



AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁLA NA hÉIREANN
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF IRELAND



Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
Province of Britain
Annual Report 2017



Clár na n-Ábhar

Message from Uachtarán an Comhaltais.....	3
A Nation of Survivors <i>by</i> Labhrás Ó Murchú, Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ.....	4
Óráid an Chathaoirligh - Chairman's Address.....	5
Tuarascáil an Rúnaí - Secretary's Report.....	7
Tuarascáil an Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí - PRO report.....	10
Tuarascáil na hÓige - Youth Report.....	11
Macalla 1916.....	14
Northern Region.....	16
Midland Region.....	17
Scottish Region.....	19
London & Southern Region.....	22
An Ród Seo Romhainn - The Road Ahead.....	24
Music Sub Committee.....	25



Message from Uachtarán an Comhaltais

As Uachtarán, I once again welcome the opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to the hard working and diligent members of the Provincial Council of Britain.

Through your efforts, and those of your many volunteers you continue to make a very valued contribution to the international organisation that Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has become.

In this special year as you celebrate the 60th anniversary of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in Britain you can all be very proud of your achievements, promoting our Irish heritage through music, song, dance and language. I congratulate each and every one and wish you all every success in your continued endeavours during the coming years.

Le gach dea ghui

Ann Finnegan

Uachtarán, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

A Nation of Survivors

By Labhrás Ó Murchú, Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ

As you assemble for your Provincial Convention I know that you will be keenly aware of the inspiring story of Comhaltas in Britain. You will also be conscious of the strong and enduring links of friendship and solidarity which exist with Ireland. This too will be evident in your most impressive Report and your vision for the future.

It is a tribute to the Irish community abroad that they have kept alive an interest in the native culture of their homeland. It is a further tribute to the indefatigable spirit of the Irish that this interest is now very evident among second and third generation Irish abroad. But the greatest achievement of all in the sphere of Irish traditional music is that so many young people of Irish descent, who, though many decades removed from their roots, have so ably mastered the earthy music, song and dance of their forefathers. Their message for us all is that the Irish nation is alive and vibrant outside the shores of Ireland. We need not consider ourselves a small, isolated nation while we have many millions of truly dedicated people of Irish descent spread throughout the world. We are not without substantial influence: this is achieved not by might but by an inherent loyalty to our country and a deep awareness of the cultural characteristics which make us a nation of survivors.

The real Irish heritage whether practised at home or abroad is not one of division but of cohesion. Never was this more adequately demonstrated – nor, indeed, more welcome - than in the North of Ireland. Many know this corner of our island only through dramatic headlines in newspapers or from the clinical bulletins of television studios. The real Northern Ireland experience for many is so different. Unity and harmony are accomplished through rollicking dance tunes, reminiscent slow airs and the joyous clatter of gay abandon and camaraderie which emanates from the tireless set dancers. It is a quiet and unobtrusive display of truth that our heritage is older than our political divisions. Herein lies one ray of hope at the end of a very dark tunnel.

Guím Rath dé ar bhúr saothar. Tá naísiún na hÉireann go mór faoi chomaoín agaibh. Spreagann sibh bród ionaina agus tugann sibh dóchas dúinn ar an ród seo romhainn.

Óráid an Chathaoirigh - Chairman's Address

Comhghairdeas, a warm welcome to all attending our convention this weekend and a huge thank you to the Scotland Regional Committee for their work in organising it. Go raibh mile maith agaibh!

This year is the 60th anniversary of Comhaltas in Britain and how fitting it is that we are celebrating here in Scotland where the first branch, Irish Minstrels, was formed in 1957. The 1950's and 60's were a time of great migration from Ireland and the newly arrived Irish were keen to create a home away from home. What happened was an explosion of cultural activity with Irish Minstrels, West and East London, and Liverpool branches being soon established until as many as 35 branches were formed this side of the Irish Sea. (Briseann an dúchais trí shúile an chait!)

Cheap flights, Skype calls, mobile phones and social media make the world today a much smaller and more interconnected place. What hasn't changed though is the passion and enthusiasm Irish emigrants and their descendants have for those things that forge and establish an identity; namely a language, culture and history. Comhaltas can be justifiably proud in today being established with the GAA as the two foremost Irish organisations in Britain, and we can now look forward to a future where our children



and grandchildren can enjoy the fruits of a crop that we and our forebears have cultivated.

In March last year we embarked on one of the largest projects we have undertaken in Britain when we hosted the Macalla concert at the Barbican Centre in London. Many of you will have been lucky to see the concert; a newly composed piece of music by Michael Rooney which featured musicians from this province and Ireland. It belied the amount of organising that went into it, and I would like to sincerely thank Seamus Brogan and his team for all their hard work in making it such a great success.

Sadly this year we lost one of the great characters in Comhaltas with the passing of Bruce Scott. Bruce was a prolific composer and singer and always stayed true to his Liverpool Irish roots. Our fleadhanna will be a less joyous place without him. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

Finally I would like to say congratulations to you all on the occasion of our 60th anniversary. I hope you have enjoyed all the workshops and entertainment that is on offer and for the year ahead I ask you to stay true to those ideals that have brought us this far in Comhaltas. I ndiaidh a chéile a thógtar na caisleáin!

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Mícheál MacCnámhain, Cathaoirleach, Comhairle na Breataine



Members of the Macalla 1916 commemoration committee meeting with Charles Flanagan TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ambassador Daniel Mulhall at the Irish Embassy, London

Tuarascáil an Rúnaí - Secretary's Report



All our members have had a busy year working tirelessly in promoting and maintaining Comhaltas na Breataine at various events and activities. The year began with couple of our younger members of receiving varies awards:

Mohsen Amini – awarded BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional musician of the Year 2016.

Órlaith McAuliffe – Young musician of the Year 2016- Gradam Ceoil TG4.

The Echoes of Erin Concert Tour 2016 was welcome at eight venues across the province. This year the Concert Tour celebrated the *100th Anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising* and included narration and poetry as well as great music, song and dancing. Everyone who attended one of the concerts stated it was a fantastic show. Also congratulations to Annette Hannigan (nee Caulfield) from Luton who had been asked to perform on the tour.

On 4th March there was an amazing night at the Barbican Theatre in London for the *Macalla 1916* event. It was the best concert that I have ever had the privilege to attend.

Macalla 1916 was a new suite of music composed by Michael Rooney performed by the Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra. It was an amazing suite mixing music, narrative, poetry, song and images to tell the Ireland's story from the famine to present times.

This was a huge undertaking for Comhaltas na Breataine, well done to all involved in the organisation, production and execution of the premier of this suite of music. Also congratulations to all our young musicians who had been asked to perform with the National Folk Orchestra of Ireland.

To mark the momentous occasion in Irish History *“100th Anniversary since 1916 Easter Rising”* the Embassy of Ireland and the Transport for London went ‘Green’ for St Patrick’s Day; bring the celebrations to several tube stations across London. Our musicians performed at various underground stations and at Trafalgar Square showing casing their talents in Irish music, poetry, song and dance.

As usual we had a contingent of British delegates attending Congress in Dublin in May. The social side of the weekend provided great music and singing sessions where new friendships were forged. There was a concert on Saturday evening with performance from members of the Ardchomhairle.

Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine was hosted by the Midland Region took place weekend 25th & 26th June 2016 in the fantastic facilities provided by Leicester University. On Saturday night there was a brilliant youth session; with young and older musicians playing all night – borrowing instruments a great atmosphere. There was also a céilí and singing session. Ann Finnegan Uachtarán an Chomhaltais and the Mayor of Leicester also attended the Fleadh. The organisational team and various helpers ensured the fleadh ran smoothly and everyone should be congratulated.

Fleadh Cheoil na Éireann was held in Ennis (14th – 21st August 2016). Several of our young musicians performed on the gig rig. We also had several musicians and dancers taking part in the ‘Overseas Concert’ at the Glór. The exhibition was showcase at the Court House although it was badly sign post Jim Teevan stated they still had a lot of people looking at the displays. Jodie Moran, a past member of Ashton-in-Makerfield and former chair of Leeds branch, who is now living in Australia, won the newly composed tune with the ‘Hip Op Jig’, which was performed for him by one of Leeds branch’s youngest competitors, Eabha Gavaghan.

Our social weekend this year took place in Hardraw in the Yorkshire Dales. Families came together to cycle or walk in this beautiful location, we even had members participating in cold water swimming. There were sessions all weekend with members and friends coming together to play tunes and sing songs. It was a great weekend and we look forward to meeting up again next year.

In November North London Branch hosted its annual Junior Fleadh which attracts participants not only from the London and Southern region but across the province. Also in November Hasting CCE hosted their 2nd fleadh with workshops and session all weekend.

Two members of Tara O’Carolan Branch were successful in their audition of the English Folk, Dance and Song Society ensemble.

This year’s Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame was award to Jimmy McHugh born in Omagh Co Tyrone who founded the first branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann to be formed outside Ireland in Glasgow in

1957. He also became the first person from outside Ireland to win an All-Ireland title, winning Senior Fiddle competition in Dungarvan in 1957. Jimmy was also a composer, with more than 40 tunes to his credit, many of which have since become established among players.

Comhaltas na Breataine *National Performance Group* which is managed by David Browne - Provincial Youth Officer (Oifigeach na nÓg) have been busy this year recording their CD which is being produced by Michael McGoldrick. Our young performers (musicians, singers, and dancers) aged 16-25 have been working on this project to showcase their talents and it will reflect the regional influences and styles. They will also help to raise the profile of Comhaltas in Britain.

Throughout the year various groups of musicians perform at the Embassy of Ireland; as well various meetings and events hosted by Irish in Britain. All of whom should be congratulated on their performances

I hope we all enjoy another year of making music and keeping tradition alive!

Síle uí hEilhir, Rúnaí. Comhairle na Breataine

*Echoes of Erin 2016
Concert group from
Ireland who toured
Britain in February 2016
performing seven
consecutive nights in
Settle, Glasgow,
Liverpool, Leeds,
Tyneside, Milton Keynes
& London*



Tuarascáil an Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí

PRO report



Cairde,

I would like to take this opportunity to say that it is a great privilege and honour to be elected the new Provincial Public Relations Officer (PRO) for Comhaltas na Breataine.

As the newly elected PRO I have made it my objective for the next year to work closely on how Comhaltas na Breataine can expand and develop. As a cultural body which promotes Irish Traditional music, song, dance and language in na Breataine we must link in and communicate with other fellow Irish cultural organisations, such as: The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha Committee (CLRG), Conradh na Gaeilge... It is through communication with fellow Irish cultural groups that we can ultimately increase attendance at Fleadhanna across na Breataine.

With it being the 60th anniversary of Comhaltas na Breataine, we must acknowledge that Comhaltas was born because "there was a time when the mere survival of Irish traditional music was not at all a sure thing". Over the past 60 years Irish traditional music has evolved and expanded from the island of Ireland across the globe. It is from its achievements that we must learn from what has and hasn't worked in its expansion, to be able to develop Comhaltas na Breataine through the future.

Looking forward to the challenge ahead!

Ciarán Doolin, Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí, Comhairle na Breataine

Tuarascáil na hÓige - Youth Report

This has been a very successful year for the youth of the organisation in Britain.

Looking back to June at the All Britain Fleadh, we had a very successful youth session. A big thanks to Órlaith McAuliffe of East London CCE for leading this for us. Earlier in the year Órlaith was awarded the TG4 Gradam Ceoil Young Musician of the Year. On behalf of all the youth, I would like to congratulate her for this tremendous achievement – a very deserving winner!

For the second year in a row Ceoltóirí na Breataine, our youth performance group, was invited to play on the Gig Rig at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Ennis. The group comprised of musicians, singers and dancers from across all 4 regions, showcasing the vibrant talents within Comhaltas in Britain. We were very lucky to be afforded this opportunity and thank the Fleadh committee greatly for this.

In December, the group went on a residential weekend to The Green Dragon, Yorkshire to record some tracks for our album. This has been a few years in the planning and we were all glad to see it take shape. A big thanks must go to Michael McGoldrick for producing and engineering the album for us, also to the Meitheal development team for getting this project off the ground. Lastly, I'd like to give a special mention to Theresa Gallagher Murphy and Tim Angland for all their help over the weekend – without them this weekend wouldn't have been nearly as successful.



*Members of our
National Youth
group at recording
session*



As a group we were also very excited to be invited to play at the 60th Anniversary Comhaltas in Britain Convention. We had planned to launch our album over this weekend but due to the logistics of the recording process, with all the musicians being in different corners of the country, the final product is yet to be manufactured. Watch this space!

This year was also a very successful year for our young musicians at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Massive congratulations to our medal winners, listed below, for their achievements!

Kevin Murphy Irish Minstrels 1st O18 Piano Accordion
David Browne Irish Minstrels 1st O18 Piano
Orla Felcey Tara O'Carolan 1st 15-18 Flute
Calum McGregor Irish Minstrels 1st 12-15 Accompaniment
Olivia Whelehan East London 2nd 12-15 Accompaniment
Brogan McAuliffe East London 2nd O18 Whistle
Brogan McAuliffe East London 2nd O18 Whistle SA
Calum Convoy Irish Minstrels 2nd 15-18 Bodhran
Ciera Doohan Irish Minstrels 2nd 15-18 Flute SA
Kyle Rowan Johnny Docherty 3rd 12-15 Piano Accordion
Joe Joe McCann East London 3rd 15-18 Fiddle SA
Ben Connolly North London 3rd U12 Flute SA
Breanna Wilson & Jamie Conway Irish Minstrels 3rd 12-15 Duets

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome two new Youth Officers at regional level: Patrick Ballantyne (Midlands) and Charlotte O'Hare (Northern). Unfortunately, neither will be able to join us this weekend at convention, as Patrick is representing the province with the Macalla Orchestra at the Gradam Ceoil Awards in Cork while Charlotte is working with An Coimisiún Le Rincí Gaelacha at the All Scotland Irish Dancing Championships. They have already proved a great addition to the strong team we already have at regional level, with Ciara Gallagher-Murphy (Scotland) and Aaron Gallagher (London), and I look forward to working with them in the coming year.

From working with other Youth Officers throughout the country, it has become apparent that position of youth officer - especially at branch level - is very much under-utilised and positions are often left unfilled. The role of the Youth Officer within Comhaltas is essential not only in retaining membership as musicians get older and leave school; but involving young people in the decision making process, and in turn effecting change within the organisation. For this reason, we are delighted to welcome Orla Brannigan (Óg-Bhaill, Ardchomhairle) to Glasgow for Convention, to run a workshop on the areas in which youth officers can get involved. We hope this will inspire this year's cohort of youth officers to take more of an active role!

Personally, I have had a great time working with the Provincial Council, and would like to thank all the other youth officers for their help throughout the year!

David Browne, Oifigeach na nÓg, Comhairle na Breataine

*Youth Session at
Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine,
Leicester 2016*



Macalla 1916

Back in May 2015, during Congress weekend at Culturlann na hÉireann in Dublin, I discussed the idea of hosting a major event in Britain to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Rising. Right from inception through to the culmination I had a buzz of excitement running through me. We formed our committee of volunteers from throughout the Province of Britain. It was clear from our first meeting that we had to go big and produce an event that would raise the profile of Irish music, heritage and of Comhaltas in Britain in such an important year.

The Royal Albert Hall and The Barbican were suggested and in the end it was The Barbican that had the date to suit us. We then had to come up with the entertainment and after some debate with Comhaltas in Dublin we decided that Michael Rooney's new suite of music, **Macalla 1916**, to be performed by The Comhaltas Folk Orchestra of Ireland, was what we needed.

Funding was secured from CCE Dublin and Culture Ireland and after finalising an outline of what we wanted to achieve, we contacted the Irish Embassy in London and immediately had the interest of the Ambassador and his staff. We were invited to have a meeting with The Ambassador and staff in the Embassy in London where we were graciously received by all.

The event finally came to fruition in The Barbican on Friday 4th March 2016. The day was packed with busily running around the strange environs of backstage at The Barbican, tackling last minute glitches or issues and taking care of the seemingly hundreds of things that needed to be dealt with that we did not foresee.

Until the moment that our invited guests and the audience were in their seats we could not relax. The sense of pride and achievement when the concert started and the first note was played was overwhelming and emotional. The fears and worries seemed to disappear.

I can safely say that one of the proudest moments of my life was when the packed auditorium gave two standing ovations to Michael Rooney and the Orchestra.

I would sincerely like to thank our committee and especially Patrick Morrison who worked tirelessly. Thanks must also go to Michael Rooney, Jim McAllister, Kieran Hanrahan and the staff of Culturlann na hÉireann for their help and support where they could. I would also like to specially thank the Ambassador and his staff at the Embassy for their help.

The Comhaltas Folk Orchestra of Ireland were outstanding ambassadors for all that is good in Ireland and abroad, they were a credit to themselves and Comhaltas.

Seamus Brogan, Cathaoirleach Macalla 1916 Committee

*Former Uchatarán an Comhaltais,
Vince Jordan introducing The
Comhaltas National Folk Orchestra of
Ireland from the stage of The Barbican
in London*



The Northern Region

All eight branches in the region continue to be active, however Bolton and Middlesbrough branches have lost members. They both find it hard to attract new members to learn Irish Music. Middlesbrough branch have introduced whistle and fiddle lessons in a couple of local schools as after school clubs and hope to attract new members.

Many branches marked the 1916 centenary, e.g. Liverpool branch staged a play titled 'Liverpool Lambs', Leeds branch helped stage 'Irish Dancers at the Crossroads', Tara O' Carolan branch held a film afternoon showing two films about two of the signatories to the Proclamation. Ashton in Makerfield branch held an event in association with the Brian Ború Club and presented the club with a framed Proclamation.

Patrick Flannery from Leeds branch was chosen to play at the Macalla Concert at the Barbican and to go on tour in Ireland. Several people from the region travelled to London to attend the concert, which was comprised of a seventy strong orchestra performing music composed by Michael Rooney. The music was spectacular and made a lasting impression on those who attended.

Several members of St Wilfrid's branch played at Richmond House, which is a facility for the elderly, some of whom suffer from dementia. Liverpool branch have supported and performed at a number of local charity and fundraising events and the annual 'An Tostal' at St Michael's Irish Centre, raising much needed funds for St Michael's, CAFOD and Irish Community Care Merseyside.

Many of our talented musicians attended the regional and all Britain Fleadhanna and some progressed to the All-Ireland Fleadh. Liverpool branch have worked had this year with the help of Angela Durcan from Manchester to form two céilí bands which progressed through to the All Britain Fleadh.

Eileen McGoldrick, Rúnaí, Northern Region



The Midland Region

The Midland Region have four meetings throughout the year. The chairman continually encourages the Region to come up with new ideas to help promote branches and the Region in the Midlands.

SESSIONS AND MUSIC CLASSES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES All of the branches in the Region have been busy with either céilí, sessions, music classes or all three. Cambridge ran some successful workshops earlier in the year.

VOTE OF SYMPATHY In January of this year, the Region was saddened to hear of the death of Patsy Cooke, a prominent member of the Leicester branch and of the Midland Region. His sudden death took everyone by surprise and his presence and cheerful countenance have been greatly missed throughout the year. Patsy supported every meeting and function in the Midland Region.

CONCERT TOUR 2016 Milton Keynes hosted the concert tour and quite a few from the Region went to watch it there. They all came back with very good reports about the concert. They felt that the 1916 element in the concert was put across very well. Annette Hannigan from the Legrave branch was on the tour this year.

MIDLAND REGION FLEADH 2016 The Midland Regional Fleadh, run by the Midland Region, took place at Princethorpe College on 17 April and an enjoyable day was had by all who attended. The facilities provided by the college were superb. The cost of hiring the college for the day has risen considerably over the last numbers of years and it is something that the Midland Region will need to do a lot of fundraising for if we wish to continue using the college. We continued with the use of Priority cards to help competitors who had a number of competitions going on at the same time. We had our now established presentation of trophies and medals in the hall. These took place at lunchtime for the morning competitions and at the end of the day for the rest of the competitions. The number of competitors was down on previous years and this is something that we, as a Midland Region, need to address to see how we can encourage larger numbers to music classes and more to competitions.

Thanks must go to the small dedicated committee who worked so hard to make the Fleadh a success. And a big thank you to the helpers from the various branches throughout the Region who gave of their time during the day.

CONGRESS MAY 2016 Three members from the Midland Region attended Congress this year.



MACALLA CONCERT 2016 The very successful Macalla 1916 concert took place in various venues throughout the year. While a lot of the musicians were from Ireland, one of the small number of musicians from Britain on the group was from the Leagrave branch of Comhaltas – Patrick Ballantyne.

FLEADH CHEOIL NA BREATAINE 2016 This was hosted by the Midland Region. A lot of work went into organising this Fleadh by a relatively small group of people. It took place on 25/26

June at Leicester University and was a very well run and successful Fleadh. The Region were delighted with the help and sponsorship from so many branches in Britain. A full Fleadh report is available from Carmel Burke or from the Provincial secretary.

FLEADH CHEOIL NA HEIREANN 2016 The Midland Region felt that it was a very enjoyable but wet Fleadh. It was nice that it was close to the town. There was always a great atmosphere in the town. Some complained that the Fleadh Office was a long way off and that there needed to be a lot more signs at the Fleadh. Everyone was happy with the reasonably priced shuttle buses and the park and ride.

REGIONAL CONCERT 2016 The Birmingham branch of Comhaltas hosted an inter branch concert on Sunday 20 November at Scanlon's Irish Club. A very friendly, musical afternoon was enjoyed by all and Carol Scanlon sponsored the food on that day, so there was no cost for the branch or the Region. Branches in the Region that attended were Birmingham, Coventry, Leamington, Leicester and Luton. The next inter branch concert will be hosted by the Leamington Spa branch sometime next year.

REGIONAL AGM 2016 The chair of the Province, Michael Nevin, was invited to attend our Regional AGM. The afternoon started with lunch at 12 noon and the meeting started after that. A lot of new Regional officers were appointed and it is hoped that this will bring new and fresh ideas to the Region. Presentations organised by Donal Murphy and with contributions from the branches in the Region were made to Sean McDonagh, Carmel Burke and Chris Murphy for all of their dedication and hard work for the Region. The AGM finished with a music session and buffet.

MIDLAND REGIONAL FLEADH 2017 This will be taking place on 2 April 2017 at Princethorpe College and will be hosted by the Midland Region.

The Scottish Region

The four Scottish branches continue to operate and thrive. Membership numbers in some branches have increased again.

November 2015 The Regional AGM was held on Thursday 15th November at 7.30pm in the Xavier Centre in Carfin. A new committee was elected as follows:

Chair	Theresa Gallagher- Murphy	Irish Minstrel's CCE
Vice Chair	Joe McNulty	St. Patrick's CCE
Secretary	Cathleen Armstrong	Irish Minstrel's CCE
Treasurer	Sarah Rooney	St. James the Great CCE
PRO	James Carney	St. Patrick's CCE
Gaeilge Officer	Evin Downey	St. James the Great CCE
Youth Officer	Ciara Gallagher- Murphy	Irish Minstrels CCE
Auditors	Frank Hughes	Johnny Doherty CCE
	James Carney	St. Patrick's CCE

October 2015 Conradh na Gaeilge invited the Johnny Doherty branch committee to their anniversary dinner céilí, to make a presentation to Sean Feeney for his contribution to the Irish language. The St. Patrick's branch held a very successful and well attended race night.

November 2015 The St. Patrick's branch was invited to Warrenpoint's anniversary celebrations, and had a very successful weekend. The branch members also played at a wedding whilst there.

December 2015 Once again, Irish Minstrels had a very successful Christmas party and céilí in St. Roch's, with the 'man in red' making a much anticipated appearance. Music was provided by the older members of the branch, while the younger members danced. They also held their annual Christmas céilí in the Couper Institute, which was enjoyed by young and old alike. St. James the Great also had a very successful Christmas party. Santa must have been very busy, because he turned up



there as well! St. Patrick's held a very successful Christmas family céilí, which was very well attended, and performed at St. Timothy's Primary School's Christmas Fayre. The Johnny Doherty branch held a 90th birthday party for Sean Feeney. Their Christmas event was in St. John Bosco's and everyone had a great night.

January 2016 In January, Irish Minstrels held their annual Winter School in St. Aloysius' School, which was well attended, with visitors from Drumore taking part. A star-studded concert and Seisiún Mór in the Couper Institute finished off the weekend. This continues to be a very popular and busy event. St. James the Great CCE continued with their outreach programme, with a couple of tutors volunteering their time in local primary schools. This project is proving very successful in bringing musicians into the branch. All four branches had members appearing in various different concerts at Celtic Connections.

February 2016 February saw all branches competing in Feis Glaschú in Woodfarm High School. This is a unique event and provides an early taster for the Comhaltas Fleadhanna ahead. For many of the younger members of Comhaltas, this is their first venture into competitions. The Scottish Region would like to express its thanks and gratitude to the Feis Committee for arranging this splendid competition, which has been in existence for over 100 years.

The Echoes of Erin Tour Concert, commemorating the 1916 Easter Rising, was held in the Redhurst Hotel in Eastwood, Glasgow. This was a very enjoyable night, with musicians and singers from the Scottish Region performing alongside the troupe. St. Patrick's CCE held a monthly session in the Bank Social Club.

March 2016 In March, there were various St. Patrick's Day ceilidh hosted by branches, with members taking part in Glasgow City Council's St. Patrick's celebrations. Members from St. James the Great CCE showcased their talent as part of these celebrations. Musicians from the Irish Minstrels branch also played at these celebrations, held in Glasgow's Merchant City. The Irish Minstrels branch held their annual St. Patrick's Day céilí, with music by the St. Roch's céilí band. St. Patrick's musicians and friends performed at the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Coatbridge. St. James the Great also held a very successful St. Patrick's céilí.

April 2016 St. Patrick's CCE hosted a very successful Scottish Fleadh in St. Andrew's High School, Coatbridge, which proved to be an excellent venue. All four branches agreed that this was a very well-run and organised fleadh, with every branch enjoying success. Members are now practicing hard and looking forward to the All Britain Fleadh.

May 2016 All branches have been busy preparing for the upcoming All Britain Fleadh, practicing grúpaí ceoil and bands. St. Patrick's held a fundraising bag pack at a local store.

June 2016 The All Britain Fleadh was held in Leicester, and proved to be very successful for all four branches, with lots of competitors taking part and qualifying for the upcoming All Ireland Fleadh in Ennis. St. Patrick's performed at St. Timothy's Primary School's Summer Fayre.

August 2016 The All-Ireland Fleadh was held in Ennis this year and was a huge success with a number of medal winners from the region. Congratulations to Kevin Murphy, Roisin Anne Hughes, Calum McGregor, Ciera Doohan, Calum Convoy, Breanna Wilson, Jamie Conway and Kyle Rowan.

September 2016 All branches started their classes up again after the summer break. The Irish Minstrel's branch held their annual Eoin Kelly Memorial Concert in the Couper Institute, Cathcart, which was a very successful and enjoyable night and was very well attended.

Cathleen Armstrong, Rúnaí, Réigiún na hAlban



The London & Southern Region



North London Comhaltas continue to hold their annual "Friendly fleadh" at Haringey Irish Centre each November and their All Winners competition two weeks later which always begins with the celebration of Mass. We understand that they are the only branch in Britain that runs a fleadh especially for juniors. Our branches are indebted to them for these wonderful events.

On Saturday 30th April 2016, Chris Evans, our Treoraí naGaeilge (Irish speaking officer), brought West London's annual 'Gaelic Voices' Festival to Shrewsbury. Thirty-five paying guests attended singing workshops by Marianne McAleer and Carmel Silver, plus Irish classes from Dr Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh (Aberystwyth University). In the evening was a music

session. This successful event was part-funded by CCÉ.

Chris writes a weekly column about Irish music and the Irish language in the Irish World newspaper and invites people to send him news for publication. His email address is chrisevans248@yahoo.co.uk

Caroline Judge Colmcilles' Ceilidh Band played at Nicholas Breakspear School St Albans, which was a great success. This was organised by the St Albans Branch.

The Hastings branch continues to go from strength to strength. Their second annual fleadh was a great success and well enjoyed by all.

The West London Branch was responsible for a well-run regional fleadh at the Haringey Irish Centre.

Comhaltas in Britain played at the closing concert of the Return to Camden Town festival, London Irish Centre, Camden at the end of October.

The London contingent of the Provincial youth recording group performed on Trafalgar Square for the Mayor of London's St.Patrick's Day celebrations in March. Comhaltas were also very well represented in the busking groups around the London Underground on the weekend.

Members of branches in London travelled to Yorkshire to record the CD with Mike McGoldrick in December.

We also had the Macalla concert at the Barbican last March, which was of course one of the high points of our centenary celebrations.

St. Albans branch were visited by Irish TV who filmed their annual summer BBQ and session on the 2nd July.

The 2016 Echoes of Erin Concert was held at the London Irish Centre, Camden and went well. This year it will be held on 4th March 2017 at the newly re-opened Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith. The newly re-built centre now has rental accommodation upstairs, which will provide a steady revenue stream to help support its busy and ambitious events. Ticket sales already (at the time of writing) far exceed total sales from last year.

The 2016 Convention was held at Camden Irish Centre but the centre could only be used on the Sunday; unfortunately we could not find a suitably priced venue for the workshops we wanted to run on the Saturday. The 2017 Convention will be held 18th and 19th Feb in Glasgow and will mark 60 years of Comhaltas in Britain. On 19th Feb London and Southern Region will be doing the presentation on the Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine 2017. Two of our branches also have their 60th anniversaries in 2017.

The 2017 Regional Fleadh and 2017 Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine will both be held at Nicholas Breakspear School, Colney Heath Lane, Saint Albans AL4 0TT. The Regional Fleadh will be held 29th April and the All Britain will be held Saturday 24th + Sunday 25th June.

8th July 2017 GAA All Britain at Greenford. GAA have asked L&S Comhaltas to provide music.



An Ród Seo Romhainn – The Road Ahead

As Comhaltas in Britain celebrates its 60th anniversary we look forward to a busy year ahead and many more years of promoting and passing on our cultural traditions. We congratulate those branches who have stood the test of time and continue to thrive but in this modern world we recognise pressures of time, austerity and the wider world continue to put impact on all voluntary and arts organisations. It is our traditional arts we preserve and extol but Comhaltas itself must be a modern organisation which relies on the vibrancy and vision of our volunteers.

Our branch structure gives us a presence in local communities across Britain but we have increasingly seen the benefits of working in partnership with other Irish organisations, with schools, and with the wider BAME community. We now regularly work in over 25 schools across the country and are in the process of implementing formal package for schools so that all schools can have access to traditional music not just the ones who have a personal connection to a Comhaltas member.

Over the past 12 months we have undertaken a review process for the organisation gaining feedback and insight from individual members, branches and regions. This information will prove to be vital in developing the way in which Comhaltas works in the future. Changes to legislation, health and safety, safeguarding, data protection and more have resulted in an increased burden on volunteers at a time when it seems increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers with the time, will and skills we need.

Technology plays an increasingly significant part of how Comhaltas reaches the community and we will be working to combine these technologies to compliment the face to face family approach which has, and will continue to push us forward. In a climate of increased accountability we have begun to review best practices associated with voluntary organisations. In our 60th year we will be looking at becoming a registered charity to provide stronger governance and ensure all our work is recognised and measured against the highest standards.

Comhaltas has always been more than teaching music to children at a weekly music class. Projects to support the wider community and provide for our members as a family are increasing, including our work in making sure Comhaltas in Britain is a dementia friendly organisation, providing training for volunteers and giving formal recognition to the time and dedication of our young musicians.

There are challenges ahead for the organisation but we continue to find ways to overcome these challenges and strengthen the sustainability, accountability and quality of Comhaltas in Britain so that more and more people can enjoy and experience our traditional Irish arts.

Music Sub-Committee

Members of the Music Sub-Committee

Scottish Region	Theresa Gallagher-Murphy, Mairi Campbell
Northern Region	Julie O'Hare, Sean Gavaghan, Margaret Webster
Midland Region	John Burke, Carmel Burke, Anna Jordan
London Region	Seamus Brogan, Pat Connolly, Michael Nevin

The Role of the Music Sub-Committee

Provide adjudicators The Music Sub-Committee is responsible for helping to provide adjudicators for the Regional Fleadhanna and the Provincial Fleadh each year. Adjudicators are selected from the official adjudicators list and the committee are constantly looking for new adjudicators to add to the list. The Regions throughout the Province are requested to suggest suitable names for the list and those put forward are required to 'sit-in' at a number of Fleadhanna in order to give them the confidence and experience to then adjudicate on their own. They are also required to attend and complete at least one (and more if possible) seminar for adjudicators. The list of adjudicators is updated every year.

Brief adjudicators The Music Sub-Committee are expected to brief adjudicators on the day of a Fleadh before they adjudicate, so that problems on the day are kept to a minimum. Where possible, we send briefing notes before the Fleadh in order to remind adjudicators of the latest updates. Usually the Music Sub-Committee members from the Region running the Fleadh are responsible for briefing the adjudicators.

Deal with complaints re adjudicators It is very important that we, as a Music Sub-Committee, are informed by the Fleadh Committee after any Fleadh if you feel disappointed in any way with an adjudicator. We will always respond to your query and if there is any justification in the complaint we will follow it through. In turn, **it is very important that a Fleadh Committee looks after their adjudicators** in terms of transport, accommodation, meals and expenses for the day/weekend.

Assist with timetable for Fleadhanna We also deal with aspects of the timetable for Fleadhanna. As we are responsible for selection of adjudicators, there needs to be some liaison between the committee running the Fleadh and the Music Sub-Committee members in that Region to ensure that the relevant adjudicator is being used for the correct competitions and that length of time for competitions has been allocated correctly.

Produce and update a Guidelines Booklet for running a Fleadh The Music Sub-Committee is responsible for putting together a Fleadh Guidelines Booklet with suggestions for running a Fleadh. This Fleadh package is made available each year to Fleadh secretaries and, in particular, to those involved with running a Fleadh for the first time. We also

keep this updated on an annual basis. This will be sent out in plenty of time before the Regional Fleadhanna to the Fleadh secretaries involved and any recent changes will be highlighted.

Coordinate dates of Regional Fleadhanna We try to ensure that all of the Regional Fleadhanna take place on different dates so that we are not limited in selection of adjudicators. Due to overlaps in previous years, it was decided that a Region should let the Music Sub-Committee secretary (Carmel Burke) know the date of their Regional Fleadh as soon as possible. The Music Sub-Committee secretary will then inform the other Regions so that no clash occurs.

Seminars for adjudicators Every few years, the Music Sub-Committee holds a Seminar for adjudicators. These seminars are for sit-in adjudicators (18 years and upwards), new adjudicators who have been added to the list and for more experienced adjudicators, as there are always new ideas and points to consider. We hosted a seminar on the weekend of the 12/13 November 2016 in Wiston Lodge, South Lanarkshire. We received a lot of feedback after our last seminar and took many of the comments on board to use as a basis for this seminar. The seminar was run by the Music Sub-Committee in Britain and a lot of preparation went into the running of the seminar in order to make it as interactive, informative and enjoyable as possible. The seminar was enjoyed by all and the Music Sub-Committee received some very positive feedback. This seminar was initial training for adjudicators. Following on from this there will be a continuation seminar course for those who participated in this recent seminar. This follow on course will also be open to other interested parties. The suggested date is 11/12 November 2017. Funding and the team who come over from Ireland will need to be arranged initially before the date can be confirmed.

These are some of the many and varied activities that the Music Sub-committee are involved with.

Carmel Burke, Rúnaí Music Sub-Committee



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