



LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT For the period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022

The Trustees are pleased to present their report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 August 2022. This report is to be presented at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday 28 November 2022.

Section A: Reference and administration details

Charity name: Lower Windrush Choral Society

Registered charity number: 1152661

Charity's principal address: 5 Chalcroft Close
Ducklington
OX29 7TP

Trustees who have managed the charity during the year:

Trustee name	Office (if any)/Dates if not full year
Diana Gordon	Joint Chairman
Jane Chapman	Joint Chairman
Bellanne Lethbridge	Secretary until 29 November 2021; remained as Trustee thereafter
Theresa Rees	Treasurer
Jonathan Harvey	
Jennifer Insch	
Jennifer Macdonald	Until 29 November 2021
Terence McNamara	Music Director
Phillip Morton	
Christopher Sawyers	Until 29 November 2021
Susan Lakie	Appointed Trustee and Secretary from 25 March 2022

Section B: Structure, governance and management

Governing document: Constitution of Lower Windrush Choral Society, March 2013

How the charity is constituted: As an Association

Trustee selection method: Election by members at the Annual General Meeting

Section C: Objectives and activities

Objects of the Society set out in its constitution:

The charity's objects are:

- (1) to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals;
- (2) to further such charitable purpose or purposes as the trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations.

Main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects:

Our main activity is the performance and promotion of choral music. In planning the Society's activities, the Trustees have complied with the duty under section 4 of the 2006 Charities Act to have due regard to guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission. In 2020/2021, the Society's Officers undertook a comprehensive review to ensure that the subscription charges and music provision were affordable to all, including those of modest means. Their recommendations for concessionary rates were adopted by the Trustees in September 2021 and now form part of the current arrangements for membership.

Section D: Achievements and performance

Concerts and performances

During 2020/2021, the Society had been unable to hold any public performances, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, choir rehearsals on Zoom had been taking place and on **3rd September**, at the start of the year currently under review, the Society held an outdoor open rehearsal of *Captain Noah & His Floating Zoo*. Members were encouraged to bring friends and family, and a garden party followed. It was a very welcome, albeit limited, initial return to performing - and indeed socialising.

In-person rehearsals resumed in September 2021 for the main choir, and the Society's first 'proper' concert since December 2019 was held on **27th November 2021**, with Fauré's *Requiem* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* as the chosen works. Partly because of the uncertainty about how many people would feel comfortable coming to a concert, and in an effort to encourage people to do so, the Trustees decided to make this a ticketless concert, with donations invited, and it was very pleasing to have an audience of about 140 in Witney Methodist Church. It was, however, a sign of the times to be performing to an audience wearing masks!

The Society's second concert of the choir-year was held on **14th May 2022**, again in Witney Methodist Church. The programme, entitled 'Music for Monarchs', consisted of works with royal connections from the last few centuries, with those by Parry and Handel featuring prominently. It proved to be rather a tiring programme for the choir: several items were quite vocally demanding and the interspersed organ pieces were short. Timed to coincide approximately with Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, it perhaps competed with other similarly-themed events and with the opening-up of the public's social lives (Covid restrictions had by then been removed), and the audience was only around 100. As this was not an expensive concert to put on, the Society again worked on the model of "no tickets required, but donations invited.

The Lower Windrush Chamber Choir restarted its monthly rehearsals in January and, on **2nd April 2022**, performed at a well-attended Evensong & short Concert Spiritual at St Mary's Church, Bampton. From the donations received, the Society was able to make a contribution to Church funds.

The Chamber Choir accepted an invitation to perform at a Memorial Service at Holy Trinity Church, Witney, on **17th February 2022** for Dick & Beryl Peace, who were the parents of Jane Dodds (one of the Society's members) and had been great supporters of the choir. The family kindly made a donation to Society funds.

Management matters

Rehearsal venue: In September 2021, the choir was at last able to take advantage of its new venue in Witney, the Congregational Church, which offers much better facilities than the previous one, Stanton Harcourt School (which the choir had outgrown). The Trustees continued to keep Covid precautions under review, and they updated and re-issued Covid guidelines for members as circumstances changed. Throughout, there was an emphasis on maintaining ventilation in the rehearsal room, as it had become increasingly apparent that airborne transmission of Covid-19 was more of a threat than transmission via surfaces. During the winter months, this commitment to open windows for the sake of health was severely tested! Initial restrictions by the Church on moving both the piano and the clavichord were relaxed in relation to the latter (thanks to the persuasive skills of one of our members), which allowed a more satisfactory layout of chairs for the choir. The Trustees authorised the purchase of piano-moving trolleys to allow the clavichord to be moved safely. Our Health & Safety Officer, Phil Morton, has kindly taken charge of these and brings them weekly to rehearsals.

Membership numbers in the main choir were hard to gauge in 2020/2021 as we did not make any subscription charges that year. However, there were in the region of 40 people who were still maintaining contact via Zoom rehearsals. In 2021/2022 our membership increased to 56, with most new members joining at the start of the year in September 2021. As at the end of the choir-year, the Society was still maintaining a waiting list (by then of altos only).

The chamber choir had 19 members in 2021/2022, but did not operate the previous year.

Concert seating. Improvements have been made in organising concert seating – always something of a thorny issue. By planning concert layouts early and then sitting in roughly the final formation for the last couple of rehearsals, the amount of on-the-day 'faffing' has been reduced. This is not to say that all problems have been eliminated: sight-lines to the Music Director are not always ideal, and, as choir numbers go up, it

becomes increasingly difficult to form a compact group of singers, with the result that there have been reports that some positions feel very isolated – particularly if the singer(s) in those spots are standing next to colleagues who are amongst our quieter members. (It can feel as though you're the only one singing and there is little or no sense of being part of an ensemble.) Resolving this is a work in progress.

The Trustees. At the AGM in November 2021, Jenny Macdonald and Chris Sawyers stood down after, in both cases, many years of service in various roles including, for Jenny, seven years as Chairman ending in 2019. The Society owes them both a great deal. Bellanne Lethbridge also stood down as Secretary after ably filling that post for four years, and the Society was very grateful to her for agreeing nonetheless to continue to deal with committee agendas and minutes until a new Secretary was appointed. Happily, Sue Lakie agreed to return to the Board of Trustees as Secretary in March 2022 and was co-opted into that role. After Sue took over as Secretary, Bellanne moved into a new role as Membership Officer. The Trustees are, as always, very keen to encourage the presence of some new faces round the committee table and welcome expressions of interest from new or long-established members.

The Trustees have also been supported, as always, by the Section Leaders (Bellanne Lethbridge, Margaret Williams, Gill Salway and Jack Gordon), the Music Secretary (Jack Gordon), and the Chamber Choir Coordinator (Jenny Macdonald), to all of whom we extend our grateful thanks.

Changes to Gift Aid. A change in the guidance published by Making Music about Gift Aid on subscriptions enabled the Society mid-year to start claiming Gift Aid on the full amount of LWCS subscriptions. This new method is a significant financial benefit to the Society as, previously, we could only claim Gift Aid on about 3/4 of the subscription fee paid. The basis of the claim to HMRC in future will be that subscription funds are used entirely on financing things that promote the charitable objectives of the Society. The corollary of this is that the Society cannot provide members with any 'personal benefits'. This prevents any Society funds being used towards choir parties. It will also preclude the use of Society funds for such things as workshops offering voice training, and regrettably the Trustees have also been advised that members who are not singing in a ticketed concert cannot (as previously) be given a free ticket to attend, although free admission will be possible if the non-singing member takes on some other task at the concert such as helping with refreshments.

Next of kin information. Members were invited to lodge next-of-kin information with the Officers so that appropriate people could be rapidly contacted in the event of a member having a medical emergency at a Society event. We hope not to need this data.

Other achievements and activities

After another Christmas Zoom quiz in December, social activity was in abeyance for some months while the Trustees tiptoed cautiously around what was prudent health-wise and what the members would feel comfortable taking part in. The previous pattern of having twice-termly short socials after rehearsal was halted until July, when it could be held in the Congregational Church garden.

The summer party was also resurrected in 2022, but that was held just after the year here under review.

Plans for the choir to sing carols for the Witney Rotary Club in December 2021 in the Market Square were cancelled by the Rotary at the last minute because of worries about Covid-19 infection levels.

After the May concert, the choir started work preparing to sing an abridged version of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in November. The Society held one rehearsal in the summer break, during August. Although previously rehearsals in the summer holidays had been held in St Denys' Church in Northmoor, the Trustees decided this year to go Bampton and the rehearsal was used to recap on *Elijah* choruses before the start of the Autumn Term.

As ever, we remain eternally grateful to our fantastic Music Director, Terry McNamara. It has been a delight to return to proper in-person rehearsals under his direction and we all continue to value highly his inspirational guidance, his knowledge, his humour and his faith in us.

The Trustees would also like to record their thanks to those members of the Society and their family-members who had helped on the day at concerts during the year – manning the door, giving out programmes, page-turning, etc. It all helps and is much appreciated.

Section E: Financial review

LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2021 TO 31 AUGUST 2022

Section A Receipts and payments								
	Unrestricted		2021-2022 Restricted		TOTAL		2020-2021 TOTAL	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts
Receipts								
Members' subscriptions (note 1)		8,194		-		8,194		-
Donations received - non-concert (note 1)		166		-		166		3,330
Gift Aid reclaimed		1,210		-		1,210		650
Easyfundraising, GiveAsYou Live and Amazon Smile income		83		-		83		146
<i>Concerts: (note 2)</i>								
Concert - donations & sponsorship to Society		2,078		-		2,078		-
Concert - gift aid reclaimed on donations		496		-		496		-
Concert - bar takings		99		-		99		-
Payments								
<i>Rehearsals:</i>								
Professional fees & expenses	4,540			-		4,540		3,480
Rehearsal venue hire	970			-		970		-
Music purchase - net cost after members' payments	62			-		62		164
<i>Concerts:</i>								
MD, soloists & instrumentalists - fees, expenses, gifts, scores	2,750			-		2,750		-
Venue costs	190			-		190		-
Programme costs	110			-		110		-
Bar/refreshment costs	127			-		127		-
Performing Rights Society fees (note 3)	-			-		-		37
Publicity	74			-		74		-
Cancellation insurance	96			-		96		-
Miscellaneous expenses				-		-		-
<i>Other expenses:</i>								
Administrative expenses	57			-		57		181
Website fees	179			-		179		133
Making Music subscription (note 4)	98			-		98		140
Insurance (excl cancellation cover for concerts)	47			-		47		43
Donation (note 4)	100			-		100		-
Social expenses	140			-		140		-
Total Receipts		12,326		-		12,326		4,126
Total Payments	9,540			-		9,540		4,178
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		2,786		-		2,786		(52)
Notes:								
1. In 2021 the Society operated mainly on-line through Zoom, no subscriptions were levied for the year. Some members continued to pay, and these amounts were treated as donations received. The costs for the Zoom licence were shown in administrative expenses. In the current year in person rehearsals resumed and the Zoom licence was cancelled.								
2. In 2021-2022 two concerts were held by the main choir and one by the chamber choir. Given the first one was held soon after the emergence from lockdown it was felt to be appropriate that this should be effectively a free concert with donations welcomed. The same format was adopted in the spring for the concert held by the chamber choir and in May by the main choir. We anticipate that this formula will be used for the immediate future.								
3. In 2021 PRS relates to Christmas concert in November 2019. No PRS was payable 2022 as no concerts held in 2021.								
4. The Making Music subscription is based on previous year turnover and thus the fee has decreased in 2022. Making Music itself, an organisation which we use extensively for advice, was severely adversely impacted by their loss of revenue and requested members to make a donation to enable them to continue. The trustees felt that this was in the interests of the society and donated £100.								
5. Restricted income at the beginning of the year represented the grant received from West Oxfordshire District Council in 2019 for the planned Bach concert. This concert was cancelled due to coronavirus but the council had agreed that it should be held against a future concert. Permission was received from the council to utilise this money to help fund the Faure concert held in November 2021. The balance has therefore been transferred to the unrestricted reserves.								
Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period								
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Net reserves at beginning of year	8,443	375	8,818	8,870				
Result for year	2,786	-	2,786	(52)				
Transfers (note 5)	375	(375)	-	-				
Net reserves as at 31 August 2022 / (2021)	11,604	-	11,604	8,818				
REPRESENTED BY:								
Barclays Bank account	11,604	-	11,604	8,870				
AVAILABLE ASSETS	11,604	-	11,604	8,870				

Commentary on financial statement

The Trustees are very grateful to all individuals who have made donations to the Society during the year.

In-person rehearsals recommenced in September 2021, and charging subscriptions was resumed. When the decision to raise subscriptions was made shortly before that, the Trustees were not sure how many members would be comfortable returning to sing together in a confined space, albeit carefully ventilated. The subscription was therefore based (as usual) on covering projected non-concert costs, but using a conservative estimate of the number of members. In the event, membership increased significantly, thereby increasing the Society's reserves. There is therefore no increase in subscriptions for the main choir for 2022/2023, remaining at £144, and only a small increase to £48 for the chamber choir to adjust for a reduction in membership and an increase in the number of rehearsals.

The costs of concerts vary enormously, with the biggest factors usually being whether or not an orchestra is engaged (and, if so, how big it is) and the number of soloists. Despite healthy reserves, the Trustees took the view that, whilst the Covid-19 virus still lurked in our lives quite prominently during the year, it would be rash to arrange a concert involving the major cost of an orchestra – particularly as insurance policies (including ours) were generally excluding cover for cancellation owing to Covid. For this reason, all the concerts held during 2021/22 have been accompanied by an organ only. It is not currently planned to engage an orchestra during the 2022/23 either, and the Trustees will consider plans for the 2023/24 season nearer the time in the light of the Society's financial position.

The fees the Society now has to pay to professionals (soloists and players) have increased markedly in recent years. Although previously our expectation was that concerts should 'wash their faces', they will now generally not do so if there is much in the way of bought-in professional input – even if tickets are sold. Looking ahead, once our present reserve for concert use is exhausted, it is becoming increasingly hard to see how the Society will fund more expensive concerts without a change in our funding model. The Trustees are considering how to consult members in the coming months about possible changes.

Reserves

The unrestricted reserve comprises the main choir fund and the separate fund designated by the Trustees for the chamber choir. They believe that it is appropriate to maintain the distinction between the two to assist in planning for any future chamber choir activities.

	Main choir	Chamber choir	Total unrestricted funds
Balance 1 September 2021	7,912	531	8,443
Net concerts	(756)	81	(675)
Net non-concert	3,395	65	3,460
Transfer from restricted fund	375	-	375
Balance 31 August 2022	10,926	677	11,604

All reserves are held in the bank account.

Reserves policy:

The policy of the Trustees is to maintain such a level of reserves as will ensure the long-term viability of the Society and enable it to continue to fulfil its objects for the foreseeable future. Over recent years, reserves have been successfully built up to cover approximately six months of non-concert related expenditure together with a significant contribution towards the costs of the next major event. This approach is felt by the Trustees to fulfil their stated policy.