

Brockham Choral Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 3 September 2024

Chairperson: Jane Stride

Present: 27

1. Apologies for Absence: Carol Belk, Jess Donnison, Val Harden, Victoria Harding-Rolls, David John, Jan John, Maureen Jones, Mary Knight, Jenni Knights, Jenni Lee-Potter, Sandy Luff, Anne Mitchell, Mary New, Eiluned Slot, Mary Suckling, Reuben Suckling, Sue Tanton, Diana Unwin, Mary White, Peter White, Ray White.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held 29 August 2023. The adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Moira Sinden, seconded by Phil Slack, and agreed unanimously, and the Minutes were signed as correct.

3. Matters Arising There were none.

4. Chairperson's Report This is attached (Annex 1). In summary, Jane reviewed the year's events, including concerts and social events; thanking all those who helped with concerts and with many other essential tasks throughout the year, and thanking in particular the outgoing Treasurer Mick Rance, and Ed Criswick, who were both standing down from the committee. She also paid tribute to our MD Cole Bendall and our accompanist Marion Lea. Jane concluded by looking to the year ahead, including the need to recruit new singers, and thanking members for their commitment and support.

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. The balance sheet showed our assets for the current and previous financial years, and there were notes which helped explain the various items, including the debtors & prepayments, and the creditors & accruals. Taking these into account gave the net current assets of £16,066 which were about £3,500 higher than last year mainly due to the donation of £3,000 from Fred Harrison's estate. It was worth noting that without this unexpected donation our finances would have been pretty much in line with the budget for the year. The staging has been depreciated in accordance with the 5 year depreciation policy agreed by the committee, and taking this into account means that our total net assets are £776 higher than last year.

Turning to the Statement of Financial Activities which gives the actual income and expenditure figures, with a comparison with last year, the concert income and expenditure is explained in Note 9 – there was a total loss on the concerts of £7,911 compared with a budgeted loss of £6,700, the difference being due mainly to an adjustment to the Verdi concert ticket price. Other income came from members' and Friends' subscriptions plus Gift Aid, grant and donations, and fundraising which was explained in more detail in Note 11. So the total income was £37,519. Expenditure was mainly on the concerts, but also on our normal outgoings for MD and accompanist fees and venue hire, as well as fundraising costs. The staging depreciation is shown as a cost. Our total funds carried forward are £776 higher than last year at £24,360.

Questions

- Robin Luff congratulated Mick on the presentation of the accounts and their comprehensiveness. He asked why the administration costs were £500 higher than last year. Mick explained that the main reason was that the farmer who stores our trailer had forgotten to charge us the previous year, so we effectively had to pay for two years' trailer storage.
- Robin asked whether, although depreciation meant that the value of the staging was decreasing, we still had to fund raise for the purchase cost. Mick explained that the staging had been paid for, but that we raised funds through the 'Buy a Board' scheme and donations so that the overall impact on choir funds was limited. Robin asked whether we needed to continue to raise funds to restore the choir finances; Mick explained that due to fund raising efforts and management of income and expenditure, the choir funds were now at a healthy level and we didn't need to carry out additional fund raising for the staging.
- Romey Criswick commented that depreciating the staging over 5 years seemed a short time. Mick explained that as we didn't want to carry the staging on our books for too long, 5 years seemed an appropriate period. Nick Hands-Clarke commented that this did not mean that the staging would only last 5 years – its expected life time was a lot longer.
- Neil Williams asked about subscription income from guest singers for the Verdi concert. Mick explained that they had been asked to pay £25; Jane commented that she had sent flyers to other choirs for the autumn 'Come & Sing' event.

Mick concluded by expressing his gratitude to David Sinden for his work as Examiner of the accounts, and remarked that David was prepared to act again in this role next year. Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Neil Williams, seconded by Tony Earnshaw, and agreed unanimously.

Examiner Mick said that in the light his willingness to continue in the role, he proposed David Sinden as our Examiner for this year; this was seconded by Briony Bowen and carried unanimously.

6. Proposal to Increase Annual Subscriptions A note explaining the proposal had been previously circulated. Mick Rance noted that the proposal was to increase annual subscriptions from £165 to £180. The committee had taken account of the current inflation rate, the increase in fees to Cole and Marion and the increase in the hire costs of St Martin's. In particular the cost of hiring the school had increased a fair amount. However, the increase would mean that members still only paid £5.29 per rehearsal, up 44p from last year. Anne Hogarth commented that the weekly cost was very modest compared with most other things. Jane explained that the proposal had been discussed at some length by the committee, and looking at other choirs our proposed subscription level seemed to be in line with theirs. She also pointed out that if we could recruit more members we would have more income. Louise Cuckney asked what the subscription would be for someone singing for only two terms. Mick replied that we would prefer people to pay for the full year, but this aspect would be discussed in the forthcoming committee meeting. Romey commented that we needed to make sure we had enough funds to ensure we didn't cut corners on things like orchestras and soloists. Jackie Goel asked about termly payments – as costs went up, we should consider being more flexible about this. Tony Earnshaw commented that golf and tennis clubs

charged subscriptions even if members didn't use the facilities as they had to meet fixed costs. He proposed increasing the annual subscriptions to £180, this was seconded by Maria Chadwick and agreed unanimously.

7. Musical Director's Report Jane explained that Cole had been intending to attend the AGM but had had to attend an event connected with a new appointment he had taken up, and had sent his apologies. In his report he referred to focussing on improving technique and expanding the choir's repertoire; he discussed the individual concerts, and mentioned carol singing. He also referred to rehearsal issues such as absences due to colds and illnesses, and commented on the financial issues facing the choir, and how these could be helped by collaboration with other choirs. He concluded by thanking all choir members, the committee and Marion. His report was attached to an email which was read out, which reiterated his thanks to the committee and referred to fundraising issues. His report and the points made in the email are attached (Annex 2).

8. Election of Chairperson Briony took over the chair. There had been no nominations, though Jane Stride had expressed her willingness to stand for a further year. She was nominated by Estelle Earnshaw, seconded by Romey and elected unanimously. Jane thanked members and said she was looking forward particularly to the summer concert.

9. Election of Committee Members Jane commented that Ed and Mick were standing down from the committee; expressing thanks for all that they had done, a small presentation was made to each on behalf of the committee and choir. Jane said that Briony Bowen, Graham Carter, Estelle Earnshaw, Nick Hands-Clarke, Reuben Suckling and Christine Thomas had agreed to stand again, and that Jenni Lee-Potter had agreed to be nominated. This nomination was seconded by Neil, and the election of Jenni and the existing committee members was approved unanimously.

10. Any Other Business

2025 Tour Jane explained that the proposal for the 2025 Tour was to go to Edinburgh, one advantage being that Cole has connections there. At the moment 16th July looked like a convenient date, depending on whether Cole was free then. As far as travel to Edinburgh was concerned, it might be better not to travel by coach but for members to make their own way, and perhaps fit it in with other holiday plans in the area. The tour company would help with arranging hotels and concerts, perhaps using summer concert items including the Fred Harrison commission. On a show of hands, 16 of those present expressed interest in taking part.

Thanks Romey proposed a Vote of Thanks to Jane and the committee for steering the choir successfully through the year, being well aware of how hard they all worked. This was supported unanimously.

11. Date of Next AGM 2 September 2025.

Chair person's Report for Brockham Choral Society for the year 2023 – 2024

We began the year with the AGM at the very end of August. It was well attended and a number of new committee members were duly elected- these were Graham Carter, Briony Bowen and Christine Thomas. Val Harden stood down from the committee and we are very grateful to her for her loyal support and commitment to the choir. I was re-elected as Chairperson.

At the first rehearsal, September 5th, we started work for the autumn concert on December 2nd in St Martin's. The programme consisted of 'Magnificat' by J.S. Bach and 'A Time to Dance' by Alec Roth. We planned a Workshop Day for this on October 14th 2023, but due to clash with a Leith Hill festival rehearsal and members' other commitments, it was not viable. We worked very hard during the term to practise the Bach, which many had sung before, and to tackle the Roth. 'A Time to Dance' was new to everyone and, under Cole's excellent leadership, we began to enjoy it very much. The choir was rather disappointed by our performance of 'Magnificat', but the Roth went really well and was received by our audience with huge enthusiasm. The British Sinfonietta performed with great skill and our four soloists, Rosanna Harris, Lauren Macleod, Timothy Peters and Richard Bannan, were excellent. Dorking seemed to very much appreciate being introduced to this exciting new work.

In January 2024 it was all systems go to prepare for our performance of Verdi's Requiem. We had a 'Come and Sing Day' for the piece on January 21st, which was a great success, with nearly 70 singers attending. Some of these expressed an interest in joining us for the concert. The concert on March 23rd proved to be a triumph, putting paid to our doubts about pulling off this huge work with a fairly modest choir and orchestra. Soloists Olivia-Rose Tringham, Rebecca Anderson, Joshua Baxter and Jonathan Forbes-Kennedy gave superb performances and the British Sinfonietta was excellent, especially given the cold conditions. We had a very good audience, with queues of people buying tickets on the door and their response was hugely positive.

The summer concert was a more informal affair and took place on June 8th in St Paul's Church, Dorking. Tables were set out with cloths and flowers for audience members to enjoy their picnics and drinks, as we performed a selection of songs related to the theme 'Dawn to Dusk.' This concert was essentially an 'in-house' event, with Marion accompanying us and with members of the choir bravely performing solo items. Thanks must be given to Graham Carter, Anne Mitchell and Annie Hind. The music was well-received and both audience and choir particularly enjoyed the 'Nocturnes' by Morten Lauridsen.

While talking of our concerts, it is important to thank those, who help them to run smoothly. Our work would be impossible without the sterling work of our librarian, Jenni, and we owe her an enormous debt of gratitude, as well as to Nick for all his photocopying and assembling of booklets. Reuben, as concert manager, does a superb job, producing seating plans, organising front of house and tables for the summer concert. Thanks are due to those who help on the door on concert nights and with refreshments, and also to Sue Tanton and her team for orchestra teas. Setting up and dismantling the concert staging is a huge task and we are indebted to the teams of members who help with this. Thanks are also due to the Mitchells for their invaluable

work on programme design and to Estelle and Ed for putting them together and providing programme notes. Mick - often with help from Jackie- and Maria have done an amazing job with ticket sales and Alison has worked hard as Friends' secretary. We are also indebted to the work done by Sue Tanton and Phil Slack on applications for grants, which are invaluable in helping to finance our concerts. In addition thanks are due to Anne Mitchell for her efforts on publicity and to Tony Earnshaw for dealing with Facebook and other electronic platforms.

It goes without saying that none of our performances would be possible without the excellent direction of our MD, Cole. He has introduced us to exciting new works and helped us to improve our performance and to become more confident, also securing excellent soloists. We are grateful for his commitment to BCS, his considerable abilities and for his faith in us – sometimes sorely tested! We also continue to enjoy the support of our wonderful accompanist, Marion, who sensitively helps us during rehearsals, as we struggle to master new music. We are also indebted to the work of the Music Selection Committee.

It has been a busy year as regards activities and social events. We had two quiz nights in the Rialto Lounge and these were well- supported, much enjoyed and financially successful, raising around £1500 for choir funds. I would like to thank Ed for his work on these – we are a good team I think! We also had a very enjoyable Christmas gathering at The Stepping Stones Pub in December, while at the end of April the bi-annual dinner took place at Dorking Golf Club. This was a great success, with everyone enjoying the excellent buffet and the amazing entertainment which followed. Once again, Brockham Choral members showed their willingness to show off! Thanks must go to Estelle for organising these events so competently and enabling us to have such enjoyable evenings. Here, I must also thank Mary Suckling, who has organised several successful Raffles at events during the year. They have been great fun and a valuable contribution to funds.

We reached out to the wider community with our carol singing sessions. We sang at Dorking Rugby Club to enhance their Christmas lunch celebrations and also to raise over £200 for the local charity 'Kids for Kids'. We sang carols at Beaumont Home, Reigate and also at Broome Park, where in May we performed a selection of music from our summer concert, ably supported by Marion who accompanied us.

This year we have also commissioned a piece of music in memory of Fred Harrison, financed by his generous bequest. The music is composed by Ian Assersohn and Tony Earnshaw wrote the poem. We look forward to performing this exciting new work at our summer concert next year. We have also acquired a new rehearsal piano thanks to Moira's generous donation and thanks go to Ed and his team for fitting it with castors.

And so we embark on another year. There are challenges ahead, which are common to many amateur choirs. We need to attract new singers, including, if possible, younger ones, in order to maintain our level of performance and to carry on the work of Brockham Choral. I am very grateful to our membership secretaries, Tortie and Mary Suckling for all their hard work, and acknowledge with thanks the commitment of our Part- reps. We also need to look seriously at the work involved with the staging and to see if we can get any assistance with this. Keeping our financial situation sound is vital in order to finance our musical development and ensure we can continue to put on

exciting and aspirational concerts, with the best orchestras and soloists: we are very fortunate to have had Mick as our Treasurer and I am sure you would all agree that he has done an amazing job. We are sorry to see him leave this role, but we welcome Graham, who has been working closely with Mick over the past year and will now take over from him. As well as challenges ahead, we look forward to an exciting programme of concerts in the coming year.

I must say a huge 'thank you' to my amazing fellow committee members. The work involved in managing the running of the choir is considerable and it could not be done without their commitment, patience, creative input and attention to detail. I would particularly like to thank Ed for all his work, as he stands down from the committee for the next year. Luckily for us, he will still be in charge of the Web site and will help with other activities. Thank you, Ed.

Finally, I would like to thank all our members for their commitment and support and for the friendly and welcoming atmosphere at rehearsals and events, which is so characteristic of Brockham. It is a joy to work with you!

Jane Stride

Musical Director's Report on Brockham Choral

September 2023 – June 2024

It is with great pleasure that I present my report on the progress and achievements of Brockham Choral Society over the past year, from September 2023 to June 2024. This year has been marked by musical growth, a deepening sense of community, and several notable performances that have showcased the talent and dedication of our choir.

Foreword

- I'd like to offer my specific thanks to Ed Criswick and Mick Rance; both have made such incredible contributions to their work with Brockham Choral over the years and have made my experience with the choir extremely fulfilling. Thanks also to Jane, Briony and the rest of our hard working and stellar committee, as well as Marion as our outstanding pianist.
- I cannot stress how much I've appreciated the choir's enthusiasm and bravery this past season; their commitment to our projects has been extraordinary and I've had such a fulfilling timing working on the repertoire we've studied last season. I look forward with great enthusiasm to the events of this coming season.
- The proposed increase of membership fees remains but one area in which the choir can solidify its financial footing to deal with challenges ahead; BCS has committed earnestly to fundraising both in our local community and through external partners and has historically done so successfully. As we continue to prepare for projects further ahead, a renewed effort in fundraising is important – any ways that you (all of us) can think to help raise funds to support our aims in the future (or collaborations which may reduce the financial impact of projects) will be very much welcomed by the committee.

1. Rehearsals and Musical Development

The year began in September with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and commitment. Our rehearsal schedule was ambitious, with a focus on developing vocal technique, sight-reading skills, and ensemble coherence. Our continued focus on warm-ups and technical music work contributes to the general improvement in the overall sound of the choir.

We also focused on expanding our repertoire, which ranged from classical masterpieces to contemporary choral works. This diversity not only challenged the choir but also enriched our musicality, enabling us to explore different styles and genres.

2. Performances and Concerts

The highlight of the autumn season was our performance of Bach *Magnificat* and Roth *A Time to Dance* in December, which was well-received by both the audience and participants. The soloists were in fine form, and the choir's rendition of the Roth was particularly memorable, garnering a great response by the audience in spite of major heating issues at the church.

In the spring, we took on the ambitious *Requiem* by Verdi. The delicate balance required for this piece was a challenge, but the choir rose to the occasion, delivering a performance that was both moving and technically impressive, supported by a number

of local “bumpers” and friends of the choir. The accompanying orchestra, the British Sinfonietta, provided a rich backdrop to our vocals to both of our orchestral concerts this season.

We also participated in several community events, including care home sing-alongs and our summer pops concert and picnic, which allowed us to connect with our local community and spread the joy of music beyond formal concert settings. This included daring performances of music by Sarah Quartel, Morten Lauridsen and more.

3. Membership and Community Engagement

This year, we welcomed several new members to Brockham Choral, and it has been gratifying to see how quickly they have integrated into the group. Our recruitment efforts have been fruitful, primarily due to the continued friendly nature of our members and our promoting excellent quality events which attract new and returning faces, including vocal workshops. These events were well-attended and served as valuable tools for improving individual skills and promoting the choir’s work.

4. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While the year has been largely successful, we did face some challenges. The winter season brought a few setbacks, with illnesses and cold impacting attendance and occasionally leading to uneven rehearsals. Additionally, the financial aspect of our operations remains an ongoing concern, particularly with rising costs associated with venue hire and concert production. We will need to explore new fundraising avenues in due course in order to continue presenting concerts of the highest quality. Formal collaboration with other choirs is such an area I would be interested in exploring in this regard (although the limitations of local performance venues in which we could do this remains a barrier here).

Musically, while we have made significant strides, there is still room for improvement in areas such as balancing voices across sections and refining our dynamic range, as well as in our unaccompanied singing. These will be focal points in our rehearsal plans moving forward.

5. Looking Ahead

As we look towards the 2024-2025 season, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. We have an exciting program planned, including a major performance of Elgar’s *The Music Makers* and a rare performance of a four-hands piano version of Haydn’s *Creation*. I am confident that with continued hard work and dedication, Brockham Choral will continue to thrive and bring exceptional music to our community.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest thanks to each choir member for your commitment, to the committee for their unwavering support (in particular our outgoing committee members), to Marion for her continued excellence as our resident pianist, and to our audience for their enthusiasm and encouragement. Together, we have made this year one of musical growth and achievement, and I look forward to what we will accomplish in the future.

Cole Bendall
Musical Director, Brockham Choral Society
August 2024