



## **Annual Report 2017-2018**

Another year is gone, and we can look back with pleasure and some pride at our work as a Choir. We have tackled some challenging music and revisited old favourites, have performed in a variety of situations with much credit, and as a group, the feeling of striving together to achieve our goals has made all our practices a joy, even when we have 'off days', and the continuing lively social dynamic is a precious bonus in all our work. Our Membership has remained fairly constant, but one Member has left for family reasons, whilst we also said goodbye to Jessie Hunt, who joined us at the very beginning of our Choir, and has been a regular attender for all 8 years. Now, at the age of 80 she feels it is time to retire, and we wish her every happiness for the future. She will be missed.

As is now the norm, we had an extremely busy few weeks before Christmas. In addition to the local events of Carol Ship, Kircubbin Lights and Care Homes, the Choir was asked by the Parkinson's Society to help fundraise in Ards Shopping Centre. This experience was very positive and a good way to raise our profile away from the Peninsula for a very worthwhile cause. We were also invited to take part in a Christmas community event in Cloughey Presbyterian Church, which was an opportunity to see many other groups perform, such as the Boys and Girls Brigades, and the choir from Kirkistown Integrated Primary School. We did, however, find singing in the new Inpatient building in the Ulster Hospital a bit strange, as there are no wards, just single rooms and empty, quiet corridors. We will review this for the coming year.

This year we added to our portfolio of Christmas music with a few new carols and now have a good collection, many of them á cappella, meaning we have a good body of work to sing if we are asked to perform somewhere but have no pianist. We also felt that a CD of this collection would be worth making, so this will be done at the beginning of October, with Paddy Craig as before.

Our Midsummer Concert was based on pop songs from the 60's to the 80's but it came as a great surprise to many Choir members that singing 3-part arrangements of these was not as easy as was first thought! However, it was great fun learning new songs and reviving old favourites, and we held our Concert in St Patrick's Community Centre in Portaferry. We were joined by Paddy Craig, with his son Theo to help with percussion, and Clive Wills on guitar. They also sorted out our amplification problems with complete calm and professional ease. During the interval, whilst our audience ate supper at the decorated tables filling the hall, we had two entertainments: Clive's daughter, dressed in a harem outfit, performed an impressive and very athletic modern dance, followed by our own Erin Johnston singing one of her Grade 5 pieces. It was wonderful to have two so very talented young people to entertain us. A week later, Erin got a Distinction in her Grade 5 singing exam. The charity donation this year went to 'Rosie's Trust'.

This year, our Committee worked on a pro forma of charges for appearances. This clarified our position for ourselves, as we need to take account of all

expenses that accrue to us, say for playing at a wedding, with extra rehearsals and cost of pianist for these. Each request will be dealt with individually, and we may decide not to charge at all, depending on the event, but at least we now have an agreed document to refer to. On the wider topic of finances, we are keeping well within our means, but we do rely heavily on the Seed Swap and the Pub Quiz to keep our balance healthy. However, we need to find more diverse ways of fundraising, as we are invariably relying on family and friends to support these events, and indeed the same goes for our Concerts. Sales of the CD have covered its production costs, but they were placed in a wide variety of outlets, thus reaching a target beyond the aforementioned family and friends. This will be an ongoing discussion this coming year, as will our focus on reaching a wider audience. Thus we are considering holding our next big Concert in May, rather than June, as it is felt our usual Midsummer date is probably putting us in competition with other events, as was the case this year in Portaferry.

Much of our Committee work is the day-to-day stuff of arrangements for the coming term, our commitments, financial status, and so on, and our 7-strong team has worked really well together this year. We all seem to contribute something a little different to the group and this leads to positive, lively discussion and fruitful outcomes. It also helps that we bring food and drink, to make things flow! My very grateful thanks to everyone, and especially to Sara and Christine who open their homes to us.

During the past year our focus has continued to be on improving the quality of our singing. A few adjustments to seating have helped, as has the stability of our membership and the gifts Emma Morgan, our pianist, brings to our Choir. At the beginning of our year we also bought a set of proper folders for our Choir, so public appearances now look more professional and our confidence in performing continues to grow. In Ards Shopping Centre we sang entirely á cappella for 2 half hour slots, and it was effortless and beautiful. I was very aware of shoppers standing very still and rapt as they experienced the lovely harmonies of the carols and we were paid many compliments. Similarly, at our Midsummer concert, the whole sound of the Choir was sweet, tight and surefooted with excellent diction - a wonderful culmination of our years' endeavours.

It is a pleasure to look back at this fruitful year, and I look forward to the coming season with much eager anticipation.

Bee Kupicha  
Chair and Choir Leader

AGM held in Maxwell's Courtyard, Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018.