

Annual Report for the year ended March 31st 2023

The trustees of Fermanagh Writers are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period April 1st, 2022 to March 31st, 2023.

Achievements and performance:

Meeting programme:

The group's weekly meeting programme is a core activity which contributes greatly to the success of the group. In the year to March 31st 2023 the group met weekly, except during the period between Christmas Day and New Year's Day, to share and peer critique our members' writings. From April until December the meetings alternated between in-person and online via Zoom as our society recovered from the restrictions imposed by Covid. From January to March weekly meetings had returned to in-person every week. Attendance at meetings varied between five and fifteen people.

Corncrake magazine:

Our biannual online magazine, edited by Jenny Brien, produced two issues during the year. The autumn issue featured poetry, prose and images related to the theme Peace and Quietness. The theme was chosen in a response to the changes people experienced to their lives during the Covid pandemic. The second issue, Small Beginnings, was prepared in March and released shortly afterward. Both issues received positive feedback and comments from readers.

Community Arts Partnership Poetry workshops:

During October and November, the group hosted six hours of workshops led by a CAP poetry tutor. The workshops provided instruction to our members and other writers living in Fermanagh. Participants produced work that was eligible for submission to Community Arts Partnership's Compass anthology.

RTE Radio's The County Measure:

The radio programme presented by writer and broadcaster Vincent Woods, who travels across Ireland exploring county identity under the themes of art, community, culture, history, music and sport, visited the group in August to interview members and record them reading their work for a radio programme about Fermanagh. The programme was aired in late August. The broadcast presented members' work to a wider audience than they usually reach and they received many positive comments about their interviews and performances from listeners to the radio programme.

Book Launches:

In December the group hosted a book launch for member, John Monaghan's debut poetry collection, *I Can Dream*. Approximately thirty people, including group members and members of the public, attended the launch. The group enjoyed a chance to celebrate the success of one of their members and to meet other writers from the area who attended the event.

Cultural Trips:

In December members of the group attended the Royal Ulster Academy's annual art exhibition in the Ulster Museum in Belfast. The exhibition consisted of works of painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, and video.

In March the group was invited to the Tribes and Tribulations solo exhibition by artist Helen Merrigan Colfer at Strule Arts Centre in Omagh, County Tyrone. The exhibition organiser, Noelle McAlinden, provided a guided tour of the exhibition, which consisted of mainly resin and bronze figurative sculptures. The exhibition also featured audio-visual work, including the artist's Covid Diaries, a series of paintings and illustrations created during lockdown which express wit, humour and sensitivity through a challenging situation.

Attending the exhibitions allowed the members to experience other art forms and produce writings inspired by their responses to the exhibitions.

Websites:

In July the Corncrake magazine and Fermanagh Writers websites were amalgamated to produce one streamlined, easy to access website. One page within the website is dedicated to the group. The executive committee made the decision to merge the websites for practical and economic reasons as the group's limited income could not sustain web hosting fees for two websites indefinitely. One website also focusses all the group's materials in one easy to find place.

Financial Review

Financial Performance:

The year ended with a general unrestricted fund balance of £370 and no restricted funds.

Income: Income for the year totalled £16.

Expenditure: Expenditure for the year totalled £100.

The group usually receives most of its income from membership fees, but membership fees were waived this year due to the difficulty of collecting fees when the group was not meeting regularly in-person. One member voluntarily paid the membership fee. As a result of waiving the membership fees, the group had a very low income for the year and relied on funds in the bank account to cover expenditures.

The group was also hampered in their activities by difficulty accessing their funds. In July Nationwide Building Society, the financial institution where the group's funds were held, closed all their Treasurers Trust accounts and returned the group's monies to them in cheque form. Due to the length of the application process for a new account at another bank, the group did not have a new bank account at the end of the financial period. During the last eight months of the year, the group could not engage in any activities that required funds as they could not access their funds. As a result, the group met in a venue that did not charge for room hire, and did not undertake spending for any purposes. Despite these difficulties, the group continued to offer its regular meeting programme to members and any other writer who wished to attend.

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name: Fermanagh Writers, which was previously known as Fermanagh Creative Writing Group.

Charity Number: Registered Charity in Northern Ireland, No .106060.

Principal Address: 59 Raw Road, Derrycullion, Brookeborough, County Fermanagh, BT94 4GH.

Charity Trustees as of January 16th 2024:

Ms Jennifer Brien	Chair
Mr Ken Ramsey	Vice Chair
Mr Thomas McGovern	Treasurer
Mrs Dianne Trimble	Secretary
Mr John Monaghan	Member without portfolio

Other Charity Trustees in the year to March 31st 2023

Mr John James Resigned as a trustee and a member of the group in May 2023

Structure, Governance, and Management Governing Document and Constitution

The group is an unincorporated association and is governed by a constitution adopted March 2009 and last amended June 2017; this is available from the group by email request to fermanaghwriters@aol.co.uk. The group is run entirely by its members who pay an annual membership subscription. As of March 31 2023 the group had a membership of 12.

Trustee Selection and Management

The group is managed by an Executive Committee which consists of all the appointed trustees. These officers are noted in the list of current trustees above.

The Executive Committee meets typically quarterly; in the year to March 31st 2023 a total of three meetings were held.

At each meeting the Treasurer presents the latest accounts and the trustees discuss other business that has arose since the last meeting.

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts are approved by the trustees and then presented to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

Objectives and Activities:

Charitable Objects

The object of the group is to provide opportunities for creative writers in the Fermanagh area to have the resources and a sociable support network of writers meeting weekly in order to improve their writing skills and publish their work.

Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Fermanagh Writers confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the Charity

Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the group in the year to March 31st 2023. In evaluating public benefit, the trustees note that membership of the group is open to all who share an interest in creative writing in the Fermanagh area. Whilst we would encourage those with interest to join our group, we also strive to make our services available to non-members in the Fermanagh area. Our meeting programme and the workshops we organise are open to all.

Summary of Main Activities

The core activities of the group are:

Delivery of a weekly meeting programme to share and peer critique our members' writings.

Production of the biannual online magazine Corncrake.

Organising professionally tutored workshops on a diverse range of topics of interest to writers, including writing techniques for prose and poetry.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on January 16th, 2024 and signed on their behalf



Dianne Trimble,
Secretary