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Lancaster and District Choral Society

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Dated: 10th May 2010

Venue: Greaves Methodist Church, Scotforth Road, Lancaster

Present: Gordon Arkwright, Richard Beveridge, Bob Bond, Joyce Bond, Lois Compton, Linda Cook, Kath Fanning, Anna Fraser, Ian Fraser, Mary Garner, Roger Heise, Sue Huddart, Marianne Hutchence, Jacky Ireland, Judith Ireland, Daisy Lumsden, Audrey Lyon, Kath Mills, Margaret Perkins, John Perrin, John Robinson, Margaret Robinson, Peter Senior, Marion Smith, Jean Stanyon, Jean Stephenson, Kate Thompson, Graham Titchmarsh, Elaine Trevitt, Stephanie Tulej, Warwick Wilson, Claire Worthington, Lynne Wyre

1 **Apologies:** Barbara Beetham, Denis Beetham, Marjorie Bloomfield, Sue Chippendale, Jan Codd, Julie Edge, Liz Falkingham, Ann Hartle, David Kimberley, Mary Rose Lee, Richard Trevitt

2 **Minutes of the 2009 AGM – matters arising**

There were no matters arising. Roger Heise proposed, seconded by Peter Senior, that the Minutes be accepted. Unanimous

3 **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

4 **Chairman's Report** (John Robinson)

John welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting.

John's Report: This had been a most momentous period in the history of the Choral Society, leaving its rehearsal venue at Skerton after many years for Greaves Methodist Church and moving its main concerts from The Ashton Hall to the Great Hall of Lancaster University, Christmas Concerts remaining at the Ashton Hall for the foreseeable future. It also saw 120 members registered. Unfortunately the tour/visit arrangements with a choir in Germany had been a little frustrating, so there are no details to date. It had been an interesting and rewarding year and was looking forward to an equally good season in 2010/11.

Concerts:

Four excellent concerts had been performed during the year, starting with "Transfiguration" by Dr Reginald Dixon in Lancaster Cathedral on 16 May '09 as part of the *Dr Dixon Centenary Memorial Concert*.

A section of the Choir went to the Royal Albert Hall in July '09 to perform Rutter's *Requiem* conducted by the composer as part of the *Really Big Chorus*.

The *Messiah* in autumn and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* in spring 2010 were impressive, as can be seen from the music critics' reviews on the website. The Christmas Concert was, unfortunately, impacted by the failure of the guest school choir to fulfil their promises.

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The Society participated in the BBC's *Sing Hallelujah* event, which had been straight forward as we were performing the *Messiah* in November. A recording of the piece made at the rehearsal on the 23 November was submitted and a collection taken during the concert on behalf of *Children in Need*. John thanked Roger Heise for his technical expertise in the matter, in his role as the Society's Secretary and also for his work in Germany trying to organise a visit to either Darmstadt or Offenbach, both of which are still under review.

On behalf of the Society, John thanked John Perrin for the outstanding and very hard work he had done on behalf of the Society during this year and looked forward to an excellent programme of work over the next eighteen months.

John also thanked Gordon Arkwright, the Society's Treasurer, whose multifaceted talent had been a benefit to the Society for many years. Not only is Gordon the Treasurer. But he organises the ticket sales for all concerts, co-ordinating this with the various outlets for sales, including members. He also distributes the annual Newsletter and makes a great cup of tea at the rehearsals! He was responsible for setting up the WeGotTickets facility for on-line sales, which proved to a success for the last concert.

Change and Challenge

The change of venue had been forced upon the Society when the Trustees of Skerton Methodist Church decided to close the hall during the summer of 2009. The Society's Committee had to find alternative accommodation before the start of Autumn Term 2009. After reviewing several possible places, Greaves Methodist Church was deemed to be the best available.

The move to the Great Hall at Lancaster University was taken only after much deliberation by the Committee, and after prolonged frustration with the management of the Ashton Hall. This had the propensity to be problematic as the Society had performed at the Ashton Hall since it opened in 1910 and it was thought that our 'followers' wouldn't go to the Great Hall. However it was decided to test this hypothesis and after prolonged discussion between the Committee and the management of the Great Hall, preparations were made to move there for the *Messiah* performance on 28 November 2009.

The management at the Great Hall have proved to an excellent group to deal with. They were interested in our requirements, which was a refreshing change to what we had been used to. It cannot be denied that we may have lost some long-standing audience members, but many new ones were gained, it is assumed, from south of the City and the University. Flyers of our concerts are put in the programmes for LU concerts.

The experience of the Choir in performance and the facilities provided confirmed this was probably the best decision we have made in recent years. Therefore, we look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with the Great Hall management for many years to come.

Equal Opportunities Policy (EOP)

The above moves brought with them issues within the membership, so the EOP Officer, Kate Thompson, organised a survey in order that the Committee could address them. It should be mentioned that one of them, for example, can only be described as a temporary resolution and that is the accessibility to the upper floor (Minor Hall) at the Great Hall. This was resolved at the Spring Concert only because the Nuffield Theatre was not being used on 27 March, but this may not be the case in the future, especially

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in the autumn, and we might have to return to the Minor Hall for use as a changing room.

The Committee is aware of the concerns of members regarding the rehearsal venue and will endeavour to find a resolution – eventually.

Committees' Structure

The **Music Selection Committee** meets once a year to decide the Society's music programme for the following year. This is chaired by the Society's Musical Director, John Perrin, and comprises members who have volunteered. It takes into account suggestions that have been submitted by Society members. If members have any ideas/suggestions for works that the Society might perform please pass them to one of the following: John Perrin, Kath Mills, Kate Thompson, Joyce Bond, Jean Stephenson, Lynne Wyre, Lois Crompton and John Robinson.

The Music Selection Committee proposed to the **Management Committee**, who agreed with this proposal, that in November 2011 we would perform Berlioz's *Grand Messe du Morte*, which means that the pattern of performing Handel's *Messiah* every two years will become every three years.

John thanked the Management Committee corporately for its work. This Committee diligently reviews the progress of the Society and takes decisions that affect every aspect of the Society's work, working amicably with the Musical Director. This includes directing the Society to attain the 'Making Music – Positive About Equality' kite mark and changing the major venue to the Great Hall at Lancaster University. It performs an excellent role and, with the Musical Director, is a source of inspiring direction for the Society. It is no sinecure but it is very rewarding work and John hoped that more members of the Society would consider putting their names forward to join the Management Committee.

Website

The Society had a website developed by B.a.c.l.-Systems in time for the autumn concert in 2008. This has proved to be successful, having had some 89,245 hits since its implementation. It contains documents of interest to new and existing members, including the Constitution, Fire Regulations, General Information, Librarian Form and Management Committee meeting minutes. It also gives information on the roles of Committee members.

Library

John thanked Jean Stephenson (the Librarian) for the great work she carries out each year. The Society has in its Library approximately 6,500 copies of general music and 5,000 copies of Christmas music; recently all photocopies were destroyed for legal reasons. The change of venue has meant that many items have to be brought into the venue each week and during the year Jean has estimated that she has carried 52 stones each week, and so a trolley was provided to carry this out.

New roles and thanks

There had been a redistribution of some roles during the year. John was concerned about single point of failures in any system and many roles had, until now, been in the hands of a couple of members. Sue Chippendale and Margaret Spencer has carried out many roles over the years, and we are grateful for the great contribution these two ladies have made to the Society. Replacements did come forward as follows: Stage Manager – Jim Birkett; Programme compilation and Newsletter

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publishing – Richard Beveridge; Posters – Lynne Wyre; Third-party website updates – Amiee Hibbert; Vice-Chairman – Roger Heise; Membership Secretary – Jacky Ireland and Rehearsal CD Admin – Margaret Robinson. John expressed his gratitude to these individuals for volunteering and for the work that they do for the Choral Society. Currently the roles of Social Secretary and Section Leaders are outstanding.

John thanked Joyce Bond for her initiatives in raising funds for the Society and Linda Cook, who has acted as Minute Secretary for several years, and to both for their work on the Committee.

John thanked Bob Bond and his stewards for their invaluable help – without them our concerts would be impossible to undertake in their present form.

John thanked Mabli Craddock (Social Secretary) and Jean Stanyon (Deputy Social Secretary), both having retired from their roles, for the work they had done over the last three and a half years.

John finally thanked Stephanie Tulej, the Society's 'knight in shining armour' for tilting at windmills in the form of the Lancaster Guardian and her efforts are very much appreciated!

5 Treasurer's Report (Gordon Arkwright)

Copies of the accounts were available at the start of the meeting.

The Social Fund account has a balance of £589.68 in the bank.

The main accounts show a balance of £16,866.12 on 30 April 2010 compared to £14,958.78 at the end of April 2009.

2009/2010 showed more income from membership fees, less from Patrons and a greatly reduced rate of bank interest. Gift Aid amount to £2365.58 was included, but this included the income for 008/09 which was received too late to be included in the '08/'09 accounts. £1,156.40 was spent on music.

The Autumn Concert (*Messiah*) made a profit of £305.23. The Christmas Concert a profit of £973.68 and the Spring Concert (*Carmina Burana*) a loss of £3,274.77.

Gordon thanked everyone for their co-operation and forbearance each week at the rehearsals, especially those in September and just prior to the concerts.

6 Musical Director's Report (John Perrin)

John's Report: 'This has been a season of growth and developments. A record number of new singers joined the Choir giving us an average of 102 singers at concerts. Some singers still think that attendance at final rehearsals is optional rather than essential to the performance.

We have also had the benefit of an excellent hall in which to perform. It has stimulated new audiences as well as providing a larger performing space and good facilities. The *Messiah* thus had a larger choir of 111 and a greatly increased audience. I decided to have a change of tack for the Christmas Concert because I felt it needed a fresh approach. I decided to adopt a new carol book. This gave the choir a chance to sing works by the new generation of emerging composers. I intend to use this extra resource in the future. The highlight of this season was *Carmina Burana*, to which

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the choir gave their all in an exhilarating performance. I would particularly like to mention the men for their excellent rendering of the challenges posed by the male choruses in the tavern scene.

Next season we have what could be the northern premiere of the *Gloria* by Karl Jenkins, the haunting beauty of the *Requiem* by Faure and a *Jazz Mass* by Bob Chilcott. This is to be followed by a Popular Christmas Concert using enduring favourites and a children's performance of a selection from *Oliver*. The final climax will be Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, one of the great choral masterworks. There are also plans for the Berlioz *Requiem* in autumn 2011.

Finally, I would like to thank the Choir for their excellent support and commitment both at rehearsals and performance, for without this nothing would be possible. Our rehearsals would never achieve so much without the expertise and close rapport of Kath Mills, for which I am most grateful. The Committee have also been very supportive to me as well as giving commitment to innovation and the development of the Choral Society. Singing is an important stimulus for a healthy society. It thrills, inspires and refreshes us. Long may its unique power continue.'

7 Equal Opportunities Report (Kate Thompson)

Kate's Report: The Equal Opportunities Policy has now come to the end of its second year. The Committee have continued to address issues at each committee meeting as they arise. There is a dedicated space on the Management Committee agenda for EO items.

The main EO issue during this season has been of access, particularly with regard to the two new venues. This was highlighted by choir members in views expressed in the 60 returned winter questionnaires, views which were greatly appreciated in their candour. These issues informed decisions and actions to attempt to alleviate the difficulties with access.

The Greaves practice venue presented with most of the difficulties, some of which we were able to resolve to different degrees, for instance, difficulties in hearing John or whoever was speaking from the front, were resolved by the provision of a microphone. The problem of crowding in the foyer during the tea break was resolved by choir members being encouraged to move back into the main area. Separate part rehearsals also helped. Some difficulties, such as poor heating and lighting are not within our power to change, but nonetheless, as a result of the views expressed the Committee have, and are still, considering moving to a more suitable practice venue when the opportunity arises.

Opinion on the use of the Great Hall was overwhelmingly positive, but there are still access issues re car parking and having to change and spend the interval in the upstairs room. After discussion with staff at the University, the Choir was offered downstairs accommodation with much better changing facilities, specific parking for members with blue badges and overall the access difficulties were resolved with success.

It had been hoped that members would agree to take part in a register of special need so that we could ensure access and other needs were catered for as a matter of course. It is now obvious that this is not needed or possibly not wanted by members, but I do hope that members will remember that the Committee remains committed to meeting the special needs of members and any Choir member may approach any Committee member with the expectation that they will be supported fairly and in confidence at all times.

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During the coming season the EO Policy will be due for an overhaul. As the EO team now numbers just one person, myself, I would like to invite members to join the team as the exciting job of reviewing the Policy begins in the Autumn Term. The work offers exciting opportunities for possibly heated discussions over such issues as ticket prices and concessions, seating arrangements (always a good topic for enlivening the evening) and we will be writing a Grievance Policy, an opportunity not to be missed.

Please continue to participate in the EO process either by giving us your views and experience formally or informally, or better still by joining the working group.

8 Election of Officers

The following were elected unanimously:

Chairman:	John Robinson
Vice-Chairman:	Roger Heise
Treasurer:	Gordon Arkwright
Secretary:	Roger Heise
Publicity Secretary:	Stephanie Tulej
Social Secretary:	(vacant)
Librarian:	Jean Stephenson (assisted by Marion Taylor)
Chief Steward:	Bob Bond
Minute Secretary:	Linda Cook
Committee member:	Richard Beveridge Joyce Bond Jacky Ireland Kate Thompson Lynne Wyre
Social Treasurer	Julie Edge
Membership Secretary:	Jacky Ireland

9 Election of Independent Examiner

The Society will need to find an Independent Examiner before the accounts need auditing at the end of April 2011.

10 Any other business

- a) Jacky Ireland proposed that we practice standing and sitting on the last 4 Monday rehearsals before each concert. John Perrin agreed to try this.
- b) Jacky Ireland informed the meeting that when people register in September they will be asked to indicate whether they are 1st or 2nd Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass.
- c) AGM Minutes to go on the website with DRAFT on them, as they won't be agreed until the AGM in 2011.
- d) Peter Senior thanked the people who had taken part in the sponsored swim. Peter also expressed the wish to step back from organising this next year. John Robinson thanked Peter for us fund-raising activities.
- e) Graham Titchmarsh spoke about the noise from the drums at the last concert. Would it be possible to distance the drums from the tenors? Unfortunately this didn't appear to be possible.

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- f) Warwick Wilson asked if we were aware of the rise by the Charity Commission from £10k to £25k income an organisation to have an audit or Independent Examiner. The Treasurer (Gordon Arkwright) said he was aware of the rise.
- g) Lynne Wyre asked about the role of Social Secretary. There had not been any nominations for this post and no-one at the meeting volunteered. John Robinson would ask the Choir if anyone was interested in taking on this role.

The meeting ended at 7.55.