



THE SOCIETY OF RECORDER PLAYERS

Registered Charity No. 282751/SC038422

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING Sunday 16th September 2016 Hughes Hall, Cambridge CB1 2EW

PRESENT:

Vic Morris	Chairman	Alyson Lewin	Musical Adviser
Mike Wilkinson	Secretary	Evelyn Nallen	Musical Adviser
Ulli Burchette	Treasurer	Allyn Richardson	News Editor
David Rollason	Membership Secretary	Rodney Callow	Committee
Sandra Foxall	COS Secretary	Ciara Flanagan	Committee
Moira Usher	WBF Chairman	Pamela Flanagan	Committee
Sarah Langdon	Competition Administrator	Caroline Jones	Committee
April Munday	Training Co-ordinator	Frances Tuffery	Committee
Anthony Hall	Web Editor	Tricia Perrin	Festival 2017 (this item only)

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting at 12 noon and welcomed those present, including Tricia Perrin of Cambridge Branch who, following the Committee's established practice, had been invited as representative of the organisers of the following year's Festival. Apologies for absence were received from Helen Hooker and Ross Winters (Musical Advisers).

2. Festival 2017

2.1 Tricia Perrin gave a report on the progress of arrangements for the Society's Festival in Cambridge from Friday 7 to Sunday 9 April 2017. This was being hosted jointly by Cambridge, Beds & North Herts and Peterborough Branches. There would be a Recorder All-Star concert at the West Road Concert Hall on the Friday evening, with Michala Petri, Tom Beets, Piers Adams, Evelyn Nallen, Charlotte Barbour-Condini and Sophie Westbrooke. On Saturday and Sunday there would be a full programme of playing and workshops, at Long Road Sixth Form College, with a festive party on the Saturday evening to celebrate the Society's 80th Anniversary. This would include entertainment by the Chuckerbutty Ocarina Quartet and others. Information was already available on the Festival page of the Society's website and further details would be added when available. The Festival budget had been approved and costs for participants would be broadly comparable to previous years. Booking would open shortly, with a range of options for members and visitors wishing to participate in some or all Festival events. There would be discounted pricing available until 31 January 2017, and bookings and payments could be made online.

2.2 The Committee congratulated Tricia and her team on the arrangements they had already put in place, in very good time, for what promised to be an excellent and very popular Festival which, with appropriate publicity, could serve to promote the recorder to an audience beyond the Society's immediate membership.

3. Minutes of previous Committee meeting

3.1 The minutes of the Committee meeting held in Lincoln on 3rd April 2016 were approved.
Proposed: Moira Usher Seconded: Caroline Jones

4. Officers' Reports - record of issues discussed: the Reports themselves are on the website.

4.1 Walter Bergmann Fund: Grant applications were down, though the Fund had ample money available. It was therefore important to take every opportunity to bring the Fund to the attention of potential applicants. For example, some recipients of support from the Fund had been given the recital slot to which the Society was entitled as part of its participation in the Greenwich Early Music Festival (at Blackheath this year), and this provided an ideal opportunity to promote the Fund more widely. There was little support for any revision to extend the WBF's remit to applicants over 30 years old, who could be expected to be more able to find funds for courses and instruments.

5. Support for potential Visiting Conductors

5.1 The Committee returned to proposals put forward in 2015 by Pamela Flanagan for encouraging more people to become members of the Society's Panel of Visiting Conductors and/or confident conductors of their own Branches. Discussion of these proposals had previously been deferred. Several applications to join the Panel were currently being considered under the established procedures, but further qualified members would always be welcome to ensure that Branches had a wide choice of conductors to invite for subsidised Pastoral Visits and Playing Days.

5.2 In discussion it was noted that the Beginners and Intermediate conducting courses offered by the Society focussed on conducting techniques, though the description particularly of the Beginners course on the website could be expanded to give potential applicants more information about what it involved and aimed to achieve. However, the existing courses did not necessarily cover everything that conductors might need to know before conducting a group of players. For example, they might need advice on the selection and source of music suitable for the abilities and interests of a typical SRP group, and more guidance and practice than the existing courses could offer on rehearsal techniques, particularly for larger ensembles. It would be difficult to add more content to the existing courses, which already needed a full day to cover their material adequately, so the case for devising one or more new courses needed to be considered.

5.3 It was suggested that it could be informative to ask participants on the Society's conducting courses, possibly 6 months or a year after their course, whether they had had opportunity to put what they had studied into practice – and, if so, how helpful the course had been and, if not, what were the obstacles. It was also suggested that Branches should be asked whether they might occasionally be able to offer conducting experience to conductors wishing to improve their techniques and/or be auditioned by a Musical Adviser for membership of the Panel of Conductors.

Action: Training Co-ordinator, in consultation with course tutors

6. Selection and appointment of a new President

6.1 The Committee discussed a paper prepared by the Secretary listing the Society's past Presidents, suggesting a description of the role that the Society might now expect its President to fulfil and the process by which a new President, to succeed the late Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, might be chosen. It was generally agreed that the President should be someone of standing and authority in the musical world, likely to appeal to both younger and older players, and with knowledge of and enthusiasm for the recorder, though they did not necessarily have to be an accomplished player of the instrument. There was little support for the idea that the President, who would no doubt have many commitments, should play an active role in the management of the Society, for example by chairing a Board to oversee the operation of the Society, though this would not preclude the Society seeking the President's advice on such matters from time to time. Neither would it be appropriate for the specification for the role to require rather than encourage the President to take part in Society activities.

6.2 As for the selection and appointment process, the Committee felt that the voting scheme suggested by the Secretary was too prescriptive. While it would be appropriate to seek Committee members' views once a list of all suggested candidates had been compiled, the choice and prioritisation of names from that list would inevitably have to be more subjective since there were many factors, some competing, to be taken into account. After discussion, the Committee also agreed that the period of office for a new President should be 7 years.

6.3 The Committee agreed that, to help ensure widespread support for whoever was eventually appointed, it was important to give Branches, affiliated Orchestras and individual Society members an opportunity to comment on the role to be expected of a new President and to suggest the names of possible candidates, with supporting reasons, for the Committee to consider. For the selection process to be complete in time for Conference on 9 April 2017, it would be necessary to start approaching potential appointees in December or January, so there was insufficient time contact members via the Winter issue of the Recorder Magazine. The Secretary was therefore asked to revise his paper in the light of the Committee's comments and to send it to Branches and affiliated Orchestras with a deadline of the end of October 2016 for responses.

Action: Secretary

6.4 Committee members then suggested several names to start a list of possible candidates for the role of President. The Secretary would include these with the names to be suggested by Branches and Orchestras and circulate a complete list to all Committee members for comment early in November.

Action: Secretary

7. The Way Forward for the Society

7.1 The Chairman had circulated a detailed paper drawing on his experience to date in that role and, in particular, on reviewing the findings of the Report of the 2020 Working Group, published in March 2012. Some of the authors of that Report had expressed concern that, halfway to 2020, little action appeared to have been taken on many of its findings. There was also concern from some members in one or two Branches that the benefits of being part of the Society, rather than just a separate group of players, were not commensurate with the cost of members' national subscriptions – though the Secretary had noted that the cost was less than 45p per week and that the members of a Registered Charity should not expect to receive benefits equal in value to their subscriptions. The Society needed to take action to respond to such concerns and prevent them becoming more widespread.

7.2 The Chairman's paper addressed four key issues: publicity, recruitment, membership benefits and governance. He felt that all these required detailed consideration, and action, if the Society was to have a sustainable and productive future.

7.3 Publicity: It was alarming that some well-known UK recorder players claimed not to have heard of the Society and disappointing that many who had, especially professional players and teachers, were not members. The Society therefore needed a more active publicity strategy, both amongst the existing membership and more widely, to build awareness of the Society and its activities. The process needed to be continual, not sporadic, so that the message was regularly reinforced. This might involve a monthly newsletter sent by e-mail to all members (from which any member could opt out if they wished) and more content on the Society's Facebook page (though this already reflected new material on the website). It might also be useful to issue Press Releases to organisations and publications such as the BBC Music Magazine, the Early Music Magazine, Making Music, Music Teacher and ERTA, though each of these had a slightly different audience and the message to be conveyed would need careful consideration.

7.4 Allyn Richardson, recently appointed as News Editor, had experience of similar activities and it was agreed that, as a start, he should institute a monthly e-mail newsletter to members, focussing on Society news and on events in forthcoming weeks that could not be publicised in the *Recorder Magazine*. This newsletter would probably duplicate some material available on the website, but individual e-mails might reach members who did not regularly consult that. All Committee members were asked to send material for the newsletter to Allyn. The Chairman and News Editor would consider this issue, and the other proposals discussed by the Committee, further. The Chairman also agreed to initiate a search for a new Publicity Officer to succeed Emily Bannister, who was standing down.
Action: News Editor, Chairman

7.5 Recruitment: The perception that the Society consisted of elderly amateurs was not entirely wrong since younger players, professional players, teachers and music colleges were under- or unrepresented amongst the membership. The Society therefore needed to consider what it had to offer to attract interest and members from such groups. Younger players, for example, had many interests and activities competing for their attention but the Society could probably do more to follow up those who had already shown interest by taking part in a NYRO course or Recorder Day. It was the Society's policy to offer NYRO course members a year's free membership, including copies of the *Recorder Magazine*, but a more proactive and targeted approach might help clarify the factors that influenced whether they retained their interest in the recorder and music more generally. Also, while all the information was available on the Society's and NYRO's websites, both organisations might do more to ensure that NYRO members knew about their local SRP Branch and that Branches were aware of and invited to support NYRO events in their areas.

7.6 The decline of recorder playing in schools was a perennial issue, though there were many examples of dedicated teachers running groups in primary and junior schools to give children the opportunity to enjoy (and benefit educationally from) making music. Some of those children would continue with music lessons, but in many areas competing pressures and lack of provision for the recorder, or music more generally, meant this was not practicable within the secondary school system. It was, however, important to help children appreciate that the recorder was a versatile and serious instrument, played by adults and available in sizes from tiny to impressively big. This could be done by adult groups visiting schools, even when recorder lessons were not offered, to demonstrate the recorder to the pupils. More generally, Branches should be encouraged to work with schools in their areas, and to share the experience of doing so, to promote an awareness and understanding of the instrument. Branches might also be invited to look for opportunities to attend local events for the same purpose. If funding was an obstacle, the Society might be able to offer some financial support for such educational and promotional activities.

7.7 It was clear from the Committee's discussion that further thought was needed to give effect to some of the ideas put forward. David Rollason and Sarah Langdon offered to consider how the Society might foster links with schools and colleges, and all Committee members were asked to think further about other means of promoting the recorder and sustaining membership of the Society.
Action: David Rollason, Sarah Langdon and others

7.8 Membership benefits: Making clear what the Society had to offer to its members, and keeping the range of its activities under review, were central to retaining existing and attracting new members. It was instructive to compare what other musical societies offered and how they presented their activities – e.g. the British Flute Society, the Viola da Gamba Society, the Ukulele Society of Great Britain, the American Recorder Society etc. Alyson Lewin said she would try to find a note that Marion Panzetta had prepared some time ago on SRP membership benefits. It was also noted that the Society's "Welcome" leaflet, which the Secretary would be having reprinted in time for the Greenwich Early Music Festival in November and for two Branches which had asked for publicity material, already included details of nearly all the benefits offered by the Society. But perhaps the presentation of these

details needed to be reviewed and brought to the attention of members and potential members more proactively.

Action: Alyson Lewin

7.9 As for the benefits themselves, the scope for negotiating discounts for members from major supplies of instruments etc, such as the Early Music Shop, could be explored. The Society's overall aim was to promote the recorder, and discounts and subsidies for students and younger players, including through the Walter Bergmann Fund, clearly helped for them, but there was little evidence that cost was a significant obstacle for other players and potential players. Further, purchasers could sometimes negotiate discounts with suppliers whether or not they were members of the Society. A further suggestion was that, like the American Recorder Society, the SRP could make back issues of publications and music available to download from its website. This was already done to some extent with commissioned pieces, and it was known that some composers/arrangers/publishers were not keen on offering more items by this route, though access could be controlled by creating a section of the website accessible by members using a password. Another suggestion was offering full or partial discounts for Playing Days. Overall the Society had to be mindful of the requirements of its charitable status, including eligibility for Gift Aid, but the membership benefits offered by other charitable organisations showed that such benefits could be quite extensive without compromising that status.

7.10 Governance: The Committee discussed whether the President (when elected) and Vice Presidents might be invited to become involved in the operation of the Society. This issue had been partly covered by discussion of the selection of a new President, and the Committee still felt that, while advice and guidance could be sought from time to time from the President and Vice Presidents (and, indeed, from anyone whose views the Committee felt might be useful), it was not appropriate for them to have a formal role, for example on an Advisory Board, in the management of the Society, which was the responsibility of the Trustees. There were, however, currently about 18 Trustees and so the question had also to be asked about whether this remained a sensible number for effective management of the Society and, even if it did, whether it might be beneficial formally to assign some day-to-day responsibilities to groups of Trustees and/or Committee members such as the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. This was not to reduce the role and legal responsibilities of any Trustees but might be an aid to decision-making on matters in which not all Trustees need be involved (see also paragraph 8.3(c) below). Any changes in the governance of the Society needed further careful thought, and some might require the consent of Conference in accordance with the Society's Rules, so the Committee agreed to return to this issue at its next meeting.

8. Future meetings

8.1 The Committee discussed the timing, number and venue for future meetings. In recent years the Committee had met in January/February, after the annual Conference usually in March/April, and in October. These meetings were not well spaced, leading to protracted decision-making, and the one after Conference had become a distraction from Festival activities, making it inappropriate for detailed discussions and decisions. Holding more meetings would increase Committee costs and attract criticism from Society members. There was little support for holding some meetings on days other than Sundays. However, there was considerable scope for more online discussion and timely decision-making between meetings, leaving meetings to focus on important issues requiring detailed discussion.

8.2 As for venues, Benslow Music Trust in Hitchin had been an excellent venue for many Committee meetings but was increasingly full with course participants and unwilling to commit to dates for meetings more than a few months ahead. Most of those attending the present meeting had found their travel to Cambridge reasonably convenient and the arrangements at Hughes Hall most acceptable.

Minutes of SRP Committee meeting, Cambridge, 18th September 2016

8.3 Accordingly, the Committee decided:

(a) There should be two formal Committee meetings each year, on the third Sunday in February and the first Sunday in October, unless there was any over-riding reason why these dates were not appropriate in any year. This meant that in 2017 Committee meetings would be held on Sundays 19 February and 1 October.

(b) The practice of holding a formal Committee meeting immediately after the annual Conference should be discontinued, though that did not preclude Committee members dealing with any matters requiring urgent attention whilst at the Conference/Festival.

(c) More discussion and decision-making should be conducted online, using a dedicated forum available only to Committee members. This would record discussions as a continuous thread rather than in a sprawling mass of e-mails. If formal decisions were needed, Committee members would be set a deadline for submitting their views and their consent assumed if no reply was received.

Action: Web Editor

(d) Future meetings should be held in Cambridge, at Hughes Hall subject to availability.

8.4 Accordingly, the next meeting of the Committee will be on Sunday 19th February 2017, in Cambridge.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm.

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