Francis webmaster, Claire Forrest and David Hayes.

Sonja proposed that Vicky should be chairman and this was seconded by Corinne Watts, Neil proposed Mark as Vice Chairman and Tim Sloane seconded. John Harrad proposed the rest of the committee to be accepted and Kath Daly seconded this.

6. Any Other Business

Neil asked if the choir could have name badges. This is already being organised.

Judith suggested that we have a social evening if someone could organise it.

Carol asked if the choir should have more publicity. There had been a community fair in Haddenham but TCS did not have a presence. Judith said she had no knowledge of the event but we would have done something had we known. She asked that we are kept updated in the future.

Go Local, a Haddenham magazine, doesn't advertise us. Liz said that she has sent them details several times and they have chosen not to put us in.

Jeanette reminded us of the carol singing we had done outside Waitrose in the past. Judith said we had not had any more invitations and Jeannette agreed to contact them to request a slot.

David Hayes suggested that we could, perhaps, invite local singers to be soloists for our concerts to make the costs lower but Helen pointed out we need quality singers and we should pay them appropriately.

Vicky said that she is excited to be taking on the role of Chairman. She would like more involvement from the members with helping run the choir saying that this would give a feeling of ownership. She thinks we are due for a good year's singing. She has been approached to take part in the Thame Lights switch on with a bucket collection on November 30th which she has agreed to.

Vicky thanked Judith and Liz for their effort over many years (at least 12) and they were presented with bouquets.

Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 18th September 2019