

WATFORD PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SECRETARY'S REPORT TO THE SOCIETY ON THE 86th SEASON

The Society's 86th season was the seventh under the guidance of our conductor Michael Cayton and the fifth under the leadership of Chairman David Pollak, who was succeeded at the delayed 2020 AGM by Pam Allanson. It was unique in that members of the Society were unable to meet in person either to rehearse or to perform at any point during the whole season. The reason was the Covid-19 pandemic, which put the whole country in lockdown from March 2020. Once the lockdown was eased, meetings and social gatherings of all kinds were subject to strict regulations to ensure social distancing. Choral singing was held to be a particularly hazardous enterprise.

Undaunted, the Society continued to hold virtual choir rehearsals via Zoom for an hour every Monday evening. These continued until the end of the season, and regularly attracted over 50 members performing a mixed repertoire each week, ranging from John Rutter's *Birthday Madrigals* to *Mamma Mia* and *Les Miserables*. Michael Cayton took the opportunity to include some sight reading and vocal exercises and finished most rehearsals with a popular song to sing along with. Tim Pettigrew and Nikki Hind provided technical and administrative support.

At Christmas, Frances Pyatt organised a Virtual Carol Concert which was much enjoyed by everyone. The Peace Hospice invited the Society to contribute some carols to the annual Lights of Love ceremony, to be held online. Individual members from both choir and orchestra recorded their parts on their smart phones, and Michael Cayton somehow knitted everything together to form a most pleasing whole.

Members also kept in touch throughout via the *Corona Chronicles*, an informal online newsletter devised and edited by Judy Newton-Davies.