DUNBARTONSHIRE
CONCERT
BAND

Dunbartonshire Concert Band

Minutes of AGM

Saturday 19th October, 2024, 1215-1305pm

Kessington Hall, 58 Milngavie Road, Bearsden, Glasgow, G61 2DP

1. Attendance and apologies

The meeting was quorate as more than one third of the current membership were present.

Apologies were received from Jacqui McMahon, Ruth Hart, Adam Jacobs, Adam Wilson, David Broad, Fiona Mclean, Laura Baker, Andrew McDonald, Andrew McCafferty and Anne Dunbar.

2. Approval of Previous AGM minutes

The minutes were approved by Fiona Ross and Michele Muir.

3. Receive Financial Accounts

The accounts were published and sent to the band via email prior to the AGM.

The accounts were proposed by Laura Hunter and seconded by Fraser Thomson.

4. Chairpersons Report – Ruth Sinclair

Another year of DCB has passed and so a quick recap – and apologies if I miss anything or anyone out. The festive season 2023 saw the band at Gartnavel Royal, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum and here at Kessington Hall, where our Christmas Concert sold out in advance. Thank you once again to The Bunting Team of Louise and Michele, who this time made some festive bunting for the hall. A special mention also to the brass group of Kirsty, Andrew, Neil, Grant, Anneli, Emma and Charlotte for fabulous festive playing at Morrisons Anniesland – and I think Susan, Monika and I did an excellent job as the collection bucket elves!

Mugdock in June 2023 was cancelled due to the awful weather so we went for May this year and managed to get one of the only good Sundays of the summer, as Michelle conducted us for the last time as Associate Conductor. Unfortunately a couple of attempts to arrange a concert date in Arrochar fell through and we also had to decline the invitation to WestFest 2024 as the date clashed with DWE's 50th anniversary concert and they obviously needed the percussion gear.

Our Summer Concert here at Kessington was a major success, selling out several days in advance. In fact, I had a waiting list of people wanting tickets. As an experiment, we tried a different approach in terms of entry this year, raising the ticket price slightly and including a printed programme in that price. Recent concerts, raffle takings have been down so we were interested to see if the option to purchase only one additional item on the night would increase raffle income. The Treasurer was very happy with the results of

the experiment! Particular highlights from the Summer Concert were the performance of Glyn's arrangement of Hamish MacCunn's 'Land of the Mountain and the Flood' and Alan's starring moment in 'Bats in the Belfry'. The audience feedback was not only how much they'd enjoyed the concert overall but how much they'd enjoyed the mix of several much longer pieces with shorter ones and this is a format we'll definitely revisit – I'm sure Robert will be talking about future music choices shortly. We rounded the season off with our second social meal of the season - thanks to everyone who attended.

A few background activities went on during the summer break – music sorting and filing (thank you Susan), the writing and distribution of the Associate Conductor job advert and after months of waiting, the delivery of the new bass drum, an upgrade to the percussion section that's been considered for some time. In respect of that, a record of thanks to Heather for the many phone calls made to various parties as we tried to arrange delivery at Kessington, and to Neil Macmillan who came to the rescue and collected the bass drum from a delivery depot in Bothwell (after we'd tracked it down to near Nottingham!) and brought it to the hall. Thank you both.

And then it was mid-August and the start of another season. Once again we played Kirkintilloch Canal Festival as our first performance of the season, this time making use of the redeveloped Regent Gardens. The weather was a little on the cool and breezy side but nothing that DCB hasn't encountered before! We then had the pleasure of hosting Star of the North Concert Band at Kessington for a joint concert in aid of Common Wheel. What a fabulous day that was, with the final total raised for charity over £1100! I'd just like to say thank you again to everyone who took part, who helped, and who contributed positively to the day but especially to Robert, Catherine Ward, Crowded Croft, Alison, Louise, Michele, Anna, Heather and Susan - and particular thanks to Susan and Neil for saving the day from a sandwich related disaster! Due to an issue with timings at Arrochar, we had to postpone our planned concert there but instead I was able to arrange for us to play at Gartnavel Royal. Fiona is so grateful to every member of DCB who gives up their time to go to The Hub – she would happily have us there every week – as the patients, staff and visitors get so much enjoyment from our visits and the music.

The final months of 2024 will have two main focuses – the remainder of the Associate Conductor auditions and Christmas, with concerts in December at Gartnavel Royal, here at Kessington and our favourite Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. With regards to the Associate Conductor post, when the advert went live we genuinely didn't know how many – if any – applicants we'd have and we were pleasantly surprised by the number who submitted CVs. We selected 5 for audition, who have a range of backgrounds and experience, and so far we've obviously had Alistair and Martin in, and we plan to have the others here over the next few weeks.

Going forward into 2025, there are quite a few things in the pipeline – we're not promising everything will get done but we'll aim high. We'll be returning to Erskine, provisionally in late February. The Three Villages Hall in Arrochar – well, we'll be trying once again to sort a date for there, potentially just after Easter. I'm sure we'll be at Mugdock, there's an invite to Gartnavel Royal at the start of May, maybe WestFest and there's our Kessington Summer Concert. In addition we have been considering for some time holding a Sunday afternoon concert of just Glyn's arrangements – "An Afternoon with Glyn" – a way to mark everything he does for DCB.

2025 is the 850th anniversary of Glasgow and there are several festivals taking place so that could be something to get involved with. It's also the 80th anniversary of VE Day in May and there may be some event(s) at Erskine. I also haven't given up hope of us returning to play in the atrium at the QEUH – but the refurbishment works are still very much happening. As always, if you have any new venue suggestions, especially one that can easily fit the full band and where we can collect donations, please let the committee know. For your information, this year we didn't get any payment from Kirkintilloch Canal Festival due to budget constraints; we can't collect money at any Glasgow Life site and we don't ask for payment from Gartnavel Royal.

As many of you know, during lockdown Colin on horn had way too much time on his hands and wrote the epic piece that is The Bearsden Bears. We've never performed it to a paying audience as, well, it is probably just a step too far! So we're hoping to record it for the DCB archives, to mark what will be looked back on as a moment of history. We've not worked out the logistics yet but the idea would be a morning of sectionals on the piece and then to come together to record it here.

Finally, the invitation to visit Tain and Inverness hasn't been forgotten about – I'm just waiting for Monika to organise it all!! I'm sure she volunteered anyhow… And we may sort of have got invited to Canada by Tony, who organised the Star of the North tour!

And now the thank yous. A huge thank you to Robert for all the hard work, time, encouragement and support that he puts in and gives to the band. There is an awful lot goes on behind the scenes that you don't see – choosing a mix of music that challenges us as players but is also fun and audience friendly; putting together concert programmes; sorting rehearsal schedules, all the extras for events such as the Star of the North visit – we created a lot of email traffic!

I'd like to record my – and the band's – immense thanks to Michelle McCabe for everything she contributed to DCB during her 9 years as Associate Conductor, which came to an end in June. Michelle was always generous with her time and advice, gave encouragement and support to us all and helped make DCB what it is today.

The next thank you goes to the committee for their support and all the work they've put in over the past year – Alison, Susan, Fiona, Heather, Anne, Anna and John. I'd particularly like to reiterate my thanks in relation to the SOTN visit to Alison, Susan, Heather and Anna. Sadly both Anne and Susan are standing down from the committee this year – oh no! Both have made an immense contribution to the band to ensure things run smoothly. If you or your guests have enjoyed non-cake refreshments at a recent Kessington concert, that will have been organised by Anne. Susan has been on the committee for 6 years now in a number of roles, most recently as librarian. For any of you who have been up to the library recently and seen how meticulously organised it is, that is largely down to Susan. You all getting the parts you need, that's Susan coming to Kessington in her own time outside of rehearsals to copy them. Thank you both very much for all you've done for DCB.

As always, Glyn was on standby throughout the past season, ready to take rehearsals if needed, and still arranging music for us – he did say a couple of seasons ago that there'd be no more arrangements but….. there are new ones ready and Robert has also asked him to arrange some songs so we can collaborate with Catherine Ward at a future concert.

Thank you also to David, Alan, Susan and Robert for all the work that goes in to Kessington, which means the hall continues to thrive as a community venue for music and the arts. Alan will give a short update on Kessington later on in the meeting but thank you to the Kessington Team for making our home a success.

Thank you to Neil Harper as Making Music Rep, Susan's partner Neil Macmillan for taking photos and videos and helping out with various tasks throughout the year, again often unnoticed in the background, Grant for organising and running the 100 Club, to all members who provide home baking for the concerts, to family and friends who help out at concerts selling tickets on the door, running the raffle, serving interval refreshments, being door security; and to all members who help with moving chairs and setting up for/tidying up after concerts. A note of thanks to Alan, for the website, setting up online ticket booking etc, and also to Margaret Isaacs, who was assisting Alan before she left the band. A final thank you to Robert Thomson, who after many, many years of auditing the band's accounts, is standing down as our independent financial examiner. Robert has willingly given up his time and expertise for the band and we are indebted to him for this.

Harriet may not be in attendance, but I can hear her telling me "don't forget about easyfundraising!" – so I won't! If you aren't signed up to it or you are signed up and are considering changing the organisation or charity you support, please consider DCB – and encourage family and friends to use it too. It's an easy way to raise extra funds for the band.

In conclusion, the band is in good health and brings enjoyment to members (that's why you're here) and audiences. All sections are well populated, we have a fabulous home and our concerts sell out. But a request - or 2 actually - please. All organisations like this require people to volunteer to give up their time to ensure they function so - and most of you do - please remember that those of us on the committee are doing this in our own time, unpaid and, like the rest of you, we have other commitments – jobs, families, elderly parents, family illnesses. With such a large group of people, of course some of you won't agree with all the decisions made and that's fine, but when you're not agreeing, please remember my comments about people doing this as volunteers. And please help by a) attending rehearsals, b) always sending apologies if

you can't attend rehearsals, c) completing availability polls for concerts and d) letting us know if your availability changes – we're not psychic! Robert and I need to know who will be at concerts so programmes and seats can be arranged – another element of background work you don't see. And on that note, here's to another great season for DCB. Thank you.

5. Musical Director Report – Robert Baxter

Robert began by looking back at our summer concert and noting how the audience responded positively to a slightly different format of playing longer pieces mixed with a few shorter pieces. He also advised that in 2023-24 session we introduced 12 new pieces including 5 Christmas pieces and 2 from Glynn Bragg. So far this session, we have 8 new pieces in the folders with some more Christmas music on order.

Robert also spoke of the positive impact our new bass drum has had on the tone colour of the section and the band overall. Robert donated a set of bongos and a drum kit so we have a spare kit if necessary.

Robert advised for this MD report, he was going to give an overview of some of the key strategies the band has in place as a way of sharing with everyone how we came to this point in the band's history and development, hoping that this may be useful to explain how things have evolved over the years and how we have arrived at this stage with the band and that members might be interested in learning about.

1. Recruitment: How has recruitment evolved over past 24 years from an open-door policy to advertising only specific instruments and why?

One of my first concerts with the band was at the garden behind St Mary's Cathedral on Great Western Road in 2000/2001 with a band of just 23 players (no percussion section, no trombone section or euphonium section, 1 horn, 1 saxophone no lower wind apart from 1 bassoon, no piccolo, Eb clarinet). This number doubled to around 46 by 2002/3 and around 55/56 by 2004/2005. While it was great that the band grew exponentially there was potential that the number of players was outgrowing the rehearsal/concert venues which was becoming a serious issue.

This was discussed, and a decision was taken that only specific instruments would now be advertised from this point as required by the MD. We did, however, always continue to support players who just turned up! We discussed the position the band was in, and would it be wise to emulate the Spanish concert band model, especially in Valencia where bands frequently have 100 plus members. It was clear however that indoor venues would become challenging and that outdoor concerts are more practical in warmer climates than here at home!

Since that point, we have recruited from applications/waiting list and some personal contacts. One of the artistic challenges faced is that I must seat new members in a position in the band that will be enough of a challenge for their ability or what I perceive to be their ability from what they have told me but not so demanding that they are out of their depth. Over the years I feel that this seating practice has been a success. However, it is important that players who find themselves on a seat other than a 1st chair feel that there is a potential to develop and challenge themselves in more demanding positions within the band. I am always happy to try to support this if I feel that this is realistic. This, of course, requires those on other seats to show flexibility and to engage with the team ethos that we have established here at DCB. I must add, this was not the case when I began here! I am delighted when I see various players in the clarinet section, for example, sharing solos and that this responsibility is shared around. Likewise with saxophone solos, horn solos, trumpet solos etc. I am also aware and appreciate that sometimes players have had to cover solos due to others being unavailable and I thank members for this.

Over the years the subject of annual auditions has been raised. These auditions would lead to a seat being given in the band and to retain a place in DCB from year to year. Although the auditions would make seating very easy for me, I have not and never will promote this process as it clearly moves against everything the band has ever stood for. I do believe and always have believed that it is possible to continue to improve the overall standard of the band without auditions and at the same time retain the founding principles that the band was built upon. This is one of the reasons that I have always tried to bring the history of the band with us on this journey as we, as a musical ensemble always strive to bring the best out of each other and demonstrate that respect of the past too.

2. Attendance. In a band of 60 I have found over the years that around 10% - 15% of players will miss each rehearsal. This was pre-pandemic and I must say that since that time the number has grown substantially. We are now sitting between regularly at around 20-30% most weeks (sometimes more) and this of course is not sustainable to either maintain the artistic standard or to improve in the long-term. The number of players attending rehearsals is of course something that seems to have lowered across the community music making sector as a whole and I have had conversations with a variety of MDs from other ensembles who have noticed this.

For this reason, I have worked over the past year to address this and make sure we increase the band membership just enough so that I improve the odds on having complete sections at rehearsals. One successful example of this is in the trumpet section where we have increased the overall number and now made sure there are four 1st, three 2nd and three 3rd all now able to exchange parts within the section. In general, this has created a full section of parts even if as much as 50% of the players are absent. Again, I mention the trumpets only to demonstrate and in no way to aim a point or a concern at that section! I think they are sounding terrific and better than ever! There is a similar situation in the saxophone section where an increase in altos is also working better for parts covered.

3. Associate Musical Director: I mentioned last week about the ongoing process about the associate conductor so I do not need to go over this again but, I do however think that it might be helpful for members of the band to understand how this position came about and what the benefits are to the DCB. This is to assist those members of the band that have only been playing here for around 10 years and might not understand the journey taken to arrive at this stage with the bands previous associate.

The band rehearses around 42 weekends of the year, far more than many other groups who have longer periods of inactivity. The band has, and always has had, many concerts, too. From as early as around 2008, I suggested that the band should have a second conductor or someone from within the band to be able to stand by. I would often arrive at a rehearsal, or worse still, a concert and someone would be running late or just not arrive on time to play the start of the concert, perhaps through last minute illness or a family issue. It concerned me that there was no safety net at all for me doing the same and although I never missed a concert, it really did need to be addressed. I asked a member of the band who played euphonium who had expressed an interest in conducting if they wanted to follow up their enthusiasm and I supported them in doing so. Whilst this was successful to a point, they really did not feel confident enough to ever consider conducting a concert (they were never asked to do so), and so this approach did not have a long-term strategy.

I also felt for many years that there were times when I or any other MD of the band really should not have had to conduct and present concerts in hugely difficult circumstances and that an associate conductor really was required. It was not until 2015 that the band appointed Michelle McCabe as associate conductor and I was delighted to have another conductor to discuss repertoire, seating, recruitment and general artistic development with. Alongside this, the band clearly benefitted from Michelle's positive musicianship upon the players. I believe that a band that is as busy, successful, ambitious and has become a large-scale organisation requires this position.

Gone are the days of just providing background music at outdoor events but we are now promoting our own concerts and developing a solid audience base which has to be safe-guarded against last minute cancellations just because the MD might be ill or has exceptional family circumstances. I also believe we should now make sure that we have a list of further conductors that we feel that we work well with and can call upon if required at any point in the future. Can I put on record at the AGM my sincere thanks to Michelle for her professional expertise in being the band's first associate conductor.

4. Future: Despite a successful period in the band's history and a period of great activity I have no reason to doubt that there are great things ahead. Over many years we have commissioned new works from several composers, toured, recorded CD's, created online content to share with many, played on radio, but, you have also shared music and entertained tens of thousands in the local community during that time, excelled at numerous competitions, hosted bands from France, Norway and USA. The band has also supported and nurtured young players from the local area, some of whom, I am pleased to say still play in the band today. What do I think we should do next?

Well, perhaps a tour to Canada arranged through our contact, Tony Moore who we met with the Star of the North band. This could also include a visit to Minneapolis. Too expensive I hear everyone say and you may be correct but, I know that the Ayrshire Fiddlers tour extensively to places like that and secure great sponsorship to make this a reality. Perhaps a tour to Valencia would be easier and the same Tony Moore offered to arrange a tour for the band. His company are in partnership with the UNESCO City of Music, and it would be fitting to visit the European capital of wind bands, historically at least and to fulfil our visit after the 2021 tour was cancelled.

Personally, I would also like to visit Tain: we had a firm invitation to perform a concert there after the band were heard on the Radio 4 programme that 4 members guest edited (Andrew, Anne, Alan and Moyra). Now we have a young player from Tain that we are supporting in the band it seems a perfect fit to travel there for a concert. Perhaps to travel there on a Friday evening before a rehearsal/concert on the Saturday followed by a lunchtime concert on the Sunday and then to travel home might be a good place to start with getting on the road again?

During July I sent a video round the committee which showed another band filmed in quite a novel way, this could be something we do for the continued online presence that has been created already and a great way to archive the bands history too. Possibly something for the online Christmas pieces again?

I have already had a meeting with Catherine Ward, who sang with us at the Star of the North collaborative concert and asked if she might like to partner the band again in concert. She would be delighted to do so and so she and I will now discuss repertoire, I will be in contact with Glyn to see if we can use his expertise in arranging songs for/her/you. This led me to think that with the hall being such a key part of the band now we should explore creating a ‘cabaret evening’ with the band – more of a social evening but, having witnessed the brilliant atmosphere during the ceilidh last month then it might be an opportunity to ask Catherine to sing plus various ensembles within the band – or even players from the band who play in ……rock bands?

A number of years ago I approached Glyn Bragg and suggested a concert of just his music. In typical Glyn form he said “I could think of nothing worse” so I didn’t pursue at that stage. However, Ruth has heard that he is now quite keen and so I would like to factor this into the calendar at some point.

I would also like to run a day of sectionals and to make a recording of Colin’s work for band – Bearsden Bears.

I truly believe that the (Kessington) hall allowed the band to collaborate with Star of the North band and that that evening would have been close to impossible without Kessington. Just as when the band moved from the boomy acoustic at Westerton Hall to Cairns Church, the move helped develop the band, we partnered Cairns in so many ways and both the church and the band helped each other. The move here has done the same and I believe will continue to do so for years to come. Beyond just developing the sound, we were able to get back to live rehearsals earlier than we could have done after the pandemic, but we also have an enviable music library, instrument store and have control over the building better than any other venue on concert days. I hope the band feels satisfied and pleased that the hall now has around 25 user groups and has allowed many hundreds from the community to enjoy the benefits of such a building.

5. Summary: Can I finish by thanking the members of the committee this year for their time, creativity and sheer hard work for supporting and developing the bands activities. It is sometimes not easy making decisions on behalf of so many players in the band, all of whom are so passionate about the band and its continued journey. Can I thank Ruth as chair and say how much I have enjoyed, as I have with all the previous chairs of the band, working with her. I am in a lucky position that I have the opportunity to work closely with all the previous chairs of this band. Each one of them bringing their personality and energy to drive the bands activities and I have relished every partnership.

I hope that you have found some of these factual ramblings of interest and perhaps they shed some light on how we have reached this stage together. After not rehearsing together through the Covid years, although online rehearsals did help keep us ticking over, I now believe the band has matched everything from its past from an artistic point of view and more. I see no reason that this upward trajectory should halt and hope that you are still excited about being part of the DCB journey.

6. Treasurers Report – Fiona Ross

Fiona gave the following presentation:

As you will have seen from the annual figures the band is in a very healthy position.

This is mainly due to the facts that so many of you gift aid your subscriptions, since we moved to this fantastic hall our rehearsal and concert rents are low, and we now have reliable pretty well full houses for our two main concerts which means that these generate very healthy profits.

There were two further factors last year which do not apply to this year. Our first very large order from Carrie-Lou for band clothing was paid in the previous financial year but all the repayments came this year and we still had fairly few external concerts which mostly cost us money. As you have heard we are planning more such concerts this year and we also no longer get a fee from the Kirkintilloch Canal Festival so that also loses money.

However, despite many of our costs increasing there is obviously no need to increase the subs for this season. We are intending to use some of the money to buy additional useful things for the band, but the surplus also makes it possible for us to subsidise a tour, which we are definitely hoping to be able to do in the not too far distant future.

Subs remain at £110 for full membership, £65 for retired members, and £50 for students and other unwaged members and are due now. The bank details can be found on the website if you haven't had to pay your own subs before this. I am also quite happy to spread the cost over the season in whatever form suits you. For those of you who have occasionally paid your subs into the Austria tour account by mistake please note that we have closed that account, partly to prevent this confusion but also because the bank was being very difficult about updating the signatories on that account.

7. Subscriptions

Fiona explained that subscriptions will remain the same as last year:

Full member: £110; Retired: £65; Unwaged: £50

Fiona emphasised that subscriptions can be paid in any frequency (monthly, quarterly etc.), and asked band members to speak to her in confidence if they are struggling to pay the required subscription amount. Details are on the band website.

8. Election of Committee Members

Ruth thanked Susan Macfarlane and Anne Dunbar who are both standing down from their committee roles.

3 new committee members were nominated prior to the AGM – Annie Lester (as joint librarian with Heather Brown) and Louise Muir and David Macdonald (as ordinary members). These appointments were proposed by Anneli Demberg and seconded by Julian Fosh.

9. Election of Honorary Independent Financial Advisor

Ruth announced last year that our independent financial advisor, Robert Thomson has stated his intention to stand down at the end of 2024 session, after serving this role for many years. Ruth recorded our thanks to him for all his work on behalf of the band.

Ellen Beattie has agreed to take on this role.

Her election was proposed by Fiona Ross and seconded by Sharon Macdonald.

10. Consider Resolutions of which due notice has been given.

No resolutions were raised.

11. Elect or Re-Elect Band Trustees

All the current trustees are happy to continue in the role.

The current trustees are: Jill Bolling, Alan Cooper, Moyra Hawthorn, Jonathan Smithers and Colin Suckling.

13. Kessington Hall Update – Alan Cooper

Alan gave a short update on Kessington Hall. We have now been in the hall fully 3 years.

Overall, the hall is running very successfully, managed by the 3 trustees – Robert Baxter, Alan Cooper and David Broad, supported by Susan Macfarlane who gives a lot of admin support.

Over the years, a number of other people have volunteered their time to various tasks and Alan and David are always happy to hear from anyone else who could offer their time / skills – particularly plumbing, electrical or carpentry skills. They are also always open to suggestions for possible developments.

The hall is very busy and in constant demand – Alan and David often find themselves trying to juggle groups to fit everyone in wherever possible.

Financially, the hall is doing well. The aim was to try and keep £10,000 in the bank account. Currently there is around £22,000. This years income came almost entirely from hall lets, with just 1 small grant of £2000 received.

The hall is fulfilling its remit to offer a community venue for the arts.

14. AOCB

Anneli Demberg offered a vote of thanks to the committee.

There was no further business and Ruth thanked everyone present for attending and closed the meeting at 13:05.