

COISTE CHONTAE THÍR EOGHAIN

Coiste Cultúir agus Teanga

A  
REVIEW of  
the  
CURRENT STATE  
and  
FUTURE  
DEVELOPMENT  
of  
SCÓR  
in  
TÍR EOGHAIN

Meán Fómhair 2018

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## Introduction

This review of Scór was undertaken due to a perception that the whole Scór ideal was in decline. This has become apparent in the last few years, with a significant drop off in participation at Scór events, in particular at Scór Sinsear level, not only at local level in Tír Eoghain, but on a widespread level, even at provincial level. In some of the Ulster counties interest has dropped to the extent that Scór competitions are limited to County Finals only. In the recent past Tír Eoghain operated on three first rounds, two semi-finals and then the county final at both Scór na nÓg and Scór Sinsear. At Scór Sinsear level, the first rounds have been reduced to two rounds, two semi-finals and a county final and the great fear would be that Tír Eoghain would then gradually continue the slide and eventually finish up like some of the other Ulster counties. In last year's competitions Tyrone clubs were unable to produce even one Ceol Uirlise group despite the fact that Tír Eoghain clubs have won four All Ireland music titles in the last twelve years.

Indeed, in one of the Ulster counties Scór has virtually disappeared at all levels.

Comparisons between Scór na nÓg and Scór Sinsear will also indicate there is a clear decline in Scór Sinsear. Last year, forty-three clubs took part in Scór na Óg while at Scór Sinsear that figure was almost half, at twenty-three clubs. This statistic is generally replicated throughout Ulster.

The perception is not as apparent at National level because at the business end of the Scór season there are always sufficient numbers at All Ireland level to give an untrue impression that the system is fully functioning.

Scór na nÓg appears to be safe and well although in some of the competitions there is a drop off in participation, which needs to be remedied or the same fate could overtake this level. It is currently fairly safe because of its general make up. While there are grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters of competitors there will always be a healthy competitive edge to competition.

Even with this, there appears to be a certain lack of interest in some of the disciplines at Scór na nÓg level. Is this the beginning of a further slide?

## Terms of reference

Five groups were set up to examine the whole Scór process and were asked to give consideration to two basic questions

1. Why has Scór begun to decline?
2. What processes can we introduce or provide to revive failing interest and help to reinvigorate clubs to renew their interest in the Scór ideal?

They were asked to meet on three occasions – firstly to give opinions on why there is a decline in Scór, the second was to make suggestions as to how Scór could be reinvigorated with the third meeting to formulate their overall conclusions.

The five groups were set as focus groups to cover the five main disciplines of Scór which are:-

1. Rince Foirne agus Rince Seit – the dance competitions
2. Amhránaíocht Aonair and Bailéad Ghrúpa – solo singing and Ballad groups
3. Aithriseoireacht / Scéalaíocht and Léiriú Stáitse – Recitation / Story-telling and Stage Production
4. Ceol Uirlise – Instrumental Music
5. Tráth na gCeist – Quiz

The groups each had a facilitator, who is a member of the Culture and Language committee, and who had a specific knowledge of each of the particular disciplines as follows: -

Membership of Focus groups: -

1. **Dance** - Donal Magee

Patricia Cummings –

Dungannon Clarkes  
Irish dance teacher  
Adjudicator

Mary Baxter

Omagh St Enda's  
Irish dance teacher

David Tierney

Omagh St Enda's  
Multi winner of All Ireland dance titles

Paula Clarke

Killyclogher St Mary's  
All Ireland dance medallist

Sean Collins	Killyclogher St Mary's & formerly Omagh St Enda's Adjudicator Multi winner of All Ireland dance titles and Novelty / Léiriú titles
Eilis Mullan	An Charraig Mhór Irish dance teacher Scór competitor
Marian Doody	Omagh St Enda's Adjudicator Set dance teacher
<b>2. Singing – Dominic Douglas</b>	Aireagal Chiaráin
Aisling McCourt	Derrylaughan Kevin Barry's Adjudicator, Musician & Music teacher Scór competitor
Paula Daly	Killyclogher St Mary's All Ireland medallist in Ballad group Coached two All Ireland winners Music teacher Scór competitor Adjudicator
Noelle Toner	Loughmacrory N Teresa All Ireland medallist at Ballad Group Musician Adjudicator
Anne Kelly	Killyclogher St Mary's Adjudicator Scór competitor

All Ireland medallist at Novelty / Léiriú  
Coached two Ballad groups to All  
Ireland success

**3. Recitation / Léiriú – Steven Hughes**

Dungannon Clarkes

Declan Forde

Adjudicator,  
Drama teacher

Peter Donaghey

Drumragh Sarsfields  
Adjudicator

Sean Lynch

Moy Tír na nÓg  
Ulster champion & All Ireland finalist  
Scór competitor

Niall Conway

Clann na nGael  
Scór competitor  
Drama producer

Kevin Campbell

Derrytresk Fir a'Chnoic  
Scór competitor  
Ulster champion & All Ireland finalist

**4. Instrumental music - Eamon Campbell**

Derrytresk / N Colum Cille

Claire McCrystal

Donaghmore N Pádraig  
Coached two All Ireland winning  
groups  
Music teacher  
Musician  
Adjudicator

Ciaran Hanna

Derrytresk Fir a'Chnuic  
Adjudicator  
Scór competitor  
Musician

Donna Campbell	Pomeroy Plunketts Adjudicator Musician
Leeanne Daly	Killiclogher St Mary's Scór competitor All Ireland medallist at both Scór na nÓg & Scór Sinsear at Ballad Group Musician
5. <b>Quiz</b> -Paul Maxwell	Edendork N Malachy Máistir na gCeist
Dermot McCaughey	Trillick St Macartan's Scór competitor Quiz enthusiast
Dónal McAnallen	Eglisk St Patrick's Scór competitor All Ireland medallist at Quiz

Overall advisory assistance was provided by Clíodhna Kerr and Oliver Corr.

## **General and Significant Observations**

This section will deal, briefly, with general perceptions of why there are shortcomings in participation levels at Scór and possible ways of going forward. Many of these observations were prevalent with all five focus groups.

### **1. Culture / Scór Officers at club level**

In a recent survey conducted on behalf of Comhairle Uladh relating to Culture and the Irish Language only 30 of the county's 53 clubs responded stating that there were only 21 clubs with appointed Scór Co-ordinators at club level. Clubs have, as per the Official Guide, an obligation to elect a Culture officer in their clubs to deal with matters relating to this. This is a matter which needs to be resolved immediately.

### **2. Communication within clubs**

In the current system communication relating to Scór within the county is transmitted between secretaries. We believe that there is a level of misunderstanding here which leads to members within clubs not receiving the necessary level of information about Scór and its events.

A solution to this would be that Culture Officers are copied into all communication between clubs and the Culture and Language committee.

More use needs to be made of social media in the promotion of Scór.

### **3. Failure of consultation with the main stakeholders in Scór.**

Up to relatively recently the Scór community had regular reviews of the health of their function in that a 'Scór Congress' was held on a triennial basis and all its aspects were reviewed and if it was deemed necessary changes or alterations were made which would be effective for the following three years.

A decision was then taken that the Scór congress was to be discontinued and replaced with a National Committee, which would be answerable to Coiste Bainistí or Central Council at Croke Park. While there is a level of agreement that CLG should hold only one congress annually there is a specific need for the Scór Community to air their views and make recommendations for its future

performance. This is difficult to achieve under the current situation as Scór does not have the same sets of values as the likes of football, hurling or handball. It is a relatively new area for CLG and the people best suited to make changes are the people dealing day and daily with Culture affairs. The situation might be better served if the National Committee were to meet, on a regular basis, with the Counties, listen to their views and put these to Coiste Bainistí for consideration in the future performance of Scór. To say Scór should deal directly with Congress is not really practical, as has been proven up to now, because Scór business has found it difficult to get on the order paper for discussion at Annual Congress.

#### **4. Adjudications / Adjudicators**

(a) There is currently, a strong lobby nationally, to return to the system whereby results do not depend on a single adjudicator's opinion to determine results in competitions. There are many arguments why this should be re-evaluated.

(b) New adjudicators need to be continually trained and used.

#### **5. Rule book interpretation**

The National Committee need to look at what the differences are between Léiriú and the 'old' style' Novelty act.

#### **6. Participation levels**

At the introduction of Scór almost fifty years ago clubs were required to participate in a minimum of three of the, then, eight disciplines. These values have now been eroded to clubs taking part in one single discipline. This is bound to have a seriously detrimental effect on participation levels in Scór competitions and ultimately reducing the cultural impact from clubs. Clubs can participate in three disciplines with a minimum of four people:- viz two individual events plus a quiz team with the two individuals taking part as members of the quiz team. There are many other ways clubs can make up three events.

Allowing clubs to claim participation in the Club Maith scheme participating in one event can be hardly justified given the example quoted above.

#### **7. Amplification**

Views expressed included some competitors and club teams experience difficulty using amplification competently. A workshop will be provided to help alleviate this

matter. A suggestion that 'stage monitors' be provided as part of the amplification / sound system is an important factor and needs careful consideration.

An 'open mic' night will also help competitors.

## **8. Trophies**

Competition winners at Scór are merely awarded medals for winning county championships. Trophies should be awarded for each of the disciplines which in turn then become part of a club's celebration of success when they celebrate successful years. This becomes cost effective to the extent that supplying a shield would work out at a cost of approximately £4 per year for each discipline.

## **9. Tráth na gCeist**

The removal of the provincial element of Tráth na gCeist has been questionable when this has proven to be an important element in Scór over its entire lifetime.

## **10. Cluster groups**

Club units should be helped in all of the areas of Scór development to open opportunities for their members in their own areas. In the past, general meetings have been called to promote Scór but these have been, largely, poorly attended. The proposal would be that clubs adjacent to each other would be gathered together in clusters of approximately five or six and advised / assisted in how to get Scór up and running and to offer guidance on the preparation required to achieve success at local, provincial and national level.

## **11. Scór 'pins'**

All participants in Scór should receive a Scór 'pin' to indicate participation.

## **12. Club amalgamations**

An arrangement to allow 'small' clubs to amalgamate could be beneficial – as is currently done for a small number of football clubs in youth competition and the special status of N Colum Cille Hurling club.

### **13. Stage presentation**

Presentation on stage of performers could take a different slant and competitors could be better prepared if the notion of wearing club football jerseys was to be changed to using club colours in a more imaginative way. An adult football jersey on a 12-year-old child may not be the most appropriate attire in which to represent your club.

Listed above here are some of matters which were found to be common to all of the disciplines in Scór. Others, which have materialised, are discipline specific and will be referred to and dealt with by the specific discipline at cluster group level.

### **Rince Foirne / Rince Seit**

These are the two dance disciplines.

The focus group also highlighted the following:

#### **a. Cluster groups**

It has been suggested that there are children in every club area in Tír Eoghain and every other county in Ireland who have attended Irish dance lessons at some time in their lives. The feeling was that an effort should be made at club level in each club to gather groups such as these together and begin a process to form dance teams. Members of the focus group are prepared and willing to go into club areas to assist at local level in setting up help groups.

#### **b. 'Must win attitude'**

There is a perception that because of the success levels of the established 'dance clubs' other or new clubs will never be in a position to compete successfully needs to be clarified and expelled. The view that continued participation and hard work to achieve success needs to be accepted.

#### **c. Workshops**

Dance workshops could be arranged if they were deemed necessary.

## Amhránaíocht Aonair / Bailéad Ghrúpa

Information relating to this discipline is specific and assistance provided through cluster groups would include:

- 1) Amplification workshop(s) to be carried out
- 2) All members of the ballad group should interact with the audience (***Also applies to solo singers***)
- 3) The use of instruments **is not essential** but can be effective if used properly. If using instruments in a ballad group make sure they don't dominate the performance, they are balanced effectively and make sure all instruments are tuned properly. (Take time to re-tune on stage if necessary.)
- 4) On stage monitors provided at all stages (***Not everyone may like this***)
- 5) Ballad group members should present themselves in club colours but avoid the use of football jerseys. (***Marks awarded for overall impression***)
- 6) If you look like you are enjoying yourself, the audience and adjudicators will sense that enjoyment.
- 7) Cluster groups to be set up to support clubs in the following areas:
  - Breakdown of marks and what each area means (*diction, phrasing, tonality etc*)
  - Understanding musical devices (*harmony, part singing, dynamics etc*)
  - How to choose the right song(s) (*Male/Female ratio in group, key range to suit voices, historical background, emotion*)

**A document will be provided for clubs with the breakdown of the points mentioned in point 7.**

## Aithriseoireacht / Scéalaíocht / Léiriú

Information relating to this discipline is specific and assistance provided through cluster groups would include:

- a. Sourcing materials

- b. Storytelling as opposed to formal poetry
  - c. Comedy or serious material
  - d. Proper use of the stage / props/ lights / appearance /amplification viz – Stage Craft
- Choice of suitable material. Some suggested that compiling an archive or database of past material may be of benefit to clubs who are new or returning to Scór competitions. Content in the chosen pieces should be age appropriate and steering clear of “Stage Irish” to add to integrity of performance. There remains debate between choosing a funny, comic piece over a more serious and heavy piece. Is the adjudicators preference influenced by the content and type of piece? It was proposed that at county level a stage alone award from best original script could be offered. All agreed the importance of competitors varying their choice of material from year to year.
  - Costume. The use of costume was discussed, rousing debate over whether it is needed, does it add to the performance. How should competitors dress? Should club colours be worn, or an ill fitted club jersey? Many suggested that unless costume was appropriate and in keeping with the relevant time period that it may not be of much value.
  - Stage presence. The importance of non-verbal communication, eye contact with the adjudicator and the audience, the use of pause, dramatic effect and individual confidence were promoted as key features in any stage performance.
  - Projection. It was suggested that the Sub-committee might organise an “open mic” night where any vocal performers might come along and practise using amplification. The use of a single mic was promoted, rather than having multiple mics in various positions on stage.

## **Léiriú**

As well as the above points relating to the Léiriú competition, the following matters were discussed, and proposals made in direct relation to Léiriú:

- All involved expressed the need for clear clarification as to what style of stage performance is deemed to be acceptable in the “Léiriú” competition.
- Developing ideas into scripts. All involved remarked on the successful use of the story of a song being realised on stage as was done successfully by Derrytresk in Scór Sinsear. Some practical advice was offered such as club members meeting early in the season, appointed a mentor, avoidance of using non-sensical “time fillers” on stage. It was recommended that any performance have a logical, start, middle and end, telling a story or making a point along the way. It was

recommended that clubs avoid appearing to be too colloquial both in delivery and in content.

- Sound. The use of amplification and sound effects was debated. The general advice was that sound effects are only of value when used effectively to enhance what is happening on stage. It was debated whether stage hands can take charge of sound or if it must come from the sound desk or from competitors appearing on stage.

In conclusion, all involved recognised the value that brother disciplines can bring to a Scór event when entries are of a high standard. It was mentioned that any advice given to clubs and competitors prior to competition must also reach adjudicators before competition so as to ensure clarity in adjudications.

### **Ceol Uirlise**

Details of information relating to Ceol Uirlise are probably more specific than any of the other disciplines. The influence of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is of the utmost importance in this aspect of Scór and their system of branches throughout the country tends to cross over GAA club boundaries. Care needs to be taken in this area to ensure the integrity and autonomy of local GAA clubs is not compromised.

Areas to be dealt with by cluster groups would include

- a. Choice of musical instruments
- b. Balance of instruments
- c. Use of amplification
- d. Ornamentation
- e. Subject matter

### **Tráth na gCeist**

Tráth na gCeist is unique in the respect that to be successful in this area you require a vast amount of knowledge and the ability to remember it when required. The only really good advice here is to read plenty, listen to current affairs programmes.

There is no escaping the fact that, like most things in life, in order to do well in the Tráth na gCeisteanna Boird teams will have to work hard.

The following advice may be worth bearing in mind.

1. If clubs are serious about competing then they should identify potential team members and start preparing for the quiz early.

2. Books, magazines and newspapers should be regularly read - even when the quiz is not happening, team members should make sure to read newspapers in order to keep up to date with current affairs.  
A good idea might even be to 'take notes' from newspapers.
4. When studying Irish history, a suggestion might be to try to look at definitive historical periods, starting with a general overview and then 'drilling down' to examine specific events, personalities etc.
5. An Leabhar Rialacha Scór also states that GAA questions shall be confined to a period of 20 years prior to the date of the Tráth na gCeisteanna Boird. GAA questions (as above) may cover: v/ Men's and Ladies' Gaelic Football v/ Hurling and Camogie v/ General GAA Round

Among other things, teams need to make sure that they cover All-Ireland and provincial champions (in each code and in all levels), County Grounds, team managers, team colours, captains of winning teams, All-stars in all codes, team sponsors etc.

6. As with any topic area one should also attempt to 'spot' potential questions.

The questions overleaf may give some indication of the type and nature of questions which may be asked. Ultimately, however, the questions asked are the responsibility of the organising committee and the Máistir na gCeisteanna.

An interesting fact from the last All Ireland Final at Scór an nÓg, the winning team in 2018 (Kerry) scored 78 correct answers out of 80 to win the All Ireland title.

In the interim the Tráth na gCeist competition will continue to be an integral part of the Scór experience, in Tír Eoghain, with the following amendments to its format

First rounds and semi-finals will continue as recent years with the following amendments to the County Final.

There will be the usual four rounds of ten questions with one of the questions in all four rounds in the Irish language and the answer also to be given in Irish.

The topics will be :- Round 1 – All the GAA family – men's and ladies football, hurling, camogie, handball and rounders; Round 2 – Irish History and Geography; Round 3 - Irish Culture and Irish Current affairs and Round 4 – General Knowledge including World information which will have an Irish connection.

## Conclusion and acknowledgements

Having taken a good look at the current health of Scór in Tír Eoghain there is much to be taken in but if, as we suggest, take part in a small number of events initially and become acquainted with the system and the standards required you will begin to learn what the full extent of our culture and heritage is all about. When you have experienced this you will begin to appreciate the richness and value of Irish Culture and how the Irish people spread this throughout the world at large.

Many matters were discussed and this is only a sample of what can be achieved if we go about the task with the proper heart and frame of mind.

It was described by the late Pat Darcy, former County Chairman, before he made a presentation at a county final during his term of office.

“You will carry on the tradition of the very many Irish People, who were forced to leave Ireland, for many reasons, and when doing so the only things they had when leaving was our song, dance, music, our ability to tell stories about our past and a proud Irishness. This is reflected in what you are now doing and is an invaluable part of our Irish history.”

We have a responsibility to carry on this work and is a great credit to the people who set this ideal up fifty years ago.

On behalf of Coiste an Chontae and Coiste Cultúir agus Teanga I would like to thank all those who have made a contribution to this piece of work and hope that it may encourage all of our clubs to take up the mantle and participate in the preservation of our rich culture and heritage long into the future.

The task in front of our volunteer workers may seem huge but if this is taken in the right spirit and ‘chipped away’ at it will reap many benefits to all who participate in it.

Is mise le meas

Dónal Mac Aoidh

Cathaoirleach

Coiste Cultúir agus Teanga

9ú Meán Fómhair 2018