



COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN
PROVINCE OF BRITAIN
ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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Irish Culture Alive Worldwide

by Ann Finnegan, Uachtarán an Comhaltais



I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very successful and enjoyable convention. I am conscious of your great work and achievements down through the years.

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 ancestors. 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 Irish culture enthusiasts spread throughout the world.

As Uachtarán, I have many happy memories of your friendship and I look forward to meeting man of you at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Droghada next August.

Bail ó Dhia ar an obair.

Ann Finnegan, Uachtarán, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

The Unsung Heroes

by Labhrás Ó Murchú, Ardstiúrthóir CCÉ

They sit unobtrusively in the background while playing their music at a local session or on the street at a Fleadh Cheoil. They welcome young musicians even though their repertoire of tunes may be limited or their musicianship immature. They get obvious satisfaction from their music-making. They may never appear on television or be included in a Concert Tour: these are the unsung heroes of Comhaltas.

It is a sheer joy to be in the company of these unsung heroes. Their enthusiasm has never been dimmed by the spotlights and their spirit is reminiscent of the early Comhaltas years when like cultural crusaders the musicians availed of every opportunity to spread the love and knowledge of our native music. They encouraged many a “Fáinne Geal an Lae” performer who has since become a proficient musician in his or her own right.



The unsung heroes require no coaxing to open their instrument cases. Their enthusiasm is infectious. They will talk about their music to the casual listener or curious passer-by with all the integrity and urgency of the hedgeschool master. Their faces show contentment and pleasure rather than tenseness and the glint in the eye is ever present. The audience is relaxed in the company of these music makers and the movement of a chair or the clatter of a teapot goes unnoticed. It is a music making which allows for and cultivates the many moods which are to be found in such a

gathering: it doesn't create a prima donna style awe which is out of place in a kitchen setting or Fleadh Cheoil atmosphere.

Fortunately, there are thousands of unsung heroes and their numbers grow daily. These men and women bear testimony to the true spirit and purpose of Comhaltas. They sustain the environment which is conducive to the continued prominence of the sung heroes. Though they may not share the limelight with their more toasted colleagues, the "naturals" are always available for the local session, céilí class, village concert or hunting the wren.

We salute the unsung heroes and thank them for the many hours of pleasure which they have given us. We hope that they will continue to accompany the rising dust from the set-dancers' feet and cultivate the precious link with the past from the throne of the fireside hob.

As you assemble at your Annual Convention, you will recall many of these unsung heroes for they are the essence of your endeavours.

Go raibh Rath dé ar bhúr saothar.

Táimíd go léir faoi chomaoín agaibh.

Óráid an Chathaoirligh

Chairman's Address

I would like to wish a very warm welcome to all attending Convention today especially those who have travelled long distances and a big thank you to the Scottish region for their hard work in hosting this weekend.

2017 has been a real year to remember with so many branches celebrating anniversaries. I was lucky to attend some wonderful celebrations this year with several branches celebrating 25, 40, 45 and 60 year anniversaries. One very special

occasion was a reception held at the Irish Embassy in London in recognition of Comhaltas' 60 years contribution to the Irish community in Britain. With members attending from all over Britain the night was certainly one to remember with our musicians, singers and dancers representing our organisation in a way that would make you feel proud to be Irish.

This year saw the launch of Peter Fawcett's book 'Fawcett's Fleadh'. Apart from being the only book written about the all-Ireland fleadh cheoil over the years, it is full of beautiful photographs featuring many of our musicians and members since the early '70's and the amusing stories of Peter's travels in Ireland. With all the proceeds going to Comhaltas here in Britain this book will surely be a collector's item in years to come.

Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí Looking ahead Comhaltas has designated this year Bliain na nÓg. This is an opportunity to highlight and acknowledge the contribution of young people to Comhaltas, Irish culture and community service. We are encouraged to honour those young people who have given



exceptional service and not just within Comhaltas, but also within the wider community. A medallion and certificate will be available on request.

Beatha teanga í a labhairt The Irish government on the other hand has declared 2018 Bliain na Gaeilge – The year of the Irish language. There has been a tremendous revival of interest recently in learning the Irish language with much interest on social media, online tools such as Duolingo, and pop-up Gaeltacht (friends and strangers meeting occasionally in various places to speak Irish) Maybe this is the year that some of you will take the plunge and try a cúpla focal. You won't regret it!

Our project officers have been busy this year working in such areas as making Comhaltas a dementia friendly organisation, education projects to introduce our music into learning in state schools, updating and educating the membership about safeguarding responsibilities and the law, developing contacts with the GAA, and planting the seed for new branches in places rich with potential. Our Meitheal team work closely together to develop these strategies throughout the year.

Lastly, I would like to say go raibh mile maith agaibh to all those officers and members who have volunteered their time throughout the year to attend meetings, organise céilís and sessions and host fleadhanna. Without you we would not blossom - is sibhse na laochra gan aitheantas.

Guím gach rath oraibh an bhliain amach romhainn.

Mícheál MacCnámhain
Cathaoirleach, Comhairle na Breataine

Tuarascáil an Rúnaí

Secretary's Report

60 years of music making and passing on the tradition is a great accomplishment to be celebrated but Comhaltas in Britain is much more than this. In this special anniversary year for Comhaltas in Britain we remember that Comhaltas is a family, and as an organization Comhaltas has provided strength, community, a sense of purpose and place for Irish people across Britain. Much more than the hundreds of music classes which take place throughout the year Comhaltas in Britain is a focal point for the Irish community, maintaining a link to not only the island of Ireland but to our shared cultural heritage which is not divided by water.



The contribution Comhaltas has made to the Irish community and life in Britain was recognised by the Irish Ambassador in London this year with a reception to mark the anniversary but also branches have celebrated their achievements locally around Britain. Irish Minstrels branch in Glasgow began the celebrations as only they could, being the first branch formed outside of Ireland. Liverpool, East London and West London branches then continued through the year with events to mark their own 60th anniversary. Luton and Ashton in Makerfield branches celebrated 45 years, Leicester Comhaltas celebrated 40 years and Cambridge branch had their 25th anniversary. As well as these long-standing branches, we have seen our newest branch in Hastings continue with their now annual Hastings Fleadh which brings the sound of traditional music down to the south coast.

Spreading the word for Comhaltas and our traditional arts comes with everything we do no more so than with the annual Echoes of Erin concert tour which is the highlight of the year for many. In addition to this first-class group of performers who tour Britain we have also now fully established our own national performance group 'Ceoltóirí na Breataine' who have recorded an album and can now regularly be seen attending festivals, concerts and sessions in Britain and Ireland.

A year we should all be around of!

Is mise

Katie Garghan

Rúnaí, Comhairle na Breataine



Member of the Provincial Council elected at Convention 2017

Tuarascáil an Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí

PRO report

Cairde,

What a year 2017 turned out to be for Comhaltas na Breataine. This Year we have celebrated Ashton in Makerfield CCÉ's Branch 45th anniversary, Liverpool CCÉ, East London and Irish Minstrels 60th anniversaries. Once again, our province has continued to demonstrate strong performances at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, with the pinnacle being St. Roch's Senior Grúpai Cheoil winning the All-Ireland!



Promoting Comhaltas at the Global Irish Civic Forum in Dublin Castle was a highlight for me. This forum debated many subjects but the main areas of interest for Comhaltas was ESP (Emigrant Support Programme) funding and the potential referendum on giving the Irish diaspora the right to vote in Presidential elections.

I was privileged to attend the 40th anniversary of the St Roch's Céilí Band. The dinner was held at Celtic Park, with around 500 people attended. This event paid tribute to Frank McArdle for his dedication and commitment to Comhaltas. Last year I stated, "there was a time when the mere survival of Irish traditional music was not at all a sure thing". But with dedicated members like Frank McArdle, who has created a Comhaltas version of Micheál Davitt's visionary concept of the 'parish', has secured Irish traditional music's presence in Glasgow for many generations to come.

My report last year outlined my ambition for Fleadh na Breataine becoming a festival themed occasion celebrating all forms of Irish culture. I have established strong links with GAA and I am actively working towards Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine involving the GAA and Conradh na Gaeilge is going to

be trialled in the 2019 Fleadh na Breataine. This is because, there has been a few difficulties in trying to template a model for GAA activities into our Provincial Fleadh.

I am going to be working with Peter Fawcett in supporting his dream of hosting a town Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine in 2019. The town of Settle is envisaged to create a miniature sized form of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, where a whole town becomes emerged by Irish traditional music. This is very exciting and highlights Comhaltas na Breataine is going from strength to strength.

Is mise le meas,

*Ciarán Doolin,
Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí, Comhairle na Breataine*

Tuarascáil na hÓige

Youth Report

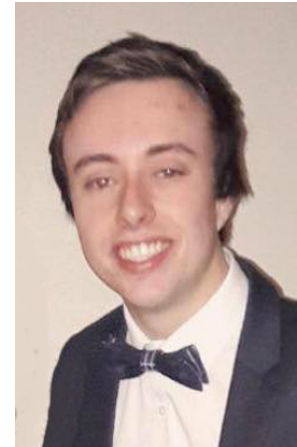
This has been another very successful year for the youth of the organisation in Britain.

Yet again 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 only 2 of our regions this year. We were very lucky to be afforded this opportunity and thank the Fleadh committee greatly for this.

In November we ran another seminar for prospective adjudicators. We were delighted to welcome Paddy Ryan, Catriona Browne and Micheal Mac Aogain from Dublin to facilitate the weekend alongside our own Music Sub-Committee ably led by John Burke. It was a great weekend filled with lots of learning opportunities as well as many tunes and lots of craic.

It's great to see all of our regions promoting youth events. These range from the simple things like regular youth sessions to weekends of workshops like the annual Eoin Kelly Winter School in Glasgow. A new event for this year was the Midlands region "Inter branch concert." Five branches were represented, and each put on a short 10/15 minute 'youth concert'. There were kids from around 6-17 playing music and it was really, really well attended, with great support from parents & families. Thanks goes to Carmel and John Burke for leading on this.

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!



Lauren Dunbar	Irish Minstrel's	1st	U12 Fiddle SA
Cara Conway	Irish Minstrel's	2nd	U12 Piano
		3rd	U12 Fiddle
Calum McGregor	Irish Minstrel's	1st	12-15 Piano
Jamie Conway	Irish Minstrel's	2nd	12-15 Flute
Michael Dudgeon	Irish Minstrel's	2nd	12-15 Piano Accordion
Alex Morgan	East London	3rd	12-15 Piano Accordion
Olivia Whelehan	East London	2nd	15-18 Accompaniment
		3rd	15-18 Harp
Roisin Anne Hughes	Irish Minstrel's	1st	O18 Fiddle
David Browne	Irish Minstrel's	1st	O18 Accompaniment
St Roch's	Irish Minstrels	1st	O18 Gruapi Cheoil
Brogan McAuliffe	East London	3rd	O18 Whistle
Jack Boyle	West London	3rd	O18 Banjo

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the Youth Officers at regional level: Ciara Gallagher Murphy (Glasgow), Patrick Ballantyne (Midlands) and Charlotte O'Hare (Northern). A special mention goes to Michael Fitzgerald (PRO Midlands) for the active role he has taken on youth involvement and social media presence within the region.

After a long wait, the Ceoltóirí na Breataine album titled "Glúin Nua" is finished!! We are in the process of organising 4 album launches as part of regional fleadhanna. These will consist of a short session type gig where some members of the performance group will lead the tunes, including some of the material from the album. Its hoped that all branches will encourage young people to attend. I'd like to thank Patrick Morrison for his Photoshop skills in producing the cover artwork – it's much appreciated. These projects have been extremely successful, not only in producing a quality product, but also in forging links between musicians separated by geography with a common appreciation of the music.

It is also worth noting the success of the Trip to Birmingham Trad Festival. Now in its 4th year is going from strength to strength. Run by Comhaltas members, it has become a highlight of the festival calendar not only in the Midlands region but in Britain as a whole, bringing together young people from all over the country to see some of the finest exponents of Irish Traditional Music. It would be great to see Comhaltas na Breataine as an organisation engaging with the festival in the years to come as events like this are key in retaining our youth membership.

Moving on to the year ahead, as in previous years, I'd like to encourage all branches to ensure that they have filled their youth officer positions. It's vital that young people within the organisation have the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process at both branch and regional level. There are great resources put in place by the Ard Comhairle to guide young people in this role.

Finally, on a personal note, I've really enjoyed working with Comhairle na Breataine and the Meitheal team throughout the year and would like to thank all the other youth officers for their help and support!

*David Browne
Oifigeach na nÓg, Comhairle na Breataine*

The Northern Region

Comhaltas celebrated 60 years in Britain in February at Convention. Irish Minstrels celebrated their 60 years in January, Liverpool and London in October and Ashton in Makerfield celebrate 45 years later in the year. The 60th anniversary was further celebrated when Comhaltas were invited to the Irish Embassy in London on 16th October and 20 of our young musicians and dancers were asked to perform, including Charlotte O'Hare, Feildham Doolin and Catherine McGoldrick from the Northern Region.

The region sent many musicians to the All-Ireland Fleadh in Ennis. Congratulations go to Martha Wall on coming 2nd in Fiddle Slow Airs and Jody Moran, formerly of Leeds branch who won Newly Composed tune for the second year running. Members of Tara O'Carolan and St Wilfrid's branches performed for 30 minutes on the Fly Shannon Gig Rig at the Fleadh in front of a crowd of 2000. They were very well received. They also performed at Settle Folk Gathering.



*Musicians playing a session after the Northern Regional Fleadh, Leeds.
Photo courtesy Peter Fawcett*

Four members of the Northern Region (Ellen and Maeve McGovern, Grainne Lacey Roberts and Owen Sprogen) have been successful in their auditions to join the English Folk and Dance Society.

Some of the branches in the Northern Region do not have many members, whilst others are very busy, e.g. Liverpool branch have used funding from the Irish Emigrant Support Fund to hold additional Irish tune ornamentation workshops (multi instrument) for all members and everyone taking part is really enjoying the regular fortnightly workshops. At the end March they

used the Emigrant Support Fund to subsidise workshops with John and Maggie Carty. They are currently developing new tune booklets for all musicians. Liverpool branch have organised a branch exchange with St Patrick's branch in Scotland.



Tara O'Carolan Branch members in Ennis at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

Leeds branch recently held a very successful and enjoyable story telling workshop. They also held an annual dinner dance, musical play and céilí. Leeds also held a branch exchange with Bofield CCÉ branch from Mayo.

Members of St Wilfrid's Branch took part in the Manchester Day parade and played at an Ordination. They also played at the Cheetham Hill Community Day

and the Irish World Heritage Centre Annual Fun Day. They also travelled to

Liverpool for their 60th anniversary celebration.

Members of Tara O' Carolan and St Wilfrid's branches recently played together at a surprise 75th birthday party in Middlewich.

Tara O' Carolan branch have had a busy year playing at the Mayo dinner dance, the Manchester Irish Language Festival launch, at the Chorlton Club before the All Ireland Football final and they will be supporting the Chorlton Clubs Fundraiser in a few weeks.

*Eileen McGoldrick
Rúnaí, Northern Region*

The Midland Region

2017 has been a very busy year with a very well-run regional Fleadh held at Princethorpe in April; several competitors qualified for the all-Britain.

The all-Britain held at St Albans in June was another successful weekend, with a number of competitors qualifying for the all-Ireland; the all-Ireland itself was a damp but very enjoyable few days.



Leagrave Branch Session at St Joseph's Luton.

The branches in the Region have been busy with céilí, sessions, music classes and in particular fundraising activities in order to support those families who travelled to Ennis, Co. Clare for the All Ireland. Other highlights included:

- A session in June with two Irish musicians, Adele Commins and Daithi Kearney which was hosted at Leamington and very well-attended by other branches.
- A storytelling workshop with Kate Corkery was hosted by Birmingham and took place in October.
- Some officers from the Region attended the excellent 25th anniversary celebrations at the Cambridge branch.
- Branch members from our Region also attended the 60th anniversary celebrations at the Irish Embassy and had a very enjoyable time also.
- The Echoes of Erin concert was hosted by Nottingham in February

- Leicester celebrated their 40th anniversary in 2017.
- Dementia workshop to be hosted by Leicester

The region is also looking forward to the Echoes of Erin Concert tour 2018 Hosted by the Leamington branch on 22nd February 2018 and the Midland Regional Fleadh 13th May 2018 at Princethorpe College.



2017 Echoes of Erin group on stage during their tour of Britain

The Scottish Region

The four Scottish branches are all very active and thriving well, with numbers increasing in some branches'

October 2016 - The Scottish Region held a very successful Halloween Céilí in St. Joseph's Hall in Clarkston Glasgow on 29th October. The music was supplied by members of the St. James the Great branch, with their Chair, Stephen Deveney performing as MC for the night. Everyone involved had a great night. St. James the Great have recruited new tutors to their branch, and have introduced Circle Time once a month, which is proving to be very successful.

November 2016 - The Regional AGM was held Sunday 6th November in the Little Flower Hall in Carfin. A new committee was elected as follows:

Cathaoirleach na hAlbain	Theresa Gallagher - Murphy	Irish Minstrel's CCÉ
Leas-Chathaoirleach	Francis Hughes	Johnny Doherty CCÉ
Runaí	Cathleen Armstrong	Irish Minstrel's CCÉ
Cisteoir	Sarah Rooney	St. James the Great CCÉ
Oifigeach Caidrimh Phoiblí	James Carney	St. Patrick's CCÉ
Oifigeach na Gaeilge	Eimhín Ó Dúnaigh	St. James the Great CCÉ
Oifigeach Óige	Ciara Gallagher – Murphy	Irish Minstrels CCÉ
Iniúcháir Amháin	Noreen Hughes	St. Patrick's CCÉ
Iniúcháir Dhá	Jim McKenna	Johnny Doherty CCÉ

St. Patrick's CCÉ had a visit from Liverpool CCÉ, ahead of their 60th anniversary celebrations. A session, quiz night and céilí were organised on Saturday, with a visit to Summerlee Heritage Park and a session in the Banks Social Club rounding off an enjoyable weekend. Irish Minstrel's CCÉ held a very successful and well attended race night in Christ the King Church Hall.



St Patrick's Branch with Liverpool Branch on their exchange visit from Coatbridge to Liverpool

December 2016 - There were several branch Christmas céilídh and parties held throughout the region in December, with Santa making a visit to each to hand out presents and sweets. In addition to the céilí/children's party held at St. Roch's, Irish Minstrel's CCÉ held their annual Christmas céilí in the Coupar Institute. This was well attended and was a very enjoyable night.

January 2017 - January marked the 60th anniversary of the Irish Minstrel's branch. This was celebrated at a wonderful night of music in the Kerrydale suite at Celtic Park. Everyone enjoyed a beautiful dinner and were then treated to the Irish Minstrel's Orchestra, led by Michael Rooney, performing the Macalla Suite. Members from all branches, with special guests, enjoyed a night to remember. The Irish Minstrel's branch also held their annual

Winter Workshops in St. Aloysius College, with a host of top tutors on offer. St. James the Great CCÉ continued with their very successful Outreach Programme, which brings new members to the branch from local primary schools. This programme is run by volunteer tutors from the branch.

February 2017 - All four branches competed in the Glasgow Feis competition. The Feis is a great introduction to competition for our young beginners and is always enjoyed by all of our members. The Scottish Region express their thanks to the Feis Committee for this wonderful competition. The Irish Minstrel's Orchestra, led by Michael Rooney, gave a sell-out performance of the Macalla Suite at a concert as part of Celtic Connections. The Scottish Region hosted the Provincial Convention in the Holiday Inn in East Kilbride, with a concert and workshops over the weekend.

March 2017 - All the branches were involved in various St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Johnny Doherty held a céilí, that was also a fundraiser for the forthcoming All Scotland Fleadh. St. Patrick's CCÉ performed at the celebrations in Coatbridge, as did musicians from the other branches. Irish Minstrels and St. James the Great held their own branch céilídh, with members of Irish Minstrels CCÉ also playing at the annual St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Merchant City.

April 2017 - Johnny Docherty CCÉ hosted the Scottish Fleadh this year, and, as always, it was a very well-run and organised Fleadh. This year, rather than having a céilí the night before the competitions, the committee organised sessions after the Fleadh that proved very successful. As a 'thank you' to everyone who helped make the Fleadh such a success, the branch held a night of food and music in the Little Flower Hall in Carfin. Congratulations to the Johnny Docherty branch for hosting an excellent Fleadh. All four branches had members qualify for the All Britain Fleadh in June.

May 2017 - Comhaltas held their annual AGM and Congress in Dublin in May. The Regional branches and Board were represented. All four branches are

practicing hard in preparation for the upcoming All Britain Fleadh in London.

June 2017 - The All Britain Fleadh was held in the Nicholas Breakspere School in London. This proved a very successful Fleadh for the Scottish Region, with lots of bands, grúpaí and competitors qualifying for the All Ireland Fleadh in Ennis.

August 2017 - Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann returned to Ennis this year and was enjoyed by everyone who attended the event.

Congratulations to the ceoltóirí who achieved the coveted title of All Ireland Champion, those who won All Ireland medals and well done to all who participated!

Once again, the Scottish Region returned with quite an impressive haul of medals.

Roisin Anne Hughes	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	1 st place Senior Fiddle
David Browne	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	1 st place Senior Accompaniment
Calum McGregor	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	1 st place U15 Piano
Lauren Dunbar	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	1 st place U12 Fiddle
Senior Grúpaí	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	1 st place
Philip Westwell	Johnny Doherty CCÉ	2 nd place Senior Whistling
Jamie Conway	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	2 nd place U15 Flute
Michael Dudgeon	St. James the Great CCÉ	2 nd place U15 Piano Accordion
Cara Conway	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	2 nd place U12 Piano
Cara Conway	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	3 rd place U12 Fiddle
Myles MacAuley	Irish Minstrels CCÉ	3 rd place U12 Piano Accordion.



IrishMinstrel's CCÉ -Senior Grúpai Cheoil winners in Ennis 2017

September 2017 - Irish Minstrels CCÉ held their annual Winner's Concert in the Couper Institute, with members and guests performing. St. Patrick's CCÉ visited Liverpool CCÉ over September weekend. A great weekend was had by all, and it is hoped this will become an annual event. St. James the Great lost one of its founding members on 24th September, with the passing of Monsignor Matt Coakley. Monsignor Coakley was instrumental in starting up the branch in 1989, and was recognised for his significant contributions to Comhaltas with the gold medal award in the 50th anniversary year.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam

October 2017 - The Scottish Region held a very successful fancy dress Halloween céilí in St. Joseph's Hall in Clarkston. The members of St. James the Great CCÉ pulled out all the stops to make this a great night, from their

Chair Stephen Deveney taking charge of MC for the evening, their céilí band supplying great music, to other members selling raffle tickets etc. Hopefully, this will become an annual event. All of the Regional branches held their AGM's in October and duly elected new committees.

November 2017

This weekend, in Wiston Lodge Biggar, Comhaltas are hosting another adjudicator's seminar.

Cathleen Armstrong
Rúnaí, Réigiún na hAlban

The London & Southern Region

Much of this year was dominated by the staging of the All Britain at Nicholas Breakspear school St Albans. A fantastic committee of people came together (with Marian Brogan very much to the fore) to deliver a very successful All Britain. A big thanks needs to go to the staff, parents and sixth formers at the school as well as those from around the province who made such a valuable contribution.

The same venue was used by the St Albans branch for our regional fleadh which was as usual a very well run and enjoyable occasion.

We are actively looking to add to our choices of possible venues for

fleadhanna and other occasions as it is getting harder to access all the space we need in the Haringey Irish Centre (which has been our "go to" place now for several years). We have also had to work hard to secure our meeting space in the Camden Irish Centre but hope that this should be able to continue.



Session in Hastings as part of the CCÉ Hastings Fleadh weekend

This year marked the 60th anniversary of both the East and West London branches. East London marked theirs with a fine and very well attended evening at the Crown Hotel in Cricklewood (and the craic was certainly good...). The parish hall in Quex Road Kilburn hosted the celebrations for West London (another location traditionally at the epicentre of Irish London). Both occasions brought together members old and new for some great music and reflected the true and enthusiastic groundswell of support for traditional Irish music in London (would be great to see that reflected at our fleadhanna, meetings and other Comhaltas occasions).



Musicians performing at the Embassy of Ireland in London

The North London fleadh went ahead in November and was again a great if less pressurised occasion for our young people to showcase their skills and passion for the music. The All Winners had to be delayed until the end of January because of an unexpectedly heavy snowfall on the chosen day in September. We broke with tradition and used the excellent parish centre at Hay Lane Kingsbury for this as the Camden Irish Centre wasn't available to us.

The Hastings branch enjoyed another very successful fleadh, bringing the music to eager and receptive local crowds. The integration of traditional sea shanties into some of the seisiuns in the atmospheric old pubs contributes

to a very unique occasion which I would strongly urge everyone to experience in the coming years.

The annual Echoes of Erin concert took place at the newly opened Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre and was the new centre's second live music gig. It was a very well received sell out and looks to be the same again this year.

Again, our young musicians have enjoyed the opportunities to play at the Irish embassy and to grace Trafalgar Square for the annual St Patrick's Day celebrations (under the banner of the Trad Gathering. We also had an excellent float at the day's parade.

We are very lucky to have such dedicated and inspiring teachers.

An exchange has been enjoyed with Tula CCE in Clare and two further exchanges with Irish branches have been planned for the coming year. Again, our families and young people are approaching these in the very positive spirit of friendship and enjoyment upon which our music community thrives.

Onwards and upwards...

*Dermot Haran
Cathaoirleach, London & Southern Region*

Comhaltas Britain as a Dementia Friendly Organisation

The Irish community in Britain is the oldest minority ethnic community in Britain. As a community with an older age profile we see higher than average issues of mental and physical ill-health including cardiovascular diseases linking to dementia.

Comhaltas in Britain recognises that dementia is a serious issue within the Irish community and is partnering with Irish in Britain through their Cuimhne memory loss campaign to help our members understand and address the issue of dementia for Irish people living in Britain.

Irish in Britain, through research, has highlighted the significant scale of the problem within the community and at a much higher rate than in the general population. It has also provided evidence for the need to address the issue and support Irish people living with dementia in a culturally sensitive way. As Comhaltas in Britain, thanks to funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, we are working towards becoming a more dementia friendly organization; as the problem of dementia not only affects the wider Irish community but also has impacted directly on members and the family of Comhaltas.

Evidence has shown that music and particularly song has a positive impact on those living with dementia. Hearing music or song from a person's past often triggers memories in people, who are otherwise unresponsive, even to family members. Often people living with quite advanced dementia can be seen mouthing words to songs or joining in with singing if the music or song is one which they recall from when they were younger.

As a Comhaltas family with such a strong connection to the music and song this is especially important. We talk about the passing on of our tradition, with an older generation inspiring and teaching younger generations but

we do not often consider the power or ability to give back that culture to a generation who may have lost it due to memory loss or dementia. 'The songs we learnt as school' takes on new meaning when we encounter someone living with dementia who is normally unresponsive but still knows all the words from their childhood.

Many of our musicians and branches currently visit care homes and dementia groups to play music and perform but we are actively working to expand on this.

Training is being made available to units of Comhaltas in Britain through Irish in Britain to help members and branches understand dementia better, so they can better support their work in care homes or with members who may be living with dementia.

We have also commissioned Co. Clare fiddle player Josie Nugent, to work with branches in Britain and Irish Dementia groups in researching through case studies the benefits of traditional Irish music in those living with dementia. As well as playing fiddle Josie is also active as a music therapist in the areas of autism, learning difficulties, cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury and dementia and is a postgraduate supervisor and lecturer of music therapy at University of Limerick. Her work in dementia focuses on enhancing attention and interactivity using music, dance and sing-a-long activities to increase levels of enjoyment and a sense of belonging. Through this research we again hope to highlight the issues of Dementia in the wider Irish community here in Britain and understand how we as Comhaltas can support and improve experiences for such a significant part of our community.



Comhaltas members from the North West at the Dementia training workshop led by Dr Mary Tilki

Following the publication of the research, which will be widely distributed, Comhaltas in Britain will look at further actions to support the community in dementia, including the possibility of producing a book of songs and memorable dance tunes or a CD of music and song which the research has identified as being beneficial to people with dementia. We will also have developed a model of working which could be used by Comhaltas

branches in Ireland to support those living with or caring for someone with Dementia back at home.

Arts Award

As part of its continuing commitment to education and achieving excellence for our musicians and teachers Comhaltas na Britain has joined Arts Award and will be rolling this program out to branches over the coming year. Arts award is a nationally recognised program operated by Trinity College in association with Arts Council England for anyone up to the age of 25.

It is a unique qualification to support young people to develop as artists and arts leaders, with five levels, four of which are on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)

Since Arts Award was launched in 2005 - 355,992 awards have been achieved by young people through a program which develops creativity, leadership and communication skills. Through Arts Award young people learn to work independently, helping them to prepare for further education and employment

Comhaltas now has trained Arts Award advisers to work with youth people and supports them to achieve their aspirations.

Young people work towards their Arts Award within the existing Comhaltas class structure utilising their talents as a traditional musician, singer or dancer and as a Comhaltas volunteer.



For more information on how your branch can benefit from Arts Award please contact your local Comhaltas Project Officer.

Fawcett's Fleadh

With 2017 being the 60th Anniversary of Comhaltas in Britain one of our long standing and dedicated volunteers came forward with a proposal. Fawcett's Fleadh is a collection spanning over 40 years of travelling to fleadhanna across Britain and Ireland. Launched at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Ennis it is a collection of photographs along with Peter's memories and funny true stories of happenings to him on his way.

Peter says the stars in the book are you and your families and friends. If Pete has taken your photo over the last decades, then it's likely that you and your band will be featured.

Everything is included no matter how small or incidental. The book is available from your local Comhaltas branch and from www.comhaltas.co.uk



Glúin Nua (New Generation)

The new album from Ceoltóirí na Breataine

Our national youth performance group have recorded a new CD - 18 tracks of music and song produced by Michael McGoldrick and featuring musicians and singers from all four regions of Comhaltas in Britain. The album will be launched throughout the year with launch events being planned to coincide with all four regional fleadhanna and a special performance at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. This highly anticipated album shows the talents of our best young musicians but more importantly has developed a national youth performance group which welcomes new members from 16-25.



GAELIC VOICES FESTIVAL

Comhaltas members have been playing a significant part in the recent Irish language revival in London and the South East in the past year. and the Gaelic Voices festival is already proving a good opportunity to connect Comhaltas and other organisations.

Bilingual families have been meeting monthly to have fun through the Irish language at the London Irish Centre in Camden. Comhaltas musicians have been coming along to play music and the rest of time is spent reading stories and singing songs and using the language with children and parents as much as possible. The group will be having their official launch at the Gaelic Voices Festival at the London Irish Centre on Saturday the 19th of May as part of the day of music, song and activities with special guest, award winning sean-nós singer, Nell Ní Chróinín from West Cork.

On the social side, Pop Up Gaeltacht events are being held regularly in pubs around the city and are an opportunity for people to use the Irish they have socially with new people of all levels of fluency. Meeting a dozen new people is a great way to practice introducing yourself if you're a beginner, but it's a lovely way to keep your language alive and meet like-minded people too.

The long-standing ciorcal-comhrá 'Ar an Drabhlás' hosted by Eamon Jeffers continues every second Friday in the Auld Triangle in Finsbury Park. There is

also a great trad session in the pub on Friday nights organised by Karen Ryan.

At the beginning of this year a Conradh na Gaeilge branch was restarted in London after almost 100 years of dormancy. Keep an eye out for developments with that.

There is also a language group starting in Brighton who will have a social day on the 12th of May with support from Coláiste na nGael.

And Irish language classes for beginners and improvers continue throughout the year in London Irish Centre, Camden, Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith and Lewisham Irish Centre.

An Gaeilge is going from strength to strength! ('ó neart go neart' - pron. 'oh nyart guh nyart!')

James McDonald



Matt Healy reading a story to the Irish Language playgroup
Photo courtesy Malcolm McNally

Music Sub-Committee

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.

The Music Sub-Committee are also working on helpful tips for running Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine as this is a huge task for a committee to undertake and even more daunting if the committee have not been involved before. We are hoping that this will be beneficial for anyone running an All Britain.

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 11/12 November 2017 in Wiston Lodge, South Lanarkshire. Three tutors came over from Ireland and worked alongside the Music Sub-Committee in Britain to run a very successful weekend. A lot of preparation by the Music Sub-Committee 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.

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

Carmel Burke

Rúnaí - Music Sub-Committee (December 2017)

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Province of Britain

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