

**MINUTES of the Sixteenth Annual General Meeting of the British Clavichord Society
held at 2.15 pm on Saturday, 21 May 2011
at the Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AT**

Chairman: Peter Bavington; Secretary: David Griffel.

Present: Peter Bavington, Alex Bell, Brian Blandford, David Derrick, Christopher Gold, David Griffel, David Helliwell, Adrian Lenthall, Alastair Laurence, David Millard, Lynne Mirrey, Jillian Mitchell, Karin Richter, Huw Saunders, Peter Stephens, Mimi Waitzman, Judith Wardman, Anthony White.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from: Rosemary Andrew, Sheila Barnes, Peter Belton, James Brinsford, Garry Broughton, Penelope Cave, Neil Coleman, Sally Fortino, David Hitchin, Richard Ireland, Ulla Kite, J. P. Lester, Sam Lloyd, Byron Mahoney, Peter Mole, Charles Mould, Pat Murdoch, Julian Perkins, Duncan Preston, Claire Randall, John Shaw, Chris da Silva, Mike Telford, Elizabeth Witts, Howard Woollin, Akihiko Yamanobe, Mary Wetherick, Paula Woods.

2. The Minutes of the 15th Annual General Meeting, held on 5 June 2010, were circulated and taken as read. Their acceptance was proposed by Karin Richter, seconded by David Millard, and unanimously approved. They were signed by the Chairman.

3. The Chairman gave this report:

In this report I shall try to review the activities and progress of the Society since the previous AGM, and also to cast an eye on what has been happening in the wider clavichord world. I'll start with our programme of events open to members and the general public. This began immediately after the last AGM with Susan Alexander-Max's clavichord recital of works by J. S. Bach and two composers more usually associated with the fortepiano, namely Johann Christian Bach and Muzio Clementi. The clavichord, moreover, was a fretted one on this occasion. Susan's playing made light of any difficulty, and was a convincing demonstration of just how versatile such an instrument can be in the right hands.

If you were there, I'd be interested to know what you thought of the venue, the Oxford Quaker Meeting Room. I liked it a lot: it was large enough to accommodate an audience of 40 or 50 people, with a fine acoustic, and almost perfect quiet; and in addition, a lovely garden and a cheerful room in which to gather and to take refreshments. The committee approved, and the feedback from members so far has been positive, so we are going there again on 29 October this year, when we shall be presenting Robert Woolley's complete performance of the first book of J.S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier in two separate recitals on the same day. Booking opens soon: details will be in the next Newsletter. We also plan to return to Oxford for the 2012 AGM.

The second BCS public event was our clavichord afternoon at the Grosvenor Chapel here in London last November, an informal event which had a largely Iberian theme in honour of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Antonio de Cabezón, with talks by Garry Broughton and John Collins, and a memorable performance by our secretary, David Griffel, of works by Cabezón and his contemporaries.

Then in February this year we managed to get a foot in the door of the Handel House Museum when we sponsored, jointly with the British Harpsichord Society, a recital by Julian Perkins entitled Handel's Attic. Julian's programme was based on the famous story of the young Handel practising secretly on the clavichord in a remote part of the house in order to escape the wrath of his father who had banned him from musical studies, and it focused mainly on works he would have played at that time.

Recitals at the Handel-House take place in the wood-panelled room on the first floor which was once Handel's rehearsal room. Its size is such that, despite occasional noise from outside,

it is not difficult to hear the instrument, and at such close quarters you can appreciate the colour of the sound and every subtlety of the playing. Unfortunately there is room for an audience of 24 people only, which limits the outreach and also makes the economics difficult; nonetheless, we hope to arrange for the clavichord to be heard there more regularly in future.

The next event on the horizon is of course Peter Sykes's Bach to Beethoven recital later this afternoon. As well as being a well-known organist, harpsichordist and clavichordist, Peter also happens to be the President of the Boston Clavichord Society. This might perhaps be the moment to mention how very much we appreciate the friendly co-operation we have enjoyed with the Boston Society. Under a long-standing arrangement, some members of the Boston Society receive our Newsletter as well as their own – a great compliment to us, and an encouragement to me as editor to keep up the standard. But more of that in a moment.

This free recital following the AGM is now an established BCS tradition. In part, it is meant to encourage members to attend the AGM itself; but we also think of it as a way of drawing in the general musical public, most of whom will probably never before have heard a clavichord. Another tradition is that the AGM alternates between London and venues elsewhere in the country: this is so that, at least every other year, local members can attend the AGM more conveniently and a wider selection of the general public can have the opportunity to hear the instrument. As I mentioned, next year's AGM will be in Oxford.

We do try to be a truly national society, and we would love to have a series of events all over Great Britain; but what we need is one or two members on the spot who can help with organisation and logistics. It is very hard to arrange a local event at long distance. So – if you would like a BCS event in your region, if you know a suitable venue, and if you are willing to help, do please let us know.

Looking ahead, we have arranged for a group visit to the private instrument collection of Linda Nicholson on 7 July this year, following the success of our visit to Christopher Hogwood in 2009. Numbers for this are limited, so please send in your applications as soon as possible. Following the great success of Linda's recital here at the Art Workers Guild in March last year, I'm delighted to announce that she has agreed to play for us here again in April 2012: watch the Newsletter for details.

At last year's AGM, Judith Wardman stepped down as Secretary, but she agreed to continue as a member of the committee to co-ordinate our public events programme. I'd like to thank her most warmly for her work over the past year, and also those volunteer members who have given their time and effort to make the events run smoothly.

The year has also seen a number of other clavichord events in Great Britain: this is encouraging, if it means that the clavichord is beginning to take its place once again in the general musical life of the country. I can't list all these events, but I shall mention three of the most memorable: first, the visit of that superb clavichordist Marcia Hadjimarkos to Finchcocks and Hatchlands in June; second, Julian Perkins' recital exploring Book 2 of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier at Trinity College, Cambridge in October; and thirdly Miklós Spányi's recital at Lewes and masterclass at the Royal College of Music in March.

Mention of the Royal College reminds me to report the encouraging news that that institution now has three fine clavichords available for teaching. In addition to the historic Dolmetsch instrument in the Museum, and a fretted clavichord after Schmahl by Adlam-Burnett, both of which have recently been overhauled and are in excellent order, the Royal College has received a superb unfretted clavichord after Hubert, made by Derek Adlam in 1985. This is a gift from Virginia Pleasants, who is of course well known to us here because she is a founder member of our Society and also the recipient of a BCS award. Virginia now lives in Pennsylvania, where she celebrated her one-hundredth birthday on 9 May. A message of greetings and congratulations was sent on behalf of the committee and the whole Society, and I believe Virginia had a very happy day.

Still on the subject of distinguished founder-members, you will all know from the announcement in the last Newsletter that the committee has decided to make Sheila Barnes an

honorary life member. Sheila was, of course, our first Treasurer and Membership Secretary and made a crucial contribution to setting up the BCS in the first place, but her contribution did not stop there. With her husband John Barnes she organised five very successful BCS weekends in Edinburgh, including recitals in their home; and she initiated and administered the BCS Awards for Clavichord Composition in 2004. She successfully negotiated outside sponsorship both for the weekends and for the composition awards scheme, without which both projects would have been seriously handicapped. All this is quite apart from her generosity and support given to individual BCS members in many ways. Sheila joins Paul Simmonds and Judith Wardman as honorary life members, which is our way of recognising the outstanding service they have given to the Society.

Looking now at our other activities, probably the Newsletter is the thing that means most to BCS members; it is also the thing that concerns me most, since I am the editor. It is a mix of reports, reviews and news items and, most importantly, announcements about forthcoming events, but we also try to include interesting articles on clavichord-related subjects. For these, I sometimes encourage members to produce articles on subjects they know about, but mostly I depend on what members happen to send in. The Newsletter is meant to appeal to all members, and I'm anxious for it not to be too exclusively highbrow. I'd love to know whether members feel the present balance is about right. I'd like to include more pictures, too, but apart from copyright issues, getting them to print correctly does add considerably to the preparation work involved.

As you know, the Newsletter takes the form of an A5 booklet and it comes to you through the post. Eventually there may be a move to distribute it electronically via e-mail, either instead of or as a supplement to the traditional print format. Electronic distribution would, of course, save us both money and volunteer time; moreover, there are some advantages to the user: for example, it is easier to search through the back-numbers if you have them on your computer. However, you do need to have internet access, and the evidence is that, at the moment, not everybody has.

I'd be interested in a quick opinion poll of members present. How many of you would be willing to receive the Newsletter entirely by e-mail instead of by post? And how many would prefer to receive it by post as at present?

[Opinion in the hall was about evenly divided]

Something that members perhaps are less aware of is our programme of educational events and sponsorship: however, over the years we have put a great deal of effort into these two activities, and the committee are now conducting a review to see what are the strengths and weaknesses of the approach we have adopted, and how we can be most effective in future.

The aim of our educational programme – firmly in line with the aims and objects of the Society – has been to encourage musically talented young people to take an interest in the clavichord. Most educational visits have been to specialist music schools and conservatoires, under the leadership of a professional tutor, and they have been a mixture of talk and demonstration, a master-class, and playing in small groups with several clavichords of different types available. The event usually concludes with a short recital by the tutor, for which the audience is often enlarged by other students, teaching staff and the public.

The aim of the review is to establish whether this kind of event gives us value for our money and effort; whether there are other ways we could pursue the same objectives; and, if we continue along the present lines, what improvements could be made.

As you can imagine, these educational events require a lot of organisational effort. We do, of course, rely on the co-operation of our hosts. Although they have sometimes helped with a contribution, generally speaking the whole cost of the educational programme has been met from BCS funds, that is, principally from your subscriptions.

Since the last AGM, we have held one educational event, at the School of St Helen and St Katharine in Abingdon, which was reported in the last Newsletter. On this occasion we had

the benefit of close co-operation not only with the school but also with the Bate Collection in Oxford, who loaned and transported instruments for the occasion. We are grateful for this help, and hope in future to build on this valuable relationship.

The educational programme is under the joint management of David Millard and Judith Wardman, and I'd like to thank them for taking on this task. Judith and David have produced a Strategic Report on our Education Activities, which we are using as a basis for consultation with a number of people whose experience might be useful. If you feel you can help us in this, please get in touch with Judith or David or with the Secretary. We'd particularly value the advice of members with experience of music-education at any level.

Closely allied with our programme of educational visits is our sponsorship scheme, which assists promising young keyboard students to have lessons from experienced professional clavichord players. At the moment, two young players are in the scheme. We are currently reviewing this activity as well. The main problem we have had is persuading busy young musicians to apply and, after that, actually to take up our offer: in fact, only about half of the offers we make come to fruition. This is slightly disappointing, since when keyboard students do play the clavichord, all too often they show little understanding of how to produce a good sound on the instrument. On the clavichord, you must support each note with a firm finger, otherwise you produce only a thin sound or, at worst, merely a click. Just dabbing a finger in the right direction is never enough: you have to think each note – beginning, middle, and end – which is why the clavichord is potentially such an excellent training tool for keyboardists.

We shall continue to work at getting this message across. It might help if we were able to recruit more student members. The subscription for student members is only £9 – half price – which is really quite good value nowadays.

I only have time to touch briefly on some of the other things that the BCS does: for example, the archive, currently managed by Judith Wardman, the website, controlled and updated by David Hitchin, and the BCS Shop, which is in the capable hands of Huw Saunders: my thanks to all three for taking on these tasks.

My particular thanks, also, to Paula Woods who has been keeping our membership records, and has volunteered to continue in this role even though she leaves the committee today. Paula has recently been affected by the sudden trauma of a detached retina: we are hopeful for a full return of her sight, and in the meantime David Griffel has been helping with some membership matters. I thank him particularly for taking this on at short notice. I am sure we shall all want to send Paula our very best wishes from this AGM.

Paula reports that we ended the year with 187 members. It must be obvious that the BCS, for an organisation of this size, has a remarkably wide spread of activities. This throws quite a load of work on to the shoulders of the committee, and I should like to thank all my fellow committee members for giving up their time to BCS work, particularly those who have to travel from a distance to attend committee meetings in London. I should like to extend my special thanks to my two fellow officers, David Griffel and David Hitchin, and to the committee Vice-Chairman, Anthony White: it has been a great pleasure working with them and they have given me every possible support.

Nonetheless, I wonder if we can continue to operate on this scale without at least a modest increase in membership, to provide a larger pool of capable and willing volunteers as well as more income. Without more members, we may have to draw in our horns a bit. I am sure there are clavichord players in this country who are not yet aware of the Society, and some of them would join if they knew about us. At present we have a vacancy on the committee for a publicity and recruitment officer. Now, there is scope here for an interesting job, if someone with initiative wanted to take it on.

This has been a longer than usual report, and I thank you all for your patience in listening to it. In a moment, I'll try and answer any questions you may have about the contents. I want to end, however, by saying something about our two members in Japan. Following the terrible earthquake on 11 March, I wrote to them both on behalf of the Society expressing our concern

for their welfare. I am happy to say that they are both safe, but shaken; however, one Japanese keyboard instrument maker, Yuichi Sato, who was one of the most active members of the former Japanese Clavichord Society, had his workshop completely destroyed by the quake. It will take years to reconstruct what has been lost. Whatever difficulties we may experience here pale into insignificance by comparison.

In reply to questions from the floor, the Chairman said that if in future some members were to receive the Newsletter by email, the Committee might consider whether such members should pay a reduced subscription. There are reasonable arguments both against and for that policy.

BCS publicity leaflets have been placed in some public collections such as the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

4. Annual accounts and Treasurer's report

The independently examined accounts for the year 2010 were circulated with the following report from the Treasurer for the year 2010 (read to the meeting, in his absence, by the Secretary).

Interest is lower than previous years as expected while all bank and building society interest rates remain so low.

Archive material has been purchased for the first time in several years.

Committee Expenses now also include the figures previously shown as "admin" as there was no clear or useful distinction between the two.

Bank charges include two penalties incurred when a cheque posted from the Halifax (the only way to transfer money to the Bank of Scotland) were delayed in the post. The new Barclays account is now functioning well, and in future transfers between accounts will be fast and predictable. The Bank of Scotland account remains open with a nominal amount for the time being. While all members who pay by bank transfer should have been informed of the new account arrangements, if any mistakenly pay into the old account their transfers will not fail.

Transfers between accounts. If we transfer money from the building society to the bank, then our statements show these as a withdrawal and a paying-in and they must appear as such on the bank reconciliation. On the other hand, they are purely rearrangements within our total accounts, and so they do not appear in our Income and Expenditure figures.

Clavichord International supply is a service which we provide to our members. We are charging £17 a year, while direct subscriptions cost €18. At present the difference in price is marginal, but our members don't have the inconvenience of paying in euros, which can incur significant bank charges. Our aim longterm is to supply these at cost price (purchase, postage and packing), but at the time when members pay (one-year or two-year subscriptions) we don't know the printing cost, the exchange rate or the cost of postage and packing, so in individual years there may be a surplus or a deficit. We do know that postal rates in the UK will soon be increased.

Subscription rates for membership and Clavichord International 2011 are unchanged, but will be reviewed by the committee in the autumn.

Figures for the bookshop stock are not yet available, and I assume that stocktaking would be an unnecessary burden to impose on the committee member who has just taken this over.

David Hitchin
25th April 2011

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Anthony White, seconded by Peter Stephens, and unanimously agreed.

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

a. Treasurer.

The following nomination had been received before the meeting: David Hitchin, proposed by Micaela Schmitz and seconded by Judith Wardman. No other nomination was proposed at the meeting. A resolution to elect David Hitchin was proposed by Anthony White, seconded by Huw Saunders, and passed unanimously.

b. Committee Members

There are three vacancies on the committee. The following nominations had been received before the meeting:

Neil Coleman*, proposed by Huw Saunders and seconded by Paula Woods, Huw Saunders*, proposed by Anthony White and seconded by Karin Richter, Adrian Lenthall, proposed by Peter Bavington and seconded by David Griffel.

* marks members who have reached the end of their 2-year term of office, are eligible to stand again, and are willing to be nominated.

No other nominations were proposed at the meeting. A resolution to elect all three candidates was proposed by Alastair Laurence, seconded by Mimi Waitzman, and passed unanimously.

6. Election of Examiner of the Accounts

Brian Blandford, having expressed willingness to stand, had been proposed by Judith Wardman and seconded by Peter Bavington.

No other nomination was proposed at the meeting, and Brian Blandford was elected unanimously.

7. Any other business

(a) Mimi Waitzman reported that funds are being raised to restore the Arnold Dolmetsch clavichord at Fenton House, which will then be used for recitals. The small fretted clavichord in the collection will now be permanently displayed in the Dining Room at Fenton House, a much more prominent position than before. This clavichord can be heard on Thursday in a recital by Peter Sykes.

(b) In the context of the chairman's remarks on the need for a Publicity Officer for the Society, Anthony White suggested that volunteers could come forward now.

(c) Alastair Laurence reported that Derek Adlam had been invited to give a clavichord recital at the Finchcocks anniversary celebrations next year, and they were waiting for his reply; and that Finchcocks is available for recitals. Peter Bavington

added that Finchcocks is well worth visiting, and its collection includes two clavichords.

The meeting ended at 3pm

At 4pm a public clavichord recital was given by Peter Sykes.