



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MONDAY 2nd September, 2019
BALFRON CHURCH**

Present Kirsty Allan, Ken Allen, Amy Anderson, Pat Ashworth, Joyce Begg, Liz Brander, Alison Brown, Roy Burdon, Colin Cameron, Julia Cross, Catherine Davidson-Carr, Mark Evans, Philip Gaskell, Victoria Glasse-Davies, Madeleine Gorham, Richard Green, Karen Heron, Peter Hunt, Ian James, Mary Lawson, Moira McKendry, Sheena McLean, Jenny McNeely, Judith Neil, Bill Noblett, Anne Parker, Fiona Renfrew, Annette Rogers, Hans Schutten, Rosie Series, Isobel Shaw, Heather Smith, Melanie Smith, Elspeth Smith, John Smith, Ewing Wallace, Penny Watson, Carole Young.

1) Apologies: Christine Hunter, Jennifer Lunn, John MacDonald, Carol Omand,

2) Minutes of the AGM on 3rd September 2018:

Adopted as correct: proposed by Catherine Davidson-Carr; seconded by Liz Brander

3) Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

4) Chairperson's Report:

Musically, this was a very strong year, which opened with our Highland Tour in May 2018. Around 30 of us travelled to Strathpeffer to sing with the Dingwall and District Choral Society in the Strathpeffer Pavilion, and then to Newtonmore where we joined the Badenoch Chorale in a well-attended concert in St. Brides Church. Both host choirs were most generous in their welcome, and we sang a mixed repertoire including excerpts from Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Jenkins' *The Armed Man*. It was a weekend that was hugely enjoyed by all.

At Christmas we sang in both Gartmore Village Hall and Killearn Kirk, and our programme included Cecilia McDowall's *A Winter's Night* and Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*. The soloist was the baritone, Daniel Barrett, currently studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and he did a splendid job. We were accompanied by the Douglas Academy String Quartet, two of whom have played with us on a number of occasions and who are now moving on to the next stage of their careers. The choir wished Anna Mackenzie and Corin Whitmarsh all success. Penny Watson provided piano accompaniment in Gartmore, and John Gormley in Killearn.

We also had an enjoyable Saturday morning at The Smiddy, Blair Drummond, singing carols for the Christmas shoppers. Helen Barclay was our accompanist. This was our first time at this venue, and they are keen to have us back.

Our annual Musical Coffee Morning was held on 2nd March 2019, and was very well attended, with excellent musical and culinary contributions from members of the choir. Plans are subsequently being discussed for a choir folder of lighter numbers that can be performed outside of our regular concerts.

For the Spring Concert we gave over the entire concert to a performance of Haydn's *Creation*, supported by the musicians of McOpera, and the soloists Monica Toll, Seumas Begg and Phil Gault. John Gormley provided the organ accompaniment. This was musically a big success, but was quite demanding for the audience, which was smaller than for previous concerts. The committee will give consideration to increasing our numbers, both of singers and audience.

On non-musical matters, due to changes in the Data Protection regulations (GDPR) which took effect in May 2018, choir members were asked whether they wished to opt-in to, or opt-out from, receiving emails from the choir that do not relate directly to the core business of the choir. Their responses were collated and are held by the choir Secretary.

At the AGM on 3rd September, we said a very big thank you to Kirsty Allan and Moira McKendry who came to the end of their tenure as the Catering Committee. They have done excellent work over the past four years, which has been much appreciated by the choir, guest musicians and our audiences. A new catering team comprising Julia Cross, Philip Gaskell, Christine Hunter and John MacDonald was elected. Annette Rogers was confirmed as Alto representative.

Once again our thanks go to the Friends of Strathendrick Singers for their ongoing support, and to Mark Evans and Penny Watson who are musical inspirations to us all. And after many years of exceptional service, Ewing Wallace has announced his retirement from the role of Choir Librarian. We are all hugely grateful for his input over the years, not just as Librarian, but as printer of tickets and posters, writer of programmes, and corrector of linguistic infelicities!

5) Treasurer's Report:

Bill had previously circulated the Financial Report to the choir members.

He pointed out that there had been reductions in income from both the Christmas and Easter concerts due mainly to disappointing ticket sales and size of audience. The Committee had a meeting in May to discuss this and will be looking at ways to address this in future, initially moving the Christmas concert from Friday to Sunday, which may help. There had been a subsequent fall in income from the Christmas Raffle, but Bill thanked the choir for their generosity in donating raffle prizes and donations for the coffee morning.

He spoke about Easyfundraising, and encouraged choir members to use this when making online purchases.

There were slight increases in overall payments to our Music Director and Accompanist, primarily due to Penny now being a full-time professional.

The cost of musicians/soloists for the Spring Concerts shows a significant increase, reflecting the size of orchestra necessary for *The Creation*. Mark was thanked for keeping the size manageable and affordable.

Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Colin Cameron, seconded by Judith Neil and they were duly adopted.

Colin thanked Bill for all his work.

6) Music Director's Report:

Christmas

This programme seemed to work very well and again, having the chance to perform the programme twice was really useful. The atmosphere in the Village Hall in Gartmore is very warm and close and I am looking forward to going there again.

The Fantasia on Christmas Carols is a fantastic piece – quintessential Vaughan Williams. This is a piece full of great tunes for singers and audience. The quartet added something extra but we were exceptionally fortunate to have Daniel Barrett, the baritone soloist, with us. Thanks to him for his solo contributions also – a joy to listen to! He thoroughly enjoyed himself and wished to come back to sing with us again in the future.

Well done all in the Seal Lullaby. This is deceptively difficult and there were some very lovely moments especially in the final sections as you all released your inner seals! A few audience members commented to me how beautiful they thought it was.

Cecilia MacDowall knows exactly what she is doing when writing for choirs and A Winter's Night is a fine example of that. An interesting and original set of arrangements of popular carols, this goes down well with the audience. Of course, not the first time we have sung these settings and this made the performance feel even more confident and comfortable.

I am a big fan of Arnesen's music – some would say it is in the lighter classical vein. I really love the Cradle Hymn both in the SSA and SATB versions, made more luscious with the addition of the quartet. Well done and thank you for a lovely rendition.

Many conductors find Christmas a chore with the same old arrangements being pulled out of the bag time and time again, which is why I like to find, when I can, pieces which are a little different. I'm sure you had the most wonderful time singing Bob Krogstad's similarly titled arrangement! In fact I know you did as you were all beaming. As I had said in rehearsal, we did not sing all the notes (although they were mostly in the right order!) but the effect was of energy and excitement and from the reaction on both evening the audience really enjoyed it. Many thanks, as ever, to Joyce for her annual message of good cheer! All in all, two good concerts!

Easter

This concert, for me, was quite important in the musical development of the choir. The choir sang to a standard I do not think I have heard before, and I mean that genuinely. Not a huge sing across the concert for the choir but what they chorus does have to do is very significant nonetheless. We started early as ever and worked very consistently. I don't know how the choir felt but I feel that I did push for a lot of detail, and make no apologies for that. In fact, it meant that when we came to performance day, with the orchestra and soloists, we did not have to 'rehearse' the choir as everything was in place. I do appreciate all the energy from the first entry of "And the Spirit.." to the final "Utter thanks" and "Amen".

I make the joke several times about making the orchestra's heads turn when we started to sing and they were really impressed by what they heard. I think that when they come in and hear a choir sing well, whilst they are professionals, they do realise we mean business. For me, the orchestra was a joy to work with. Not just super players, but genuine and honest and easy to work with. They were clearly enjoying themselves which helped. Our visitors always feel welcome and thanks to you all for that. The choir does of course feed off the band and this was certainly the case in March, raising your singing to another level. We used a reduced orchestration which suited the voices, the logistics, and hopefully the bank balance! My thanks to the soloists Monica, Seumas and Phil. In particular, Phil really brought a sense of the drama through his performance and as ever was a delight to work with. I think the audience was rather bowled over by the concert (and rightly so), some indeed saying they did not think the Singers could perform to that standard. I think it was proof of what we can achieve and that we should not shy away from pushing ourselves. So thank you all for your hard work again. My only slight disappointment was perhaps the slightly small audience, something for discussion at another time perhaps and which I know the committee wishes to address.

Plan for 2019-20

Christmas

Britten – Ceremony of Carols. Traditionally this is set for SSA but I have a very fine and popular arrangement for SATB. This is with harp or piano accompaniment. It would be good to have a harpist and if not, Penny will do a very good impersonation.

This would be the meat of the first half and then the second half more traditional carols and a perhaps one or two new items. As ever, our student quartet from Douglas is primed to come and play, and looking forward to it already.

Easter

I am putting together a programme of Baltic Music. Perhaps entitled Baltic Nights...? The main meat of one half will be Gjeilo's Sunrise Mass, which we did perform about 5 years ago, then paired then with the Mozart Requiem. By Baltic I would mean repertoire from the 3 Baltic States and the wider Baltic coast, so using the Sunrise Mass as a 'main' piece and then have several smaller contributions – composers such as Ciurlionis from Lithuania, Part, Vasks, and more contemporary pieces including the likes of Arnesen. This is work in progress but I am confident that we will have a concert of great and beautiful music.

Thanks

My thanks go to the Committee, Ewing, Penny, and thank you to all the choir for a super year with so many great musical moments – for your energy, commitment, hard work and fun, thank you!

7) Election of New Committee:

Chairperson: Colin Cameron was nominated to stand again. Proposed by Bill Noblett and seconded by Ken Allen

Secretary: Amy Anderson was nominated. Proposed by Colin Cameron and seconded by Bill Noblett

Treasurer: Bill Noblett will continue as Treasurer

Librarian: Sheena McLean indicated her willingness to act as Librarian. Proposed by Colin Cameron and seconded by Judith Neil

Carol Omand was appointed as Soprano Rep.

8) Future Events

Come and Sing. Saturday September 21st 2019 at Balfron High School

Colin indicated that, so far, the number of people contacting him to register to sing was disappointingly low. He urged choir members to come along, and also to redouble their efforts to spread the word by social media, fliers and posters (which will be available next week).

The aims of the Come and Sing are to engage with Balfron High School, to make the Community aware of the choir and potentially to join us, and for everyone to have a thoroughly enjoyable day.

9) AOCB

Colin thanked Ewing for his many years hard work and dedication as our Librarian; and Judith for her excellent stewardship as Secretary. This was resoundingly seconded by all. He made presentations to them both on behalf of the choir.