

LARNE CHORAL SOCIETY 2023 AGM :- HON. SECRETARY'S REPORT. The new season of 2022/2023 brought it's own challenges for Larne Choral Society, but as always, with a committed membership and good leadership, we overcame, and ended on a high note once again. During the summer recess of 2022, our then Conductor, Anne McCambridge, commenced her plans for the formation of a Larne Choral Youth Choir, (LCYC) with a successful application for a grant from the Blackburn Trust. In conjunction, Anne also planned The Big Sing for autumn 2022, and successfully applied for a post paid grant from M.E.A. Council. This one-off event was to encourage the whole local community, young and old alike, to participate in and enjoy singing. The event took place on 21st October daytime in Larne Town Hall for Primary School age children, and in the evening, at Larne Market Yard for adults. Although The Big Sing was a big success, and well attended, and all the children were invited to come along to subsequent LCYC practices, there was a very small response to the latter in early November. It was then decided to postpone until Jan. 2023, when the children would not be pre-occupied with AQE tests, school choir Christmas practices etc.. The launch has, however, subsequently been re-scheduled by Anne for Autumn 2023. On 3rd. September some of our members joined the Come and Sing Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man", in Belfast, which was a most enjoyable and moving experience. At the Committee meeting of August 4th. Anne had informed us that she had found an Accompanist for our practices for the new season, and we were very pleased to welcome Andrea Bain to play for us, at our first practice on September 13th. 2023. At the subsequent committee meeting of October 12th., Anne proposed that Andrea take over as Conductor of LCS, allowing her to concentrate on setting up the Youth Choir and her other musical commitments. We were delighted when Andrea accepted the proposal, and took her first practice on October 25th .. With our Christmas concert booked for December 9th. in St. Cedma's Church, and the programme only just set by Andrea, and neither soloists nor Accompanist available, a very difficult decision to cancel / postpone for a year, was made by committee on November 17th.. To help allay the disappointment, and give us another "goal", choir and committee member Carol arranged for us to Carol (!) Sing at Ballygally Christmas Lights Switch -on December 9th. instead, when we sang the "World Premiere" of Andrea's arrangement of "The Holly and the Ivy", and other well known carols, along with the local community. Everyone cheerfully turned out in a gale force wind to the accompaniment of a raging sea. We were treated to warming refreshments afterwards, and all spirits were lifted by the evening. The gale then followed us to the Santa Steam Train at Whitehead on 18th. December when we enjoyed repeating our carols as the long queue of families waited patiently to sit with Santa in his sleigh. £110 was raised for Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research Fund, helped by a volunteer from the public who kindly took off down the queue with Hazel's collection bucket. Terry, John, and Gill (to her cost) did a valiant job holding down the gazebo. Practices recommenced on January 10th. 2023 and over the subsequent weeks we were delighted to welcome several new members across all four choir sections, taking us to a grand total of 31 for the first time in some years. We prepared in earnest for the planned Memorial Concert for Elaine set for April 28th, but yet again we were to be thwarted by an outbreak of Covid and other illness in the local community and the choir, which forced us to postpone the concert until Autumn 2023. (October 13th., set). We were grateful to Andrea for entering us into both Carrickfergus (March 20th. 2023) and Larne (April 29th.) Music Festivals. Despite reduced numbers, we were pleased to pick up a 2nd prize in the Adult Choral section at Carrick. Our pieces included unaccompanied "Let the Song Begin". The Larne Festival concluded our singing year. It was a most enjoyable afternoon with a great atmosphere, and some wonderful choirs and very talented young musicians to listen to. This was the first year for some time, that the Adult Choir section had been reinstated. Many of us listened at home to the fabulous music at King Charles' Coronation on May 6th., to inspire us for our next season.

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