

The Freebird

Volume IV

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The Freebird is the newsletter of the **Irish Fair of Minnesota August 8-10, 2008 at Harriet Island in St Paul, Minnesota**. Its purpose is to keep us connected, provide updates, celebrate successes and share our stories, and to support the mission of the Irish Fair by promoting and cultivating Irish culture.



Gaelic Athletics at the Fair:

"LOOKING FOR SOMETHING FUN TO DO THIS SUMMER?"

Such was the title of an ad on *Craigslist* that lured local Irish-American Alex Kingsley into the world of Gaelic football. "The ad, placed by the new **Twin Cities Gaelic Football Club**, had links to a few YouTube videos of Gaelic Football" explains Alex "I watched ...and within seconds I said to myself 'This sport is *crazy*. **I HAVE TRY IT OUT!**' The following Tuesday, I was there."

Gaelic football can be described as a cross between soccer, rugby and basketball; even though it pre-dates all three of those games. It's played with a round ball (that looks like a volleyball, but it's much heavier) The pitch is the exact same as hurling; longer than an American football field. At both sides there is a soccer goal with uprights. A goal is worth 3 points and a field goal is one point. The Club started with informal pick up games



The Gaelic Football players' skills will be on display at the Irish Fair of Minnesota on Harriet Island in St. Paul August 9 & 10. On Saturday they will be giving a brief history of the game, and showing off some of their skills, as well as teaching some kids who want to come out to the field and play. On Sunday, the team will play a match lasting a full hour. There will be a commentator explaining what is going on out on the field.

...and if you want to see that aforementioned enticing video to learn more about Gaelic football, go to:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIlsRsMMJUc>

last year, but now has been formed into a team. The team is made up of different sorts of athletes, ranging from people who have played before, Irish lads, converted soccer players, runners, rugby players, and players new to sports just looking to play a new sport.

The Twin Cities Gaelic Football Club is always recruiting new members, male or female. They can be reached at www.twincitiesgfc.com. "No experience is necessary" says Tim Singleton, an organizer of the team "We will take anyone aged 15-75...it's a great way to get in shape, and also a very fun social group."



“...A COLLECTION OF WILD ANIMALS ON DISPLAY” ... *and Yet Other Irish Athletics at the Fair*

Rugby football is another outdoor contact sport played with a ball with roots in the British Isles, possibly being a descendant of the old Celtic game of ‘Caid’, along with Gaelic football. Players are in two teams, there are goals, field goals and hard, fast play. An aspect of rugby that sets it apart from most other sports is the concept of "advantage". If one team commits an infraction of the Laws, the referee will not stop play if the opposing team is in a position to gain a territorial or tactical advantage from the mistake. Instead, he calls "advantage" and allows play to continue until he judges that adequate advantage has accrued.

The first Irish rugby club was founded in 1854, in Cork. Following the adoption of a set of official rules in 1868, rugby football began to spread quickly throughout Ireland. In the 1890s Rugby was primarily a game for the Protestant middle class, and was not included among the traditional Irish sports of hurling, camogie, Gaelic football, Gaelic handball and rounders supported by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Only in 2007 was Croagh Park in Dublin (a GAA-owned 82,500 capacity stadium) made available for the first time for Ireland's two home rugby games against France and England. A second match between Ireland and England on 24 February 2007 was politically symbolic because of the events of Bloody Sunday in 1920. There was considerable concern as to what reaction there would be to the singing of the British National Anthem *God Save the Queen*. Ultimately the anthem was sung without interruption or incident, and applauded by both sets of supporters at the match---which Ireland won by 43-13 (their largest ever win over England in rugby).

Women’s rugby in the Twin Cities... and at the Fair!

Last year a local women’s rugby team dazzled fairgoers with their mix of tremendously rugged athleticism and cheerful sense of fair play. Founded in 1986 under the original name of the “Heebe Jeebe's”, this club officially latched onto its definition: “...a collection of wild animals on display,” changing to their name to **Minneapolis Menagerie Rugby Club** (photo at left) in 1989. Menagerie's current membership includes: 30 players and 50+ social members who makes a yearlong commitment to play high quality rugby, strengthen women's rugby in Minnesota, and have fun! Along with rugby, community support and service have always been an active part of the Menagerie vision, giving support to the Eastside Neighborhood Services Food Shelf, local hospitals and schools. The women’s rugby exhibition will be held at the Fair *own* Croagh Park (OK it’s a *little* smaller than the original in Dublin) at 6:00 pm on Saturday and 11:00 on Sunday. There will also be a men’s rugby exhibition at 10:30 Saturday and 4:30 pm Sunday.



To learn more about Menagerie, see: <http://www.menagerierugbyclub.com/> . To see some very short clips about current women’s athletics in Ireland, including rugby go to:

<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=35063148>

Catch the superfast game of hurling

Started in a very grassroots manner, Twin Cities Robert Emmets Hurling Club (<http://www.twincitieshurling.com/>) has been a wonderful addition to the local Irish community, working extremely hard on its commitment to educating Minnesotans about the unique sport of hurling, as well as other aspects of Irish culture. One of the club’s first formal activities was the offering of an exhibition at the 2005 Irish Fair of Minnesota, and they have remained a favorite of Fair-goers since, with their display of this high-speed, lithe sport that has roots in ancient Irish legend and history. Over the past year, the Club has grown to include 70 members, including both players and social participants. To see a schedule of the hurlers’ play times , as well as all the activities at the Fair at Croagh Park and elsewhere, visit the Fair’s website at <http://www.irishfair.com/schedule/index.php>

GREAT PERFORMANCES ON THE SHOWBOAT STAGE

The Irish Fair of Minnesota cordially invites you to make your way along the Mississippi Riverbank on **Sunday afternoon** to enjoy a sampling of Irish theater aboard the Minnesota Centennial Showboat. Schedule as follows:

12 Noon A performance from **Tír na nÓg Irish Children's Theater** of elected *Ulster Cycle Tales*. **Tír na nÓg** has grown out of the Irish Fair's Summer School Children's Theatre Workshop and engages children ages 5 to 17 in exploring Irish myths and stories during a week long theater camp. Directed by *Sarah Cromer-Ben Said*, the young performers have created their own costumes and set, and their original script, including story telling and poetry.



1:00 PM *The Fiver and the Troubadour* Irish Fair is delighted to welcome **Milwaukee Irish Arts** in the persons of John Gleeson (*in photo at left, with a friend*) and Eamonn O'Neill to the Irish Fair stage this year. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel affectionately calls them "a charming, delightful pair of geezers". With one from Dublin, and the other from Cork, anything goes when these two take the stage together.

2 PM *Out of the Basement Players* will be presenting a new and unique adaptation of James Joyce's short story, *The Dead*. The adaptation for four actors was done by *Julia Jenson*,

a graduate student in Creative Writing at Hamline University. Keeping Joyce's stunning prose and wit intact *The Dead* offers glimpses into the lives of ordinary Irish men and women as they struggle with mortality, love and family while.

3 PM *Lex-Ham Community Theater* returns to the Irish Fair stage to present the US premiere of Deirdre Kinahan's, play *Hue and Cry*, which is also included in the Minnesota Fringe Festival. Kinahan is one of Ireland's outstanding contemporary playwrights and *Hue and Cry* is touching, with a hint of Irish humor.

4 PM The final presentation is **Scenes from Contemporary Irish Drama**, directed by Kay Martinovich. The four scenes to be performed at Irish Fair are taken from some of the most important contemporary Irish plays of the 20th century. Playwrights Brian Friel, Hugh Leonard, Marina Carr, and Conor McPherson are all known for their powerful use of language and their engagement with the haunting of the past on the present, the struggle to communicate, and the disappointment of lost love.

The scenes come from the following plays:

A Life by Hugh Leonard
By the Bog of Cats... by Marina Carr
Port Authority by Conor McPherson
Translations by Brian Friel

IRISH FAIR OF MINNESOTA MUSIC HEADLINERS



[Flogging Molly](#)
[Tannahill Weavers](#)
[The Elders](#)
[Wild Colonial Bhoys](#)
[Romantica](#)
[Scythian](#)
[More TBA](#)

August 8-10, 2008
Harriet Island in St. Paul
FREE ADMISSION

FAIR ODD AND ENDS

A Compendium of Practical Matters to Make for a Better Visit to the Fair

Greening the Fair

The Irish Fair will implement several environmentally friendly practices this year. Please consider coming by foot, bike or bus. When you are there, look for the recycling bins for all your recyclable plastic or cans. We also plan to reduce the number of plastic bottles used by volunteers and entertainers by nearly 5,000 bottles, cut our ice usage in half and take the first steps toward creating a zero waste event.

Park Then Take the Shuttle

In partnership with Kennedy Concessions, there will be a shuttle bus circulating around Harriet Island parking lots picking up folks and bringing them to the main entrance or back to your car. Flag it down for a ride if you missed it at your lot.

Rules Reminder

No coolers, bikes, skateboards allowed on the grounds.
No video or sound recording devices allowed.
Dogs and other pets are discouraged.
Seating is limited. Bring a blanket or lawn chair for your comfort.

ID Check Now Free

The Irish Fair is no longer charging a fee for your Drinking Age Verified Wristband. You still need a wristband to purchase alcohol, though. The ID Check will be just outside the main entrance. Please get your wristband before you enter the grounds.

Purchase a Raffle Ticket or Two

Entrance to the Fair, all the entertainment and the ID Check may be Free but it still takes lots of cold hard cash to provide first class headliners and the myriad of activities at the festival. **Please consider purchasing a raffle ticket or two as you enter the festival or in the Marketplace at the Irish Fair booth.** Your purchase will help keep the Fair free for years to come.

Join Us for the Third Annual RUN WITH THE CELTS 5K AND FAMILY 1K

The 5K race will be on a certified race course that starts and ends on the festival-grounds at Harriet Island. The Family 1K, held around the Harriet Island grounds, is an enjoyable event that families can do together. The race will be held on Saturday, August 9, 2007. The Family 1K Run/Walk starts at 9:00 a.m., and the 5K Run/Walk starts at 9:30 a.m. Both the 5K and Family 1K start and end at Harriet Island. The Family 1K is \$12.00 in advance or \$15.00 on race day. The 5K Run/Walk is \$20.00 in advance or \$24.00 on race day.

For more information and to register online, visit <http://www.events.runningroom.com/site/?raceId=3895>. **Online Registration Closes: 11:59 PM Friday, August 8, 2008**

All participants receive a Run with the Celts t-shirt and can enjoy Finnegan's Irish Amber and other goodies at the Runner's Oasis after the race. Dress up and show your Irish pride! Prizes awarded for the best costumes. Prizes also awarded for the top finishing male, female, and family. Stick around after the race to enjoy all the Irish Fair of Minnesota has to offer! Enjoy some great Irish fare, music, dance, storytelling, wares and many other great Irish cultural activities at this free festival. Best of all, the race is a fundraiser for [The Legacy Fund](#) of the Irish Fair of MN, which gives back to the Irish community and other new immigrants through a grant program.

IRISH FAIR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Volunteers are still needed for this year's Fair. Volunteering is a great way to meet other energetic, interesting people who enjoy All Things Irish---and the ONLY way the Fair can survive. So if you'd like to spend some time renewing old acquaintances, making new friends and having fun while contributing your time to the worthy cause of keeping the Irish Fair free, please register at our website www.irishfair.com where you will find a list of areas and times.

AN GHAELIGE

Sláinte chuig na fir agus go maire na mná go deo!
Health to the men and may the women live forever!

Be sure to visit Gaeltacht Minnesota <http://www.gaelminn.org/index.htm>, an organization that teaches the Irish language, at the Fair!