

Thurrock Choral Society



Conductor: Crispin Lewis

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2011

This is my fifth annual report as TCS Chairperson and I am pleased to give details of the society's events and achievements during the past twelve months. This has been a rather busy year with not one, but two changes of rehearsal venue, as well as some new events such as the singing courses. I must pay tribute to the committee in managing these changes with their customary hard work and good humour - supporting the society in continuing its high standards of performance and raising its profile in the local community.

Our concerts continue to receive much acclaim and good reviews were published in the borough's press and online. We are again fortunate to have been led by our Musical Director Crispin Lewis and many thanks go to him for his hard work and expertise - and also to our accompanist Elspeth Wilkes and the excellent soloists and orchestras at concerts. The pattern of performing two major works in April and November, with a less formal Summer Soirée in July has continued, but instead of our own concert at Christmas, we were invited to support Grays Rotary Club Christmas Concert at the Civic Hall. This was very well attended with a 600-strong audience (despite inclement weather) and substantial funds were raised for local charities. Contributions came not only from TCS, but Thurrock Male Voice Choir, Aveyley & Newham Brass Band, Deneholme School Choir and the Thurrock Young Musician of the Year.

As well as holding our concerts and soirée, we were able to secure funding for two five-week singing courses in the autumn and spring, led by the excellent Lesley Cooper (Crispin's mother - also a professional musical director) and accompanied by Elspeth. These initiatives brought new people to sing with us and a few decided to join the choir permanently as a result. But the usual exhortation applies - we need more members - especially of the male variety! In March we again held a very enjoyable Workshop with Bob Chilcott where we studied his Requiem, we will re-visit this lovely new work when we perform it as part of our Spring 2012 concert.

We are grateful to Thurrock Borough Council (for their various grants schemes), Thurrock Arts Council for its annual grant and to the Grassroots Scheme for supporting us for the last two years. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the society to secure sufficient funds to continue its programme and so difficult decisions will have to be made with regard to reducing our present level of expenditure. Concerts with orchestra are very expensive to fund and have to be heavily subsidised as - despite wide publicity - they do not attract a sufficiently large audience to cover costs. Also TCS members' fees are by far the lowest in the region and weekly rehearsals costs have increased. (We were no longer able to rehearse in a free venue and now pay a hire cost for our current venue at Grays Church Hall). We will be consulting widely with members on the best way forward to ensure that TCS remains a viable organisation into the future, but we must accept that changes to the way we operate are inevitable.

We supplement our income with raffles at concerts and social events - thanks to all who have donated prizes. Also, we have a 100 Club costing £1 a month/£12 a year to join - prizes are drawn at regular intervals. For details, contact our Concert Secretary, (whom I thank for organising this so well). This income is very welcome; supporting the expenses of high-calibre soloists and orchestra, but it is insufficient to meet our expenditure. Members are asked to support this Club and also invite friends and family to become Patrons or Associate Members. Patrons pay £50 p.a. whilst Associates pay £4 p.a. Both receive newsletters and invitations to AGMs and events - patrons also receive two complimentary tickets to concerts.

Again, I thank the committee for their support: Pam Worrall, (Vice Chair) Kate Draper, (Secretary) Brian Price, (Treasurer), Linda Wade (Librarian), Sheila Walsh (Arts Council Representative), Stephen Pinnock (Concert Secretary), Suzarne Price (Registrar) and particular thanks to Peter Wade who is retiring as Associate Members' Secretary. Thanks also to our President Merlyn Jones and Mrs Margaret Jones for their constant support, to Norman Pickett for kindly producing the Independent Accounts Examination and to all at Grays Parish Church and St Clere's school. On a sad note, we learned that a longstanding member, Brian West recently passed away at his home in the Wirral. Brian sang tenor for many years and was also a committee member. We send our sincerest condolences to Vera and their family.

Finally, let us all work together to ensure that TCS can survive and grow, so that we can continue our long musical tradition in the Thurrock community.

Sandra Wilkes

Chairperson