

# The Peninsula Choir

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## Annual Report 2016-17

The Peninsula Choir is now 7 years old! This is a significant number, representing completion of the first phase of our life as an entity, and fittingly this year has seen the realisation of two goals: firstly to make measurable progress in our work as a choir, and secondly to record a CD that we can be proud of. Our core choir remains stable. Membership increased by 3 this year, which included a 12 year-old girl, but during the second half we lost 2 members, one to family pressures, one to ill health. We hope they will return in September. This core stability has been a central contributor to our progress this year.

We were very busy in the Christmas period, and did not even contemplate having a concert of our own. We sang at Care Homes in Portaferry, at the Kircubbin Lights switch-on, did a marathon round the wards in the Ulster Hospital, The Carol Ship, and a memorable evening in Greyabbey where they put on a pageant of the Christmas Story, and we were asked to sing in the ruined Abbey, where the pageant started. Big Lesson here: singing in the open air requires practice and spatial awareness. Needless to say, we did not cover ourselves in glory! But, as the pageant progressed through the village, we sang lustily at every station, and I believe we were appreciated as the main voice for the carols.

In February a few of us attended a singing workshop in Portico, Portaferry. It was entitled 'The Tenebrae Effect' and was given by Nigel Short, leader of The Tenebrae Consort which was performing that evening. The aim was to *listen* to each other and *breathe* with each other. It was peaceful and intense, yet so consciousness-raising that our final deed was to stand as a choir, eyes shut, and sing what we had practised, just listening and breathing together. The effect was really powerful, yet it was so simple, and so dramatically obvious! We discussed our experience at our practice and resolved to put this into our work, so that is what we have tried to do. It has had such a very positive effect on our work.

Thus, in this very tight, *together* frame of being, we made our CD, which we recorded in Cloughey Presbyterian Church, for its beautiful acoustics. It was quite an ordeal of strictness, in terms of silence and togetherness, but after three-and-a-half hours we staggered out into the balmy late spring air, feeling that we had given it our very best shot! And we are delighted with the result - our first CD 'The Running Wave' - of which we can proudly say "This is what we do, this is how far we have come." It is a project that Paddy Craig, our friend and drummer has been urging us to undertake, and he made it all happen. We are so pleased with the result, and grateful to him. In return he is working on a project of his own, with his own composed music for **us** to perform, so we wait to see what this will entail. It has been suggested that our next CD should be of Christmas music, which is certainly worth considering.

For our Midsummer Concert we included a song by Hollywood singer/songwriter Martin Donnelly, a friend, and someone with whom Emma Morgan our pianist has worked. We asked if he would like to come and play a few songs for us, which he did (for free!)

and was very warmly received. It was a wonderful evening altogether, and much, much praise was heaped upon the Choir for the incredible progress that we have made this year as a group. I also believe that the lavishness of the after-concert spread is becoming legendary, and another reason to attend the Concert! Our charity donation from this event went to 'Singing for Syrians'. The following Tuesday we had a delicious noisy meal in The Saltwater Brig, while we watched a DVD of the concert, and sang along.

Our absolutely final gig of the year was a wedding in Carrowdore. In addition to singing for half-an-hour before the ceremony, we also had to learn the hymns, and learn to sing 'Highland Cathedral' accompanied by the bagpipes, which was great fun, and a little challenge. We sang the hymns in 3 parts, and were entranced by the harpist who was playing too. We are very grateful to Helen Brown who was our pianist for this event, also appreciated by the Bride who asked her to play her out of the Church. (We thought they had their own organist for this!) By the end of it we were all starving and went to Eden Pottery to eat every scrap of food they had.

Of course, the Choir does not run on air, and it is always necessary to raise a few extra pounds, but as always it is fun. We had a really jolly pub quiz at The Brig in September, and a very well attended Seed Swap at Donna Moore's new house in Portavogie. These two events raised a lot, allowing us to easily pay for the making of the CD. There is always a great deal of background work to the fundraising, so we thank those who have been involved in making it happen, and for making these occasions such fun. And thanks to our faithful Committee who also work hard behind the scenes. We have cooperated well this year, and I look forward to working with them again, and anyone else who wants to join. Thanks therefore to Christine Jendoubi for her dedicated stewardship of our finances, and for running the website, and to Sara Brown for all her work on the CD cover and an endless supply of Good Ideas. To Bussy Stephens our faithful minute-taker, to Deirdre Roddy for keeping us up to date on Facebook, and Jeanie Martin, we thank you all.

And finally we all express our gratitude to Emma Morgan who is such a gifted accompanist. Her work complements and encourages our singing which has really helped to lift our sights for the work of this year.

I know we all feel proud and maybe amazed at what we have achieved over the last 7 years. Now we have to build on that, and see where it takes us.

Bee Kupicha  
Chair and Choir Leader

September 5<sup>th</sup> 2017  
Held in Maxwells Courtyard, Kircubbin, Co Down

