

The Comhaltas Saint John Branch is pleased to nominate Stuart Hook for representation in the Comhaltas Hall of Fame. Stuart has been tireless in his efforts to support Irish culture in Saint John for more than 15 years and has helped to carry the branch through tough times, when membership was almost nonexistent. Through music, dance and his support of storytelling and other cultural endeavours, Stuart's loyalty and dedication laid the groundwork for the record number of members we now enjoy.

Though Stuart was born and raised in Peterborough, England, his wife Helena, who hails from Athlone, Co. Westmeath, jokes that he is more Irish than she is. Stuart has been the face and voice of Comhaltas in Saint John, the "go-to guy" for all things Comhaltas, and the person most associated with Irish music in this area. He has been instrumental in helping the Comhaltas Saint John branch to form partnerships with other organizations and musicians. Stuart was key in bringing about the Belfast Children's Breakfast fundraiser in the Saint John area and in building a solid relationship with the local Irish Canadian Cultural Association. In fact, the ICCA and Comhaltas support each other regularly at events in our region, due in large part to Stuart's unique organizational and people skills. He was actively involved in the ICCA's 150th Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine in 1997, and helped organize the celebrations associated with the visit of the replica of the Jeanie Johnston three-masted sailing vessel to Saint John.

It was through the nurturing atmosphere of Comhaltas that Stuart found the confidence to learn to play and sing – he didn't begin playing music until he was in his fifties. His love of music and his skill with the tin whistle and bodhran have blossomed under the Comhaltas umbrella, and Stuart has developed a vast repertoire of traditional Irish tunes and songs and has an obvious love of Irish music. He is eager to share his knowledge and talents with others, and strives to make traditional Irish music accessible to all ages and skill levels.

Stuart has developed musical associations in Saint John, throughout New Brunswick, Canada, and beyond, and Comhaltas has benefitted from these connections greatly. Over the years, he has welcomed newcomers into Comhaltas with enthusiasm and sincerity, and many of these members have become accomplished musicians in their own right. He shows an active interest in established musicians and fledglings alike, supporting and promoting all skill levels.

Stuart has held several positions within the Executive Committee of Comhaltas over many years, including Auditor, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations, and he encourages other members in their efforts to participate and grow within the organization. When travelling in Ireland, England, the United States or Canada, Stuart always tries to find and visit a local Comhaltas branch. On a grand scale, Stuart has attended numerous Comhaltas conventions and annual general meetings, and yet he is always there ready to help set up tables for a local Irish event or help prepare the stage for other musicians.

Stuart's approachable manner and nurturing personality have made him an excellent ambassador for Comhaltas and the Irish culture in general. He is loyal and steadfast, and the Comhaltas Saint John branch is ever grateful that he shares these qualities with our organization. For these and innumerable other reasons, we respectfully submit Stuart Hook's name for nomination into the Comhaltas Hall of Fame.