

**Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
Saint John Branch
Newsletter – January 2010**

In this issue:

Message from our
Chairperson

News

Did You Know?

Upcoming Events

Message from the Chairperson

I begin this update with a heavy heart. The past months have been tragic for our members. We lost a Comhaltas member and dear friend when Hugh Cannell passed on January 3rd, and many of our members have lost close family and friends recently. Our hearts go out to you, as well as your friends and families.

We will miss Hugh's kind smile and genuine pleasure in playing the keyboard. We will miss his musical stylings – unusual at times! – and the sincere efforts of Tom Noel and others to work with them. And we will miss the opportunity to watch Hugh and support him on his musical journey. We have uploaded some pictures of Hugh from our Christmas party on the website www.comhaltas.ca, in the *News and Events* section. We're thankful that we have these images to remember him by. Rest in peace, Hugh.

Since the Annual General Meeting in October, the Executive has met monthly. We've opened these meetings to all members so we can get your thoughts face-to-face. While members don't vote on issues at these meetings, we encourage you to attend. If you have a topic you'd like to bring forward, or want us to bring forward on your behalf, please contact me so it can be added to the agenda.

Thanks to those who attended our Christmas party last month – it was nice to have such a great turnout. Many drove from afar to attend and help us kick off the season, and it was a lovely evening spent enjoying fine company and music.

Plans are underway for St. Patrick's Day events and the Comhaltas Pub Night on **March 12** – save the date! Bob Burgess, Stuart Hook and Paul Roach are coordinating Pub Night and will lay out the program. Plans are afoot (no pun intended) to do some dance instruction before the evening begins and to have further instruction provided during the Ceili. We would like to give folks the chance to get up and participate in some traditional Irish dancing at this event.

The Executive held a meeting with our Youth Officer, Kathleen Gorey-McSorley, who offered insight into how we might reach out to and involve younger people in

Comhaltas. Out of those discussions came the idea to visit high schools and play some traditional Irish music for their bands and/or choirs. Kathleen's talent and joy of Irish music will surely inspire other young musicians to want more. Stay tuned as we work on these plans.

With respect to performing, each year it seems we get more requests to play than the year before. As such, we won't be actively seeking additional playing opportunities. However, please continue to bring any performance requests to me and the Executive will determine, for each event, whether we have sufficient musicians available to carry the day. It is certainly a compliment that our organization is in demand.

Best wishes for 2010,
[Rick Clark](#)
Chairperson

NEWS

Stuart Hook inducted into 2009 Comhaltas Music Hall of Fame

Stuart Hook has worked tirelessly to promote Irish music in the Saint John area, and his efforts have now been formally recognized.

The Canada East Region of Comhaltas honoured Stuart for his dedication to traditional Irish music and culture at a gala event in Toronto. Other inductees include Stan O'Donohue from Comhaltas Toronto and Maureen Maher from Comhaltas Ottawa.

Stuart has welcomed newcomers into Comhaltas with enthusiasm and sincerity; his approachable, sincere personality has made him an excellent ambassador for Comhaltas and the Irish culture. He is loyal and steadfast, and the Comhaltas Saint John branch is ever grateful for his continued support. Congratulations for this well-deserved honour, Stuart!



Helen Gannon, Chairperson Comhaltas North America; Stuart Hook, Treasurer Comhaltas Saint John; Anne McConnell-Strong, Chairperson Comhaltas Canada East

Comhaltas North American Convention in April

The Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann North American Province Convention is April 8-11 in Parsippany, New Jersey. Bob Burgess, our Vice Chairperson, attended the convention in St. Louis last April, and two others before that. He continues to find the experience very rewarding and is organising a trip for us to this year's convention.

- *What is it?* Three days of total Comhaltas immersion! Sessions, ceilis, dancing, workshops, banquets and loads of fun! Join in or listen to some of the best players in North America at several impromptu sessions around the hotel. Elite ceili bands from New York and New Jersey. Workshops in ceili dancing, various instruments, Irish language and traditional singing. Four magnificent meals including a Saturday evening Gala banquet and ceili. Instructors include John Daly, Eileen Gannon, Isaac Alderson, Joanie Madden, Martin Donohoe, Fr. Charlie Coen, Jesse Winch, Brendan Dolan, John Walsh, Michael O'Malley, Ivan Goff, Siobhan O'Donoghue, Brian Glynn, P.J. Gannon, Mattie Connolly, and Maura Mulligan.
- *Price?* Complete weekend package for everything at the convention \$175US.
- *Accommodations?* The conference hotel (Hilton Parsippany) is \$121US/night, but we are organising room sharing so individual cost will be less.
- *Transportation?* We will likely rent a van and share driving and cost.



Due to the popularity of this event, the conference hotel will fill up quickly. Please contact Bob (bob.burgess@gmail.com) by **February 20** if you'd like to go. He'll send out an email with more details soon. You can also visit the convention website at <http://midatlanticce.wordpress.com/2010-convention/> for more information.

A weekend you'll never forget!



Comhaltas members help fan the Olympic flames

Comhaltas members John and Cynthia Cudmore, Sheila Davidson, and young dancer Alexandre Banks offered their talents performing with Stephanie Mainville to celebrate the arrival of the Olympic torch to Saint John. Congratulations to them for being part of such an exhilarating event and representing our organisation so well.

NEWS cont.

Comhaltas.ca

Keep visiting www.comhaltas.ca. We post our past and upcoming events, news from and for members, and interesting links. On our "Music" page, we've included new tune sheets as well as a YouTube link to a performance of one of the traditional songs we're practising.



DID YOU KNOW?

Sessions

This fall we enjoyed great turnouts for the weekly sessions. Our focus is on traditional music for the first part of the evening, and we're also trying to include a greater number of traditional songs during this time. Our goal is to regularly introduce new tunes and songs in the sessions, building our repertoire and keeping things fresh, while becoming "tighter" with our more regular tunes.

We're striving to be more consistent with a good blend of song and tunes, especially in that first hour and a half of the session. We're also working on arrangements for songs and tunes at the sessions, hoping to provide a learning experience for members. Please let a member of the Executive know how you feel about this new session format at any time. We'll also be seeking more formal feedback on the sessions as we get further into the New Year. And don't be shy – please suggest other traditional tunes and songs that we could try at our sessions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Executive Meeting

The next Executive Meeting is February 16 at 6:00 pm at O'Leary's. All members are invited to attend and observe the proceedings, and then join us for the session in the back room! Please send any items you would like added to the agenda to Chairperson Rick Clark, r.clarksjnb@gmail.com.

Comhaltas performances

January 23, Saturday

Chateau de Champlain. Paid performance for a private function.



March 7, Sunday, 2:00 pm

Town of Grand Bay-Westfield – Brundage Point River Centre
Helping Grand Bay-Westfield kick-off their St. Patrick's celebrations.

March 10, Wednesday

Men and Music – Harbourview High School
Plan to attend this great evening and support the Comhaltas musicians and our friends in Men and Music.

March 12, Friday, 7:00 pm

Comhaltas Pub Night – West Side Legion

Come one, come all to play, sing, and dance the night away! This is our chance to get together as a group and enjoy a fabulous evening with each other, friends and family.

Newsletter topics/suggestions

We hope this newsletter is a source of information and interest for you. Please send any comments, topic suggestions for future newsletters, and upcoming events to Janie Gillies at kjgillies@yahoo.ca.