



Còisir Dhùn Èideann

Trustees' Annual Report

1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025



Sorley learning to conduct

Còisir Dhùn Èideann (Edinburgh Gaelic Choir)

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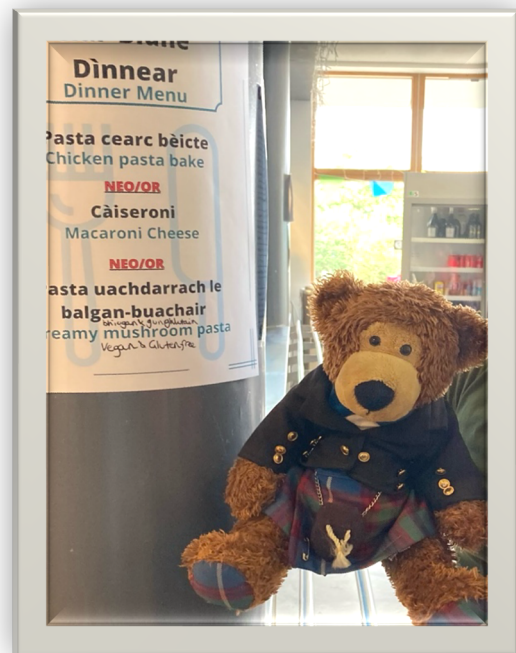
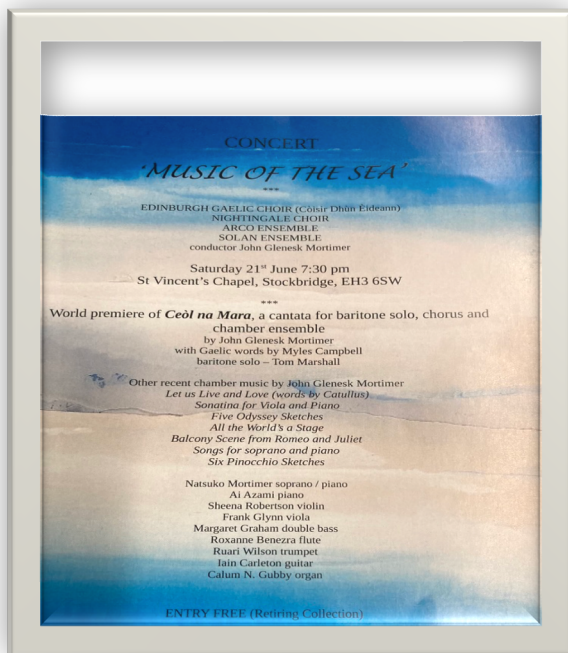
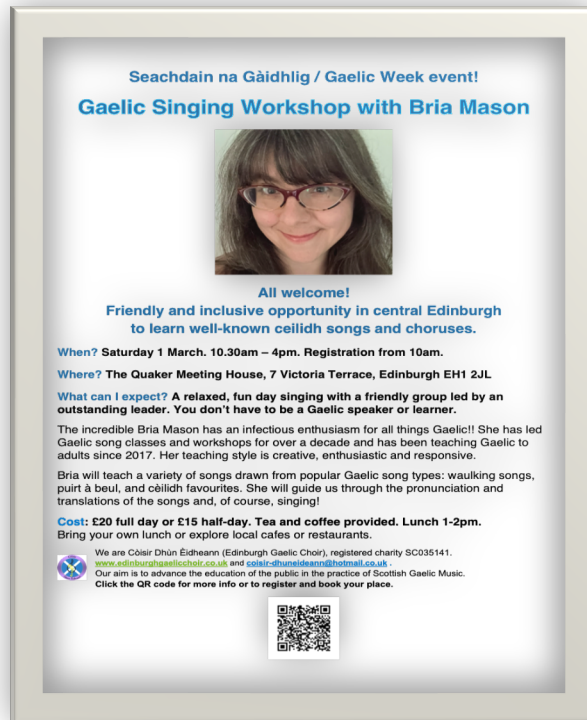
www.edinburghgaelicchoir.co.uk

Instagram: @coisirdhuneideann

<https://www.instagram.com/coisirdhuneideann/>

Facebook: facebook.com/CoisirDhunEideann

X (Twitter): @EdinGaelicChoir, x.com/EdinGaelicChoir



Poster for SnG Workshop with Bria Mason, 1.3.25.

Programme for the première performance of *Ceòl na Mara*, John Glenesk Mortimer's Gaelic Cantata, to words by Myles Campbell.

Sorley learning Gaelic at SMO, Isle of Skye.

Charity Trustees

1. Nora Baylis
2. Pauline Watson
3. Christine Wilson
4. Helen Nicholson
5. Helen Weir

Objectives and Activities

Còisir Dhùn Èideann is one of Scotland's longest established Gaelic choirs, being a combination of two choirs, one of which was formed at the turn of the 20th century.

The object of the Choir will be to advance the education of the public in the practice of Scottish Gaelic Music. In furtherance of this object but not otherwise, the society will seek to give public concerts and to enter into festivals, competitions and other activities.

In the past we have taken part in the Royal National Mòd, a yearly celebration of Scottish Gaelic music and culture, established in 1981, and at local mòds, contributing to the protection and promotion of Scottish Gaelic music and language. Currently we are a small, but growing, group of enthusiasts and our direction has changed. We aim to enjoy and explore Gaelic language and song and, unlike most Gaelic choirs, we don't focus on competitions. Our rehearsals are relaxed, workshop-style sessions.

We are a small charity, entirely volunteer-run.

We provide a regular weekly opportunity for singing, Gaelic culture and sociability in central Edinburgh.

We are open to all.

Events and Performance Highlights

Open Workshop: Seachdain na Gàidhlig (SNG) (Gaelic Week) is an annual event celebrating Gaelic arts, heritage and culture. As its contribution to SNG 2025, on Saturday, 1 March the choir held a successful and enjoyable full-day Gaelic Song Workshop, led by Bria Mason. 18 people attended the workshop, including 12 people who are not members of the choir.

Although we were unable to attract external funding we are grateful to two sponsors who covered leader fees. With the sponsorship and the course fee (£20 full day, £15 half day) the event covered costs.

Ceòl na Mara: During lockdown, John Glenesk Mortimer, conductor until June 2023, wrote a Gaelic cantata, Ceòl na Mara, based on original poems by Myles Campbell. The cantata was written for the choir; during lockdown the choir and friends performed an online version of an extract, [Faoileag](#).

From February 2025, John was able to return to the choir and prepare for a full orchestral performance of the cantata, which took place on Saturday, 21 June 2025 at St Vincent's Chapel, Stockbridge, Edinburgh. The performance, the cantata's premiere, was a great success. Ceòl na Mara was enjoyed by an enthusiastic audience, some of whom would have heard Gaelic for the first time. The conductor has made a film recording available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prsBoXNyQq8>

Choir members who took part thoroughly enjoyed rehearsals and the concert but some less confident choir members stepped back for a while. We collaborated with singers, notably Nightingales, who, together with the soloists, mastered Gaelic pronunciation with aplomb. We are delighted to report that the project also attracted singers learning Gaelic who subsequently joined the choir in 2025-26 and also friends from other choirs who attend rehearsals when occasionally in Edinburgh.

We are also grateful to John and to Nightingales who undertook the publicity for the concert.

Meeting challenges

Many thanks are due to Niall Tracey, who had led us since June 2023 but who stood down for health reasons in January 2025. As conductor, Niall brought much enthusiasm for lesser-known traditional songs taught by ear.

By chance, improved health enabled our previous conductor, John Glenesk Mortimer, to join us shortly afterwards, on the understanding that he would work towards an orchestral performance of Ceòl na Mara, but not take a longer-term role.

The choir faced a continuing challenge of not only small numbers (who were not getting any younger...) but no secure future leadership. After the June concert the committee

considered options. One option was closure. Another was moving to a smaller rehearsal room, which was agreed and which reduced our costs. The usual posters announcing term dates etc would no longer do: it was time to reinvigorate the choir's social media accounts.

In July the choir embarked on a lively campaign to attract / retain members and also recruit a conductor. The choir was able to repurpose 'posters' as 'posts', thus maintaining place-based publicity as well as the reinvigorated digital presence. The choir's mascot, Sorley (Somhairle) found himself working very hard as the friendly face of the choir. He worked hard online and also in person at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO), ensuring flyers were visible and catching up with Bria Mason, who was teaching Gaelic over the summer.

Returning for the autumn term, on 3 September, six choir members were met by a further five who all wanted to join the choir. Of these, three had been taught by Bria at SMO. Nearly doubling membership was a start, but one which needed to be built upon during 2025-26.

As we were still without a conductor we met informally during the autumn term, singing in unison with support from a keyboard and working on Gaelic pronunciation. As well as maintaining Gaelic choral repertoire in that way, we also expanded our range by introducing waulking songs (òrain luaidh), a significant part of the Gaelic musical culture it is our mission to promote.

We are grateful to the online Gaelic community for their support in re-posting posts, especially those highlighting the need for a conductor. Notably, the Association of Gaelic Choirs, Comunn Na Gàidhlig, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO) and Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann have helped to maintain the choir's online visibility. We were able to publicise the Gaelic and Scots activities of neighbours to our rehearsal venue, National Library of Scotland and City of Edinburgh Libraries Central Library, who also boosted our profile.

Financial review

Our only regular income is from membership fees. Additional income may come from workshops or special event fees and/or grants and donations.

Our accounts show that our income and costs in 2024-25 relate overwhelmingly to the running of regular weekly choral rehearsals, Còisir Dhùn Èideann's core activity. During the year, committee efforts focused on ways to publicise the choir and increase numbers in order to maintain the activity.

Details of any surplus / deficit

In 2024-25, the choir made a surplus of £148.55, the first surplus in five years.

Venue costs were £1906.70, slightly less than in 2023-24. We raised £1540.00 through Members' subscriptions, associate (ie. Non-singing) members' subscriptions and occasional single session attendance fees. The increased membership income reflects an increase in membership fees for the autumn term 2025 and includes £260 recovered as fees unpaid in previous years.

We are aware that the surplus relied on generous sponsorships of the SnG workshop, other small donations, not paying any Conductor honorarium, and other savings. Membership retention and growth are critical to maintaining and strengthening recovery.

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

While always careful to keep activities and costs within available resources, the committee has not yet formally agreed a general reserves policy. We plan to finalise our position and publish the policy in financial year 2025-26. There are no long-term or hidden costs to our standard operation and costs occur on a term-by-term basis. Were we unable to cover the costs of the forthcoming term, we could temporarily hold activities in abeyance.

Future plans

We intend to continue with our regular activity and we continue to conduct a concerted social media effort to recruit more members and fill the conducting gap. Word of mouth efforts to spread the word continue too. We have been actively exploring one potential conducting relationship, possibly on a part-time basis.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

Helen Nicholson

*OSCR will accept
digital or typed
signatures*

Full name(s)

Helen Catherine Nicholson

Position (e.g. Chair)

Trustee, Hon. Treasurer

Date

27.07.2026