



# **LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY**

## **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT For the period 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020**

The Trustees are pleased to present their report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 August 2020. This report is to be presented at the Annual General Meeting to be held by Zoom on Monday 30 November 2020.

## 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)
Diana Gordon	Joint chairman from AGM 16 December 2019
Jane Chapman	Joint chairman from AGM 16 December 2019
Jennifer Macdonald	Chairman until AGM 16 December 2019
Bellanne Lethbridge	Secretary
Theresa Rees	Treasurer
Jennifer Insch	
Terence McNamara	Music Director
Christopher Sawyers	
Jonathan Harvey	
Phillip Morton	

## 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.

## Section D: Achievements and performance

**Concerts and performances**

During the year 1 September to 31 August, the Society sang at the following events:

The chamber choir were joined by members of L'Ensemble Vocal Montéclair from Langres in France and accompanied by the Harcourt Early Music Ensemble for a performance of two Bach cantatas in St Mary's Church, Bampton on **14 September**. After an initial short delay, when late-afternoon sun coming through the church's west window threatened to blind most of the performers, the concert eventually got started and was really well received by a full church audience who were able to enjoy the music and a little liquid refreshment

in a very lovely setting. Although the event was not ticketed, thanks to several donations prior to the concert and to donations on the door afterwards and takings on the bar, the concert overall approximately broke even, having donated £250 to the Church's Pipe Organ Rebuild Project. (Receipts prior to 1 September 2019 were disclosed in last year's accounts and contributed to the healthy brought-forward balance shown under 'Reserves' below.) Afterwards the French visitors and other performers were entertained by the choir to an informal supper. Many thanks to Jenny Macdonald for organising and hosting this at her home.

On **5 December**, a group of singers from the choir made a guest appearance at the Witney Rotary Club's Christmas concert, singing four well-known carols and leading the audience in a lively rendition of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

On **14 December** the main choir performed *A Christmas Cracker: music through the ages* in Stanton Harcourt Village Hall. This comprised music from the late medieval period (*Gaudete*) to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*It's the most wonderful time of the year*), passing through the intervening centuries and including some of the best-known and best-loved carols along the way. The hall had been arranged in a café style and drinks and nibbles were available. A convivial evening was enjoyed by both a full-house audience and members of the choir. The pleasingly full hall, in spite of the lateness of the date, was probably in part because two Trustees had undertaken a leaflet drop round virtually all the houses in the village a week or two beforehand. This concert raised about £600 towards the Society's funds.

On New Year's Day, the Society lost one of its longest-serving members, Christopher Daniel, who died aged nearly 90. Happily for him and the choir, he had retained his singing voice until very late in his long illness. Several members of the Society sang in the choir at his funeral in St Giles Church, Standlake on **21 January**.

On **21 February**, another group from the Society sang at St Michael's Church, Stanton Harcourt at the funeral of Ann Gascoigne, who had died on 26 January. In addition to having been a prominent local figure, Ann had been the President of Lower Windrush Choral Society in the early years of its existence.

### **Management matters**

The main event of the Society's year, which had been planned for 30 May, was to have been Bach's *St John Passion*, but sadly this had to be cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. This concert would have been an expensive proposition for the Society, involving professional soloists and an orchestra, with whom contracts had been signed months previously. As the contracts all included cancellation clauses that started to bite many weeks before the concert, in early March the Trustees took the decision to cancel it, thereby avoiding all cancellation charges. It is hard even now, and will become harder as time goes by, to remember how much we all hoped in the early stages that the UK would not be badly affected by coronavirus, and the early decision to cancel could have seemed pessimistic and precipitous; the temptation to delay was strong. However, the chances were very low that the situation was going to look rosier in time for the concert to be a success, artistically and financially. This proved to have been a wise move, and our only loss on the event was a small amount spent on printing posters. The choir had been rehearsing the *St John Passion* on and off for about a year, so it was a big disappointment for all concerned and, at the time of writing this report, we have no idea when we may be able to return to it.

By mid-March, although official lockdown had not yet been declared, social distancing was the order of the day and it was becoming clear that the choir's activities could not continue for the foreseeable future. The Trustees agreed to halt all rehearsals from 16 March. They also agreed to continue the contractual relationships with the Music Director and Accompanist *pro tem*, although they recognised that this would not be financially sustainable over the long term. Unfortunately, by May it appeared that the choir would be lucky to restart rehearsals even in the autumn so, very reluctantly, the Trustees concluded that the prudent course to protect the Society's interests was to terminate the existing contracts with the Music Director and Accompanist. The Trustees considered, however, that even in lockdown it was vitally important to continue to have a Music Director and to have access to his advice and guidance, and happily Terry McNamara agreed to accept a new retainer-style contract.

Another management matter consuming the Trustees' time has been securing a new place to rehearse. Stanton Harcourt School, which has been our home for many years, would not allow for any meaningful social distancing, and the Trustees have agreed terms with the Congregational Church in Witney to accommodate our rehearsals, once we can re-start singing and once they re-open the building to non-church activities. The Sanctuary there is much bigger than the School Hall. A risk assessment of the Church premises was carried out, covering both general and coronavirus-specific issues. The Trustees are satisfied that the venue offers an excellent rehearsal space, and that precautions and procedures that will need to be put in place by the Church themselves as hirers, combined with additional guidelines announced over time that are particular to choirs, should keep our members safe. For these latter choir-related specifics, we are

able to draw upon our membership of Making Music which is campaigning for more help for choirs, and regularly publishes its analysis of any updates received from research or government affecting our particular sector. We are, however, very aware that the decision of when to return will be a very personal one for our members and all our correspondence with them seeks to make this very clear. There will be no pressure to return until the individual feels safe to do so.

An added benefit of the move to rehearsing in Witney is expected to be more fruitful opportunities to improve recruitment to the choir.

### **Other achievements and activities**

Membership numbers in the main choir fluctuated between 45 and 47 (2019 – 46 and 48). The chamber choir had 19 members (2019 - 24), including two affiliated members who are not members of the main choir.

Following its successful concert in September 2019, the Chamber Choir continued to meet approximately monthly at Cokethorpe School, until lockdown came. There was no specific concert in view and the members just met to enjoy singing together.

In mid-August 2020, following the results of some research commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport, the Government changed its guidance on amateur choirs. Previously all amateur singing groups had, since lockdown, been either banned or strongly discouraged from operating. Suddenly, there was the prospect of amateur groups singing together again, socially distanced and outdoors, and the Trustees seized the chance to arrange a few such singing sessions for those members who felt comfortable attending, before the weather made this impractical. The group size was limited by Government guidelines. After a risk assessment was carried out, the Society organised two sessions in a garden – one in late August and the second in early September. Terry McNamara, our Music Director, had arranged for those attending to receive some singing coaching from Quentin Hayes, who was well-known to us as a bass soloist in a number of our concerts, and his input and tips were judged very useful. Our thanks go to Jack and Diana Gordon for allowing the Society to use their garden for this purpose and to Terry for his willingness to adapt to the challenges of music-making al fresco. Each session was attended by about one third of the membership, who thoroughly enjoyed the chance to catch up with fellow members and to air their vocal chords. The main problems were the breeze and the difficulty of being able to hear fellow choristers in the open air. Until larger indoor gatherings are allowed, we will not be recommencing our regular programme of rehearsals, and even then we are likely to have to operate under strict Covid-secure conditions.

'Summer Sings' have not been held this year, but we are aware that once life gets back to 'normal' we will probably need to look at these in conjunction with other recruitment measures to strengthen our choir numbers.

On the social side, our very enjoyable and well-attended summer party for last year was held at the very beginning of this Society year in the garden of Jenny Macdonald on 7 September. The equivalent for 2020 is not being held. There was a well-attended New Year party, also at Jenny's home, including what has become the customary light-hearted musical interlude. The Trustees are most grateful to Jenny and her helpers for a successful social programme.

We are, as ever, grateful to our much-valued Music Director, Terry McNamara, for his skill and patience in drawing out the best in his amateur choir, before everything ground to a halt. It is also a comfort to know that we can continue to call on his advice through these awkward times. Roger Clarke acted as Accompanist for our rehearsals until they stopped in March and we are very grateful to him for doing so. We would also like to acknowledge and thank him for his over 20 years of loyal service in that role. It was a very difficult decision to terminate our contract with him.

Our warm thanks also go to those members of the Society (and to some of their family-members) who help with some of the jobs involved in running a weekly cycle of rehearsals and putting on concerts.

**Section E: Financial review**  
**LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY**  
**RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2019 TO 31 AUGUST 2020**

**Section A Receipts and payments**

	Unrestricted		2019-2020 Restricted		TOTAL		2018-2019 TOTAL- all unrestricted	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts
<b>Receipts</b>								
Members' subscriptions		6,038		-		6,038		6,329
Donations received - non-concert		225		-		225		985
Gift Aid reclaimed		962		-		962		1,232
Easyfundraising, GiveAsYou Live and Amazon Smile income		186		-		186		369
Raffles - net income		79		-		79		156
<i>Concerts:</i>								
Concert ticket sales		1,108		-		1,108		1,026
Concert programme income		105		-		105		57
Concert - bar/refreshment income		624		-		624		-
Concert - donations & sponsorship to Society		848		-		848		504
Concert - gift aid reclaimed on donations		141		-		141		-
Concert - grants (note 1)		-		375		375		-
<b>Payments</b>								
<i>Rehearsals:</i>								
Professional fees & expenses	6,105		-		6,105		4,776	
Rehearsal venue hire	600		-		600		835	
Music hire/purchase - net cost after members' payments	-		-		-		15	
<i>Concerts:</i>								
MD, soloists & instrumentalists - fees, expenses, gifts, scores	2,973		-		2,973		981	
Venue costs	165		-		165		160	
Programme costs	85		-		85		86	
Bar/refreshment costs	289		-		289		-	
Performing Rights Society fees	36		-		36		85	
Publicity	129		-		129		208	
Cancellation insurance	132		-		132		48	
Miscellaneous expenses	-		-		-		26	
<i>Other expenses:</i>								
Administrative expenses	74		-		74		61	
Website fees (note 2)	154		-		154		239	
Making Music subscription (note 3)	140		-		140		200	
Insurance (excl cancellation cover for concerts)	43		-		43		43	
Social expenses (note 4)	220		-		220		177	
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>10,315</b>		<b>375</b>		<b>10,690</b>		<b>10,657</b>
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>11,146</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>11,146</b>		<b>7,941</b>	
<b>(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>(831)</b>		<b>375</b>		<b>(456)</b>		<b>2,716</b>

**Notes:**

- The grant was received from West Oxfordshire District council for the planned Bach concert. This concert was cancelled due to coronavirus but the council have agreed that it should be held against a future concert only (not general running expenses). For this reason it is treated as a restricted fund
- This includes the remaining 3 months of the old website only this year. Last year included whole year of running two sites, whilst new one under development
- Making Music sub based on Society income for the previous year, and LWCS moved into lower income bracket last financial year.
- Wine was purchased in advance to take advantage of reduced prices. This wine is still held in stock

**Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period**

	£	£	£	£
Net reserves at beginning of year	9,326	-	9,326	6,610
Result for year	(831)	375	(456)	2,716
<b>Net reserves as at 31 August 2020 / (2019)</b>	<b>8,495</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>8,870</b>	<b>9,326</b>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>				
<i>Assets</i>				
Cash in hand	-	-	-	58
Barclays Bank account	8,495	375	8,870	9,268
<b>AVAILABLE ASSETS</b>	<b>8,495</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>8,870</b>	<b>9,326</b>

### Commentary on financial statement:

The Trustees are very grateful to all those individuals and companies who have made donations to the Society during the year. Their contributions have made a real difference to the overall picture at the year-end – especially to the viability of the chamber choir concert at Bampton.

**Coronavirus:** As indicated above, the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the operation and finances of the Society. Our contracts with the Music Director and Accompanist, although terminated, required the payment of fees during the notice period which extended to the end of the Summer Term, but the Trustees were pleased that this provided some welcome support for our long-serving professionals during what was, and continues to be, a difficult time for the self-employed. Our members have been hugely generous and most of them continued to pay their membership fees after we had ceased singing in March, even though they were receiving nothing for their money and had been invited to stop contributing. This is much appreciated. Continuing to receive this income has been very helpful in maintaining the healthy balance at the year end.

We expect costs to increase as we move to bigger premises and also we may have to double the number of rehearsals to cater for smaller groups to maintain social distancing. All this is still unknown at present. As we enter the new Society year, we have again invited members to suspend the payment of subscriptions, although it appears that many are still generously continuing to pay. The Trustees plan that, once we are functioning more normally again, we will not immediately increase subscriptions and instead in the short term utilise some of the reserves we have built since a concert is still very much in the future. In the medium term, however, a subscription increase is probably inevitable.

### 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 2019	7,399	1,927	9,326
Net concerts	664	(1,649)	(985)
Net non-concert	(99)	253	154
Balance 31 August 2020	7964	531	8,495

As noted above the restricted fund (£375) comprises the unused grant from West Oxfordshire District Council.

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.

## Section F: Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

### Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees:

Signatures		
Name	Jane Chapman	Diana Gordon
Position	Co-Chairman	Co-Chairman
Date	27 October 2020	