



Charity Registration Number: NIC108830

TRUSTEES' REPORT 2022-2023

(as delivered at the Annual General Meeting, 26 October 2023)

The Chair began by reminding members that the overall aim of 2022-23 for Ards Choral Society (ACS) was diversification, experimentation and consideration of new directions and links. Specific priorities set by the committee/trustees related to recruitment, publicity and outreach.

Diversification and experimentation were addressed through implementing a 'non-traditional' programme (compared with previous years), including a Christmas Concert of varying musical styles, a joint performance of Stainer's *The Crucifixion* at Easter with another choir and an experimental Open Evening in May, providing guests with the opportunity to experience a typical ACS rehearsal. Each of the events was very well-supported and all attracted new members.

The Christmas Concert had grown out of the previous year's small, in-house event involving the singing of carols, some readings and enjoying some seasonal refreshments. The event of December 2022 expanded the initial concept and engaged Mary McCabe as Soprano soloist, Walker Ewart as Narrator and our own Joanne accompanying the choir in a programme of music from Part 1 Messiah and some new arrangements of carols. The catering committee provided a lovely festive supper for a very full Queen's Hall in Newtownards.

The Spring programme centred on a joint venture with Ballyholme Parish Church choir, in a performance of John Stainer's *The Crucifixion*. While many members had sung this over the years in their own church choirs or with other groups, Ards Choral Society had never performed the work. Our own Stanley Officer joined Paddy Crothers (Bass) and Martin O'Hagan (Tenor) in this deeply moving telling of the Passion of Christ. The evening performance also included some new music by Will Todd and a performance of Roberton's *All in the April Evening*. The church was full to capacity for the evening and the performance was extremely well-received. Finally, the Open Evening in May provided an evening of fun, an opportunity to display a variety of repertoire and gave potential new members a taste of what ACS practices involved. A very pleasing number of guests joined us and some have now become members!

With regard to recruitment, the Chair reported that numbers had grown from 55 post-pandemic, to 62 in 2022-23. This was largely the result of an active recruitment drive by the committee via wider use of social media, newspaper publicity, word of mouth and the Open Evening. Events were publicised widely in the Newtownards Chronicle, on local Council and other relevant websites and through a much more proactive approach to the use of WhatsApp and other platforms.

In terms of outreach, links were established with Ballyholme Parish Church choir and the Rotary Club of North Down. Developing further links with other organisations/groups remains a priority for 2023-24, along with further consolidation of diversification, experimentation, recruitment, publicity and marketing.

The Chair concluded by thanking the committee members for their hard work and support during the year, the Musical Director and accompanist for their massive respective contributions to a successful year and all choir members for engaging actively with the difficult concept of change and taking incremental steps toward diversification and experimentation.