



Registered Charity 1185729

**A Creative  
Community  
Nurturing Irish  
Culture**

**Annual Report 2020**

## A CREATIVE COMMUNITY NURTURING IRISH CULTURE

*Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann strives to be a positive force in the community. At local grass roots and as a global family Comhaltas bonds together all those have an affinity with Irish traditional culture.*

*The Comhaltas movement is its members, and as such at all times people will be valued and treated with dignity and respect.*

*Our intangible cultural heritage is not safeguarded in the pages of a music book, in a certificate or medal but in the fingertips, feet, voice and hearts of our people and it is this which we prize and pass on, ó ghlúin go glúin (from generation to generation).*

*Through celebrating our heritage, shared identity, culture and roots we are committed to treating all people equally and with respect, irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.*

*We are an open and inclusive organisation. Discrimination and harassment of any kind is not welcome in the movement. Comhaltas values authenticity, respect, creativity, community, friendship and fun.*

*We recognise that being accessible and being inclusive are not the same thing and we actively encourage and welcome all people into our Comhaltas family, working to reduce barriers preventing anyone's enjoyment of our traditional Irish culture.*

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# Táimid ag tnúth le bliain bhródúil de sheirbhís dhílis dár gcultúr.

UINSIONN MAC SIÚRTÁIN.

UACHTARÁN COMHALTAS CEOLTÓIRÍ ÉIREANN.

Táimid ag tnúth le bliain bhródúil de sheirbhís dhílis dár gcultúr. Seo píosa gairid ar an gcaoi a n-oibríonn ár n-eagraicht.

With this annual report we celebrate the achievements of Comhaltas na Breataine. I am motivated by all our volunteers who work tirelessly for our organisation. At branch level we have officers and teachers taking ownership of the branch business, activities and outcomes. The branch is, and always should be, the most important unit of An Comhaltas. Continue to care for your branch.

Two delegates from the branch feed into the Regional Board. It is at regional level that communications with the branch are





maintained. As well as organising events within the objectives of Comhaltas, the region can play a part in assisting a branch in its concerns. Delegates to the regional board should inform the region of branch activities and the same delegates bring information back to the branch.

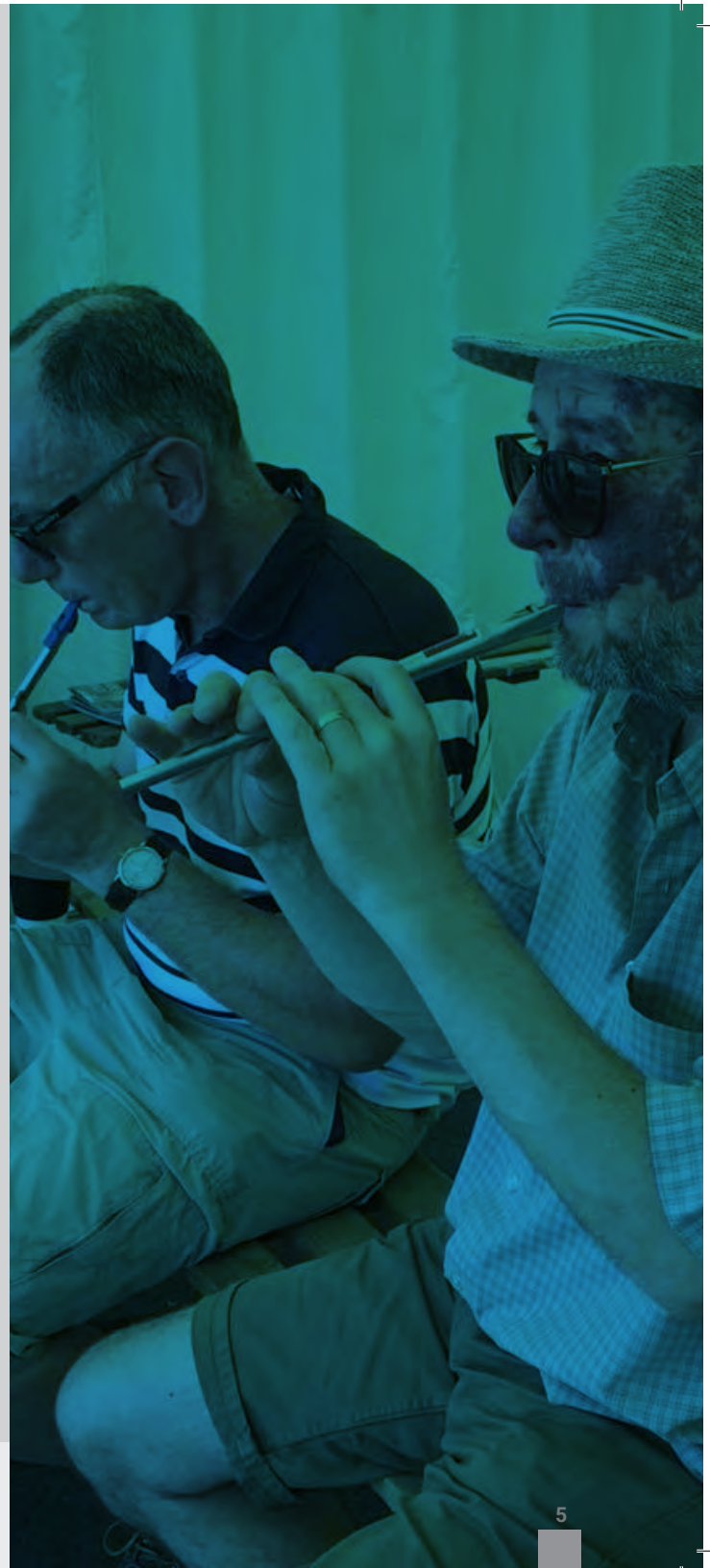
Two delegates from the regional board are selected to attend the Provincial meetings. The delegates report to the region and will equally report to the Provincial Council.

The Provincial Cathaoirleach and two elected delegates from the Province, are nominated to sit on the Central Executive Council (Ardchomhairle) of Comhaltas. Once again, a two-way information flow should occur. A very useful document from the Ardchomhairle is the Buachoiste report, which delegates can bring back to Province for onward transmission to the region and branches.

Annual Congress is the supreme authority of An Comhaltas, and occurs at Culturlann na hÉireann, Monkstown on the 1st weekend in May. For the year 2020 motions for Congress are concerned with our constitution The Bunreacht. Congress will consist of the members of the CEC (Ardchomhairle), two elected delegates from each branch and regional board, and the secretary and treasurer of the Provincial Council. I encourage units to send their delegates to congress, to witness Comhaltas in depth, and meet & greet other like minded people.

Congratulations to Comhaltas na Breataine on securing Charitable Status. A great achievement for our organisation.

Go raibh maith agat go léir agus go mbainfidh tú taitneamh as an gcoinbhin siún.





# MÍCHEÁL MAC Cnáimhin CATHAO

Once again our Convention is hosted this weekend by the Northern Regional Board and I would like to say go raibh mile maith agaibh for all their hard work and endeavours to make us feel welcome.

I especially would like to welcome those who have travelled from far and wide and I hope you enjoy the new two day format of our Convention.

One thing you can say about the Comhaltas is that no two years are ever the same and this year proved to be no exception with two major achievements for us.

The first achievement was hosting the All Britain Fleadh in a market town for the first time. Kirkby Lonsdale was an inspired choice of venue and will have left an indelible impression in the memory of every person who attended the weekend. The first words most people said to me was "wow what an incredibly beautiful town" and I think this, with the beautiful weather, set the tone for such a perfect weekend. There was much entertainment to be had from the céilí to the concert, the many pub sessions and the open air gig rig. Of course it was not all plain sailing and we accept that there are a number of lessons to be learnt. However, I would like to say maith sibh to two people in particular; Peter Fawcett for his unrelenting quest to make this happen, and to Patrick Morrison for his organisation and diligence in pulling it all together.

The second major achievement was the awarding of charitable status for Comhaltas in Britain. This has been an objective of ours for a number of years and now we can look forward to the benefits it will bring us in terms of elevating our profile and status and fund raising opportunities. Well done to all involved for achieving this.



# CHATHAOIRLEACH

Also this year saw the launch of our dementia research report authored by Dr Josie Nugent, a new diaspora newsletter and an annual singing session for the Province in Liverpool. Nobody can accuse us of standing still!

Looking forward a new initiative has been launched from Dublin – An Ród Seo Romhainn - The Road Ahead.

The idea is to deliver a cohesive and productive road-map to complement An Ré Nua which will maximise our potential and extend our influence. We are looking forward to helping shape this new programme. Ní neart go cur le chéile

Many of you will be aware that it is my intention to stand down as an Chathaoirleach na Breataine this year. An rud a théann i bhfad, téann sé i bhfuaire

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the role since 2012, meeting and greeting members from up and down the country, charring meetings and representing you on the Ardcomhairle. It has genuinely been a most amazing journey.

Sometimes a fresh face is needed to stop things going stale and with this I would like to wish my successor well. The ranks of Comhaltas are filled today with a new generation of highly educated, enthusiastic young people and we can be assured that the future is bright and safe in their hands.

Enjoy the convention and I wish you all well for the future.

Ádh mór agus coinnigh ag obair é!



# 70 YEARS OF MUSICMAKING

DR. LABHRÁS Ó MURCHÚ, ARDSTIÚRTHÓIR CCÉ

This year we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of Comhaltas in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, in 1951. The movement is now operational in 18 countries worldwide, with Comhaltas na Breataine uppermost in our hearts and appreciation.

The clarion call has gone throughout the land and far outside the shores of Ireland that Fleadh 2020 will return to the birth place of Comhaltas. The people of Mullingar and region will once again raise the torch of our national heritage and proclaim its rightful place in the hearts and homes of Ireland and wherever Irish people and their friends foregather. No one ever doubted their resolve or their ability to pursue this lofty ambition - their enthusiasm was infectious and their service awe-inspiring.

Our people – descendants of a noble race of survivors who sought sustenance in the global village – will travel from the four corners of the earth to the appointed town of Mullingar to bear witness to the loyalty and support which exists for the cultural identity of the homeland. They will be joined by thousands of non-Irish followers – friends of our Irish nation – in the celebration of our distinctive culture.

The ancient tongue of the Gael will be heard to extol the attributes of our race at home or in the lands of their adoption. The music will exhilarate the national pulse while the dancers shoes beat out the rhythm of survival. The ballad makers will tell of great deeds past and point the way to an illustrious future – AN RÓD SEO ROMHAINN.

1951 - 2020



We salute with pride all our colleagues at your Annual Convention and hopefully, le cúnamh Dé, meet you at the Fleadh.

Tá éacht déanta agaibh. Tá An Comhaltas agus náisiún na hÉireann go mór faoi chomaoín agaibh. Bail ó Dhia oraibh i gcónaí.







# THE MARKET TOWN FLEADH

The 2019 All Britain Fleadh Cheoil in Kirkby Lonsdale has been heralded as a huge success and a triumph in local and national press. From the very beginning it was a massive undertaking for a voluntary organisation but was viewed as a timely stepping out of the shadows for Comhaltas in Britain. A positive development for the Comhaltas movement to engage with the wider public using the fleadh as a vehicle for striving to fulfill the aims of Comhaltas, in creating a closer bond among all lovers of Irish music. While the event itself was a success there was also a desire to create something more than just a weekend of music competitions, and the organisers, committee and volunteers worked hard to fulfill this. Moving to a town setting, with an aspiration to 'turn the town green' was a success and shows the potential and capability of the Comhaltas movement in Britain. It is hoped that the full legacy of this fleadh can be realised into the future, with the lessons learned from this special undertaking serving to inform, help in the planning, organising and enjoyment of All Britain fleadhanna into the future.



# TUARASCÁIL AN RÚNAÍ

MÁIRE DOOLIN

Rúnaí, Comhairle na Breataine

Looking back, 2019 saw Comhaltas in Britain make the headlines in the media both in terms of our music and community engagement. Our fleadhanna continued to be the main focus for not only our young musicians, dancers, singers and storytellers but attracted thousands of spectators to Kirby Lonsdale, to participate in the first All Britain “town fleadh” outside Ireland. The reigning All-Ireland champions The Blackwater Céilí Band performed at the céilí, and Talisk performed at the Concert held in St Mary's Church great craic was had by all.

The Echoes of Erin Concert tour annually features the best of traditional talent drawn from all four Provinces of Ireland, and Britain. It demonstrates how Comhaltas is a creative community nurturing Irish culture. To realise our vision it has been imperative to work in partnership with grass roots organisations like the GAA and Irish in Britain. Our school's education program is key to this development together with our mental health and wellbeing projects.

Comhaltas in Britain is now a registered charity and we continue to work towards gaining a recognised quality assurance mark and developing our staff and volunteers.

Looking forward we have an exciting year ahead with regional fleadhanna, the All Britain hosted by the London & Southern region and the return to Mullingar, where the first fleadh was held.







## Jim Teevan

FACILITATOR  
COMHALTAS IN BRITAIN

My congratulations to the staff for their outstanding work over the past year.

The excellent educational project is making great progress, introduced in Luton towards the end of 2018. Under the Luton music hub there are currently 350 students who have received an introduction to traditional Irish music. This project has tremendous potential when introduced to the four regions.

The dementia project is well advanced, the document written by Josie Nugent has now been published. Music is recognised as an excellent therapy for dementia patients. Another great project and again when introduced over the four regions has great potential.

An excellent all Britain fleadh in the rural setting of Kirby Lonsdale. One of the finest All Britain fleadhs brought back memories of the early All Ireland fleadhs in Listowel. Well done to everyone involved.

Obtaining charitable status is a great step forward for Comhaltas in Britain. Comhaltas in Britain registration as a charity has great potential going forward. Well done to every one involved.

The staff would like to join with me in congratulating the outgoing Chairman Michael Nevin and thank him for his outstanding work over the past eight years.

## COMHALTAS IN BRITAIN

### Contact information

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## Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2019 - Medal Winners from Britain

### **Cairdín Pianó / Piano Accordion (15-18)**

1st Michael Dudgeon, CCÉ, St James the Great  
3rd Alex Morgan, CCÉ, East London

### **Cairdín Pianó / Piano Accordion (018)**

3rd David Browne, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels

### **Pianó / Piano (15-18)**

2nd Calum McGregor, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels,

### **Tionlacan / Accompaniment (Faoi 12)**

1st Myles Macauley, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels

### **Tionlacan / Accompaniment (12-15)**

2nd Cara Conway, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels

### **Tionlacan / Accompaniment (15-18)**

2nd Andrew Turner, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels

### **Bodhrán (15-18)**

3rd Sean Griffin, CCÉ, East London

### **Foinn Mhalla, Fidil / Fiddle Slow Airs (018)**

3rd Joe Joe McCann, CCÉ, East London,

### **Foinn Mhalla, Feadóg Mhór / Flute Slow Airs (12-15)**

1st Ben Connolly, CCÉ, North London

### **Ceol Trí / Trios (018)**

1st Chris Maguire, Jack Boyle, Orlaith McAuliffe,  
CCÉ, West London

### **Fedaíl / Whistling (018)**

2nd Phil Westwell, CCÉ, Johnny Doherty

### **Amhránaíocht ar an Sean Nós (Fir) / Irish Singing (Men) (018)**

3rd Jim McElhone, CCÉ, Irish Minstrels



# COMHALTAS NA NÓG

## Youth Report

DAVID BROWNE, Oifigeach na NÓG



This marks the end of yet another successful year for Comhaltas na Breataine. As in previous years, I have been working closely with the project officers and management team to ensure the youth are represented in decision making key to the running of the organisation.

Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine was a highlight in the Comhaltas calendar this year, set in the picturesque market town of Kirkby Lonsdale. In addition to the competitions there were various new additions to the Fleadh this year, including a concert in the local church featuring both local musicians and headline band Talisk – this was greatly received, and was a massive attraction for young folk attending the Fleadh. We also had an open air stage, similar to the Gig Rig you would expect to see at fleadhanna in Ireland. Unfortunately, it was logistically impossible to have our youth performance group play as a whole due to many other commitments over the weekend – but it was great to see many small groups of our young musicians take to the stage and share their music with the crowds gathered. I'd like to thank them all for giving their time freely for this. It really added to the atmosphere in the main square.

The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann was held in Drogheda for one final year. I worked closely with



National Youth Officers to promote a programme of events aimed at young people. On the whole these were very well attended, especially the Trisco (Trad Disco) hosted by our own DJ Paddy Callaghan. This year we had great success, again with medals heading back to Britain. Massive congratulations go to all our medal winners.

Now in its 6th year, the Trip to Birmingham Trad Festival was another highlight of the festival calendar this year. Run by Comhaltas members, it has become a great opportunity to bring together young people from all over the country to see some of the finest exponents of Irish Traditional Music. This year Comhaltas na Breataine sponsored the festival's open stage competition "The Molloy Award" – named after Anne and Pat Molloy, stalwarts of the Irish traditional music scene in Birmingham. A massive congratulations goes to Breanna Wilson from the Scottish Region who was crowned the winner of this competition, with accompanist Sophie Joint.

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.

It has become apparent that we need to look at recruitment for our youth performance group and other opportunities in the pipeline for next year. It has been increasingly difficult to get representation from all regions at our events and performances, not surprising when the group that we have been targeting were recruited back in 2015 for the start of the 'New Generation' CD project.

I'm sure there are lots of young people out there aged 16-24 who are keen to get involved in various opportunities that come up throughout the year. If interested, then get in touch by email at [youthofficer@comhaltas.co.uk](mailto:youthofficer@comhaltas.co.uk).

Go raibh maith agaibh,

## Hastings Fleadh 2019

Taking place in November for the 5th consecutive year. The event is growing in size and reputation year on year and draws musicians from along the South Coast, Kent, London and Ireland. Musicians traveled from Scotland for this year's event.

Featured artists included Eimear McGowan from Northern Ireland, James Carty from Roscommon, Tricia Hastings from Co Clare, and London based group Nóta.

Workshops were available in a wide variety of disciplines that include singing and dancing, there was a series of concerts and sessions in the old town pubs.

The event works closely with local businesses and as well as being supported through our ESP award, runs regular fund raising events through out the year. The fleadh also does a lot of good work in bringing Irish traditions and culture to the local community and raises the profile of Comhaltas. The next Hastings Fleadh is being planned for 20-22nd November 2020



## Leeds 50th Anniversary

In a style that only CCÉ Leeds can do, 2019 saw a year long celebration to mark 50 years of Comhaltas activity in Yorkshire. The new branch CD and commemorative book charting the history of the branch are excellent additions to the Comhaltas canon but the highlight of the year was undoubtedly the weekend of celebration which brought together founder members of the branch along with current musicians, teachers, committee and special guests. As always the professionalism and organisation of the weekend was matched only by the quality of the music which rang through the Leeds Irish Centre. Leeds branch are without question a shining example of what a branch should be and how to join the whole community in our culture.

# **'The Impact and Effect of Irish Music and Song on Irish People Living with Dementia in Great Britain'**

A report commissioned  
by Comhaltas in Britain

## **Abstract:**

This report documents active research on the effects of engagement in the traditional arts (music, cultural songs, storytelling and dance) in the lives of Irish people living with dementia in Great Britain. The project was funded by Comhaltas na Breataine, with the support of a grant from the Irish Government, Emigrant Support Program. This report was created following music workshops for older people with dementia in selected care homes and day centres throughout Great Britain in January 2019. These workshops were led by the author, Dr. Josie Nugent - a music therapist and Irish fiddle player, who has developed innovative ways to help older people with dementia reengage through the use of cultural songs and dance music.



The richness of findings from the four centres visited for this research project resulted in the creation of a programme titled Engaging Through Irish Traditional Arts for the Irish Diaspora with Dementia for Comhaltas na Breataine. The programme has been designed, with an emphasis on a person-centred approach, to meet the social and emotional needs of people in dementia care and to be delivered by traditional artists, who need not have therapeutic expertise.

The full report is available for use in supporting the Irish community living with dementia



# Comhaltas in Schools

Our Schools education project continues to be delivered in Schools in Luton, where around 500 year 3 learners have experienced the program.

Music teacher, and program author Georgina Murphy-Clifford has also had the learning delivered in schools in Bedford.

We have updated the learning resources to include some suggestions from teacher, following feed back on the pilot scheme that ran in late 2018, and hope to be able to turn the resources in to a marketable product.

We are also supporting Georgina as she plans a major showcase concert in Bedford on the 22nd May.

## Provincial Traditional Singing Weekend

November 2019 saw the first of a new venture for Comhaltas in Britain. The first annual traditional singing weekend held in the province took place in Liverpool. Organised in memory of Bruce Scott and Mary McAndrew, two well known singers who gave so much to the promotion of singing, songwriting, and passing on the songs and stories. The weekend was attended by singers from across Britain and Ireland including many of Bruce's family. The weekend incorporated the new Comhaltas seminar on the teaching of traditional singing which was delivered by Deirdre Scanlon and Barbara Mary Tynan and which aims to improve the standard of singing for our younger singers. We were also fortunate to have Seamus Brogan in attendance and he was able to give a newly developed talk on the Songs of the Wexford Coast. The Liverpool Singing weekend will now be a permanent fixture in the Comhaltas in Britain calendar so keep the first weekend in November free.

# PARTNERSHIPS, AWARDS & RECOGNITION



The Annual Echoes of Erin concert tour continues to delight and entertain audiences up and down the country. The 2019 tour featured the finest talent from the world of traditional Irish music, song and dance visiting Liverpool, Manchester, Tyneside, Settle, Leeds, London, Leamington Spa & Milton Keynes. The 2020 tour promises to be a great show with London's own Brogan McAuliffe joining the group for the nine concerts in February.

## The GAA All Britain Championships

Having a presence at the GAA All Britain Championships has become a regular event in the Comhaltas calendar.

More than a thousand young people participate in Gaelic games over the weekend at the start of July.

Comhaltas representatives were there again in 2019 to promote the organisation and deliver 'Taster' Tin whistle lessons between games. More than 50 young learners participated in lessons over the weekend.

The weekend also presents an opportunity to connect with Schools and Gaelic clubs, and has Created many valuable relationships. Our music class at Wimbledon came out of a chance meeting at the ABCs.



## Gaelic Voices Festival

This year's Gaelic Voices festival took place at the London Irish Centre, Camden on the 22nd May. It's a fantastic event that brings Irish, Language, music, culture and the Irish Community together.

The Saturday afternoon concert featured the Gaelic Voices Community Choir, led by Richard Swan, a mixed group of old and young from Meitheal Cheoil, Lewis Barfoot, and many other players from the London traditional music community. Around 150 people attended. This year's Festival will be held at the London Irish Centre on Saturday afternoon, 23rd May 2020



Gaelic Voices Festival and Gaelic Voices Choir  
is a joint project delivered  
with Conradh na Gaeilge i Londain

## Comhaltas Jersey

### A New Branch on the Island of Jersey

Following a very successful visit, we have continued to develop a relationship with the Jersey Irish Society with a view to establishing a new branch on the Island. A group of musicians from the London and Southern Region visited Jersey in February 2019, in response to an invitation from Jersey Irish Society. The group performed at a diner reception and Project Officer John Devine gave a presentation on best practice for establishing a branch. Instrumental workshops were delivered the following day where more than 20 attended. We are helping the society establish a music class, taught by musicians that live on Jersey, and the Irish society have formally invited members of the London Regional Board to attend their Irish festival on the 16th May. Everyone is welcome.



Earlier last year, the U12 St. Roch's Grupai Cheoil from Irish Minstrels CCÉ were invited to perform at a special event in the Scottish Parliament recognising their achievements of winning the All-Ireland Grupai Cheoil competition in August 2018. It is fantastic recognition for both the young musicians involved in the group and their teacher Roisin Anne Hughes who was crowned All-Ireland Senior Fiddle Champion the previous year.

Comhaltas in Britain are delighted to be Partnering with the Trip To Birmingham Trad festival in their delivery of the Molloy award. The award invites young up-and-coming musicians to apply to take part in the event, and a group of judges sift through the many applications before choosing the 6 lucky groups to take part in the competition itself. After performing for the judges live, one lucky group is crowned the winner and is welcomed back to the festival the following year to perform support for one of the festivals headline concerts. The vast majority of applicants in this award are Comhaltas members and the winning act was 'Breanna Wilson and Sophie Joint' – Breanna is a 2nd year Student of traditional music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and is an active member of Irish Minstrels CCÉ.



Breanna and Sophie were also crowned winners of the Danny Kyle Open Stage Award at celtic connections along with Rory Stark (St. James the Great CCÉ) and Malachy Arnold (Irish Minstrels CCÉ) who now form the new group Tarran.

Luton Leagrave CCÉ made a presentation to Denis Whelan, Larry O'Hanlon, Sean McDonagh and John Hutcheson - 4 of our longest serving members, to thank them for their hard work and dedication down through the years. Denis Whelan, who was one of our founding members of the branch, was also presented with some Galway Crystal, as he has immigrated to the Philippines with his wife Sally. We wish them the best of luck in their new home.





In partnership with BEMIS Scotland, and Celtic Connections, the Irish Minstrels Branch of CCÉ partnered in the 'Celtic Connections in the Community' Programme at the 2020 festival. The programme looks to celebrate the diverse cultures which contribute to Scottish cultural arts and to recognise their achievements on establishing themselves in the city of Glasgow. The Irish Minstrels host a 'Winter School' weekend which is already an exciting event in the yearly calendar, and this year was no exception with a fantastic weekend of workshops taking place which attracted an audience from within the 4 branches of Comhaltas in Scotland. The showcase concert this year however, was incorporated in to the Celtic Connections Programme and saw the event open to a wider audience.



As part of the programme a group from the Irish Minstrels branch 'St. Roch's The Next Generation' also took part in a Celtic Connections led workshop from celebrated fiddler Graham MacKenzie and performed alongside other diverse groups at a special Celtic Connections Showcase Concert.

The group were also welcomed to perform at a Celtic Connections Schools Concert in the Royal Concert Hall to a sell-out 2,500 strong audience alongside Cherish the Ladies.



Recently, young musicians from Irish minstrels CCÉ were invited to perform with the IMBOLC Youth Orchestra under the instruction of Ryan Molloy at the imbolc festival in Derry. Not so young Irish minstrels CCÉ members performed with the IMBOLC orchestra under the direction of Michael Rooney and in collaboration with Four Men and a Dog.



Feith an Cheoil are just one of the many groups of musicians who regularly perform at the request of the Ambassador for official functions at the Embassy of Ireland, London



# Comhaltas na hAlban

# SCOTTISH Region

RÚNAÍ, CATHLEEN ARMSTRONG

The Scottish branches continue to operate, with lots of members qualifying from the All Scotland Fleadh to the All Britain and All Ireland Fleadhanna. Musicians of all ages performed at many events throughout the year.

**NOVEMBER 2018** - St. James the Great CCÉ had a fun filled Halloween céilí in St. James the Great Church Hall.

Johnny Doherty CCÉ played at 2 charity nights in St. John Bosco's parish hall, with all proceeds going to the homeless and St. Andrew's hospice. The branch also had a day out in Edinburgh, with a music session in the Waverly Bar.

St. Patrick's CCÉ had an exchange visit from Liverpool CCÉ. Sessions, a family céilí and quiz night all made for a very successful weekend.

**DECEMBER 2018** - St. Roch's All Ireland winning U12 Groupai Cheoil performed at the Scottish Parliament, a great advert for Comhaltas.

Santa was on call this month, visiting all four branches. Each branch held their own Christmas parties and céilíthe, with Santa distributing gifts and sweets and at some branches, even picking up a fiddle and playing a couple of tunes!

**JANUARY 2019** - The Regional AGM was held later than usual, on Sunday 13th January, in the John Bosco Church Hall in New Stevenson. A new committee was elected. The Irish Minstrel's branch held their annual Winter Workshops in Woodfarm High School, with a host of top tutors on offer. These were enjoyed by all who attended, but numbers could have been higher. As always the concert held on the same weekend, was a huge success.

St. Patrick's CCÉ members attended the BBC Traditional Musician of the Year Awards, with 2 members of the branch, Sarah Markey and Benedict Morris shortlisted. Against very strong competition, Benedict Morris won, becoming the Traditional Musician of the Year 2019. Well done Benedict!

What an achievement. Another member of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann to join the list of past Comhaltas winners of this award, Paddy Callaghan and Mohsen Amini.

Comhaltas na hAlban members played at various concerts and events at Celtic Connections.

**FEBRUARY 2019** - Woodfarm High School Thornliebank, was the venue for Feis Glaschú. The Feis is an excellent competition, and acts as a precursor for upcoming Comhaltas competitions. Members performed very well, and as always, a great day was had by all.

**MARCH 2019** - St. Patrick's CCÉ members played at various events for St. Patrick's Day. The younger musicians from the branch performed during the annual Street Festival, while the Senior Céilí Band performed at the breakfast function in St. Patrick's Church Hall for invited guests.

Johnny Doherty CCÉ and St. Patrick's CCÉ hosted a joint céilí in St. Monica's Coatbridge, with music provided by members of both branches. The evening proved to be a great success and helped raise funds for both branches. Johnny Doherty CCÉ held a music session the next day in The Bullfrog Bar in Motherwell. This was also attended by members of St. Patrick's CCÉ, and together, both branches entertained the locals with tunes, songs and whistling.

Irish Minstrels CCÉ held a very successful and busy céilí in Christ the King Church Hall. St. Roch's Senior Céilí Band performed at the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Merchant City.

St. James the Great CCÉ had a very successful St. Patrick's céilí in St. Mirin's Cathedral Church Hall.

Johnny Doherty CCÉ suffered a great loss at the end of March, when Anne McKenna sadly passed away. Anne was the branch treasurer, and also taught the set dancing class for several years. She was a huge part of the branch and will be sorely missed. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

**APRIL 2019** - St. Patrick's CCÉ hosted the Scottish Fleadh this year in Woodfarm High School on 28th April, and are to be congratulated on a very well-run and organised event. All four branches had members qualify in solo, duet, trio, groups and band competitions.

**MAY 2019** - Members attended Congress in Monkstown. Congratulations are in order for Patrick Callaghan, who was presented with his TTCT certificate at the event.

St. James the Great held their class competitions this month, in the Baptist Church in Mossbank.

All four branches were busy practicing, in

preparation for the All Britain Fleadh in Kirkby Lonsdale in June.

**JUNE 2019** - The All Britain Fleadh was held in Kirkby Lonsdale over the weekend of 29th/30th June and was a little bit different from previous fleadhanna. Lots of activities took place in the town, with a gig rig in the centre.

**AUGUST 2019** - Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann was once again held in Drogheda, with lots of our members attending. Congratulations are in order for everyone who participated, and to all the medal winners from the Scottish Region:

**SEPTEMBER 2019** - Irish Minstrels CCÉ held their annual Winner's Concert in the Couper Institute, with members and guests performing. As always, this was a great night.

Members from St. James the Great CCÉ continue to play at mass every Sunday in their parish. A group from the branch went to Mullingar, to commemorate the anniversary of Monsignor Coakley's death. They were made to feel very welcome, and linked up with a local Comhaltas group, Ballynacargy CCÉ, for a weekend of music and song. Hopefully, this will become an annual event.



# NORTHERN

RÚNAÍ, JULIE O'HARE

We have had a great year here in the Northern Region.

In December members of St Wilfrids and Tara O'Carolan branches travelled to Kirkby Lonsdale along with Peter Fawcett to represent Comhaltas at the Kirkby Lonsdale Christmas Fair. This was a great day promoting Irish music.

Convention 2019 was hosted by the Northern Region in Liverpool at the Hallmark Hotel Sefton Park with workshops on Saturday on Education, Stagecraft and a Volunteers workshop. We held the AGM on Sunday. This was a very informative weekend.

At the same time as our Convention we had the Echoes of Erin concert tour with Liverpool CCÉ hosting the event on Friday, followed by Tara O'Carolan, Tyneside, Settle and Leeds. This was a great show which had a mix of established artists together with up and coming stars which appealed to fans of Irish traditional entertainment. We hosted an All Britain Fleadh Fundraiser in which members





# N Region

from Leeds, St Wilfrids and Tara O'Carolan branches travelled to Huddersfield Irish Centre to participate in this event. It was a great night in which the branches showcased their talent. We are hoping to attend the Irish Centre again next year.

In May there was the Annual 24-Hour trad session with Grace Kelly and Friends in aid of Irish Community Care Manchester at the Chorlton Irish Club. This was a very well supported event by all the Manchester musicians, and they will continue to raise money again this year.

Also, in May we had Regional Fleadh at Bolton University which was host by Tara O'Carolan, this was a great fleadh and we will be returning to the university again next year.

We made history in Britain as it was the first time to hold the All Britain Fleadh in a market town rather than in a college. When we turned the town of Kirkby Lonsdale green for the weekend of Irish Culture with a true community festival of music, song, dance

and fun. We also need to thank Michelle O'Leary who provide tuition to 96 young students from the local primary school on the tin whistle, which enabled us to create a legacy.

For the first time at the All Britain Fleadh the awarding Ard Ollamh was present to Mike Harding who has contributed to traditional music for many years.

Fleadh Cheoil na Éireann was held in Drogheda which was enjoyed by all who attended.

Leeds CCÉ launch a CD as part of their 50th Anniversary. They held their Dinner Dance on Friday 25th October and held a céilí with Blackwater Céilí Band on Saturday 26th October. For all those who attended it was a great weekend of music, song and dance.

We finished the year with a Singing Weekend in Liverpool where we remember two of our great singers Mary McAndrew and Bruce Scott.



# MIDLAND Region

The Midland Region have four meetings throughout the year. The chairperson continually encourages the Region to work together and support one another as we try to keep alive and grow our branches and the Region in the Midlands. The Region is hundreds of miles wide and for some branches would entail up to a seven hour round trip to attend meetings so being able to offer members to Skype into our meetings has proved a huge success in the level of contact between all.

**REGIONAL AGM 2018** - Our Regional AGM saw retention of officers from the previous year. There was acknowledgement of the hard work done by all and an appreciation of the support and commitment shown across branches for the work of both Comhaltas in general and for the Midland Region in particular. Individuals were thanked and the meeting ended with a presentation by Peter Fawcett about the forthcoming Kirkby Lonsdale Fleadh and a

buffet lunch.

**SESSIONS AND MUSIC CLASSES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES** - All of the branches in the Region have been busy with either Céilís, sessions, music classes or all three. Much admirable work has also been done by branch member in their efforts to keep branches going when teachers and members are difficult to find. This work is ongoing and it is heartening to witness the support offered between branches.

**OUR THOUGHTS THIS YEAR** - The Region was saddened by the deaths of Frank Boyle, Mick and Kathleen Lyons. We continue to keep our longstanding Regional representatives Hughie Gallagher, Jimmy Greaney and Kathleen Stanley in our thoughts and wish them well on their recovery.

**REGIONAL INTERBRANCH CONCERT 2019 -**

The Coventry branch of Comhaltas hosted an inter branch concert on Sunday 3rd February. This was a great success, it was very well attended, a group from Newport in Wales came and helped provide what was a very friendly, musical afternoon. Thanks to the Coventry Branch for all the work, organisation and delicious food.

**CONCERT TOUR 2019 -** Leamington Spa hosted the concert tour again and it was a great success, again down to the hard work and support of our Comhaltas members both locally and from across the Region.

**MIDLAND REGION FLEADH 2019 -** The Midland Regional Fleadh, run by the Midland Region, took place at Princethorpe College on 7th April and an enjoyable day was had by all who attended. The facilities provided by the college were superb. The cost of hiring the college for the day, though reasonable, is something that the Midland Region will need to do a lot of fundraising for in future. We had our now established presentation of trophies and medals in the newly fitted out auditorium, this was well attended both at lunchtime for the morning competitions and at the end of the day for the rest of the competitions. The number of competitors was down on previous years and this is something that we, as a Midland Region, need to address to see how we can encourage larger numbers to music classes and more to competitions.

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

**FLEADH CHEOIL NA BREATAINE 2019 -** This was hosted by the Northern Region and us here in the midlands had a very enjoyable weekend and were well represented and were successful in many of the competitions.

**FLEADH CHEOIL NA BREATAINE 2021 -** The Midland Region are in advanced negotiations with Coventry University as a venue for this Fleadh, this is significant as it is Coventry City of Culture in 2021.

**FLEADH CHEOIL NA hÉIREANN 2019 -** The Midland Region felt that it was another very enjoyable trip to Drogheda. Our musicians played well and made our Region proud of them. We are acutely aware of the efforts and cost of travel and accommodation, that it entails for families here to take children over to Ireland for the Fleadh, however, we hope that the experience they had, the atmosphere they felt and the warmth and kindness shown to them would compensate in some way for that.

**MIDLAND REGIONAL FLEADH 2020 -** This will be taking place on 5th April 2020 at Princethorpe College and will be hosted by the Midland Region.



# LONDON & SOUTHERN Region

RÚNAÍ, CLARE NEVIN

The Echoes of Erin Concert Tour returned to Hammersmith Irish Centre in February and played to a sell-out crowd. The tour continues to be a success in the London venues each year.

**NORTH LONDON BRANCH** held its Junior Fleadh in November 2018 and All Winners competition later that December. The Junior Fleadh continues to be a great chance for very young musicians to get a feel of the fleadh environment before the excitement of the qualifying events later in the year, with age-groups for under 9's.

In April 2019, North London branch again worked hard to run a very successful Regional Fleadh, held at Nicholas Breakspear School in St Albans, a venue which continues to be a great feature of L&S regional events. Numerous families then made the trip up to Kirkby Lonsdale in June for the Fleadh na Breataine and feedback on the "town-style"

fleadh from visitors was glowing.

## **IRISH MUSIC, LANGUAGE & CULTURE**

- Our region is keen to support events and activities related to the teaching of Irish language and culture to promote the ties between the language and music. In March, musicians from East London branch Michael and Matthew Nevin and Connor MacMahon played music for the opening of Seachtaine na Gaeilge (Irish language week) at Camden Irish Centre. In May, Gaelic Voices festival took place at Camden Irish Centre, another fantastic event organised by James MacDonald of East London and his team of volunteers. This year saw the foundation of the highly popular Gaelic Voices Choir which is now in its Autumn term continuing on into 2020. The festival itself took place over one day at The London Irish Centre and involved performances from the GV choir, the Devine family, Meitheal Cheoil Community, Lewis Barfoot and Joe Joe McCann. The generous Emigrant Support Fund grant through



Comhaltas made the choir and the festival possible, with organisational and financial help from East London.

**PARK VIEW DEMENTIA STUDY** - This year saw research carried out by musician and researcher Josie Nugent and commissioned by Comhaltas, looking into the importance of music and song on the cognitive function and social skills of elderly people with dementia. Young musicians from Feith an Cheoil School of Music of East London participated in the study in 2019 by playing for residents at Park View residential care home in Edmonton, London. Full details and findings of the study can be found in the Dementia Project Report.

**BRANCH ACTIVITIES** - Music classes through Comhaltas St Albans are growing each year with many new musicians coming up through the community of committed teachers and parents at the branch. Classes are reinforced with sessions and fundraisers held by the branch throughout the year, with St Albans Irish Centre as their hub. Music classes in Wimbledon are continuing to run successfully, with much organisational and practical support from parents and occasional sessions organised by the teachers.

**THE 5TH HASTINGS FLEADH** was held in November and continues to go from strength to strength each year, drawing musicians and visitors from all over the region to participate in a weekend of concerts, sessions and workshops. The hard work put in by the branch, spearheaded by branch Chair Chan Reid, makes this excellent showcase of Irish music and song possible, along with the

generous funding support of Comhaltas na Breataine.

Having made closer ties with Hammersmith Irish Centre, West London branch held their Christmas concert and fundraiser there in December, with a performance from the All Britain Senior Céilí Band winners, The Parish Céilí Band. Through this event, the branch had a key aim in making connections with young families in the Irish community and encourage their engagement in Irish music.

A London & Southern regional newsletter is circulated every few months, put together by regional Vice-Chair John Goulding of Hastings branch, to keep our members updated on regional activities. The region looks forward to hosting Fleadh Cheoil Na Breataine in London in 2020.

## Wimbledon Music Class

The music class at South London Irish Centre, Wimbledon has continued during 2019. Fiddle player James Carty, and whistle player Mary Guest are now well established as tutors, having taken over from John Devine who helped to establish the class in October 2017.

Around 15 young learners attend the regular Monday night classes.

It is hoped it will still be possible to set up a new branch for South London from the class, and we will be encouraging them to do so throughout 2020.



# MUSIC SUB-COMMITTEE

The Music Sub committee is a part of the Provincial Council of Britain with an important role in our competition structure and the development of adjudicating standards.

**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.

In 2020, the briefing of adjudicators should also highlight safeguarding. A copy of the safeguarding policy will be sent to adjudicators prior to the Fleadh that they are adjudicating. It is also imperative that the adjudicator has a clerk (18+) with them at all times. An adjudicators should never be in a room on their own adjudicating.

**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. This should be completed in time for this year's All Britain Fleadh.

**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. 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. The next seminar will be held in November 2020, in the London and Southern Region.

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

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