

Chair's report: Cairn Chorus AGM Moniaive Memorial Institute 6.30pm 26th. April 2018

This will be my penultimate report as chair and since this is my fourth year in office I will have to stand down at 2019's AGM. So you've got a whole year to fight over the position and I know there will be keen competition! I don't know where the time has gone, since it has all been so busy and exciting. Never a dull moment with Kate as our musical director. From Songs of Separation to the fantastic Cairn Valley Song cycle and now this spring, our third collaboration with Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival, with our new worldwide repertoire. Kate, who has never acknowledged musical, linguistic or geographic boundaries, trusts us with ever more interesting and challenging pieces and lures us into conquering them. So thank you Kate for all your hard work and dedication. As the choir is financially healthy at the moment, the committee were pleased to bring forward Kate's annual pay review and to increase her fee by 5%.

2017 was a very exciting year for us, as the Cairn Valley Song Cycle presented the most challenging material we had tackled. Ten songs from a wide range of composers, meant differing styles and approaches, but all were beautiful tributes to Kate's themes of home, movement of people, landscape and community. Local poets provided the words for some songs; three of them from CC. The highlight of the concert run was performing with a section of the Scottish Ensemble at the Easterbrook Hall and although I was unable to sing, I was very proud to watch and listen to you all giving a great performance. Thanks must go to Sonny our longsuffering soloist, who did brilliantly and was not fazed by the packed Easterbrook Hall. He'll go far. Thanks also to MFV and the Wind farm for financial backing, which enabled Kate to bring her long-held dream to fruition and I'm sure she feels that it was worth the countless hours she spent liaising with Composers, committees, and the SE; not to mention the sorting of music, some of which arrived late and difficult to decipher. The cycle has already begun to provide a legacy as Cairn Chorus has commissioned a song from Kate's friend Bongani, a talented choir leader from South Africa who has written us a song on the meaning of home for him, so we are just awaiting the dance he has promised to accompany it.

I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work and support. Wendy was co-opted last year and gave a lot of complex professional and useful help with the Song Cycle cd especially in terms of copyright. Sue Madigan has been diligently striving to improve our website, in order to make it more attractive and user-friendly, ensuring that more choir information can go onto it and we can cut down on individual emails; also getting more into the public section to publicise upcoming events, sell tickets and give this fantastic choir a greater public presence. Our first website ticket was purchased last weekend for our 'Big Lit performance'. This work is complex and time consuming and a 'work in progress.' Deirdre quietly does whatever is needed, and acts as our liaison person with Dunscore church, an important role, as they are always a very appreciative audience, and provide great teas. Georgina has been working hard on the choir's facebook page and her husband Steven has not only helped out by driving the bus, but is now going to help with publicity as a co-opted member. Annie has been our secretary for several years now and is willing to continue, but her busy life involving a lot of travelling makes her role challenging at times.... I mustn't forget John, our treasurer, although I'm sure lots of us would like to forget him as he has the unenviable job of collecting our subs. He toils long and hard over spread sheets and will just have got them conquered when he has to step down next year. So we will need a new treasurer, the lynch

pin of our activities; for without one we could not function. Thank you John for your stoicism and patience. Due to the 'Beast from the east' we had to postpone this meeting so we co-opted prospective new committee members Lorna and Sarah so that they could get started.

I would also like to thank all those members who informally help out and make our lives easier: Jude who organises and prints out our programmes and cds; to Gordon who looks after our new banners and transports them to and fro; all those who help with chairs, teas, sweeping up, or putting out publicity material and to family members who work the pay desk at concerts. I must also mention those wonderful members of the CC band and our readers who bring so much to add to the atmosphere at our concerts. We are indeed blessed to have so many talented people.

The choir keeps growing, which is wonderful. I'd like to thank everyone for their enthusiasm and dedication to all the learning, and you have discovered the freedom of performing, rather than having your faces stuck in files. It makes such a difference to engage with the audience and even be able to watch Kate! A belated welcome to our new members who may still be reeling, but 'panic ye not' everything will seep in, especially with the return of practice CDs this term; so just keep playing them and coming to rehearsals. No more files in performance now that Gatehouse is over. So well done all who were there. As you all know 'practice makes perfect'. We are gaining a reputation as a very good choir so let's keep on improving on that for ourselves, and for Kate, as she leads us into a new and exciting season determined to bring unity in harmony to our small part of a very troubled Earth.

Pat Stonell

Chair