

COMHALTAS IN BRITAIN



Annual Report 2022/23

**Our mission is to
bring a community
of all ages together
to learn, share
and experience the
music and culture
of Ireland.**

Our vision is a world where Irish music and culture is open to all, and celebrated as a valued part of Britain's cultural heritage.

Contents

- 05. Cathaoirleach Theresa Gallagher**
- 07. Uachtarán an Chomhaltais**
Éamonn Ó hArgáin
- 08. Oinigh Uachtaran Comhaltas na Breataine**
Seamus O Teimheain
- 09. Ardstiúrthóir Labhrás Ó Murchú**
- 11. Goals - Our 3 Year Plan**
- 12. From 1957 to now**
- 15. Mullingar Medal Winners**
- 16. TTCT - Caroline Judge Fegan Scholarship**
- 17. Public Relations Michael Fitzgerald**
- 19. Gaeilge Evin Downey**
- 22. Youth Mairi Docherty & Calum McGregor**
- 25. Regional Reports**
- 31. Music Sub-Committee**

Theresa Gallagher

Cathaoirleach

New Year, new challenge, new hope, and determination to overcome adversity and move forward. The Comhaltas family in Britain have had a very positive year, and one which will be remembered for coming back together, seeing old friends and meeting new ones.

This began in the historic town of Kenilworth, for the annual convention of Comhaltas in Britain. This was a great opportunity to listen to our members and join with them to shape the road map for the future. As a result, we were delighted to operate 14 online training sessions for our wider membership amongst other new initiatives.

It was a great personal honour for me to present a specially designed medal, to the new Honorary President of Comhaltas in Britain Jim Teevan - a very special gentleman who has devoted much of his life to Comhaltas in Britain to ensure that it has blossomed over the years.

In June we hosted Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine in Brunel University, London. A special mention goes to Clare Nevin who was responsible for much of the running of the Fleadh and she never stopped running around all weekend. Just 3 days after the Fleadh she gave birth to her second child - a boy called Malachy! As always, the All-Britain Fleadh is an event which brings a real feel-good factor to the Province!

Also, that weekend, we announced the inaugural 'Caroline Judge Fegan Scholarship' which covers the costs for a teacher from Britain to attend the TTCT course in Dublin. This years' recipient was Michael Fitzgerald - Button Accordion player from Coventry. Michael attended the course in October and said 'It is without doubt the most incredible musical experience of my life'.

I was also honoured to present 5 prestigious "Gradam na hEigse", a new award acknowledging individuals who have made a particular contribution in the fields of education, scholarship, planning, vision, etc. to Rosaleen Duddy Owens, Mairi Campbell, Kathy Walton and Angela Usher. Michael Nevin also received a long service award that evening.

We were delighted to launch our 3-year strategic plan taking the Province forward for the next few years. The strategic plan sets out 6 goals which we aim to achieve ensuring that 'Irish music and culture is open to all and celebrated as a valued part



of Britain's cultural heritage'.

Comhaltas in Britain were delighted to announce young musician Órlaith McAuliffe as our first 'Ceoltóir Ambassador'. This role uses the platform of celebrated musicians to help promote the work of Comhaltas.

I would like to pay tribute to two of our outgoing Provincial Council officers. Margaret Webster has served as our Provincial Treasurer and Ard Comhairle delegate for a number of years, and Maire Doolin has served as our Provincial Secretary for a lengthy period. For a time we were the three members of the management team for the staff. They will be sorely missed as we were a great team. I would like to wish them the very best for the future but hope to see them frequently at Comhaltas events.

I would also like to pay tribute to Patrick Morrison, who is leaving Comhaltas in Britain, after 17 years of service as one of our Project Officers. Patrick has driven too many initiatives to mention, and will be a very difficult act to follow!

We wish him well and congratulate him on his new post as CEO of Manchester Irish Community Care.

Our newest officer, Siubhán McAuley, who has made an amazing contribution during the year that she has been with us is also departing having been snapped up for the Artistic Director post at the Culturlann in Derry. We wish her well and will have opportunities to keep in touch.

I am very proud that the Comhaltas in Britain family has helped to nurture the wonderful careers for both of them going forward, an amazing steppingstone.



Éamonn Ó hArgáin

Uachtarán an Chomhaltais



Ba mhaith liom tréaslú le Comhairle na Breataine Chomhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann as Comhthionól Bhliantúil an Chomhaltais 2023 a chur ar siúl in Kenilworth arís i mbliana.

Tá áthas orm go mbeidh mé i lathair i mbliana mar caill mé bhur gComhdháil anuraidh de bharr COVID.

Táim cinnte go mbeidh Comhthionól iontach taitheamhach agaibh agus guím gach rath ar bhur saothair thar an deireadh seachtaine.

The story of Comhaltas in Britain is a source of inspiration to us all. Down through the years you have been to the forefront in promoting Ireland's unique Irish cultural traditions - music, singing, dancing and the Irish language.

Cultural and heritage connections help us to reach closer understandings - and in a world of increasingly fierce global competition they also help to distinguish Ireland and to open doors in a welcoming and encouraging way.

We look to live music in Ireland and in Britain and indeed the wider arts, for personal and social fulfilment, as a source of age-old wisdom and understanding, and as a means of resonating with each other and the world itself.

Since its formation over 70 years ago Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has elected 22 Presidents - three of them were resident in Britain, Pádraig Mac Suibhne, (2000 - 2003), Jim Teevan (2004 - 2009) and Vincent Jordon (2012 - 2015 and 2018 - 2021). In total 14 years of dedicated service from three wonderful people.

Volunteerism and generosity of spirit are the cornerstones of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, and such values are manifest at branch level. The network of branches here in Britain are underpinned by a core of volunteers. Each of these individuals plays a part in ensuring the vibrancy of the traditional living arts and sharing its appreciation with the upcoming generation of performers.

We are all looking forward to the forthcoming season of Fleadhanna Cheoil on the island of Ireland, in Britain and North

America and in particular to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullingar from 6 to 14 August where there will be a céad míle fáilte for you all.

I want to extend my best wishes to the Provincial Council of Comhaltas in Britain under the chairmanship of Theresa Gallagher and her wonderful team.

I would like to commend the work of Marie Doolin, the outgoing Provincial Secretary and to Margaret Webster the outgoing Provincial Treasurer for their dedicated work on the Provincial Council over many years. You have made an immense contribution to the promotion of Ireland's cultural traditions and Comhaltas owes you a great dept of gratitude.

And finally, I want to pay a special tribute to the Provincial and Corporate Officer Patrick Morrison who will be stepping down from his role with Provincial Council shortly. Patrick's professional approach to his work has inspired us all and I wish him well in his new position.

I wish you every success with your deliberations at Convention 23.
Go n-éirí libh agus go dté sibh ar fad slán.

Seamus O Teimheain **Oinigh Uachtarán** **Comhaltas na Breataine**



As honorary President of Comhaltas in Britain, I am delighted to welcome you all to this year's Convention.

My grateful thanks to Theresa Gallagher, the council of Britain officers, the full-time staff and all the volunteers for all their hard work during the year. It was great to meet at the All Britain Fleadh after two years of lockdown.

We were delighted to display our Archive exhibition at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullingar. It generated great interest again from many visitors from around the World. I believe there is a lot of Archive material in our branches. If any branches have photographs, press-cuttings and their history, this would be greatly appreciated.

Dr. Labhrás Ó Murchú

Ardstiúrthóir



'COMHALTAS PEOPLE HAVE RIGHTLY BEEN DESCRIBED AS AMBASSADORS FOR OUR COUNTRY'

Greetings from Ireland and congratulations on another year of dedication and success in promoting the cultural traditions of Ireland. Comhaltas na Breataine has a distinguished record of voluntary service and is highly regarded throughout our global cultural movement.

At Convention time, we recall with pride and appreciation all those people who, very often in the most difficult of times, kept the ship afloat. Comhaltas and the Irish nation owe them a huge debt of gratitude. We wish Patrick Morrison every success in his new career.

At the heart of Comhaltas is the volunteer. They are the ones who make it possible at grassroots level with sessions, concerts, classes and other events. They are the dreamers and the doers. Their monumental service is enhanced by the support of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Ní neart go teacht le chéile. There is no strength till getting it together.

Here is how Mary McAleese viewed Comhaltas when she was Uachtarán na hÉireann:

'Comhaltas people have rightly been described as ambassadors for our country, communicating in a language that knows no boundaries and which has won us friends and admirers far and wide.

'That admiration, those links, have reflected back to us that inestimable value of what we have inherited, and have added greatly to that new-found sense of cultural confidence and pride that we now enjoy and which is so inextricably linked to our success on other fronts - social, political and economic. We owe so much to Comhaltas for the role they have played in this.

'Generations of Irish men, women and children have tapped their feet to the lilt of Irish music that's been made by Comhaltas. So often when we listen we fail to understand the extraordinary legacy that tradition gives us.

'We are proud of that ancient art form, once the preserve of fireside and local crossroads, and which today enjoys such widespread popularity at the global crossroads of the modern world.

'Take Comhaltas out of the equation, turn back the clock and contemplate Ireland without Comhaltas and the sheer scale of what we owe you is revealed'

We can approach 2023 with increased confidence having had a very successful Comhaltas year in 2022. It was great to see our 1,500 classes up and running again with thousands of young people having the opportunity to embrace Irish cultural traditions at community level. The Fleadh is a shopwindow of these traditions.

Go raibh Rath Dé ar bhúr saothar. Mile buíochas as ucht bhúr dtacaíochta. Tá éacht déanta agaibh le blianta fada anuas. We look forward, le cunamh Dé, to meeting you all at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Mullinagr next August. Slán go fóill.



Our 3 Year Plan

GOAL 1: CELEBRATE IRISH MUSIC THROUGH ALL OUR ACTIVITY

GOAL 2: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND EXPAND OUR WORK TO INCLUDE MORE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

GOAL 3: TRAIN AND RECOGNISE OUR VOLUNTEERS

GOAL 4: TRAIN AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS

GOAL 5: PROMOTE AND DEVELOP THE USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

GOAL 6: IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

Since
1957

Comhaltas in Britain has been strengthening communities through traditional Irish music. Growing from our first branch in Glasgow, our network of talented and passionate volunteers teach Irish Traditional Music to c. 1,200 members, across all generations, in over 20 branches across England, Scotland and Wales.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Britain are of Irish descent. The Irish community in Britain, like many migrant communities, has complex needs centred on understanding of identity, community and belonging. We believe engaging with traditional music and culture strengthens these communities, while recognising the appeal of traditional Irish music beyond Irish communities alone. Coming

together regularly to practise creativity provides a tool for better mental health and wellbeing; is an important vehicle for reducing social isolation; impacts positively on identity, and strengthens bonds between people of all generations, genders and backgrounds.

We deliver weekly multi-instrument music classes in community settings across Britain, such as local community centres, churches and music schools, which encourage people of all ages to access their creativity in an informal and fun environment. Through these music sessions and development with their instrument, our musicians and members express themselves, bond across generations, raise their confidence, and most importantly come together through music each week. (Regular music playing has been proven to contribute to good mental health, as shown for example in the 2019 report into our work with Irish dementia patients living in Britain.) Some of our members go on to play traditional Irish music to a professional standard, and many members give back to Comhaltas by teaching voluntarily to the next generation. Our vision is a world where Irish music and culture is open to all, and celebrated as a valued part of Britain's cultural heritage.

We are a people-led organisation, with our members coordinating activity at national, regional and local levels. All of our volunteers are Comhaltas members, and a great many are musicians. Comhaltas in Britain is led by our board (also made up of our members), which employs 2.5 members of staff working for the benefit of all the branches and members across Britain. Over the last 3 years we have undergone significant changes and challenges in the face of the pandemic, reducing our staff team from 4 full-time staff to 2.5 members of staff; adapting to online delivery where possible; and focusing heavily on community support in an isolating time. Volunteers in all our branches have now reopened their doors to the public, and in Summer 2022 we worked with our members and musicians to develop a 3-year strategy that will see us re-engage musicians after Covid, incorporate digital advances we have made, and listen more closely to the needs of our members, particularly our younger musicians. In consultation with the Irish community in Britain in 2021, Irish in Britain discovered many of the current services serving Irish communities are viewed to be "for older people", and there aren't many services for younger Irish people or people of Irish heritage. As a cross-generational organisation, we will commit over the next 3 years to working more closely with our young musicians, forming a youth board and underpinning our decisions with the voice of our young people.

For first generation musicians, Comhaltas activities provide a therapeutic sense of home, important when dealing with any

alienation people may be feeling in their new home country. For second and third generation musicians and members, who often identify strongly with common migrant experiences of being trapped between two lands (eg. not Irish enough for Ireland, and not English enough for England), a community of people who share that experience (and complex emotions inherent in it) is important to collective identity. Music functions to create meaning and share memory together: Comhaltas sessions in community spaces such as pubs and community halls are the basis of a ready-made community when people emigrate to Britain from Ireland. Those who join our classes and activities who do not have a connection to Ireland reap the benefit of musical activity on mental and physical health, plus join a friendly, supportive community of people for whom music is a focal point. We estimate over 24,000 musicians have learned Irish traditional music through our branches since the 1950s.

In today's Britain, Irish communities have become more assimilated, and Irish traditional music has grown beyond its Irish origins, and is heard, played and enjoyed globally. Comhaltas in Britain now brings together people of all backgrounds, who have an interest in coming together through the enjoyment of Irish traditional music to improve their mental wellbeing and positively impact on their identity. Performance of Irish music in public settings helps Irish communities to become more visible in their local areas, and the skills of musicians across England, Scotland and Wales enrich local areas culturally and economically.

Anecdotally, from our members and musicians, we know that music-making in the community through Irish traditional music is strengthening the confidence, positive identity, communication and leadership skills, and creativity of our members, while reducing social isolation especially for older members of the community.

With significant decreases in funding for music in educational settings, the importance of music making in the community has never been greater, and with a diverse population in Britain, so too a need to recognise multicultural influences on the arts of Britain. During Covid, our branches were largely unable to continue their regular music-making activity via Zoom. We worked with our local partners, such as Irish community care organisations, to help our volunteers and teachers get online, and we hosted two incredibly successful online "Féile" events, which provided an outlet for musicians to perform online as a digital version of our main annual event "Fleadh Cheoil." However, during the pandemic, we've seen our members become more isolated, wellbeing decrease as people were not able to go back to Ireland, and members impacted by financial insecurity, which has been further exacerbated by the cost of living crisis.

Over the past 12 months we have worked to re-engage our members and musicians, increasing our volunteers' confidence and strengthening the structure of the organisation. This will ensure people of all ages and backgrounds are able to access, for significantly reduced costs, quality music education amongst their peers and community at least one night a week, to form strong communities and improve wellbeing, confidence and reduce social isolation.

Comhaltas in Britain use the teaching of Irish music to have an impact on the lives of those who learn it, and form strong and healthy communities through Irish traditional music. Each of our branches teach multi-instrument classes at least one evening a week during term time, to people of all ages. In any one week, there are at least 44 hours of music making happening in 22 branches across Britain. We teach in cities and towns where there has historically been a large Irish population, and many

branches are nestled in disadvantaged areas in large cities or towns due to the historic settlement of Irish populations.

We rely on a network of passionate teachers, local to each branch, most of whom have learned their instrument through Comhaltas branches in early life. Many of our teachers volunteer their time or teach for a significantly reduced fee each week, and branches often run other activity, such as monthly sessions (a casual gathering of musicians coming together to share tunes and enjoy making music), and events such as Irish Language days, céilís (organised dances), workshops from visiting teachers in a particular instrument, or “give it a go” days.

Volunteers sit on committees to manage each branch, volunteer at classes and events, help set up rooms, or help with the promotion of classes and branch activities. Branches host regular activities outside of classes, such as workshops with high level musicians, céilís, sessions, and performances in the community centred around celebrations - such as Coventry’s recent City of Culture celebrations, or local St Patrick’s day festivals, often working in partnership with other organisations such as Irish centres, the GAA, or local arts organisations. We enter musicians into qualifications in traditional music, building performance skills and technical ability, but also confidence and other soft skills that will be useful to them in employment and further study. We host tours around Britain, where members have the opportunity to showcase their talent. Each region holds an annual “Fleadh” once a year (a celebration of Irish music, centred on competitions), where members compete to play in our annual All-Britain Fleadh, and eventually the All-Ireland Fleadh each year. These “Fleadhanna” are celebrations of the work that each musician puts in each year, and bring people together across the branches to play together.



Comhaltas in Britain Medal Winners from Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Mullingar 20222

U12 Fiddle (1st) April Macaulay, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
15-18 Fiddle (3rd) - Freeja Nolan, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
U12 Piano Accordion (2nd) Shia McGuire, CCÉ St Wilfrids, Manchester
12-15 Piano Accordion (1st) Miles Macaulay, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
12-15 Piano Accordion (2nd) Orla Bruce, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
Senior Piano Accordion (2nd) Alex Morgan, CCÉ East London
U12 Piano (1st) Shia Mcguire, CCÉ St Wilfrids, Manchester
Senior Piano (2nd) Calum McGregor, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
U12 Fiddle Slow Airs (2nd) April Macauley, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
Senior Mens Singing in Irish (3rd) Joseph Twomey, London
U12 Mens Singing in English (1st) Cormac Cotter, CCÉ Leamington Spa
Senior Whistling (3rd) Phil Westwell, CCÉ Johnny Doherty, Motherwell
Senior Liltng (3rd) Marianne McAleer, CCÉ Amairgin the Gael, Wales
Newly Composed Song (3rd) Jim McElhine, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
Senior Scéalaíocht (2nd) Micheál Ó Grainne, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow
Senior Scéalaíocht (3rd) Evin Ó Dunigh, CCÉ Irish Minstrels, Glasgow



TTCT

Caroline Judge Fegan Scholarship

When I heard that I had received the Caroline Judge Fegan Scholarship to attend the Comhaltas TTCT Teacher Training Diploma course, I was over the moon. I had previously not considered attending the course as I did not believe I had the experience or skills necessary and the cost of the course had always been a barrier. When Comhaltas in Britain launched applications for this scholarship it finally gave me the motivation to apply.

The course is delivered at Cultúrlann na hÉireann in Monkstown, Co. Dublin and it runs for one week. Over the course of the week there are a series of lectures from world class traditional musicians on teaching methodology, musical theory and special educational needs, as well as lectures on a whole host of traditional musical instruments and styles.

You need to have experience in teaching prior to attending the course, because each day from the first day there is time for practical teaching experience. You need to be prepared to teach students are of all ages and abilities. This is followed by time with an expert tutor to provide you feedback on your teaching as well as time for self-reflection on your teaching sessions that day.

The final part of the course is an exam testing your knowledge on some of the elements of musical theory and the styles, types and features of traditional Irish music that has been developed over the week.

The course is intense. But completing it has had a huge impact on me as a teacher and as a musician. It is one of the best things I have ever done on my musical journey. I have changed the way that I teach entirely, relying much less on teaching through musical notation and encouraging my students to learn by ear and I am already seeing the benefits to my students of doing this. I have also reassessed how I learn myself and I now see how equally important it is that I keep developing my own skills to make me an effective teacher. Having no formal musical education myself, I now also have a much greater understanding and appreciation for music as a discipline.

I cannot thank Comhaltas in Britain enough for the opportunity they gave me through the Caroline Judge Fegan Scholarship. I would strongly recommend any teacher out there who is looking to strengthen their teaching skills grabs the opportunity to attend the TTCT course.

Michael Fitzgerald

Public Relations

My report this year reflecting on the last 12 months is a world away from the report I wrote this time last year. It's hard to believe that this time last year I was reflecting on a year's worth of activity that had predominantly taken place online. This year, however, we have returned to meeting face to face and as such we have returned to what we do best as an organisation: sharing Irish traditional music, dance and language in the more traditional ways.

Firstly, I must acknowledge the hard work of branches and regions this year. The emergence from COVID-19 has not been easy and we cannot deny that our branches, as the primary point of contact for our members and the general public, have felt this impact enormously. I have always believed that branches are the fundamental unit of Comhaltas. It is the branch network throughout the province that has the greatest impact on Public Relations as you build links within our communities. Without branches, we simply would not exist. The impact of the pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge in not only trying to recruit new members but to encourage our existing membership to return to active participation in our activities. Branches all over Britain have risen to this challenge and continue to tackle it head on with an unwavering resilience that must be commended.

It was wonderful to see the success of fleadhanna this year, returning for the first time since 2019. Many congratulations to all regions for your hard work in seeing Fleadh season making a successful return. It was so wonderful to catch up with so many of our members at the All Britain Fleadh in London. A massive thank you and well done must go out to the Fleadh Committee from the London and Southern Region for a great weekend.

Comhaltas in Britain has undertaken many other activities as a province this year in the space of public relations. We have undertaken a huge programme focussed on education with the aim of putting us in the best possible position to deliver high quality education, and therefore help us to continue to teach Irish music for many years to come. We have begun a teachers' forum where our teachers can gather together to share ideas and advice; we have launched the Caroline Judge Fegan Scholarship to allow a member of Comhaltas in Britain to attend the Comhaltas TTCT teacher training course; and launching a programme for delivering teaching in schools.

In the Spring time we reached out to our members to get their thoughts on what we need to focus on as an organisation. We wanted to understand what you thought our priorities needed to be. This research helped us to create our plan for the future. We hope that this will help to keep us focussed over the next few years but also will hopefully help us realise what we can do to get in touch with the wider public to help secure our future as an organisation.

We continue to distribute an e-newsletter containing key information and updates, that help us to remain connected, as well as launching a youth newsletter this year.

We have helped to develop committee members across Britain by hosting workshops throughout the autumn focussed on giving hints and tips as well as building some key skills. One of these workshops was specifically about the role of the PRO and we hope PROs around the province found this to be a valuable session.

Having acknowledged branches at the start of this report, I must also acknowledge the incredible work of our Project Officers, Paddy Callaghan, Patrick Morrison and Siubhán Macauley. Their ingenuity and creativity has helped us through this difficult period of re-emergence and re-evaluation. As I complete my final report as PRO of the Province of Britain and reflect over my time as PRO, it must be acknowledged how much work our Project Officers do, and how easy that makes the PRO role.

Thank you to all those who have supported me over the last three years as PRO. I have enjoyed this role immensely and I am proud of what we have achieved in the most adverse of circumstances. I look forward to continuing my work with Comhaltas in Britain in a new capacity.



Evin Downey

Gaeilge

A chairde,

Cuireann sé gliondar ar mo chroí le rá go raibh 2022 bliain mór na Gaeilge fá choinne baill Comhaltais na Breataine. Chuir muid tús leis an bhliain le dhá chúrsa Gaeilge ar líne le comhlacht oideachais Oideas Gael, bunaithe i nDún na nGall. Chuir siad dhá cúrsaí 10 seachtain ar fáil saor in aisce fá choinne baill Comhaltais, ceann ag bunleibheál Gaeilge agus ceann ag meanleibheál. Ghlac 54 daoine páirt idir na dhá chúrsa, agus gabhadh go hiontach na cúrsaí, le haiseolas galánta. Gabhaimid ar mbealach le foireann Oideais Gael!

Fá choinne Seachtain na Gaeilge i mí na Márta, rinne muid sráith beag "On Airs", a chraoladh amach ar na meain soisialta, ina míníodh tidil Gaeilge 10 fonn chun tuiscint níos fearr a chuir ar a scéal agus ar a gcomhtheasc. Thig leat éisteacht leis an sráith seo ar ár gcuntais meáin soisialta.

I rith an tsamhraidh, chuir muid fáilte roimh triúr amhránaí sean-nós a mhuin stíl sean-nós a gceantar féin chuiig lucht feachana ar líne i dtrí ceardlanna. B'iad na hamhránaí Dianne Cannon (Dún na nGall), Mairead Ní Fhlartharta (Conamara) agus Clare Horgan (Ciarraí). Arís, bhain achan amhránaí sult mór as a bheith ábalta cúpla amhrán úr a fhoghlaim sna ceardlanna seo.

Ag Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine, bhí seomra na Gaeilge againn arís an bhliain seo caite. Go raibh míle maith agaibh a tháinig agus a bhain triail as cúpla focal Gaeilge a d'fhoghlaim sibh ag tús na bliana a úsáid. Tá muid ag súil go mór le sibh a fhéiceail arís sa Seomra i mbliana i Stirling.

D'oibrigh muid le heagraíochtaí Éireannacha thart na Breataine chun liosta a chur le chéile de na ranganna Gaeilge agus imeachtaí Gaeilge uilig atá ar súil go rialta ar fud na Breataine. Beidh muid ag uasdhatú an liosta seo go rialta agus tá an comhad leis an liosta seo le fáil ar ár suíomh gréasáin.

Bhí an t-ádh dearg orainn airgead a fháil ó Magic Little Grants chun imeacht Sean-nós

eile a chur ar fáil i 2023, aghaidh le haghaidh an uair seo! Chomh maith leis an imeacht seo beidh ceardlanna agus imeachtaí eile a bhaineann le hamhránaíocht ar an Seán-Nós ar siúl idir seo agus Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine. Bigí ag amharc amach fá choinne sonraí na n-imeachtaí seo, ar na meáin shóisialta agus ar ríomhphost!

Tá a fhios agam go mbionn craobhacha éagsúla ag déanamh rudaí chun na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn ina gcraobh agus a gce-

antar agus molaim go hard an obair seo, maith sibh!

Aidhm iontach tábhachtach atá againn i mbliana ná go mbeadh muid ag cuidiú le gréasán na Gaeilge i mBreatain a láidriú - i gComhaltas na Breataine agus taobh amuigh dó fiú.

Mar sin, déan teagmháil liom má tá suim agatsa féin agus/nó ag do chraobh/réigiún sa Ghaeilge agus tá súil agam go mbeinn in ann cuidiú libh.

It has heartened me this year that we have had a very active year of Irish Language. We kicked off the year with two 10 week courses from the Irish language learning organisation, Oideas Gael, one at beginner's level and one at intermediate level. 54 people took part all in all, and the courses were very well received, with fantastic feedback.

"Katie has been brilliant. Her knowledge on the Irish language, patience with us beginners and teaching style has been exemplary. I will miss being part of the class every Thursday night."

"I'm eager to keep learning- it's part of my culture and especially now as Irish is recognised as a European language."

Our thanks to the team at Oideas Gael!

For Irish Language week in March, we put out a small series called "On Airs", in which the Irish Language titles of Slow Airs were explained, to help people understand the story context of the tune. You can listen back to these short episodes on our social media channels.

During the summer, we welcomed three talented sean-nós singers, who taught sean-nós songs in their local style at three online workshops. The singers who led these workshops were Dianne Cannon (Donegal), Mairead Ní Fhlatharta (Conemara) and Clare Horgan (Kerry). Again, each singer really enjoyed the opportunity to learn a few songs in these workshops.

"Clare is a good teacher, great personality, fun. I learned a new song, learned new words (Munster) and she gave me such a lot of information about sean-nós. She is so willing to keep in touch and help me progress with songs and Irish. Great!"

"The event was great! Learning new songs is helpful to me because I am learning Irish. I loved the song, melody, story and Mairead was an excellent teacher, translating the Irish."

At the All Britain Fleadh, we had an Irish Language room again this year. Big thanks to those who came along, and tried out a couple of the words they had learned earlier in the year. We're looking forward to seeing you again at Seomra na Gaeilge in Stirling this year.

We worked with various Irish organisations up and down Britain to create an online database of all the Irish language classes and activities currently happening across Britain. We will be updating this list regularly.

And we have recently been funded by “Magic Little Grants” to host another Sean-nós event this coming year, face to face this time! Keep an eye out for details of this event on our social media channels and email newsletters.

I also know that branches are working on promoting the Irish Language via various activities in their own areas, and I’m incredibly proud of that work, well done all! It is an important aim for us this year to strengthen the network of Irish Language activity in Britain, both in Comhaltas in Britain, and in the wider Irish community. As such, please get in touch with me if you, your branch or your region have an interest in the language and I hope I will be able to help you.



Mairi Docherty & Calum McGregor Youth

While it feels like we've only just come into our positions as youth officers, apparently a whole year has come and gone and we are delighted to be able to update you on what we've been up to so far.

Our first big tasks as provincial youth officers arrived along with the return of fleadhanna as the province welcomed competitors from across the UK to the All Britain Fleadh in Uxbridge last June. Considering this was the first All Britain in 3 years, it was extremely well attended and well received. The province ran a survey for young people offering the chance to win a free hoodie in exchange for feedback on various aspects of Comhaltas in Britain. We had some great suggestions in response to this outreach, showing great enthusiasm for and trust in our up and coming musicians, and took many of these onboard to inform what we did this year. We'd also like to thank a number of young members who were involved in a working group during the summer to inform our plan for the next three years. Their commitment to the organisation is evident and it has been fantastic to hear their vision for the future of Irish traditional music in Britain, and incorporate it into the work of the Province. We are always looking for new ideas and would still love to hear from anyone who would like to get in touch with us! In addition to this, the youth session run on the Saturday night after the Fleadh mass with over 100 players proved to be a great success and was extremely well received by members and their families alike. A great weekend by all accounts.

It was great to see this enthusiasm for the music continuing throughout the summer when classes for many branches aren't on, as many young people got involved in summer schools in Ireland. Events such as Tinto, Drumshanbo, the Belfast Trad Fest, Joe Mooney summer school and Willy Clancy summer school in Miltown Malbay are great opportunities for young people to keep up their music, learn from top class musicians, make new friends through classes and sessions (incredibly important for retention) and have a bit of fun with the music as well.

Leading on to the All Ireland which took place in Mullingar this year. Many of our members were there representing the province - participating in sessions, concerts (including the overseas concert featuring some of our younger musicians), Scoil Eipse classes, competitions and a number of other different events during the week. Congratulations goes out to all involved in the music throughout the week (as well as the months and years leading up to it), to all who performed, competed and to those who brought home medals! This year we had some incredible results from our young (and slightly less so) musicians so huge well done from us.

We weren't long home and recovering from the festivities when it was time to travel to London for the GAA All Britain

Competitions (ABCs). We were well represented and had great chances to promote Comhaltas to the younger people there and the opportunity that being a member of Comhaltas brings to the players and their families, playing a few tunes along the way.

Many of our members travelled across the country to celebrate Coventry CCÉ's recent 50th anniversary. A ceili was put on by the Garngad Ceili Band from Glasgow, and was well received by all. The night ended with a session at the Four Provinces Bar, where players from England, Scotland and Ireland were playing some tunes. Congratulations to both Coventry CCÉ and Ashton CCÉ for their 50 years!

We're very excited for convention this year with lots to keep us busy with over the course of the weekend. Something we were keen to get going was a youth workshop which will take place on the Saturday and increase opportunities for our young players to play with some of the best musicians and get more chances to perform. Our youth members will be treated to a masterclass from the incredible Rebecca McCarthy Kent before treating the rest of us to a performance of the arrangement they worked on during the day. The night will also see one of our many youth members who was nominated by their branches and regions for their contributions receive the Ógánach na Bliana (Young Person of the Year) award.

We are currently in the process of building stronger connections to link youth officers from the different branches and regions to ensure we support them as provincial youth officers as best we can - we hope to build this into a youth committee which would help us to determine what our younger members from all across the province want, rather than only those near us. If you are a youth officer, or are interested in working on a youth committee, please get in touch with us. This would enable us to take even more of our young members' ideas into consideration to influence what we should focus on next.

Thinking of ways to help our members listen to more Irish Music and to go to more sessions was a focus of our planning this year. Sessions are fundamental to developing a player's style and repertoire of tunes as well as introducing young people to the more sociable aspect of trad music which encourages them to continue playing, listening and learning new tunes outside of the classroom setting - therefore it is extremely important to us that we encourage sessions as much as possible with our members. One thing repeatedly mentioned when speaking to younger players was that they were tentative to play in sessions (particularly with other musicians from outwith their own branch) in part because they were worried they wouldn't be able to find any tunes in common.

Another thing mentioned by some of the younger singers in particular was that in some areas it can be difficult to find other singers to share with and learn from, that there are few teachers in some places and it could feel at times like there was no place for them at these sessions. While there is a singer's club at the fleadh to encourage the singing side of the tradition, it would be nice to integrate both the tunes and songs more widely as they are both important aspects of Irish Culture. Encouraging Sean Nos songs as well as tunes could go a long way to increasing exposure to traditional singing and help to build repertoire of songs for young singers who may struggle to find them otherwise.

We plan to make better use of our social media, doing social media takeovers at big trad events to showcase opportunities available to everyone but particularly our youth members. We also want to contribute to the trad music scene on TikTok, using user generated videos playing tunes to start video chains (and perhaps trends if we're lucky) to improve visibility. Again, if you'd be happy to contribute your time and skill to celebrating traditional music on social media, we'd love to hear from you.

To aid in some of our goals from above, this year we started a youth newsletter to keep our younger members updated on what we are doing, opportunities available to them, as well as including some common session tune suggestions to help build a common repertoire to ease some nerves regarding joining in at sessions, highlighting traditional singing and Sean Nos songs for those needing a helping hand or wanting to get started, links to the latest videos we've posted (e.g. TikTok trends) and starting a playlist to inspire those not regularly listening to traditional music (or those wanting to hopefully discover some new musicians) through some of our favourite tunes we're listening to throughout the year. If you're not already signed up to our youth newsletter and would like to be, you can visit the Comhaltas in Britain website and follow the link to be added to the mailing list.

Other ideas we are looking into for the coming years include workshops around other aspects of music (e.g. performance nerves, sound design) as this was something highlighted by younger members as something that would be of interest. Also under consideration is the potential for branch twinning to better connect musicians from across the province who may otherwise only interact at the fleadh. Then finally, to cater to some of our older youth members, we have been working to highlight that Comhaltas is not only for making good friends, learning and playing tunes and having a bit of craic, it is also helping them to develop skills and experiences which can be used to benefit their UCAS applications for university/college, CV building and job applications in the future.

It has been a busy year for us which we have thoroughly enjoyed: gradually coming back to a normal where we are once again able to play music together in person and getting to work towards doing what we can for the younger members of Comhaltas in Britain. We want to thank you for your continued support and say that we're very much looking forward to what's next. We are excited for the year ahead and with any luck, if excitement sparked by the return of live music remains at the level it is at or continues to grow then we can hopefully look forward to much more in the coming years and give our young people plenty of opportunities to get involved, improve and develop as musicians within Comhaltas in Britain.

mairidocherty@comhaltas.co.uk / calummgregor@comhaltas.co.uk

Scottish Region

It is very encouraging to see, particularly after such a challenging year, that all four branches of the Scottish Region continue to operate and are doing well.

December 2021 - The Irish Minstrels branch held a Christmas concert online, and where there was no 'Santa night' this year, they promise to be back next year for all the usual fun.

January 2022 - In January, classes returned at St. Roch's, although beginner whistles remained online. The Irish Minstrels branch also held a very successful Winter School online, which was very well attended.

February 2022 - Members from all four branches attended the much-loved Glasgow Feis, held in St. Columbkille's Church Hall in Rutherglen, over two days. The Feis is a great competition, and is a forerunner to the upcoming Scottish Fleadh. It was great to be back!

A stalwart of Comhaltas, Fred Sweeney, sadly passed away in February. Fred was a great supporter of Comhaltas, and will be sadly missed.

March 2022 - The Johnny Doherty and St. Patrick's branches joined together for St. Patrick's celebrations in St. Augustine's, for a ceili, concert and session, with musicians from across the region providing the music. The Johnny Doherty branch also had a successful St. Patrick's weekend of sessions at the Whitehouse and the Bullfrog. The St. Patrick's Day Festival Family Day was held in the Merchant Square in Glasgow, and the Irish Minstrel's branch provided some of the music. Sunday band and group practices resumed for the branch, ahead of the Scottish Fleadh.

April 2022 - The Scottish Fleadh was held in Woodfarm Secondary School in East Renfrewshire, and was very well attended by all branches. This was hosted by the Irish Minstrels branch, and as always, was a great weekend, with lots of members qualifying for the All Britain Fleadh to be held in London in June.

May 2022 - St. Patrick's, Johnny Doherty and the Irish Minstrel's branches joined together to play at Celtic Park for Dr. Joe Bradley's latest book launch. They played for guests arriving, and also at the interval.

June 2022 - The All Britain Fleadh was held in London and was a great success, with many competitors qualifying for the All Ireland Fleadh, being held in Mullingar this year.

July 2022 - Lots of members from across the Scottish Region, attended the various summer schools and workshops held in Ireland in July and August. Friends were able to meet up again after a long time.

August 2022 - The All Ireland Fleadh was held in Mullingar this year, with lots of members taking part in the competitions.

Well done to all the medal winners!

September 2022 - Classes resumed for all branches, after the summer break.

October 2022 - The Irish Minstrels held a very successful Winner's Concert, in St. Columbkille's Church Hall in Rutherglen. On Saturday 8th October, the branch held a Seisiun Mor in the same venue for all ages, to encourage young musicians. This was very well attended, and is going to be a regular monthly event. The branch held their AGM on 27th October. The St. James the Great branch moved to a familiar venue for future classes, The Swamp in Pollock. They hope to enjoy a prolonged period of stability and the newly refurbished venue for some time to come.

Scottish Region Committee, elected November 2021

Cathaoirleach na hAlbain	Jim McKenna	Johnny Doherty CCÉ
Leas-Chathaoirleach	Paul McCormack	St. Patrick's CCÉ
Runai	Cathleen Armstrong	Irish Minstrel's CCÉ
Cisteoir	Noreen Hughes	St. Patrick's CCÉ
Oifigeach Caidrimh Phoiblí	Hannah Connor	St. James the Great CCÉ
Oifigeach na Gaeilge	Eimhin Ó Dúnaigh	St. James the Great CCÉ
Oifigeach Óige	Mairi Docherty	Irish Minstrels CCÉ
Iniúchóir Amháin	Davy Johnston	Johnny Doherty CCÉ
Iniúchóir Dhá	Angela Moreland	St. James the Great CCÉ

Cathleen Armstrong

Rúnaí, Réigiún na hAlban

Northern Region

It is great to hear that branches are now back to normal and running their normal weekly classes. We were able to host our Regional Fleadh at Bolton University at which we had a good turnout.

The branches have got involved with events like Liverpool CCÉ who took part in this year's Liverpool Irish festival. Members from Middlesbrough CCÉ are involved with the North East Irish Network providing information for articles in a newsletter. They also help distribute a small Christmas gift bag to over 100 Teesiders. Members also took part in a Trad for Trocaire charity session in October.

St Wilfrid's CCÉ are now back at the Irish Centre which was being used as a hub for vaccinations and it was great to have everyone back together. They were well represented at the Regional Fleadh at Bolton University and at the All Britain and also at the All Ireland fleadh in Mullingar. Two of their members climbed Groagh Patrick to raise funds for The Forgotten Irish Group. Members attend the monthly session at the Brian Boru Club and the weekly session at the Bowling Green in Chorlton. It was a big shock to the branch and the local community at the death of Andy Dinan in May 2022. He received a very traditional send off with musicians playing at the funeral and the wake afterwards.

Tara O'Caralon CCÉ had to find another venue to host their music classes and have also hosted various events ie sessions and ceili nights.

Ashton CCÉ have now started a weekly junior class on Tuesday night and the numbers are increasing each week. They also have an adult class on Friday and a monthly session both of which are going strong. They have also now started a Gaelic language class every Friday evening. The Branch has also joined in the club various events and the children played at The Wrens in the club.

Leeds CCÉ have continued to develop and expand teaching music on a Tuesday evening and they held their Class Fleadh in February with Michelle O'Leary adjudicating for them which is open to all their students and used to encourage entering the Regional Fleadh for the first time. At the Regional Fleadh they had a large number of qualifiers for the All Britain with the Under 12 were runners up and 15-18 were All Britain champions. And on the first Saturday of the month, they host their monthly sessions which attract a great crowd.

All our branches are working hard and are making plans for the future.

Julie O'Hare

Rúnaí, Northern Region, CCÉ

Midland Region

Branch news - After a shaky start re branch closures etc, it is good to report that there are now seven branches in the Region. Luton Leagrave are no longer a branch, but still hope to reform as a branch at some stage. The Birmingham branch gathered momentum during the year and a new committee was formed with Marian Dwyer as chair.

Many of the branches in the Region are having regular music classes, sessions, concerts and ceilis. Some of the other branches in the Region are working their way towards this. A lot of interbranch support is going on, which is particularly useful for the smaller branches. The branches support the Regional meetings and keep everyone updated with how things are going on in their detailed branch reports.

Provincial Convention (March 2022) - This was supported by the Midland Region. Coventry and Leamington Spa branches entertained before the evening session. Donal Murphy (chair of the Leamington Spa branch) was delighted with his award for long service. Coventry branch members attended and enjoyed the workshops.

Midland Regional Fleadh (April 2022) - This took place on 3 April at Princethorpe College. The Fleadh was a small affair, but finished off in the afternoon with a lovely session. Thanks to the Midland committee for all of their hard work.

Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine (June 2022) - Competitors from Coventry, Leicester, Leamington Spa and Amairgin the Gael took part in the All Britain Fleadh and enjoyed the weekend. Thanks to the London Region and to the Province for hosting this event. Competitors from Leicester, Leamington Spa and Amairgin the Gael qualified for the All Ireland Fleadh.

Zoom meeting re information on funding provided by Provincial Council (November 2022) - This was well attended by members of the Midland Region and was a very useful meeting. Thanks to the Province for setting this up.

Interbranch get together (November 2022) - This was hosted by the newly formed Birmingham branch. It was a great opportunity for all branches in the Midland Region to mingle and enjoy the music provided by many of the musicians in the Region. A great afternoon was had by all.

Highlights

- Coventry celebrated 50 years as a branch (a year later due to Covid) with a great weekend of sessions and a dinner ceili. A group of friends from Letterkenny (their partnership branch) greatly added to the enjoyment of the weekend and the ceili was played for by a great band from the Scottish Region. Congratulations to Coventry.
- Members from Leamington Spa, Leicester and Amairgin the Gael gave a great account of themselves at the All Ireland Fleadh in Mullingar, with a 3rd place going to Marianne McAleer of the Amairgin the Gael branch and a first place going to Cormac Cotter of the Leamington Spa branch. The town of Mullingar put on a superb Fleadh and all those who attended

from the Midland Region had a wonderful time.

- Donal Murphy (chair of the Leamington Spa branch) and Rosaleen Duddy-Owens (chair of the Leicester branch) both received long service awards from Provincial Council in 2022 for their continued support for Comhaltas.
- Michael Fitzgerald completed the TTCT (teacher's course) in Dublin. Michael was awarded the new Caroline Judge-Fegan Scholarship to attend this intensive teacher training course from Comhaltas in Britain (a great boost and well deserved for Michael and the Coventry branch).
- Jim Teevan was made honorary president of Comhaltas in Britain at a dinner which took place over the last Provincial Convention weekend.

Congratulations to all!!!

St. Anthony's School in Leamington has been booked for 23rd April 2023 to host the Midland Regional Fleadh. Unfortunately, the spiralling costs of hiring Princethorpe College meant that the Region needed to find a different venue. Princethorpe College has been used for many years with its lovely grounds and facilities and the Midland Region have been very grateful to Donal Murphy for his work in securing this for the Midland Region each year. Donal was instrumental in approaching St. Anthony's (the new venue for this year).

Cambridge will be celebrating 30 years as a branch on Saturday 13 May 2023 and would be very appreciative of support for this occasion.

Carmel Burke

Rúnaí, Midland Region



London & Southern Region

2021-2022 saw the return of large public events to Comhaltas in Britain, which were eagerly awaited by our members. The London & Southern regional fleadh was hosted by West London branch and took place at the Salvatorian College in Harrow on 8th May 2022. This was a new venue for the region and thanks to the efficiency of the fleadh committee and helpful staff at the college, was a really successful fleadh. The branch did some excellent fundraising thanks to some clever raffle ideas including guess the name of the giant teddy.

The London & Southern region held a Regional Reunion Concert on Sunday 12th June at the Irish Cultural Centre Hammersmith for an afternoon of music, singing and storytelling. It was an opportunity to bring our branches together informally for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic, to showcase musicians who may not have performed before as soloists or in groups, and to raise money for the All Britain fleadh. A welcome surprise was that the concert audience extended beyond Comhaltas members and welcomed some of the local Irish community, possibly thanks to the Irish Cultural Centre being such a hub in West London. This event was made possible thanks to funding from the Irish Government's Emigrant Support Programme.

The London & Southern region were thrilled to welcome the Comhaltas community back to its first Fleadh Cheoil Na Breataine since the Covid-19 pandemic. The fleadh was held at Brunel University, West London, on 25th and 26th June. Brunel was an exciting new venue for the fleadh cheoil in London, a campus University with various amenities and very well connected for those travelling from around the UK and Ireland. Fleadh attendance was lower than in typical years but it still welcomed a great crowd and most of the usual competitions took place. The fleadh had an excellent send-off on Saturday night with an evening including Mass, Comhaltas in Britain awards and lively sessions into the late hours.

The North London Junior Fleadh was keenly welcomed back this year by our young musicians and took place on Sunday 20th November, returning to the Salvatorian College. The Junior Fleadh is a great introduction for young musicians due to the under-7 and under-9 competition age groups and it was very well attended by the region's young families.

The region would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to John Devine and Pat Connolly, two stalwarts of the London & Southern region who said goodbye to us this year. John and Pat were a huge part of the region's success over many years as project officer and regional treasurer, respectively, but were also in fact key contributors to all regional activities and events in a variety of ways. We wish them the very best in their Comhaltas retirement!

Clare Nevin

Rúnaí (Outgoing) London & Southern Region

The Music Sub-Committee

The Role of the Music Sub-Committee

Provide adjudicators - The Music Sub-Committee (MSC) 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.

The MSC secretary has emailed all adjudicators informing them of the information that was held on them by the MSC (in accordance with GDPR guidelines). A 'Code of Best Practice' issued from headquarters in Ireland will also be sent out to all adjudicators.

Brief adjudicators - The Music Sub-Committee are expected to brief adjudicators on the day of the 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. 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.

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.

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 know the date of their Regional Fleadh as soon as possible.

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. The first stage of training is the 'Introduction to Adjudication' course and we are hoping to host this later this year.

**Comhaltas in Britain
Liverpool Irish Centre,
6 Boundary Lane
Liverpool L6 5JG**

**info@comhaltas.co.uk
www.comhaltas.co.uk**



Registered charity number 1185729



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Standard

