

Present: Officers - Chris Walker (Chairman), Liz Buxton (Secretary), Anne Adams (Social Secretary), Vicky Highet (Publicity Manager), Sarah Hogan (Joint Librarian) and Michael Buxton (Box Office Manager). Also in attendance was Jonathan Brice (Independent Examiner), and 34 members of the Society.

1. **Welcome** – the Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He referred members to the Officer’s reports and final accounts which had again been circulated with the agenda.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from K Ross (Treasurer), J Gaunt, L Heller, C Denby-Hollis, P Digby, L Paice, N Kisdon, L Unwin, D Sanderson and Vice President Alan Brown.
3. **Minutes of the previous AGM & Special General Meeting** – Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 31st October 2022 and previously circulated with the agenda, were approved (proposed F Flynn, seconded R Nortcliffe) and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting. Minutes of the Special General Meeting held on 22nd May 2023, and previously circulated with the agenda, were then approved (proposed N Dummigan, seconded J Nortcliffe) and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.
4. **Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.
5. **Secretary’s report for 2022-23** (*previously circulated and attached*)
The report from the Secretary was received and no questions were asked.
The secretary was thanked for her report.
6. **Treasurer’s report for 2022-23 and annual accounts** (*previously circulated and attached*)
The report from the Treasurer was received. In the unavoidable absence of the treasurer, the Chairman presented the annual accounts for the season 2022-23 for approval in Item 7. The Treasurer was thanked for her report.
7. **Independent Examiner’s report for 2022-23**
The Chairman welcomed Jon Brice (Independent Examiner) to the meeting. Mr Brice reported that he had scrutinised the accounts presented for the 2022-23 season and was entirely satisfied that these were fully in order and had been presented in accordance with the reporting requirements of the Charity Commission. Jon was thanked by the Chairman on behalf of the membership for his work on behalf of the Society. The final accounts for the 2022-23 season were then approved by the members (proposed A Heath, seconded V Highet)
8. **Election of Officers**
The Chairman reported that nominations for the Officer vacancies as indicated in the invitation to the AGM, and now proposed and seconded by members of the Society, had been received and the following were consequently elected unopposed to serve for a further two years: Chairman - Chris Walker; Secretary – Liz Buxton; Social Secretary - Anne Adams; Librarian(joint) - Sarah Hogan; President – George Nicholson. Officers were thanked for their continued support for the work of the Society.
9. **Changes to the Constitution proposed by the Committee**
As signalled at the last AGM and in the notice of the meeting, the Chair outlined the rationale for the proposed changes to the Constitution seeking any comments/queries from members:
Membership subscriptions - As we seek to grow the choir, some variations to the arrangements for membership subscriptions were being proposed to allow for some flexibility to be responsive to different situations and the needs of potential new members. There was some discussion about the definition of ‘student’ and it was agreed that for many years, this had never been defined precisely, not least as this was very challenging so to do. As the proposal was designed to encourage younger members arriving in Sheffield as students, it was agreed to use the term ‘registered student’ although as circumstances, particularly for more mature students would differ, and some would not need the concession, the proposal to give the treasurer discretion, in consultation with the Committee, would allow for all eventualities.
Officer roles - The Membership Secretary role had been left vacant since the last AGM as this had been subsumed into the work of the Secretary. The nature of Society’s publicity had changed radically over the years and most particularly now that the Society was using electronic means of publicity. It was proposed therefore that the Publicity Manager role be removed from the Committee/Constitution. The work of Vicky Highet who

had taken responsibility for publicity for many years had been much appreciated and a small gift of appreciation was presented to Vicky to mark her 'retirement' from the Committee.

Conductor's contract - The proposed change of date for the conductor's contract was purely an administrative change to bring this in line with the accounting year.

Proposed change to paragraph 3(b) to now read as follows:

*The Annual Membership Subscription shall be payable in advance and is due on the first Monday in September of each year or upon joining the Society, the amount to be such as may from time to time be decided by a General Meeting of the Society. Membership for registered students shall be free of charge. There shall be a reduced rate of Membership at the discretion of the Treasurer, in consultation with the Committee, for those considered to be in need of support and for couple's joint-membership, or where the Treasurer deems a reduction to be appropriate. **APPROVED by members.***

Proposed change to paragraph 5(a) to now read as follows:

*The Officers of the Society shall be President, Vice-Presidents(s), and Executive Officers. The Executive Officers shall be the Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Social Secretary, Librarian and Box Officer Manager. **APPROVED by members.***

Proposed changes to paragraph 5(b) to now read as follows:

*The business of the Society shall be conducted by a Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting and consisting of four Executive Officers, namely the Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and Social Secretary and five other Members of the Society. Any member in receipt of an Honorarium shall have no voting rights in any Society matter. **APPROVED by members.***

Proposed changes to paragraph 5(f) to now read as follows:

*The ordinary Members of the Committee shall be elected at an AGM, and shall hold office for three years. They shall be eligible for immediate re-election subject to the usual ballot of members as outlined in paragraph 5(g) for a period no longer than three terms of office. **APPROVED by members***

Proposed changes to paragraph 6(a) to now read as follows:

*The Conductor shall be appointed by the Committee. An Acting Conductor may be appointed for such shorter period as may be agreed. **APPROVED by members***

Members were thanked for approving the above changes to the Constitution.

10. Election of ordinary members of the Committee

StJohn Wright remained in post and nominations had been received for the now four further Committee vacancies arising following the approval above. As four nominations had been received for four vacancies, Neil Dummigan, Alan Heath, Jenny Nortcliffe and Liz Paice were elected to serve as ordinary members of the Committee initially until 2026. These members were thanked for their willingness to serve on the Committee.

11. Election of Honorary Independent Examiner

Jonathan Brice was re-elected to the position of Independent Examiner. The Chairman thanked him for his work on behalf of the Society and willingness to continue in this role.

12. Honorary Conductor's report for 2022-23

The report (*previously circulated and attached*) from George Nicholson, our acting Conductor during the 2022-23 season was received. The Chairman thanked Professor Nicholson for his report and for his support during the last season.

13. Chairman's report for 2022-23

The report (*previously circulated and attached*) from the Chairman was received. The Chairman again expressed his thanks to George Nicholson for his work for the Society over the last year. The Chairman thanked members for their continued support during the 2022-23 season.

14. Any other business

i. The Secretary indicated that she often received information about other music making which she had previously not been able to circulate due to the GDPR restrictions on using the choir emails for SBS choir business only. She asked whether members would like to receive this information. Anne Adams suggested that any such information could be added to the Members Area of the website, which it was agreed would be a good solution and avoid unnecessary emails

- ii. Jane Ginsborg mentioned that she had noticed that the choir's *Wikipedia* entry was out of date. Anne Adams indicated that with the approval of the Committee she was now looking at a range of places where information was available about the choir and this would include looking at *Wikipedia*.
- iii. Pat Kendal-Taylor queried the responsibility for *FaceBook* and other publicity in the absence of a Publicity Manager role. She was assured that the named members of the Committee took responsibility for advertising on social media and other means to publicise our concerts.
- iv. Jill Lauriston queried arrangements for virtual meetings should these be necessary. It was confirmed that the Constitution had been amended accordingly. (*November 2021*)

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.30 pm

OFFICERS reports circulated with the AGM agenda and included as part of the minutes of the meeting

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Thank you to all who contributed to another season which was certainly very successful.

We had a return visit from Fine Arts Brass who were a delight to work with and had arranged themselves a lot of the parts that they played. It was marvellous to sing such a range of music with such a professional and competent group. A spectacular Messiah in the Cathedral. This time George had had a chance to rehearse us (the previous year he stepped up to the task with two days notice!) and it was one of the best that I have sung in. An almost full standing ovation after the performance was testimony to that. A rousing B Minor Mass in St Mark's which just about raised the roof off at times and then a finale of Royal music for a summer evening with the excellent Darius Battiwalla once more accompanying and soloing on the organ.

At the start of the season there was still a degree of uncertainty about the position of Conductor. I remain incredibly grateful to George Nicholson, who we are delighted remains as our president, for stepping up and excelling in his interpretations and musicianship for keeping the choir going and performing during such a period of uncertainty. We were able to thank George in a social event at the end of the season where he was presented with an inscribed tankard, some vouchers and notes of appreciation from members of the choir. I sincerely hope that he will look at these – and use the tankard – and have fond memories of conducting some of the great works that we were privileged to let him have the opportunity to. Many for the first time.

It is premature to talk about our new conductor in this report as it relates to the 22/23 season but suffice it to say onwards and upwards, exciting times and we are off to a great start!! More in next year's report.

A final vote of thanks to the officers and committee who do so much unseen work behind the scenes.

Chris Walker

Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

As predicted last year, we are unfortunately running a deficit over the 2022-2023 season, in part due to increased costs (particularly energy price increases passed on through hall hire). Our membership numbers also shrank which affected income, as well as some disappointing audience figures. We are very grateful for the sponsorship received over the season, we but do need to explore new ways of raising funds.

The coming season continues to pose financial challenges for the choir as costs are rising, both in relation to hall hire and rising professional costs. Our main sources of income are choir subscriptions and ticket sales - so attracting new members and selling more tickets are the best ways to help us financially. Ticket prices have been increased for 2023-2024. Membership subscription rates have also been increased by £25 to £150 this season and can be paid in instalments. We are always very grateful for additional donations and sponsorship from any members who feel able to contribute further. Please do support our fundraising efforts, including the weekly little raffle and monthly stalls.

We are also hoping that more members will join the monthly draw (£4 per month) and to sign up to online gift schemes such as Give as You Live and Easy Fundraising. Please contact me if you would like more information on any of these.

Kitty Ross

Treasurer

ACTING CONDUCTOR'S REPORT

This year we can look back with some pride on a successful season of concerts in 2022-23. As usual the smaller scale events were the first and last, both of them made up of miscellaneous shorter items. Programmes of such

variety bring their own challenges in terms of preparation and performance, and they are actually quite difficult to bring off. The November concert was a collaboration with the Fine Arts Brass Quintet, featuring a wide range of music by Renaissance and 20th century British composers. With Derek Grover at the organ we included Ireland's *Vexilla Regis* and two of Schütz's antiphonal psalm settings, ending the concert with a rousing performance of Handel's evergreen *Zadok the Priest* (sounding splendid with organ and brass!). It might not have been obvious to everyone at the time, but this was effectively a foretaste of the concert of coronation music that was to follow in June, which happened to include two of the other three anthems Handel wrote for George II. I particularly enjoyed the process of putting together this programme, which ranged from Weelkes through Purcell, Parry and Vaughan Williams to the present day (yes – even a new piece from me!). We had sterling support on that occasion from Darius Battiwalla, whose two organ solos were highlights of the evening (and also provided a useful few minutes of relaxation for the choir).

On a personal note, it has been a great pleasure to conduct the Bach Choir over an eighteen month period, not least for the opportunity and indeed the privilege to work with you on some of the great works of the choral repertoire. In December I returned to *Messiah* for the second time and was relieved that this year's performance had the added benefit of some preliminary rehearsal! As for the B Minor Mass, well, the experience of living through that piece and recreating it in front of a very receptive audience was something that will always stay with me – a most inspiring occasion. I must say that in all our concerts we have been more than ably supported by first-rate soloists and instrumentalists, and in such company we are all inevitably encouraged to raise our game. Thank you all for your commitment, your responsiveness and your willingness to join me in our musical journeys together. Even at this distance from the initial effects of the pandemic I fear that we are not yet completely free of its reach, with the result that regularity of attendance at rehearsals is still something that cannot be taken for granted. I do hope that greater stability is on the way and that continuity in the rehearsal process will come to be restored.

I wish you all success under Philip's direction, and I will certainly be there to cheer you on.

George Nicholson

Conductor

SECRETARY'S REPORT

I can confirm that the Committee has continued to work on behalf of members, to meet the 'object' of our Society as outlined in the Constitution, meeting 6 times during the last season with some additional 'virtual' meetings. Meetings focused on detailed planning for the 2022-23 season, outline planning for 2023-24 and the recruitment process to find a new substantive conductor. Once our new conductor was able to join us for committee meetings towards the end of the season, we were then able to undertake detailed planning for 2023-24 and with his help, we now have the outline of 2024-25 and 2025-26 in place!

Members are thanked for their very thoughtful contributions to the process of appointing a new conductor. Your views were built into the recruitment process and feedback from singers since the start of the new year would indicate that a most successful appointment was able to be made. The planning for 2023-24 season is already reflecting new ideas and approaches, prompted by the arrival of our new conductor.

The Covid-effect still impacted rehearsals during the 2022-23 season, but a gradual re-introduction of a break allowed for some much-welcomed social time. Our season ended with a social evening with entertainment and delicious food provided by members. The social evening also provided an opportunity for choir members to say a heartfelt 'thankyou' to our President George Nicholson who had stepped in at a very challenging time for the choir and undoubtedly helped to secure a future for the choir. During the year, it was with some sadness that we heard of the death of our former Chairman Derek Holdsworth, more recently his wife Vanessa and Jill Angood who sang with us until 2020.

As signalled at the last AGM, the Committee have now undertaken a review of the relevant sections of the Constitution, to ensure this meets the changed landscape in which the Society now operates. Details of the proposed changes are included in the Notice of AGM. Thank you to everyone for your contribution to the success of the society over the last year as we look forward to another exciting season under the direction of Philip Collin.

Liz Buxton

Secretary

Minutes signed: (Chairman - Mr C Walker) Date: