

AGM - 23rd November 2021 Report from chair - Huw Jenkins

When I began my report last year by saying *the 2019/20 season for Royston Choral Society was like none other* I didn't really believe that I would feel the same would be true a year later. A whole year without the ability to meet and sing together is a somewhat unusual situation for a choral society to be in.

However, we have come through that year and as we look back it is wonderful that we are doing so from the position of having restarted in-person rehearsals, and looking forward eagerly to our first concert for almost exactly two years. The future is bright!

We took the decision early on in the pandemic to not, as some choirs chose to do, go down the online rehearsal route. Whilst some singers find these enjoyable, they are not really very satisfactory from a musical perspective and Andrew, now finding his days filled with online teaching for school, was understandably not keen to do yet more of this in the evenings.

Instead, huge thanks must go to Fay for the series of online social activities that she arranged during the year. Ranging from Taskmaster type challenges, to a wine and cheese evening and puzzle nights these were thoroughly enjoyed by a good number of members of the choir. Interspersed, as they were, with a series of recorded singing lessons put together by Andrew - incorporating some vocal exercises as well as teaching a range of songs in different styles and languages they allowed the society to maintain some cohesion and contact which was very much appreciated.

At many times I am sure it felt like herding cats, but Chris too did sterling work during the year corralling members into writing articles for the website and for a regular series of newsletters for our members and supporters. Again, all so very important to ensure we maintained some level of visibility.

The trip by a group from the choir to sing in Rome, originally planned for July 2020 and then rearranged for June 2021, sadly had to be cancelled again. We took the decision not to simply postpone it again this time but to cancel. However, it is still hoped that the trip will go ahead at some point - possibly later in 2022 or 2023.

We have continued to follow the on-going restoration work to St John's Church in Royston. Inevitably that has suffered from some delays due to the pandemic as well as finding significant additional work which needs to be done. Easter 2022 is now the date when they hope to be open again. As a result we eagerly look forward to returning to the church to both rehearse and perform from the summer.

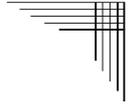
I think there were many of us that felt the Government treated amateur musicians somewhat poorly during the pandemic. Advice about what could and couldn't take place was often delivered late and was very often contradictory. We were fortunate, as members of Making Music, to be able to access the significant resources they put together to help societies understand and navigate the



Royston Choral Society

Charity number 1090459

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rules. At various points in the year the committee officially, and many members individually lobbied our members of Parliament but with no real success. Some of the replies received also didn't really seem to offer much support. I think it is a great shame that the role of music and the arts in general to enhance peoples' well-being and enrich society is not apparently appreciated more by those in power.

It was inevitably a less busy year for the committee than normal. However, on your behalf I would like to thank everyone who has served on that for the last year for their contribution and good humour. Joining online committee meetings must at times have felt a bit pointless but thank you so much for doing so. The accounts show us to be in a good state financially and so as some new sort of normality returns we can look to the future with confidence.

So, let's put behind us what has been a strange 18 months or so for the society and look forward to much more fine music-making in the Royston area. 2021-22 brings a varied feast of Haydn, Handel, Mozart and Todd and we are also talking about a significant programme for our 50th anniversary year coming up shortly. Enjoy the singing and please all do everything you can to make sure we perform to full audiences by selling tickets!

Huw

