



Saoithe: Paddy Daly, Diarmuid Ó Cathasaigh, Niamh Parsons, Ann Riordan

The Sweet Nightingale

New Series, no 10, January 2019

In reading our latest edition of *The Sweet Nightingale*, please feel free to comment on any items – either within the newsletter or generally regarding your view of Howth Singing Circle activities. We would also welcome more general articles from any of you – reviews of recordings or performances, reflections on your favourite songs, anything that relates to traditional singing and music.

Since our last *Nightingale*, the traditional world has been hit by the loss of some great talents including Finbar Boyle, Garech Brown, Vincent Campbell, Alec Finn, Liam Óg Ó Floinn, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, Tommy Peoples, Jer O’Leary and Tim Lyons. Whilst there is general comment regarding the amount of young people playing traditional music, these deaths underline how fragile the tradition can be and how blessed we have been to have heard these talented people play and sing.

No Briars in the Botanic Gardens

Below are two of the outstanding contributors to the ‘Down By You Flowery Garden’ Singing Walk in the Botanic Gardens in July last. Mícheál Quinn’s rendition of ‘Dobbins Flowery Vale’ was class. The lyrics were most appropriate: ‘One morning fair as Phoebus bright / Her radiant smiles displayed / When Flora in her verdant garb, / The fragrant plains arrayed, / As I did rove throughout each grove, / No care did me assail / When a pair I spied by a riverside, / In Dobbin’s Flowery Vale.’



Walter Kennedy’s wonderful rendition of ‘The Last Rose of Summer’ and Mícheál Quinn – ably assisted by his Technical Director Bennery – with ‘Dobbins Flowery Vale’.

The performance of the day, however – and no offence to anyone else – was, by popular acclaim that of Walter Kennedy of Thomas Moore’s ‘The Last Rose of Summer’, both he and Micheál performing at the rose bush taken as a cutting from the original plant in Jenkinstown Park, County Kilkenny, that inspired Moore. Walter’s rendition was beautiful and reflected considerable work, practice and, above all, total understanding of the song. As with all great interpretations, he ‘got inside the song’ and provided a memorable finale to a great afternoon.

'Tis the last rose of summer,
Left blooming alone;
All her lovely companions
Are faded and gone;
No flower of her kindred,
No rosebud is nigh,
To reflect back her blushes,
Or give sigh for sigh.
I'll not leave thee, thou lone one!
To pine on the stem;
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go, sleep thou with them.

Thus kindly I scatter,
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead.
So soon may I follow,
When friendships decay,
And from Love's shining circle
The gems drop away.
When true hearts lie withered,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

Harbour Lights: A Celebration of Howth Harbour

Against a backdrop of photographic memorabilia of the construction of the new Howth Harbour (1808-1818), our October session was led by Bean agus Fear a’ Tí were Áine agus Diarmuid Ó Cathasaigh. Sea-faring songs, many with Howth references, rightfully dominated the occasion. Seán Ó hEarcháin set the tone with his fine rendering of ‘Bantry Bay’. Then Úna Kane moved us up the west coast to her own ‘Dear Galway Bay’. Máire Ní Bhaoill brought us further up country and we heard Tír Conaill’s lovely ‘An Mhaighdean Mhara’. Luke Cheevers gave us two epic songs of the sea-the first his own composition ‘The Ouzel Galley’ and later ‘The Waterford Sea’ - each song with more than a baker’s dozen of verses!

Dave O’Connor amused us greatly with his ‘Hannah Healy the Pride of Howth’ and its plethora of internal rhymes, as was his second song ‘The Primal Light’: ‘As he wandered gaily down past the Bailly / Where night and daily the water flows’. Breege Mc Nally sang ‘The High Walls of Derry’ and then her ‘Táimse i’ mo Shuí ó d’éirigh an ghealach aréir’, was another highlight of the night. Paul Redmond sang his own composition ‘The Ben Eader Lass’ and later ‘Let the Light of the Lighthouse Shine on Me’, both songs very relevant to the theme of the night. Míle buíochas, Paul.



Diarmuid & Áine steering all boats into the safety of Howth Harbour

Máire Mhic Aogáin, on her first visit to our Club, gave us a spirited rendition of 'Bhí 'Diversion' Aerach ar an Aonac'h'. Art Mac Cumhaigh (1715-1773) the Armagh poet, got honourable mention from Diarmuid who quoted a few verses from Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin's translation of Mac Cumhaigh's poignant poem 'Cuan Bhinn Éadair', on his exiling to Howth and notes his regret at the diminishing use of the Irish language in his new surroundings.

Contributions were made by virtually everyone in attendance which included Martina Ní Cearnaigh, Pat Ferne, Tom Finn and our stalwarts Francy Devine, Eugene Mc Eldowney, Máiríde Woods, Ann Riordan, Antoinette Daly, Walter Kennedy, Eddie Phillips and Brian Doyle. To borrow from Paul Redmond's song, 'Let the Light of the Lighthouse' continue to shine on all the members and supporters of Ciorcal Ceoil Bheann Éadair !

Áine agus Diarmuid Ó Cathasaigh

Songs of Wexford with Cathal Caulfield

In November, our Young Singer/Musician in Residence Cathal Caulfield led a night of 'Songs of Wexford', a theme well adhered to by the floor. Among over twenty singers, Úna Kane set the standard with 'The Land Where the Slaney Flows' while Máirídhe Woods reflected on the fact that 'There Was an Old Woman From Wexford'. Walter Kennedy movingly sang of a Wexford massacre and Seán Ó hEarcháin of 'Boulavogue'. Seán Ó Cinnéide provided an old and uncommon version of 'The Croppy Boy' and Ann Riordan read John Boyle O'Reilly's 'The Fishermen of Wexford'.



Cathal at the Howth Singing Circle and as guest in Marrowbone Books

It was lovely to see Cathal's parents John and Carol on the night. Cathal played appropriate tunes about banshees and púcas as were adjacent to Halloween. His songs included 'The Fethard Lifeboat Disaster', 'Paddy and the Whale' and a song from his people's area 'The Saltmills Explosion'. His footnotes were informative and entertaining providing context and explanation in equal measure. He finished by granting us a tantalising glimpse of his residency project by extracting comic songs from the Tom Munnely Collection in the National Folk Archive. He produced many laughs with his stylish and enthusiastic presentation of 'The Neat Little Window'. There was a deep sense of appreciation for our Young Singer on a night that was most enjoyable.

Dún Laoghaire Vinyl Festival

At the invitation of Brian O’Flaherty, organiser of the Dún Laoghaire Vinyl Festival, the Howth Singing Circle were invited to perform some shanties on the Friday night, 16 November, in Eblana Avenue. Our Skipper Gerry O’Connor assembled a motley crew – aren’t crews always motley? – and Mick Dunne was first to walk the plank with his ‘Man on the Flying Trapeze’. Gerry himself led ‘Whitby Harbour’, while Niamh Parsons and Eddie Phillips brought Cyril Tawney’s ‘Grey Funnel Line’ and ‘Sammy’s Bar’ to starboard and Brian Doyle berthed in Mingulay. Our shanty leaders were Tom Finn, ‘Fair Bungle Rye’; Jack and Angela Plunkett, ‘Bully in the Alley’; Joe Gallagher ‘Sally Brown’; Luke Cheevers, ‘Billy O’Shea’; and George Henderson, ‘John Kanaka-naka’. Ann Riordan assisted Gerry with arrangements and two Club favourites completed the set: Tony Fitzpatrick, ‘Greenland Whale’, and Fergus Russell, ‘The Bonnie Light Horseman’. The audience response was warm and they readily sang along. Gerry O’Connor’s hard work ensured a most enjoyable evening.



Left: those hours of rehearsal in dank, draughty halls paid off: l-r, Tom Finn, Mick Dunne, Ann Riordan, Fergus Russell, Luke Cheevers, Niamh Parsons, Brian Doyle, Captain Gerard O’Connor, Jack & Angela Plunkett, Tony Fitzpatrick, Eddie Phillips, Joe Gallagher & George Henderson. Right: Mick Dunne explains that he has left his trapeze behind while Luke & Gerry look on in obvious disappointment that Mick’s acrobatic skills will be denied the audience queuing round the corner in anticipation

Songs for Nollaig na mBan

Our monthly sessions started off the year on 3 January with sisters Anne & Niamh Parsons at the helm. A relatively quiet night, we were graced with thirty old and newer songs and carols and one poem. Laurence Bond began with a new song written by Holly Near, followed by a song as gaelige from Antoinette Daly. Newcomer Colin gave us ‘A Pint of Plain’ and ‘January Man’, a song destined to be sung at some stage during the night. Our visitors from Sidmouth, Kath and Bill, entertained us with interesting songs in English and in Welsh, including the classic ‘Calon Lân’. Francy Devine sang ‘The Lowlands of Holland’ in Scots, and Máirídhe Woods gave us one of her wonderful poems as well as the ‘Silver Dagger’. Malahide Singing Circle was represented by Máire Ní Bhaoill and Martina Nic Cearnaigh. Gerry O’Connor led the evocative ‘Night Visiting Song’ and Siobhán Moore followed with her version of what we feel is ‘our’ song, Bull Moore’s version of ‘The Nightingale’. You can listen to Siobhan singing harmonies here <https://youtu.be/q0uH701JJxQ>. Joyce gave us an old Dan Fogleberg song ‘Another old Lang Syne’ and James Oppenheim’s anthem ‘Bread & Roses’, and Noeleen Berry, Eleanor McEvoy’s ‘A Woman’s Heart’. We had Twelfth Night carols from Eddie Phillips and Kath. Graham Dunne gave a sublime rendition on nylon string guitar of ‘Moonriver’. The first half finished by two sisters singing ‘Two Sisters’.

In the second half, Graham played another and Niamh and Anne sang Sara Daniels’ ‘Bramblethorn’. Kath sang a new fisherman’s song and Séamus Shields brilliant ‘mash-up’ ‘Spencer the Rover/The Wild Rover’ – what he called ‘Spencer the Wild Rover’ - was hilarious and very difficult to sing. Other items included, Máire Ní Bhaoill, ‘Mary from Kilmore’; Siobhan, Karine Polwart’s ‘I’ve Got It All’; Máirídhe, ‘Three Lovely Lassies From Banyan’; and Martina a moving version of ‘Dónal Óg’. Niamh sang of ‘The Wrens’, Antoinette her own composition about the fishing women in Killybegs, and Eddie reminded

us of Simon and Garfunkel's 'Old Friends'. The night finished with the wonderful 'Misalliance' from Anne, learnt from her late father, Jack Parsons. It was a lovely start to the New Year.

Niamh Parsons

Niamh Parsons Campaigning for the Musicians' Union of Ireland & Gender Equality Through FairPlé

At its AGM in November, Niamh Parsons was re-elected to the Executive of the Musicians' Union of Ireland (MUI). An affiliate of SIPTU, the MUI represents musicians from every genre along with music teachers, singers and other music professionals. It works hard to protect members, whether freelance or directly employed, from exploitation and has a successful track record of ensuring that members receive all contractual entitlements arising from their performances.

Through the MUI's membership of the International Federation of Musicians (FIM), the union plays an important part in advancing, promoting and protecting the rights of musicians in a global marketplace in the digital age. In this context, the MUI is developing positive working relationships with all of the relevant stakeholders including the collecting societies. As a founding member of the Association of Artists' Representative Organisations (AARO) the MUI has joined forces with a number of other bodies representative of Writers, Directors, Actors, Composers, Visual Artists and others in pursuit of the right of all artists to collectively negotiate terms and conditions, the right to Social Protection, the right to share in the economic life of the work artists create and the right to representation on all of the relevant arts bodies in this country.

Details of the MUI can be gained at <https://mui.ie/news-events/>

or by reading the union's online journal *SoundPost* –

<https://cloud.3dissue.com/86718/87064/220411/SoundPostSummer2018/html5/index.html?page=1&noflash>

Niamh would encourage all musicians, singers, music teachers and music professionals to join the MUI to strengthen musicians' voice in defending our national orchestras, establishing fair rates of pay for musicians – full-time and freelance, and protecting musicians' rights in recording, broadcasting, performing and in arts policy generally.

MUI UNION CONTRIBUTION RATES

For full-time musicians:

for those earning over €500 per week is €4.70 per week

for those earning over €325 and up to and including €500 per week is €4.00 per week

for those earning over €200 and up to and including €325 per week is €2.80 per week

for those earning over €127 and up to and including €200 per week is €1.90 per week

members earning €127 a week or under pay contribution at a rate of €1 per week

For freelance musicians: €106 per year or €8.23 per month

In addition to Niamh's campaigning work with the MUI, she has also played a prominent role in FairPlé, a group set to demand gender balance in Irish traditional and folk music. Fair Plé have held events and symposia to draw attention to their campaign and Niamh has been a prominent participant in these activities. Check out the FairPlé website for news of their activities and position papers - <https://www.fairple.com/>



The MUI logo and the incoming Executive, l-r, Andy Irvine, Éamon Murray, Niall O'Loughlin, Séamus Doyle (President), Francy Devine, Niamh Parsons, David Agnew and Graham Macken (Organiser) – missing from picture Liam Kennedy, Cormac Ó hAodáin, Fintan Warfield, Robert Swift

Eddie Phillips in City Hall

As part of an October lunchtime lecture series on 'Dublin Port and Dockers' organised by Dublin City Libraries, Eddie Phillips read E.J. Brady's 'The Dockers' Orchestra' after Joe Mooney presented a 'Virtual Tour of Dublin Port. Chaired by the Lord Mayor Nial Ring, Eddie represented the Howth Singing Circle with distinction. Others performing at these lectures were Luke Cheevers, Pádraig Ó Nualláin, and Dara Yeates. Details of the lectures can be found at: www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-culture-and-amenities-dublin-city-public-libraries-and-archive-events/dublin-port



Eddie Phillips in City Hall

Robert Cinnamond

The acclaimed singer Róisín White organised a weekend of events in November last to pay tribute to the Antrim singer Robert Cinnamond who died fifty years ago. After events in the Sunflower Club and Cinnamond's native Glenavy, a workshop and concert were held in Belfast followed by a singing session hosted by the Belfast Singing Circle. The concert featured those who sing on a CD released for the occasion that complements the re-mastered CD of Cinnamond's original Topic LP, *You Rambling Boys of Pleasure*: Jane Cassidy, Len Graham, Maurice Leyden, Maebh Meir, Jennifer Orr, and Róisín White. They were joined by Glenavy flute player Brendan Mulholland and Derry fiddler John McLaughlin who played Cinnamond's fiddle 'Bob'.

Cinnamond was born in Glenavy on 18 May 1884. He worked as an agricultural labourer and basketweaver. He lost his wife, Elizabeth Murphy, aged only forty-two on 27 October 1936 whilst giving birth to their ninth child. The BBC arranged for recordings of Cinnamond in the early 1950s and those formed the basis of the Topic LP. Having lived in the United States from the late 1950s, he returned home to Glenavy and died, aged 84, on 3 June 1968. The commemorative booklet is entitled *'Tis Pretty to be in Ballinderry* and it contains much detail and the song lyrics, like those of the title song beautifully performed on the night by Jennifer Orr, produced below. The booklet with its two CDs can be obtained from Róisín.



'Tis Pretty To Be In Ballinderry

'Tis pretty to be in Ballinderry
'Tis pretty to be in Aughalee
'Tis prettier to be on Bonny Ram's Island
A-sitting forever beneath a tree
Ochón, ochón, ochón, ochón

Oft times I've sailed to Bonny Ram's Island
Arm in arm with Félimí Diamond
And often he'd court me and I'd be shy
In my heart I loved him, the darling boy
Ochón, ochón, ochón, ochón

I'm going he says from Bonny Ram's Island
Out and across the stormy sea

And if in your heart you love me Mary
Open your arms at last to me
Ochón, ochón, ochón, ochón

'Twas pretty to be in Ballinderry
But now it's as sad as sad can be
For the ship that sailed with Félimí Diamond
Is sunk forever beneath the sea
Ochón, ochón, ochón, ochón

I wish I was the weeping willow
I'd wander far by yon lonesome billow
And cry our o'er the cruel sea
Oh Félimí Diamond come back to me
Ochón, ochón, ochón, ochón

Dinner with Jimmy Crowley

On November 22, our annual Dinner was held in Howth Yacht Club with Special Guest Cork's Jimmy Crowley. Jimmy is a stalwart of the traditional music scene and has made a unique contribution as singer, song-writer and collector. A copy of Jimmy and Stoker's Lodge's seminal LP was raffled on the night and Ann Riordan's organisation of matters extended to arranging for Jimmy to pull out her number. The HSC also made a special presentation of a bouquet of flowers to Finola Young as she does

a large amount of work for the Circle – putting guests and visitors up at her own expense, arranging raffle prizes, selling tickets and generally being available for many myriad, largely unseen tasks.



Jimmy Crowley going full steam ahead and presenting a bouquet to Finola Young



Jimmy Crowley draws Ann Riordan's ticket for a prized LP; Paddy Daly enjoying his night; and the sensational new Boy Band, Gerry O'Connor and John Keely

The night was run by Ann Riordan and Gerry O'Connor, the latter surprising us all by singing with his new accompanist John Keely, their song a suitable tribute to the man after whose memory the Club was formed, Brendan 'Bull' Moore who regularly sang 'The Night Parting Song'. There were great contributions from, among others, Cathal Caulfield, Brian Dunne, Walter Kennedy, Angela Murray, Paul O'Mahony, Paul Redmond. Jimmy's set encompassed old favourites and new songs, a celebration of maritime life, Cork's rebel girls and his own takes on ordinary life. It was an imaginative and lively set with plenty of entertaining sleeve notes thrown in. He concluded the night with a rousing version of 'Salonika', the audience lustily joining in.

Niamh Parsons

Francy in the Summer

Many Howth Singing Circlers attend festivals in Ireland and elsewhere over the summer. Recognition of the Club is evidenced by invitations to members to perform at such events. Francy Devine was a guest at the 40th Stonehaven Folk Festival, presenting 'The Songs of Jim Connell and James Connolly' with assistance from the Laggan Folk's Arthur Johnstone and Aberdeen's Danny Couper. On the Sunday, Francy joined the illustrious company of the legendary singer, song-writer, collector and musicologist Adam McNaughtan, Christine Kydd and Emma Speirs in the Tradition Bearers' Concert. Thanks to Meg Findlay and Annie Reid for the invitation to participate in a most enjoyable event.

Later in the summer, Tom Holmes invited Anderson, Byrne and Devine to perform at the Star Folk Club in Glasgow. It was an emotional night for Francy as his father's family were from Glasgow and the attendance of many friends and comrades from the city added to the sense of occasions. It remains a mystery as to how he entices musicians of the calibre of Steve Byrne and Paul Anderson to accompany him on such occasions.



Above: Francy Devine and two greats of Scottish traditional singing – Arthur Johnstone (Glasgow) and Danny Couper (Aberdeen) presenting the songs of Jim Connell and James Connolly and Francy performing at The Tradition Bearers' Concert at Stonehaven Folk Festival

Below: Adam McNaughtan (Glasgow), Annie Reid (Stonehaven), Emma Speirs (Inverurie) and Christine Kidd (Kirriemuir) at Stonehaven and Steve Byrne, Francy and Paul Anderson at a packed Star Folk Club in Glasgow



Fonn – New Traditional Music Magazine

Fonn is a quarterly magazine dedicated to traditional music and song, produced in Ireland and available free of charge online. It features on developments in traditional music – including reviews of concerts and recordings, profiles of major figures and a calendar of upcoming events. *Fonn* features many clubs and Singing Circles that not only preserve the traditions of the past but also carry music and song forward into the future.

Of particular interest to Singing Circle regulars is the guide to the upcoming sessions around the country, with information on guests or themes where this is available. If you need more than your monthly fix of songs and stories at the Howth Singing Circle, *Fonn* will guide you to other venues, near or far.

December's issue carried an extended interview with Rhiannon Giddens, the award-winning multi-instrumentalist and singer who delighted audiences at the South Roscommon Traditional Singing Weekend and the Sligo Music Festival. Uilleann piper Rónán Browne reflected on the late Garech de Brun, founder of Claddagh Records. *Fonn* previewed some of the artists appearing at Dublin's Tradfest in Dublin this month.

Fonn's autumn issue is available at https://issuu.com/ssheils/docs/fonn_autumn_2018. You can download the magazine as a pdf or on the Adobe platform: <http://bit.ly/fonn18aut>. Follow *Fonn* on Facebook at @fonn0 for notifications about further issues or updates. You can also email Séamas Sheils at ssheils@me.com to receive a notice directly into your mailbox.

Séamas Shiels



Howth Singing Circle at the Dún Laoghaire Vinyl Festival and providing singers for Ardmhéara Mícheál MacDonncha's Conference on the Anti-Conscription Strike in the Mansion House: back, Larry O'Toole and Tony Fitzpatrick; front, Liz Gillis, Mícheál and Pádraig Ó Nualláin

Buíochas Mór

As ever, *The Sweet Nightingale* does not appear by magic. Our thanks to the following: Cathal Caulfield; Áine Lalor Ó Cathasaigh; Finola Young; and the Howth Singing Circle Committee – Laurence Bond, Paddy Daly, Francy Devine, Helen Lahert, Diarmuid Ó Cathasaigh, Gerry O'Connor, Niamh Parsons and Ann Riordan.

She exceeds Flora, or bright Aurora / Or beauteous Venus from the briny froth / I am captivated, I do repeat it / By Hannah Healy, the pride of Howth



Above: Diarmuid Ó Cathasaigh's display celebrating two hundred years of Howth Harbour and Cathal Caulfield, mysteriously filed under J

Below: those hours in cold rehearsal rooms and then the release back into the open air: Sutton Methodist Singathin [not a misspelling] 2018



John Bentham and Éibhlís Ní Ríordáin on the Liffey banks

Programme for 2019

2 February

– Workshop with Shona Donaldson, Abbey tavern, 11.30-1, €10

2 February

– Howth Burns Nicht 2019

Paul Anderson & Shona Donaldson Anderson

3 February

– Fare Thee Weel Session, Helen Lahert & Dave McCracken, Abbey Tavern, 3-6, free

7 February

– Brenda Ní Ríordáin & Antoinette Daly, ‘Oiche Gaelach’, aoi speisialta Éibhlis Ní Ríordáin

7 March

– Cathal Caulfield as Young Singer in Residence to present his Song Project

4 April

– Special Guest, Declan Hoey (Drogheda)

2 May

– ‘Songs for May Day’, Laurence Bond

6 June

– Helen Lahert

20 July

– ‘Singing the Fishing’, a Walking Tour of Howth Harbour

From everyone at Howth Singing Circle, peace and health for 2019.

**Thank you for your support throughout 2018
and we look forward to seeing and hearing you all again soon**