

Larkhall Festival Group Annual Report 2009

How it began

The Larkhall Festival was organised by a handful of people who met each other for the very first time in the Rose and Crown in November 2007 to discuss holding a festival.

Guiding principles

We wanted a festival celebrating the talent and creativity in the local community with everything done by people who lived, worked, went to school, shopped, worshipped, took part in community activities or had some other connection to Larkhall and surrounding areas (we actually have the 'area of benefit' drawn on a map). In addition to this we strongly believed that the festival should be not for profit and, wherever possible, free.

A full copy of our 'Guiding Principles' is available on the website

Participation

We wanted to offer something for everyone, not just cater to a small proportion of the local population. With the range of music, visual art, photography, dance, comedy, demonstrations and displays on offer we felt that the first Festival went a good way towards achieving this. However, we know there is room for improvement.

The festival really happens

A week before the festival we all began to panic, we weren't sure how it would all come together and even if Larkhall's Got Talent was going to go ahead. We needn't have worried!! Over 1,000 people came through the Oriel Hall on the Saturday with nearly a hundred watching the cello performance alone and the Cabaret in the evening jammed solid. Twelve entries materialised for Larkhall's Got Talent and it, together with Port Erin's album launch the next night, sold out the Rondo Theatre. Hundreds visited the twelve Artists' Open Studios and the art exhibition in St. Saviours Church (before joining the queue to go up the tower). The Family Fun Day at St Saviours Junior School was buzzing with activity and even on Monday, the quietest day, 124 people visited the exhibition in New Oriel Hall. Mention must also go to the two cafés - Smith's and Alice Park - who both hosted a varied mix of performers to ensure the festival reached all parts of the community.

See for yourself

From www.larkhall-festival.org.uk you will find links to over 300 festival photos and a video of Larkhall's Got Talent. You can also see the winners from the children's photo and teenage fiction competitions. Some of the artwork and photography on display is featured on the artists' website at <http://larkhallopenstudios.weebly.com> If you have festival photos you'd like to share, please send them to us or upload them via flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/groups/1106353@N21>

A real community effort

Everyone who performed, displayed, ran activities or helped out did it for free, only receiving expenses where appropriate. It couldn't be done without them and everyone deserves a great big pat on the back. Many of them have already said they want to do it again next year.

Show me the money

This year's festival was organised without a grant of any kind - we booked the New Oriel Hall using our own money (a year in advance!) and relied on fundraisers such as November's Fish and Chip supper and Leftism Club Night in March. We broke

even over the weekend and now have a small amount of money to begin planning for next year. However we need to do more fundraising and need help and ideas, so let us know if you have any suggestions or would like to help.

Quotes

The Trustees of the New Oriel Hall wrote to say

“We are proud to have played a part in the universally acclaimed success of this creative, community building project. We hope it will be born anew next year when I'm sure it will be welcomed by everyone, and we can again contribute to this fine effort”

Terry and Diane emailed to say-

“Never before have we enjoyed a Bank Holiday filled with such a variety of events, surprises, concerts, so much to look at and more importantly interesting people to meet. As we walked through Larkhall throughout the weekend there was a 'buzz' of anticipation and interest from all we saw. People were talking to each other. They were giving each other directions and recommendations on where to go next for a 'fix of delight'.”

And Jane De Ste Croix wrote to the Chronicle to say how much she and her family had enjoyed it.

“It was such a fantastic weekend, packed full of great activities. Every taste, age and interest was catered for.....it was lovely to see so many people out and about. I'm so pleased to live in such a wonderful community! Thanks and we're all looking forward to the 2nd festival next year.”

Next year

At an open meeting on 19th September it was announced that the 2nd Larkhall Festival would take place over the first May Bank Holiday weekend in 2010.

The festival will be a mixture of the activities that worked this year but with lots of room for new ideas, especially from individuals and groups who were not involved last year.

We really want this second festival to be even more of an event organised 'for the local community by the local community' and are looking for a few more Larkhall News readers to get involved.

- Please join as a member of the Larkhall Festival Group – it's FREE and it means you get regular up-dates of what's happening. Contact us for a membership form.
- Like last year we want the majority of festival activities to be free. In order to make this happen we need more local people to get involved in fund-raising activities and events. If you have ideas or time to contribute please let us know.
- If you want to organise an activity or event at next year's festival (or have an idea but want some help to realise it) please get in touch. You will need to complete a short proposal form to register your interest but there will be ample opportunity to 'talk things through'.