



## Women Aloud Fermanagh

For the second year in a row, the female members of *Fermanagh Writers* joined other women writers in Northern Ireland on 8th March to celebrate *International Women's Day*.

Throughout the Province 150 women writers, organised by *Women Aloud NI*, hosted a series of literary public events, including readings, bookshop appearances and library events to inspire women everywhere to write, read, and champion the literary work of local women.

Fermanagh Writers hosted *Women Aloud Fermanagh*, an evening of stories and poems in our usual meeting place at *Blakes of the Hollow*, Enniskillen. The event brought together women writers from Fermanagh Writers and Omagh Robins, as well as other writers living in the border counties. The evening provided an opportunity for writers in the region to meet each other, chat, and share ideas and our writing. Our members have enjoyed our participation in the *International Women's Day* celebrations these past two years. Although it's only the women on stage, some of our male members help behind the scenes, operating the sound system and collecting admission fee. We try to include everyone in this fun and rewarding event.

The evening was a great success as a social and performance event. The small but enthusiastic audience enjoyed the writers' heartfelt performances and the writers had a chance to experience an audience's response to their work as well as to meet with other writers who understand and share their passion.

The atmosphere was relaxed yet professional. The MC Kate O'Shea left the call for performers open until everyone had arrived, so that those who might have been hesitant to get up in front of an audience had time to gather their courage and decide to brave it. But the relaxed atmosphere belied the organisation and polish behind the programme and none of the writers gave anything less than her best on stage. Each writer who stepped up to the microphone gave a poised, confident reading. The stories and poems ranged

from a rant by Queen Maeve to a poignant story of childhood superstition and fear to a condemnation of female genital mutilation and much more. The readings were funny, sad, poignant, inspiring and stirring.

Most of the events Women Aloud NI organise to celebrate International Women's Day are free so that they are accessible to as many people as possible, but before our first Women Aloud evening last year, we decided to charge a small admission fee to raise money for the work of Fermanagh Women's Aid. This year the admission fee also covered the cost of supplying a complimentary copy of our publication *Tavern Told Tales* to each audience member. As a result of this year's event, Fermanagh Writers will donate £100 to *Fermanagh Women's Aid*. It's great to be part of something bigger than our own group and satisfying to share our writing with others. So we are looking forward to continued links with Women Aloud NI and to celebrating with writers throughout the province again next year.

***Dianne Ascroft***