



Chairperson's Report - North Swindon Big Band AGM 2020

At last year's AGM I was voted in as Chairperson and never having held this role before in any organisation, I didn't know what to expect. It didn't start well, as I had a complete brain fade of a senior moment and missed the first meeting. The other 3 committee members were sympathetic and managed perfectly well in my absence (although our Treasurer Ken will never let me forget it!). We have all been present and correct at committee meetings since then.

During February 2020 we were beginning to hear of this unusual virus from China that was gathering a lot of attention around the World. I, probably like others, thought this was some form of flu and come the warmer weather it would peter out and we could get back to enjoying our Summer programme of events. How wrong I was with so many dying in its clutches! The Band met last on 9 March 2020 and David Baker sent an email suspending rehearsal until 6 April on 13 March, but we have not rehearsed together since 9th. Your committee have been monitoring the COVID social restrictions with the hope of starting rehearsals again but recent restrictions (14 September 2020) have put these plans on hold. Concerned that The Band may be crumbling in terms of member commitment, a survey was taken earlier in the crisis and all members responded positively in wishing to remain as members and for The Band to continue. Thanks to you all for that commitment and I trust this still holds true.

At the outset of my tenure we decided to find ways that we could make The Band more professional in our approach. This was both in performance and administratively. This resulted in our new banners being designed and procured by David Baker as well as, for example, keeping extraneous items of band equipment away from performance areas. There were also radio mics provided to enable soloists to be heard through the amplification. At their first outing of the banners at Penhill, Jayne Baker took a series of photos and we looked good and the radio mics and other amplification helped us sound good too. Administratively we agreed it was essential to keep The Band apprised of items being discussed in committee and one of my duties was to provide this feedback at the following band rehearsal after each of the committee meetings. This happened a few times, but COVID put pay to this and so I have been using View from the Chair emails to continue this communication flow.

We decided to implement a Band Web-site that could be used both for possible marketing material together with a repository for band related information, including access to our music and internal band related data in the web-site members area. David Baker, as so often, has again done a brilliant job for us all in getting the site up and running and adding band member biographies to the web site and mapping out other aspects of what we need on it. The web-site work is ongoing and the committee at this time would like input and suggestions of how the web-site can be used to best advantage. The web-site address is www.northswindonbigband.co.uk. The decision was made that the wider use of social media (e.g. face book, twitter and Instagram) was, at this stage of development unnecessary.

Prompted by my role as chairperson, we have started, but not completed as yet, the creation of committee member role descriptions. As a new Chairperson such items will help clarify my role as well as that of each committee member. Such material will further add to the push for greater administrative professionalism and ensure each of us are clear on what we need to do. I have also prepared a Welcome Pack to be given to new members to help them integrate into The Band. As there were so many modifications to The Band's Constitution, and the fact that The Welcome Pack was to include a copy of that document, it will be released to all once the AGM has

decided whether the Constitution changes are accepted or not. Finally, we are close to agreeing a logo that can be used on our Band Communications as well as the web-site where appropriate.

We were in discussion with The Rodbourne Club to enable hard copy music in our archive folders to be stored there. We are close to identifying with them how this can be achieved but COVID as with so much has again put this on hold.

Comings and goings to the membership

Leavers: - Gerry Mason (trumpet) retired and David Scholl (bass), who had been a stand in, also finally left us. Roger Burn (piano) wants to resign membership but no replacement has been found as yet and Roger continued to help to the point of COVID interruption.

New members: - Karen Cordon, David Hide, Joanna Green and Norma Bates, joined The Band on saxes, Brian Harris joined the trumpets and Paul Richings joined on bass guitar.

You have my assertion that the other members of the committee have each done a splendid job. David Baker, as Musical Director, continues to astound me with what seems to be boundless amounts of energy and dedication for The Band. He has done a fabulous job of providing us with plenty of exciting new music and challenging musical experiences whilst insisting on upping our game as far as what is musically acceptable. Not least, he has impressed in producing the two virtual band recordings as well as providing us with challenging quizzes during lockdown. Ken Emerson, as treasurer, has not just carried out his treasurer's duties well, but has also worked tirelessly to sort out, provide and operate the amplification we use at gigs (including supplying radio mics). More recently Ken has been looking into our insurance matters together with being our expert on COVID regulations in our attempts to get The Band rehearsing again. A special thanks to Nina Stimson, as Secretary, for what she has done both in previous years on the committee and importantly, as far as I'm concerned, helping me this year to turn my ramblings into 'to the point' deliverables. This is Nina's last stint as Secretary and I wish to thank her, for myself and for band members for her support in looking after The Band contacts to secure so many performances for us, albeit that this year COVID has decimated these opportunities.

The future is still a problem for us, as it will be for many similar band organisations nationwide. My earlier hope that COVID would disappear is proving groundless and it looks as though, with Winter approaching, there will continue to be restrictions applied to groups of people meeting in confined spaces. The general age category of so many of our members makes it particularly difficult, especially where other underlying health conditions may also be present. As much for our mental health and social interaction together with the fun we have playing together, your committee will continue to monitor the situation and explore ways that will enable The Band to rehearse again safely. We may have to look at alternative venues until The Rodbourne Club, where we rehearse, is available again and this may impact our finances. We do not know, as yet, whether there will be a vaccine found that will eliminate the COVID issue. The best we can do is to have hope, and to monitor what's happening until the situation is clearer and it is safe for us to start again. Until then I trust that you all stay safe and keep well.

Graham Frampton

NSBB Chairperson
10 September 2020