

Brockham Choral Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 29 August 2023

Chairperson: Jane Stride

Present: 35

1. Apologies for Absence: Catherine Barker, Carol Belk, Maria Chadwick, Bridget Doughty, Michael Doughty, Ann Hanson, Victoria Harding-Rolls, Jenni Knights, Sandy Luff, Anne Mitchell, Jean Scott, Eiluned Slot, Mary Suckling, Mary White, Peter White, Ray White.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held 6 September 2022. The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Sue Tanton, seconded by Jenni Lee-Potter and agreed unanimously, and the Minutes were signed as correct.

3. Matters Arising There were none.

4. Chairperson's Report As there were two Chairpersons during the year, a combined report is attached.

5. Annual Report and Accounts These had been circulated previously. The Treasurer (Mick Rance) explained that by law every charity has to produce an annual report and accounts and submit these to the Charity Commission – if you look up Brockham Choral on their website you can see our report and accounts for previous years. Each year a budget is produced; in 2021/22 it was just £200 adrift from the final accounts figures. It was more complicated this year, with the staging; the budget had been optimistic in assessing income but more accurate in assessing expenditure. Although a lot of Tour money had passed through the accounts this had been excluded from the Financial Statement as the Tour is self-funding.

Looking at the Balance Sheet, the Cheque and Deposit accounts show what money the choir had in the bank - £11,329 (compared with £20,148 the previous year); the debtors and prepayments figures represent payments for items outside the financial year, for example the deposit on the forthcoming autumn and spring orchestras. The liabilities represent a credit for pre-payments for programme adverts. Our net current assets – our actual funds – are £12,526, £5,116 less than last year. The staging cost £13,822 and the committee agreed this should be written off over 5 years, so the staging figure of £11,058 represents the residual value after one year's depreciation, giving total assets of £23,584.

The summary of concert finances shows total income of £7,462 and expenditure of £11,978; expenditure differed from the budget by about £500, whilst - due mainly to the lower than anticipated audience for the Ethel Smyth concert – net income was lower by £1,526.

The Statement of Financial Activities showed that subscription income was lower than the previous year due to a fall in membership and some members joining for less than a year. The Restricted Funds are those allocated specifically to the staging. Mick expressed his gratitude to Sue Tanton for obtaining grants for the staging and also for more general support. The 'Buy a Board' scheme had raised £2,075 towards the staging, less than hoped for. General fundraising had brought in £3,338, again less than budgeted for but the fundraising expenditure figures were

fairly close to the budget figure; the £2,764 shown for staging under Expenditure represents the depreciation cost for 2022/23. Our fixed assets have increased by £11,058, which represents the staging value. However, the total reduction in current assets compared with the previous year was £5,116 – clearly we couldn't keep reducing funds in this way and we need to trim our costs, for example on orchestras and soloists etc. Choir workshops made a loss and we need to work towards more of a balance on these. The Mole Valley Community Lottery provides useful income with no effort on our part, but our best fundraising comes from the Quiz Evenings. Mick concluded by confirming that the accounts had been examined and approved by David Sinden, the independent examiner.

Questions

- The 'Buy a Board' scheme didn't raise as much as hoped – it wasn't clear later in the year whether sales were supposed to be continuing. *There was a 'clock face' to show how sales were going, and some people bought more than one Board. We also were able to claim Gift Aid on the donations. After a while sales fell away, and in addition, people were also being asked to pay for the Tour.*
- Jumble sales had raised a good deal of money some years ago – should we do something similar? *We had held an Auction of Promises which raised some £4,400. We could hold another but would need people's commitment for this. The numbers attending jumble sales fell away and left the problem of disposal of unsold stock. The committee will discuss fund raising more generally – we could have raffles at Quiz Evenings, and there had been Bring and Buy sales which had worked well. We could also revive the 'Buy a Board' scheme. Members were urged to submit ideas.*
- Do workshops usually break even? *There were two types – a rehearsal workshop usually charged a nominal fee to members but lost money as we still had to pay professional and venue costs. Recruitment workshops were charged for and were intended to break even. There would be a recruitment workshop in October and in particular for the Verdi Requiem – it was suggested this could take the form of a 'Come and Sing'.*

Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by David John, seconded by Neil Williams and agreed unanimously.

Examiner Mick explained that David Sinden had agreed to be nominated again as Examiner; he was nominated by Jackie Rance, seconded by Nick Hands-Clarke and agreed unanimously. It was noted that he was the husband of a member.

6. Subscriptions Jane said that the committee had agreed to propose an increase in annual subscriptions to £165 – this was reasonable compared with other choirs. Ed said that this amounted to a 9.5% increase since the last rise in 2021, averaging 4.75% per annum, well below the rate of inflation. For those wishing to pay in two instalments these would be £85 and £80; three instalments would be £70, £70 and £25. For those who only wanted to pay per term, the cost would be £80. Friends subscriptions would be increased to £25. The increase was proposed by Ed, seconded by Estelle and agreed unanimously. Jenni commented that the committee needed to look at the budgeting for concerts.

8. Musical Director's Report This had been circulated previously. Jane commented that Cole put a lot of emphasis on preparation, and this had been helped by Ed arranging for the John Fletcher rehearsal aids to be available. Ed said he had already put the Bach and the Roth on the choir's own page on the John Fletcher website. Jane added that we would also want to have a rehearsal schedule to help us prepare. She said that Cole had wanted the following statement to be read out: *"This has been a challenging year for me with a large increase in professional commitments elsewhere alongside my move eastwards; you have continued to make it fun and enjoyable to work with you on so many pieces of music this term. It's not a huge hardship to travel to Dorking from Sevenoaks every week when you get the welcome that Brockham Choral gives you. Your kindness has made me feel welcome on many occasions. On a personal note, you've also continued to extend that same kindness to my now wife, Alicia – whether she's been in cheering us on or as a bumper. I am very grateful – and fortunate – indeed."*

Thank you to our office bearers and committee who have worked tirelessly to produce our projects. Particular thanks go this year to Jenni and Nick who have worked extremely hard especially on sourcing copies, printing and more besides to ensure we can achieve our goals successfully. As ever, my thanks to Marion, whose amazing skills as an accompanist mean that I can focus my efforts on listening to you all and helping where I can to produce the best quality of singing in our work together. I look forward to another brilliant season ahead."

9. Election of Chairperson Nick took over the chair. There had been one nomination, for Jane Stride. There being no other nominations, Jane was elected as chairperson for the coming year.

10. Election of Committee Members Jane read out the list of those who had been nominated – all had agreed to stand: Briony Bowen, Graham Carter, Ed Criswick, Estelle Earnshaw, Jackie Goel, Nick Hands-Clarke, Mick Rance, Reuben Suckling and Christine Thomas. These were proposed by Jane and seconded by Reuben, and agreed unanimously. Jane welcomed the new members and thanked Val Harden for her warmth and positivity, and Phil Slack for all his work.

11. Any Other Business

Music Selection Committee Jenny Bartholomew asked how the MSC system worked, eg how did the Ethel Smyth work get selected? The librarian has to be able to source copies. And the MD has to feel able to decide not to proceed with a piece if it isn't working. She felt the Smyth should have been dropped and replaced by a work which would have been attractive to an audience. Jane agreed there had been problems; there had been a lack of confidence and we had to have a workshop, people had been ill due to Covid, and ticket sales had been very low. There had been some problems with music availability initially, but these had been resolved eventually. Although it was a piece that some people had not warmed to, we had to keep trying new pieces. Jane confirmed the Smyth had been Cole's project, and she had met with him to discuss some of these issues. Jane confirmed that the MSC was separate from the management committee, met with Cole to discuss the repertoire, and made recommendations to the management committee; and in response to Anne Slack, Ed confirmed that it reported to the management committee not to the AGM. Jane commented that although some choir members had been under the

impression that they had not performed well, others had been satisfied with the performance and in fact the comments from the audience were generally favourable. However, it had failed to attract a good audience. Jackie Goel suggested that it might have been too soon to try out a work like this after Covid, as we were still trying to attract people back to concerts; others felt the lack of copies early on had led to the initial rehearsals being very difficult, which affected morale and confidence and so members were not enthusiastic about selling tickets. Jenni commented that getting hold of enough copies had been much more difficult than expected. Jackie Rance asked if there would be problems getting hold of music for the Roth 'Time to Dance'; Jenni said it had been ordered and was due very soon. Anne Slack said that although it was good to stretch the choir by trying out new works, rehearsals also had to be enjoyable and there was not enough enjoyment in the Smyth. Jane said the management committee would give further consideration to the way in which the MSC operated.

Normandy Tour Jane was asked for her reflections on the Tour; she said it had helped to establish a positive attitude and the rehearsals were enjoyable, and hoped this would continue. She accepted the hotel was disappointing, but it was very well located and people coped well with the shortcomings. Estelle said that it was a question of balancing cost against standards. People had also had to travel more than originally planned. Ed said that we had given an honest feedback to the Tour company on what had gone well, and what hadn't. Jenny thought that we had had more than two rehearsals on previous tours; the lack of rehearsals meant that we had had to spend more time on rehearsing there rather than having free time. Jane pointed out that we had tried to keep costs down, and that more rehearsals would have meant higher costs. Reuben commented that two of the concerts had had excellent audiences.

Recruitment Jackie Rance said we needed to recruit new younger members; Jane agreed, although it wasn't entirely clear how we would achieve this. However, the proposal had been noted.

Expressions of thanks David John thanked Jane (and Keith) for her hard work for the choir, commenting that although the running of the choir gets more complicated each year, the important things for the choir were to have enjoyment, innovation and security in their chosen works. Estelle also thanked Ed (and Romey) and Mick (and Jackie) for their hard work.

12. Date of Next Meeting This was subsequently set as 3 September 2024.

Brockham Choral Chairperson Report - September – December 2022

At the AGM I announced my retirement from the position of Chairperson, having completed a 3-year term. I then agreed to continue for one further term to enable a successor to be found.

We then had a thoroughly enjoyable term rehearsing for the Autumn concert of Haydn's Nelson Mass, Vaughan Williams' 5 Mystical Songs and Mozart's Laudate Dominum. The concert was well received, and we enjoyed a workshop together in October despite the chilly temperature whilst the church adjusted to the new heating costs! As well as this we sang carols in Broome Park and Reigate Beaumont care homes, and enjoyed a brilliant Christmas social at the Stepping Stones pub in Westhumble. The last event of the year was well received as we sang carols at the Rugby Club's Christmas luncheon.

I so enjoyed the privilege of being Brockham Choral's Chairperson and could not have survived the tricky Covid period without the support of such a lovely committee and every encouraging word from members. Thank you all.

Estelle Earnshaw 7th August 2023

I took over as Chair in January 2023, having expressed the choir's heartfelt thanks to Estelle for her very successful term in this role, fully recognising that she would be a hard act to follow!

January saw the choir beginning to tackle Ethel Smyth's Mass in D for the Spring Concert on April 1st. This was an exciting new work for Brockham, although because it has been performed so infrequently, getting scores proved difficult. We were very grateful to Nick Hands-Clarke for his photocopying work, which enabled us to get on with rehearsals, and to Jenni Lee-Potter for all her efforts obtaining the scores. The work is challenging and some members did not warm to the music, which needed considerable concentration in rehearsals. The number of tickets sold for this concert was disappointing, although audience feedback suggested that many had enjoyed being exposed to this new and very interesting work, which they felt the choir had tackled well. In addition to the Smyth, the programme consisted of Vaughan William's 'Toward the Unknown Region', Britten's 'Hymn to the Virgin' and the 'Cantique de Jean Racine' by Fauré. The organist, William Campbell, also played two pieces; 'Prelude & Fugue on a Theme of Vittoria' by Britten and Vaughan William's 'Prelude on Rhosymedre'. The new staging was used for the second time. It is such a great improvement on the old one and people felt that they had become even more familiar with assembling it than in December. I would like to thank the dedicated team who meet early on the day of the concert to set up the staging. As a moment of light relief and a fund-raising activity, we held a Quiz Evening on March 13th at the Rialto Lounge in Dorking. It was very well supported and proved very popular and enjoyable, raising over £500 for choir funds. I would like to thank Ed for helping me with the questions and providing the microphone.

The Summer Concert took place on June 3rd 2023 at the URC Hall in West Street. This was a change of venue, organised at fairly short notice, as it was felt that it was better suited to a 'Café style' concert. Our 'Feeling Good' concert featured Rutter's 'Feel the Spirit', with the mezzo-soprano soloist Ellen Smith, and a selection of other songs accompanied by Marion Lea, who also performed piano items by Grieg and Chopin. The audience really appreciated the relaxed format of the evening,

including the singing, Cole's informative and entertaining comments and the stunning performances of both Ellen Smith and Marion. An After-Concert meal was arranged at the Rialto Lounge and enjoyed by singers and friends. Thanks are due to Estelle for this and for her work decorating the tables in the hall. Earlier in the afternoon, at the end of the rehearsal, the choir presented a wedding gift to Cole and Alicia, wishing them much happiness.

In July Brockham went on tour again - something which had not happened for a while due to the pandemic. We went to Normandy and it was arranged through the company Rayburn Tours. A total of 49 singers and friends set off on July 12th, enjoying a sunny crossing and a good journey. We gave three concerts, in Conches-en-Ouche, Beauvais Cathedral and in Ouistreham, and were pleased to have really good audiences in the first two venues. Singing in Beauvais, with glorious weather and the excitement of Bastille Day was an unforgettable experience. We also enjoyed the sight-seeing elements of the tour. There were issues with the accommodation and, because of problems getting a third venue, rather too much coach travel, but, overall, it was a highly positive and enjoyable few days. Thanks go to Ed for his huge help with the organisation and the wonderful brochure, to Mick for his endless patience with things financial, Robin Luff for producing the detailed passenger manifest, to David for sorting parking at Dorking Rugby Club and, of course, to Cole for all his work and to Helena for her wonderful piano playing. Nick Hands-Clarke and Jenni Lee-Potter must also be thanked for all their work producing the music for us.

At this point I would like to thank the Committee for their huge efforts for the continuing success of Brockham Choral and for their support.

The tour was a high note on which to finish the year and I look forward very much to this coming one. This term we will be working on Bach's 'Magnificat' and Roth's 'A Time to Dance', and we look forward to a Workshop on October 14th, a Quiz Night in November, and Christmas carols at both the Beaumont Care Home and the Dorking Rugby Club.

I would like to thank you all for your continuing commitment to Brockham Choral and for your support.

Jane Stride, August 2023