



Minutes of the 29th Annual General Meeting 15th May 2011

In Attendance:

Patrick Salisbury (President), David Russell (Chair), Caroline Hobbs Smith (Music Director), Tony Furze (Orchestral Manager), Janet Knowles (Librarian), David McKenzie (Publicity Officer), Tony Gillman, Rosemary Salisbury, Faith Wilson, John Storrs, Pamela Vivian, Steve Fisher.

Apologies for Absence:

Anna Blum, Gillian Holcombe, Christiane Hutchins, Liz Hutchings, Tom Heering, Jill Kelly, Trish Lyth, Uschi May, Janet Mercer, Pat and John Napper, Adrian Rance, Liz Standish, Margaret Notley, Anne Whitehead, Lesley Bishop.

Minutes:

The minutes of the 28th Annual General Meeting held on 9th May, 2010, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising: None

Chairman's Report

DR commented that during the past year he had experienced a steep learning curve and discovered much about the workings of ASS! He thanked members of the committee for the huge amount of work they did that often went well beyond the call of duty and about which he had previously no idea. He also thanked Patrick for his crucially important efforts in running the Friends that fulfil a vital role particularly for the finances of the choir.

Music Director's Report

CHS described an astonishing year with some amazing highs as well as a few problem areas, such as singing in German. There had indeed been some shaky moments. She had found that the choir had a big heart, great determination and enthusiasm and the ability to push through when required. Members are prepared to work very hard. There was a magical chemistry on the day of the November concert that grew during the afternoon rehearsal and into the evening and was truly thrilling. The performance of Vivaldi's 'Credo' was its first performance in the UK. The musicians and soloists carried the concert in spite of the arctic conditions outside. She thought that the Passiontide concert of Handel and Haydn 'would be a breeze' and it was a joy to rehearse but there were a lot of notes to learn and a lot of singing but she had not expected a press critic to be in the audience! The last Friday rehearsal was rickety, perhaps because of the novelty of the church's acoustics and seating arrangements after the warmth and comfort of the Matrix. She said that the choir should be proud of its achievements and she looks forward to the future.

The problem of the concert layout of the orchestra and choir was raised and needs to be addressed. In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- with the present arrangement, the tenors and basses under the arch cannot hear the ladies' voices. The following suggestions were made: the use of polystyrene sound panels, another venue, extending the stage forward by a further pew, seek an expert acoustic opinion.
- CHS felt that the issue of space was more pressing than that of acoustics,

- that the Sunday rehearsal the week before the concert should also be in the church.

Further discussion occurred in AOB below.

DR commented on the choice of music. It was necessary to have a popular concert last March and also for next November in order to consolidate both the number of choir members and the numbers in the audience. PV said that it was important to have the support of a quality orchestra for our concerts and PS added that the standard of the orchestra had been very good for both of this year's concerts.

DR thanked CHS for her inspiration and hard work.

Treasurer's Report

The Chair, as acting Treasurer, tabled the accounts for the year 2010-11 that had been audited by Ron Dell. There was a surplus of £1215.30 and the balance in the Coventry Building Society account was £6588.67.

Three items were significant in producing the surplus, namely two special donations of £500 and a significant increase in Friends' contributions that had doubled to £1105. There have been 2 grants, one of £100 from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council and the other of £150 from the nPower Trust. The charity tax relief refund from HMRC was less this year as there were fewer singers last year; this payment always comes a year in arrears.

DR encouraged members to use the "Easy Funding" website when purchasing from a variety of online stores on the internet as it had produced over £100 for the choir this year. David McKenzie (DMcK) commented on the wonderfully clear layout of the accounts this year.

Following on from the auditor's suggestion, DR will open a bank account, in addition to the Coventry BS a/c, so that cheques can be written.

DR said that ASS was a little treasure for the village. He suggested that we could invite individuals and organisations to sponsor a performer, such as "The nPower Trumpet" in the last concert, for future performances.

Membership fees: There would be no increase in membership fees for the coming year and it was unanimously agreed that the performance fee should be incorporated into the annual membership fee for the sake of simplicity. The flat-rate annual membership fee would, therefore, be £85 and £70 for couples. Students can come for free. We would also be sensitive to individual member's situations in this matter.

Orchestral Manager's Report

Tony Furze (TF) did not feel it was necessary to report this year. He was thanked for his prodigious research for scores, soloists and players.

Publicity Manager's Report

DMK said that he was getting better at using newspapers and websites for publicity. BUT there seems to be no change in the turn-out of the audience in that most of them are friends of choir and villagers. JS suggested we ought to try to get into a mutually beneficial cooperative with other local choirs such as Steventon, Wantage, Abingdon, Didcot and Benson to help each other in planning concerts, advertising each others' programmes, sharing concerts and perhaps a reduced fee if a member sings in 2 choirs etc. DR thought this was a very positive suggestion and would make contact with the Chairs of each of these choirs to find out their thoughts about the idea.

Librarian's Report

JMK said that the cost of music hire this year was £80 for Sept 2010, £65 for Jan 2011 and £40 for Sept 2011. She thanked those who return music to her, erased and in good order. She particularly mentioned Pamela's important contribution after the last concert. It is easier and cheaper if the scores can be hired through the county library system. However she has knowledge of other sources and will accept the challenge, with her

limited IT skills, of getting the best bargain! DR thanked her for the great work she had done.

Future concerts.

Should we do different types of music or continue to please the audience that we have? DR announced that we will be singing Mozart's 'Requiem' in the Advent Concert on Sunday 27th November.

The Passiontide concert would be on March 27th 2012 and will include 'The Oxford Elegy' by Vaughan Williams. A narrator still needs to be found. This work lasts 35 minutes and we may also sing 'The 5 Mystical Songs' which lasts 20 minutes. CHS said that each concert should have about 90 minutes of music, 60 of which should be choral.

In preparation for the autumn concert, CHS suggested that members would enjoy a book- "1791-Mozart's last year." By HC Robbins Landon.

The Summer Serenade date for 2012 has yet to be decided and we need to be aware of other events in the village before deciding on our date.

Nominations for committee.

A treasurer is needed but no nominations were forthcoming. TF offered to help with the figures.

AOB.

(1) D McKenzie proposed a vote of thanks to David Russell, the chairman AND Treasurer, for taking on the job, a hard act to follow after Pamela's tenure.

(2) The lay-out for the concerts - a pew on the right will be removed to the chancel, to give more room for a different plan. CHS wants tiers, for sound and sight reasons.

DR and John Napper will go to the church in advance of the next concert, to look at the layout.

Flat pack modules can be purchased for tiers but would probably be too expensive for ASS. Steve Fisher said that Eynsham Choral Society had recently bought some and he would enquire about the possibility of hiring some if not all of them. The storage of the current platform is also a problem for the church.

Lighting. The lights are not safe. The problem was debated. John Storrs agreed to investigate possible solutions- prices, etc. and report back to the committee.

Pamela thanked DR for taking on the job of chairman.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm and was followed by a buffet.