



Registered Charity No. 1090411

Handbook for Members



Alnwick and District Choral Society

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Alnwick and District Choral Society is a member of the National Federation
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Alnwick and District Choral Society

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this edition of Alnwick and District Choral Society's members handbook.

If you are new to the Choral Society, hopefully you will find the answers to many of your questions in these pages. Each vocal line (SATB) has an elected representative who will advise you on where to sit and to whom you can refer if you have any queries or suggestions. You will find their names in the Appendix.

If you are an old hand, this booklet should contain some useful reminders. There are also some blank pages at the back that you can use for your own choral notes or even your shopping list if you wish.

Much of the information in this handbook can be found on the Society's web site (www.alnwickchoralsociety.co.uk) along with some great photographs and details of past and current programmes. If you have access to the internet, do try and find time to look at it. We are very fortunate to have the services of talented and patient musicians (Music Director and Chorus Master, Peter Brown; Accompanist Alan Gidney; Assistant Chorus Master Veronica Gilbert) to guide us (and occasionally cajole us) on our musical journeys.

I hope you enjoy your time with the Choral Society, giving and receiving as much pleasure from singing together in the future as we have done in the past.

Alison McKenna (Chairman)

Alnwick and District Choral Society

BACKGROUND

Alnwick and District Choral Society was founded in 1934, although records of a Choral Society can be traced to the middle of the 19th Century.

Regular concerts are performed in local Churches, particularly St. Paul's with its wonderful acoustic. We also perform at the Playhouse, as well as occasional less formal events in places such as Brinkburn Priory and the Alnwick Garden.

Our concert programmes vary enormously and have included music from 4 centuries, from Monteverdi to Elgar, from Buxtehude to John Rutter. As well as traditional large scale works such as Bach B minor mass and Handel's Messiah, we have also tackled songs of Brahms and Schumann and have a substantial Mozart repertoire.

FINANCES

The Choral Society is almost entirely funded by its member's subscriptions and audience ticket sales, supplemented by donations from Society "Friends" and the hire of music to other choirs. Our ambitious plans are carefully tempered to take account of our ability to pay for them. We regularly employ excellent professional soloists and orchestral musicians for our concerts, all of whom are paid out of Society funds. Alternative sources of funding are constantly being sought and all avenues explored. Subscriptions are reviewed on a regular basis and will normally only be raised when absolutely necessary. Current rates are published in the Appendix.

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ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

You will find the following items indispensable at rehearsals:-

Pencil

Rubber

Drink

Current music

You will also need a black folder on occasions for holding sheet music during performances. These can be obtained from any music shop (or the internet) or you may already have something suitable at home.

REHEARSALS

Rehearsals are held on Wednesday evenings at Swansfield Park Primary School, The Avenue, Alnwick, NE66 1UL. Please arrive early enough to start promptly at 19:15. This is particularly important at the start of term when there may be music to issue and/or collect. There is usually a short break around 20:15 and we aim to finish at 21:30.

The year is usually divided into 3 terms in line with the school year and geared around our performances. However we may have rehearsals at half term or in the school holidays if the work requires it.

There may also be some Saturday morning rehearsals each term. These are particularly useful sessions as singers tend to be fresher at these times, so you are encouraged to make every effort to attend.

ATTENDANCE

Members are expected to attend rehearsals regularly and minimum attendance levels may be set for performance in a concert. If you expect to be absent due to other commitments, please let your line representative know.

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MUSIC SCORES

Music is normally provided by the librarian. This may have been borrowed from the County library, from other choirs or from our own extensive library. We may buy copies in if this is more appropriate. While we try to keep costs to members to a minimum, there will be occasions when we have to ask for a contribution, or to ask members to buy their copies.

We also have some standard books of music that members will need to provide themselves.

These are:-

100 Carols for Choirs - edited and arranged by Willcocks & Rutter, OUP - usually referred to as "The White Carol book" which is used at our Christmas concerts. This can often be found on Amazon or from music shops costing approx £14 -£16 or ask the librarian who may have new or second user copies available to buy.

European Sacred Music - edited by John Rutter, OUP - the librarian has a supply of this book which is available to purchase at the discounted price of £12.00, or you can make your own arrangements.

In addition, you should have your own copy of Handel's Messiah, preferably the Watkins Shaw edition. Again, the librarian sometimes has stocks of new or second user copies available to buy, it's always worth asking.

Each member is given a library number which identifies their music. Members will be advised when they need to return music and should do so promptly to avoid the Society incurring additional hire or postage costs. Music should never be marked with anything other than soft pencil and should not be used as a diary or for shopping lists! The back pages of this booklet can be used for your own notes or reminders.

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PERFORMANCES

Dress - Normal dress for concerts is:-

Women - Choral Society standard white overblouse (see your line rep or the librarian), a full length black skirt or trousers, black shoes, black socks/stockings/tights.

Men - Black trousers, black (dinner) jacket, white shirt, black bow tie.

This dress may be varied for Christmas or other occasions, but you will be advised in advance.

"Getting In" - Wherever performances are held, there is always a need for physical help to set up staging, move chairs and generally prepare the venue in advance. Members are expected to assist in whatever way they can to smooth this process and ensure the right environment for a successful performance. To this end, members may be asked to sign up to assist on a rota basis.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLICITY

There is little doubt that a full house encourages the very best performances. As a member of the Society you are strongly urged to encourage family, friends and neighbours to come along to our concerts and share the pleasure of singing to a full house, as well as raising funds.

Members can also help publicise our events by putting up posters in their local areas, placing flyers in local shops and notices in local magazines.

SOCIAL

In addition to its musical activities, the Choral Society has a lively and active Social side managed by the Social Committee. This can include an annual dinner and ceilidh, a summer party, visits to the Sage Gateshead or other occasional social events throughout the year. These events can only happen if members are willing to help. The Social committee are always looking for ideas and volunteers.

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You can speak to your line rep or to Debbie Howey, Social Secretary, if you think you can contribute.

FRIENDS

In order to continue to produce concerts of the very highest level the choir relies heavily on the interest and core support of its Friends.

In return for an annual donation Friends are :-

- Kept informed of events and activities

- Given priority bookings for all concerts

- Priority seating at our concerts in The Playhouse, Alnwick

- Included in our programme's list of benefactors

- Provided opportunities to socialise with the choir members

- Given free supper tickets for the annual post concert buffet in the Playhouse.

By having a lot of Friends the Society is able to secure grants and funding more easily. This is because it demonstrates to the fund providers the Society's inherent popularity and worth within the community.

Anyone can become a Friend by sending an annual donation of whatever amount they choose (minimum single: £10.00). If each member can sign up at least one Friend, this will boost the Society's funds considerably.

If you know of anyone who would like to become a Friend of the Society, then ask a committee member for an application form or contact the Friends secretary (see Appendix for contact details).

Alnwick and District Choral Society

APPENDIX

Committee 2018-2019

Committee members are elected or re-elected each year. New committee members are always welcome.

Chairman	Alison McKenna
Vice Chairman	Karen Carlson
Secretary	Gillie Stapleton
Treasurer	Sally Onions
Librarian	Joyce Clayton
Social Secretary	Debbie Howey
Friends	Doreen Davison
Line Reps	
Soprano	Vicky Johnson
	Felicity Edmunds
Alto	Cherry Hambrook
Tenor/Bass	Ian C. Brown

Annual Subscription

£90 per person payable in September.