

Thurrock Choral Society

Conductor: Crispin Lewis

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2015

This is the ninth occasion that I have been privileged to provide a report on the society's events and achievements from the previous year. Again, I would like to thank the hard working committee which has supported both me personally and our choir during that time – and indeed for the whole of the time that I have served as Chair, as all the current incumbents were already very experienced committee members when I joined them. Indeed Stephen Pinnock has served as Concert Secretary (man and boy) for almost half a century! I am sure you would wish me to thank all of them for their commitment and dedication in ensuring the society has run smoothly and efficiently for so many years.

Last September we moved our weekly rehearsals to Thameside Primary School and we thank the Headteacher, Ms Christina Pumphrey and her staff for making us so welcome – and also our Secretary Kate Draper for facilitating this move. We have settled there very well – in the school hall which has a piano (so we do not need to use our keyboard) - and very good acoustics. As this venue has plenty of parking, we intend holding our first concert there shortly. The two main concerts of the 2014-2015 season were held at Grays Parish Church and were well received with excellent press and social media reviews which have been uploaded onto our website: www.thurrockchoralsociety.org.uk. As always, we are fortunate to have been led by our Musical Director Crispin Lewis and many thanks go to him for his hard work – and also to our accompanist Elspeth Wilkes and Raymond Lewis who has both deputised on occasions and played the church organ at concerts. We also thank the soloists, instrumentalists and guest singers at concerts.

Apart from concerts, we occasionally hold social events and were pleased that one of our members, Meryl Catty has twice spoken on interesting topics – the origin of surnames and of common words or phrases. These were held in the historic surroundings of the Woolmarket at Horndon-on-the-Hill and accompanied on each occasion by a wine and cheese buffet. Our thanks go to Meryl for her part in making these events very enjoyable for all those who attended.

The number of singing members stays small but reasonably stable. We have had an influx of young people during the year but as so often happens, their education or career takes them elsewhere. Hannah, one of our altos moved to Bath to teach cycling and PE - and Louis returned to take up a university place in his native Bremen, Germany. However we are pleased to retain Charlie (for the moment), a talented and hardworking young singer and actor.

On the financial front, we are grateful to Thurrock Arts Council for its annual grant, although we have been warned that this is a limited resource and may not continue to be offered in the future.. This means that it will be even more difficult to balance the books and constitutes a very real threat to the future viability of the society. As previously mentioned, our fees are the lowest in the region and we more than ever need to increase both our membership and the attendance at our concerts and other events to guarantee our future survival. We still supplement our income with raffles and I thank all members for their contributions here. Also, our 100 Club costs £1 a month/£12 a year to

join - prizes are drawn at regular intervals – thanks again to our Concert Secretary for organising this so well. Although this income is very welcome, it is not sufficient to meet our expenditure. But please support this Club and encourage friends and family to become Patrons or Associate Members. As a reminder, Patrons pay £50 per annum and receive two complimentary concert tickets, 2 newsletters and invitations to the AGM and social events, Associates pay £4 p.a. and also receive newsletters and invitations to the AGM and social events.

Again, I wish to pay tribute to committee members: Pam Worrall, (Vice Chair) Kate Draper, (Secretary), Sheila Walsh (Treasurer/Arts Council Representative), Linda Wade (Librarian/Associate Members' Secretary), Suzarne Price (Registrar) and Stephen Pinnock (Concert Secretary) also our President, Mr Merlyn Jones and Mrs Margaret Jones who support all our events. We are also indebted to Mrs Pat Cameron for kindly producing the Independent Accounts Examination. Thanks also go to everyone at Grays Parish Church, Thameside Primary School and to all our other partners and supporters

Finally, as ever, I invite you to work with us so that the society continues to be a beacon of choral excellence in the borough of Thurrock.

Sandra Wilkes

Chairperson