

MINUTES

of the 2012-13 Annual General Meeting of the Whitehall Choir
held at St Stephen's Church, Rochester Row, on Tuesday 2nd July 2013, at 6.30pm

In the Chair: *Jonathan Williams*

1. **Apologies:** apologies were received from Paula Nobes, Helen Audaer, Katherine Herzberg

2. **Minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting**

The minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting were accepted as a true record subject to minor spelling corrections (proposed by *Jean Orr* seconded by *Ruth Eastman*).

3. **Secretary's report**

Liz Walton, Secretary, gave her report on the year's activities highlighting in particular the memorable performance of the B minor Mass at St John's Smith Square on Maundy Thursday and the commissioning, through a competition for young composers, of a piece for the choir to include in a recording in May 2014. A copy of her full report is appended to the minutes.

4. **Treasurer's report**

Patrick Highton, Treasurer, outlined the end of year position of the Choir's finances. He explained that over the year the shortfall from concerts was £4,000 less than budgeted for. This was largely because of the near sell-out of tickets for the B Minor Mass and better than anticipated audience at St Margaret's for the autumn concert. This emphasised the point he had made when first presenting the budget that the choir is heavily dependent on members selling tickets for concerts and this effort must be sustained over the coming year. In addition he commended the refreshments team who through their sales of tea and biscuits had contributed £850 to choir funds, noted that a long standing £800 debt had been written off due to a choir cheque not being cashed and also that the choir had received an anonymous donation to funds. This relatively healthy financial position meant that the choir was in a satisfactory state to go forward with CD recording. The Jubilee Fund trustees had agreed to fund the competition and underwrite the CD for which he thanked them but indicated the latter was likely to be less than originally estimated.

There were a few minor constitutional changes he wished to take forward including rolling the end of the choir's financial year forward to the end of August and amending the name of the choir on the Charity Commissioners list to clarify that the choir is now known simply as Whitehall Choir rather than Whitehall Choir (formerly Board of Trade choir). A motion was proposed by *Ken Holmes*, seconded by *Rose Chandler* to cover these changes, and the motion was carried.

He saw no grounds for increasing subscriptions in the coming year and recommended that the choir should vote to support this. *Ken Holmes*, seconded by *Jean Orr*, proposed a motion that there should be no increase and the motion was carried. Subscriptions for the 2013-14 season therefore remain at the levels for 2012-13.

Patrick explained that all subs were now gift aided and noted that under current rules all donations to the choir under £20 could also unilaterally be included as Gift Aid. He therefore proposed that the donations received from the audience at the Christmas Carol Concert should be treated as Gift Aid. *Ian Williamson* proposed a motion to this effect seconded by *Monica Darnbrough*, and the motion was carried.

5. Conductor's report

Paul Spicer, Conductor, made his report on the year's activities. He considered the choir had had another good year as the Secretary had reflected in her report. While the concerts in the autumn and spring term had gone well and the B Minor Mass showed the choir at its best, the summer concert the night before at the Banqueting House had proved extremely stressful for him as conductor. Fortunately at the final hour the choir produced a respectable concert to a respectably sized audience with a terrific party to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the choir afterwards. However the high level of absenteeism during the summer term was an issue the choir needed to address (including whether they wanted a summer concert) together with a strong recruitment drive, as a number were leaving the choir.

Overall he commended the choir for its the quality and efficiency which made his effort of having to travel to London each week worthwhile .

In relation to absenteeism and the nature of the programme for the summer term the general view was that the choir did not want to dumb down and do merely 'comfortable /popular' pieces in the summer. However concern was expressed that it had been difficult to get an overall feel for the Gloriana concert because of the 'bittiness' of the programme which had not been sung through as a whole until the final rehearsal. Members felt that the additional rehearsal had been very welcome and it was agreed that additional rehearsals should be programmed into the choir's calendar for each concert in future, even if they were not necessarily pursued they would be in members diaries. *Philip Pratley proposed* a vote of thanks to Paul for his work and support through the year.

6 Motions from the choir

No motions had been presented by members for consideration by the meeting.

7. Committee elections for the 2013-14 season

Liz Walton was standing down as secretary and *Joanna Tomlinson* had been nominated to stand as secretary in her stead. The other two officers on the Committee were re-standing, while there were also single nominations for all of the other posts. Katherine Herzberg was standing down as joint business manager but would take on the work of concert manager as a non-committee post. The following members were elected unanimously to serve for the 2013-14 season:

<u>Chairman</u>	Jonathan Williams
Proposer	Jane Mackay
Secunder	Katherine Herzberg
<u>Secretary</u>	Joanna Tomlinson
Proposer	Martin Humphreys
Secunder	Ken Holmes
<u>Treasurer</u>	Patrick Haighton
Proposer	Emmanuel Boukandoura
Secunder	Hilary Davies
<u>Business manager</u>	Penny Prior
Proposer	Helen Audaer
Secunder	Monica Darnbrough
<u>Librarian:</u>	Mark Graver
Proposer	Simon Lawson
Secunder	Laurie Grace
<u>Publicity (joint)</u>	Martin Humphreys; Ruth Eastman;
Proposer	Laurie Grace; Hilary Davies
Secunder	Ian White; Janet Simpson
<u>Webmaster:</u>	Richard Grafen
Proposer	Laurie Grace
Secunder	Simon Lawson
<u>BIS Rep</u>	David Rawlins (co-opted)
<u>Sop Rep</u>	Kate Goulden
Proposer	Jacky Erwtaman
Secunder	Janet Winstanley

Alto Rep	Alison Williams
Proposer	Miranda Douce
Secunder	Jean Orr
Tenor Rep	Alastair Tolley
Proposer	Kevin McManus
Secunder	Philip Worley
Bass Rep	Daniel Lambauer
Proposer	William Longland
Secunder	James Gourlay

In addition Ian Williamson, Ken Holmes and Penny Prior were re-elected as Trustees of the Jubilee Trust Fund proposed by Mark Graver and seconded by William Longland.

Jonathan Williams thanked the Committee and the Trustees for their support to him throughout the year and all those who contributed to the successful running of the choir on a week to week basis. In addition the choir expressed their thanks to Liz Walton on retiring as secretary and also to Jackie Houghton for her front of house help and arranging drinks at concerts.

8 Any other business

a) Come and Sing May 2013: While the Verdi Requiem Come and Sing with the Whitehall Orchestra in May had been enjoyed by a reasonably large number of visitors, the attendance from choir members was poor. Feedback from those attending and discussion at the meeting indicated that the main issue was the split of the day between Paul and Michael Nebe which was generally seen as unsatisfactory. Much of the detailed work Paul put in with the choir was lost when they sang with the orchestra later in the day, mainly it was felt because Michael Nebe was not a choral conductor. Some felt that it was unsatisfactory not to end with a full performance of the piece. David Rawlins for the Whitehall Orchestra said that players enjoyed the event as it was the only opportunity they had to play with a choir like Whitehall. It was felt that because of the recording such an event was unlikely to be possible in Summer 2014. St Sepulchres was thought to be a good venue and consideration would be given by the committee to the form future such events and workshops should take.

b) Attendance at rehearsals: Paul expressed concern that the dress rehearsal for the Gloriana was the first time all those singing in the concert had actually sung as a group, given the numbers absent at each rehearsal during the term. This was a situation that should not continue for future concerts. Excluding members from singing at concerts if they missed more than three rehearsals was acted on, although Paul made exceptions when the balance of the choir would be affected if certain members did not sing. The size of the choir meant that it did not function effectively if too many missed a concert – absentees were something larger choirs were able more readily to carry. It was agreed that at the beginning of the year it would be emphasised that members were expected to attend all rehearsals unless there were pressing reasons why they could not. Three absences a term was not a right but a practical benchmark against which to decide whether people should sing in a concert. It was argued that for those working, at least two absences a term was realistic one for work and one if sick. Including also occasional absence for holidays meant that three absences a term was a sensible working figure.

c) Friends: Ken Holmes raised the matter of the Friends Scheme for which there had been only one new member during the year. It was agreed that greater publicity would be given to the scheme and members encouraged to recruit new Friends.

d) AGM minutes and papers: it was requested that draft minutes of the AGM and associated papers should be posted as soon as possible on the website. They had appeared only shortly before this year's AGM.

e) Change of Vicar at St Stephens: concern was expressed as to whether the change of vicar would affect the choir's use of the church. The committee were hopeful that the church would continue to be available and saw no reason why the position should change. The choir had signed a card and a bottle of the choir's own label champagne for the retiring vicar Philip Welsh.

Liz Walton
Secretary
August 2013