

**MINUTES of the Seventeenth Annual General Meeting of the British Clavichord Society  
held at 2.15 pm on Saturday, 23 June 2012  
at the Oxford Quaker Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW**

Members present: Derek Adlam (President), Susan Alexander-Max, Peter Bavington (retiring Chairman), Alex Bell, Peter Belton, Garry Broughton (elected Chairman during the meeting), John Erskine, Christopher Gold, David Griffel (retiring Secretary), David Helliwell, Andrew Lamb, Martha Leigh, Adrian Lenthall, David Millard, Lynne Mirrey, Jillian Mitchell, Ian Mortimer, Karin Richter (elected Secretary during the meeting), Huw Saunders, Mimi Waitzman, Judith Wardman, Paula Woods.

**1. Apologies for absence** had been received from J. S. Brinsford, John Collins, Ulrika Davidsson, David Derrick, Sally Fortino, Edmund Handy, Ulla Kite, John Lester, Sam Lloyd, Kenneth Mobbs, Peter Mole, Pat Murdoch, Simon Neal, Julian Perkins, Micaela Schmitz, Chris da Silva, Paul Simmonds Peter Stephens, Anthony White, Howard Woollin.

**2. The Minutes of the 16th Annual General Meeting**, held on 21 May 2011, were circulated and taken as read. They were accepted unanimously, and signed by the Chairman.

**3. The Chairman gave this report:**

Let's start by looking back at the events which the BCS have organised for members and the general public over the past year.

Our 2011 AGM at the Art Workers Guild in London was, as usual, followed by a free concert. The recitalist on that occasion was Peter Sykes, over here on a visit from the USA; he not only played superbly well, but also intrigued everyone by reading his music from facsimile – on an iPad. Peter is not only a superb clavichordist, organist and harpsichordist, but also the owner of a substantial collection of clavichords, and the Chairman of the Boston Clavichord Society. Last December it was discovered that he was suffering from damaged tendons in one shoulder: these were operated on, which of course put a temporary halt to his playing activities, but we understand that he is making good progress and is already back to playing. We send him our very best wishes for a complete recovery.

The next event was our visit last July to the home of Linda Nicholson, which contains the private collection of keyboard instruments built up by Linda and her husband, Alan Rubin. The collection includes about 30 instruments, nearly all in playing order, and almost every one among the finest preserved examples of their kind. We are grateful to Linda and Alan for this rare opportunity, and the trouble they took to make us welcome.

In autumn 2011 we put on an ambitious event here in Oxford, in this very hall: a complete clavichord performance of Book One of the Well-Tempered Clavier, in two recitals on the same day. The artist, Robert Woolley, is well known as a harpsichordist, but we think this was his first public clavichord recital – quite an honour for us.

In March this year we had the second joint harpsichord and clavichord recital arranged in collaboration with the British Harpsichord Society at the Handel House Museum, Terry Charlston being the performer this time. The recital room at the museum, holding an

audience of just under 30 people, is an almost ideal ambience for the clavichord, and I hope this joint recital will become a regular annual event.

Two eighteenth-century clavichords from the Nicholson/Rubin collection were heard earlier this year in Linda's remarkable recital of eighteenth-century music at the Art Workers Guild. We are, of course, most grateful to Linda, not only for playing so sensitively, but also for allowing her valuable historic instruments to be moved from their home for this outstanding event.

Finally we have this afternoon's recital by Marcia Hadjimarkos, one of today's most distinguished clavichordists, who has come over specially from France. This event could not have taken place without the help of many people: I'd like to thank David and Kumiko Helliwell, in particular, for lending the clavichord and accommodating Marcia in their home while she is in Oxford; thanks also to Huw and Martha Saunders, Simon Neal, Ben Marks and David Law for vital help without which the event could not have gone ahead.

Judith Wardman, having retired as secretary last year [in fact it was two years ago], stayed on the committee specifically to plan and organise BCS events. It has been quite an impressive programme, and I know how much thought and effort has been put into it. Many thanks to Judith for her work all through the year.

As well as public events directly organised by the Society, there was one which we supported financially, namely Paul Simmonds' recital in the Workshop Concerts series in Lewes last month. That brings me on to the subject of sponsorship.

For many years now, the BCS has offered help to promising young keyboard professionals who have shown an interest in the clavichord, by sponsoring lessons with experienced clavichord teachers. In the past year, one candidate, Sophia Russell, has benefited from this. Since there is a shortage of good clavichord tuners and technicians, we have extended the scope of this scheme to include young trainees who want to learn about clavichord tuning and maintenance – that is, in principle: we haven't yet had any such applications, but we hope there will be.

We have also occasionally given financial help to other projects, such as recordings, in the past when asked to do so. The committee recently decided to put this kind of sponsorship on a more regular basis. Applications can be made for help with any project that will advance the aims of the Society, and the committee will decide each case on its merits. The possible scope of such projects is quite wide: as well as recordings and publications, the committee is prepared to consider sponsoring academic research, public events including clavichord performances, and the restoration of historic instruments. Details of the scheme and how to apply are on the Society's web-site.

Paul Simmonds' recital last month in Lewes was sponsored in this way, and we have also agreed to give modest support to a recital for voice with clavichord accompaniment in Berkhamsted next month, the performers being Norbert Meyn and Terence Charlston.

More substantial help has been promised to the project to restore the 1925 clavichord by Arnold Dolmetsch which belongs to the National Trust and is part of the Fenton House collection. The Trust commissioned me to do the restoration, which is now complete, and the instrument is now in fine playing order awaiting its return to Fenton House. The committee were influenced in their decision to make a grant towards the cost by the fact that, as well as the actual restoration, it would involve some tuition. Ben Marks is on a special training placement with the National Trust, and he joined me part-time and participated in the work – and I hope learnt something about clavichord restoration in the process.

I must explain that we are scrupulously careful to avoid conflicts of interest when an application for sponsorship involves a member of the committee, even indirectly. Because the clavichord world in this country is a small one, we think it is not practical to rule out such applications altogether, but in such cases, the committee member concerned must withdraw and take no part in the discussion of the application or the decision. In the case of the Dolmetsch clavichord, the application came from the National Trust, not from me personally, and in principle another restorer could have been asked to do the work; but as it was likely to be me, I had to temporarily surrender the committee chair and leave the room.

Sponsorship is something we are able to do because of our strong financial position, and it extends our reach considerably. Organising events and projects ourselves is expensive in volunteer time and effort, which are in short supply; if we can, by spending a modest amount, get other organisations to advance our aims – that is, to promote understanding and appreciation of the clavichord and its music – then we think sponsorship is justified.

At this point it might be fair to ask how successful we have been in advancing those aims. It has to be said that, within the UK, the clavichord is still at the margin of musical life. We are still hard pressed to find experienced clavichord teachers, good clavichord players, competent tuner-technicians, and instruments for recitals. The clavichord is hardly ever heard on the radio, and few new recordings originate in the UK.

There are some encouraging signs. Paul Simmonds' residential course at West Dean College continues to attract pupils. At least two conservatoires, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy, now have good instruments and teachers willing to devote some time to the clavichord; and occasionally concerts and recitals happen without the BCS being involved. One such was Susan Alexander-Max's courageous decision to use a clavichord for the first half of a solo keyboard recital in Inigo Jones' splendid but enormous Banqueting House, Whitehall: this event is reported in the most recent Newsletter. Another is next week's clavichord recital in Wokingham Town Hall, to be given by Richard Smith, who has mostly been known hitherto as an organist and choirmaster.

As members will know, we have put some effort into promoting the use of the clavichord in musical education. Our greatest success has been in the two London conservatoires just mentioned. Over the past year there have been two educational events: in November last year we provided a clavichord for John Henry's introductory lecture to first-year keyboard students at Trinity College, and in May this year we supported Menno van Delft's master-class and lecture at the Royal College – there is a report of this in the most recent Newsletter. We are reviewing our Educational programme, to see whether there are ways we can be more effective in future. David Millard has spent some time considering whether we could run educational events within the state education system, and if so how, and I thank him for his work on this. David and Judith have produced a strategic report, which has been the basis for consultation with experts inside and outside the Society; it is available on the web-site, and we would welcome comments from any BCS member. All those who have responded so far want us to continue the educational effort, but there are doubts about the effectiveness of an educational visit where there is no clavichord on site, and no member of staff willing to continue what we have begun. The new committee will no doubt decide on the best way forward, but meanwhile I would like to thank Judith and David for the considerable effort that went into preparing the report, and into their attempts, sometimes rather frustrating, to identify willing hosts for our presentations. I also thank Judith for planning and administering the sponsorship of young persons scheme that I referred to just now.

I shall pass quickly over some of the other things we do. The Newsletter has appeared three times: for the moment, it is unlikely to change very much, and we shall continue to deliver it in print form. For the time being, I shall continue as editor when I step down as Chairman. The content of all 53 issues of the Newsletters is listed on the web-site, and we have recently taken steps to ensure that we can continue to supply copies of all the back numbers in print form. I have no doubt that at some future date the Newsletter will 'go digital' but that will probably not be for a year or two yet. We are fortunate in having a number of knowledgeable and articulate members who contribute reports and reviews, and I'd like to thank all of them; and also Huw Saunders for sending out the Newsletter efficiently and promptly, as well as distributing Clavichord International to those that have subscribed to it.

The web-site has been maintained by David Hitchin, with some help from David Griffel. It is gradually growing in interest with the addition of more useful material: in particular, we now have an on-line Register of Professional Services, which replaces the list in the International Clavichord Directory. In due course more of the material in the Directory booklet will be updated and added to the web-site.

How healthy, then, is the Society? Membership at present is lower than last year and stands at 160: this figure will rise a little before the end of 2012, since some members – you know who you are – have a habit of renewing late. Nonetheless, it continues a rather disappointing trend of slow decline over the last few years. Some of this, no doubt, is due to the operations of the grim reaper, and some to the current financial conditions, which are causing many people to trim their expenses. I hope this trend can be halted and reversed, as I have always felt that we need about 200 members for a viable society in the long term. I suspect that there are still clavichord players in the country who for one reason or another haven't yet considered joining the BCS: when we come across them, let's encourage them to do so. Meanwhile, I thank Paula Woods for keeping the membership records so efficiently.

I am now nearing the end of my two-year term as Chairman. That it has been a largely positive experience is due to the help and co-operation I have received from many people, and the hard work and commitment that they have put into running the Society. I should like to thank all the committee members, who have sometimes had to travel quite long distances to participate in committee meetings; all those who have taken on special tasks for the Society – I haven't been able to mention them all – and all those who have helped at meetings and events. I thank the treasurer, David Hitchin, who has been like a rock of stability over the past two years, and whose briefings to the committee and presentation of the annual accounts have been both meticulous and exceptionally informative. Above all, I must say special thanks to David Griffel, the retiring secretary, whose clear and accurate minutes have, I think, helped to make membership of the committee seem worthwhile and even enjoyable. Among other tasks, David has helped with the web-site, administered the sponsorship of clavichord projects, and dealt with general correspondence. His good sense, foresight and creative thinking, instantly available by return of e-mail, have been a great comfort to me over the past two years.

The Society now enters a new phase, with long-standing members of the committee retiring and new ones joining. I wish the new committee every possible success in promoting the Society's aims, and I look forward in due course to the celebrations of our twentieth anniversary in 2014.

In response to this report:

- Mimi Waitzman reported that Peter Sykes is recovering well from the operation on his shoulder, and has played recitals.

- David Millard asked whether it would be appropriate to put the Chairman's report on the website. In reply, the Secretary said that the report will be reproduced in the minutes of the AGM which he hopes will appear on the website within a fortnight. The Chairman added that for those without internet access the minutes will be available by post from the Secretary on request.

#### **4. Annual accounts and Treasurer's report**

The independently examined accounts for the year 2011 were circulated together with a written report from the Treasurer for the year 2011. Introducing the report and accounts, the Treasurer pointed out that:

- subscriptions have increased only once in the lifetime of the Society, in 2008, but might have to be increased again for 2013, the increase in postage rates being one relevant factor;
- the income from subscriptions has been reasonably steady;
- the General Fund rose to a maximum of roughly £11,000 in 2002, after which we adopted a policy of spending more than our income in order to bring the fund down to a reasonable level, around £6,500, which has been maintained since 2009. The fund is a useful buffer, enabling us, for instance, to spend a considerable sum this year supporting the restoration of an early Arnold Dolmetsch clavichord ;
- our meetings and recitals have consistently cost us more than they have raised;
- the main change in income between 2011 and 2010 has been the drop in subscription income;
- on the expenditure side, Newsletter costs have increased; but our Newsletter dispatcher, Huw Saunders, prudently bought large numbers of stamps before the sharp increase in postage rates, so the next few issues of the Newsletter will be mailed at the old postage rates;
- it is difficult to interpret the bookshop entries in the accounts without having figures from stock-taking. An inventory of the stock is needed, but making an inventory requires a good deal of work, which it would not be reasonable to undertake every year.

In response to the report and accounts, Mimi Waitzman noted that there was no spending on the archive this year. In reply, the acting Archivist, Judith Wardman, explained that the archive was begun by Francis Knights to store documents of various kinds relating to the history of the clavichord during the lifetime of the Society; that there is at present no archivist; and that JW, as acting archivist, can do no more than arrange storage for the archive, and accept donations and suggestions for purchases. The £33.48 spent in 2010 was for storage boxes. It is unfortunately not possible at present to make the contents of the archive easily accessible to members. However, questions regarding the archive are welcome.

There were no other questions. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Derek Adlam, seconded by Alex Bell, and passed nem. con.

## **5. Election of Treasurer and Committee members (see below)**

### **a. Chairman**

Peter Bavington having come to the end of his two-year term of office, one nomination had been received: Garry Broughton, proposed by Karin Richter and seconded by Huw Saunders. No other candidate was nominated. A resolution to elect Garry Broughton was proposed by Judith Wardman and seconded by Adrian Lenthall; it was passed unanimously.

Garry Broughton took the chair, and spoke warmly in appreciation of the work of his predecessor.

### **b. Secretary**

David Griffel having come to the end of his two-year term of office, one nomination had been received: Karin Richter, proposed by John Collins and seconded by Anthony White. No other candidate was nominated. A resolution to elect Karin Richter was proposed by Peter Bavington and seconded by Mimi Waitzman; it was passed unanimously.

### **c. Committee members**

i. The following had reached the end of their 2-year term as committee members, and were eligible and willing to stand for re-election:

John Collins, nominated by David Millard and seconded by David Hitchin.

Ulla Kite, nominated by Anthony White and seconded by David Hitchin.

David Millard, nominated by Huw Saunders and seconded by John Collins.

Judith Wardman, nominated by Karin Richter and seconded by Huw Saunders.

The meeting agreed to take a single vote to re-elect the four candidates above. They were re-elected unanimously.

ii. The following BCS members had expressed willingness to stand for election:

Christopher Gold, proposed by Ulla Kite and seconded by Huw Saunders.

Andrew Lamb, proposed by Huw Saunders and seconded by Anthony White.

Francis Knights, proposed by Judith Wardman and seconded by Karin Richter.

Jillian Mitchell, proposed by David Griffel and seconded by Karin Richter.

No other nominations were received. The meeting agreed to take a single vote to elect the four candidates above. They were elected unanimously.

## **6. Election of Examiner of the Accounts**

Brian Blandford had agreed to stand for re-election, and had been proposed by Judith Wardman and seconded by Peter Bavington. He was elected unanimously.

## **7. Any other business**

There was no other business, and the meeting ended at 3pm.

At 4pm a public clavichord recital was given by Marcia Hadjimarkos.