

The Freebird

VOLUME II

JUNE 2006

The Freebird is the newsletter of the Irish Fair of Minnesota- August 11th-13th, 2006. 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.



GET READY FOR GAELIC STORM

When you come to hear Gaelic Storm, be ready for an engaging mix of traditional music, dance music, and songs, all performed with energy and enthusiasm---and **excellence**.

Alternately described as “Guinness for the ears” and “reminiscent of the early Chieftains”, Gaelic Storm has sustained their renown since they were tossed into fame by their appearance in the 1997 blockbuster film *Titanic*. As you would expect from a salt- of- the- earth steerage band, Gaelic Storm (whose slogan is "Irish music with thunder and lightning") is hardworking, with some 125 touring dates a year, and five albums which have topped the world music charts on a repeated basis.



Patrick Murphy of Cork City, Ireland (vocals, piano, accordion, spoons, harmonica) and Steve Twigger of Coventry, England (guitar, mandolin, bouzouki, vocals) have made it a point to bring the best into the eye of the Storm. Witness percussionist Ryan Lacey, who graduated *twice* from the Los Angeles Music Academy--once for hands and once for sticks. Fiddler Ellery Klein holds a MA degree in Traditional Irish Music from the University of Limerick) and piper Peter Purvis (yes, that is fun to say fast) is a Grade 1 piper who toured with the award- winning Braemar Pipe Band as well as at 2000 Sydney Olympics.



In addition to their energy and musicality, Gaelic Storm exudes a likable playfulness in their performances. You can see this quality also on their albums such as *Herding Cats* and the soon-to-be released *Bring Yer Wellies*. And in spite of their huge success, the band prides themselves on remaining as accessible as ever and sharing "a pint" with fans whenever possible.

Visit

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000009DEE/104-9142220-6739157?v=glance&n=5174> to access audio clips.

IRISH FAIR SUMMER SCHOOL BUILDS ON LAST YEARS SUCCESS

Close to 150 people, me among them, took the opportunity to participate in last year's inaugural Irish Fair Summer School. The Summer School delivered in spades on its aim; to deepen and enrich appreciation for Irish culture and heritage through immersion in lectures, workshops, documentaries and discussions. The program was as varied as it was vibrant, and I came away with a sense of having a more genuine---because more grounded---value for our culture. If this sounds like your cup of tea, you'll want to come to the second annual Summer School which will take place on August 10, 2006, on the St. Paul campus of the University of St. Thomas.

Sessions will start at approximately 10 am and conclude in the evening with a presentation from **world famous musician and storyteller, Liam Clancy**. Topics range from Celtic spirituality to Irish cinema, theater & music, with intriguing titles like "Celtic Thin Places; Then and Now" and "Irish Cinema: Three Men and a Boy: The Quiet Man, Odd Man Out, Man of Aran, and The Butcher Boy" on offer.

For more information about the Summer School see the Fair web page http://www.irishfair.com/summer_school/index.php or contact Patrick O'Donnell at 651-699-4936.



Depiction of a 'Hedgerow School' on a mural in Belfast, Northern Ireland, by Danny Morrison

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR LOOKING FOR A FEW---WELL, QUITE A FEW---GOOD PEOPLE

The lifeblood of Irish Fair of Minnesota is its volunteers. Only through the efforts of this small army of hardworking souls can the Fair put on the annual event at Harriet Island and support Irish and new immigrant programming through the year.



This year our new volunteer coordinator, Sara Armstrong (far right in photo at left with mates Brigid and Teresa), is on point to bring together the shining faces behind the scenes. Says Armstrong: "The Irish Fair of Minnesota continues to grow every year. This brilliant event that is only made possible---and free-- due to the volunteers who participate by adding their own time, energy and spirit. We have under close to half the number of volunteers that we will need for this year's Fair-- so please check the web site and volunteer your time."

It's commitment that people often make as a one-off, but end up returning to year after year, not just because of the neat perks--all volunteers receive a volunteer t-shirt, free parking, soft drinks and an invitation to the **Thank You Celebration**---but more so due to the wonderful camaraderie and satisfaction volunteers share at a great job well done. See http://www.irishfair.com/volunteer/task_description.php for more info on available assignments.

An Ghaeilge

Courtesy of Gaeltacht Minnesota <http://www.gaelminn.org/index.htm>

Níor tháinig stoirm ariamh gan báisteach ina dhiaidh.

A storm never comes without the rain after.

FAIR GETS *PHYSICAL*

The Irish Fair has an antidote to offer to a world where too many of us spend both work and leisure hours supine or seated--*come on down and get moving!* Topping the action list is the Run with the Celts event, which will be held on Saturday, August 12. There are 2 levels to suit different participants. *The 5K race will be on a certified race course that starts and ends on the festival-grounds at Harriet Island but ranges further a field; the Family 1K, keeps to the scenic Harriet Island grounds, is an enjoyable event that families can do together.* The Family 1K will start at 9:30 a.m. and the 5K will start at 10:00 a.m. After the race, enjoy a beverage and some Irish fare on the festival grounds. And dressing up for the race is encouraged! A prize will be awarded to the best costume, as well as the top finishing family, male, & female.

Also new to the fair this year is traditional Gaelic heavy games. Heavy games refer to the athletic events that require significant strength and power; as opposed to the light athletics, which require stamina, such as dancing, sprinting, and jumping. In general, lightweight persons tend to gravitate toward the light athletics, while the heavyweights excel in heavy athletics. Heavy athletics include stone throwing, weight tossing, hammer throwing, caber turning, and sheaf tossing. While more often associated with the Scottish tradition, such games are in fact part of a shared heritage; the earliest date for 'Scottish' Heavy Athletics is contained in the 12th century Irish "Book of Leinster", which describes ancient games held at Telltown, County Meath. The Heavy athletics arrived in Scotland with Celtic Migrations from Ireland. There will be women's, youth, men's & special categories of competition for these games.

Also new, Minnesota's legendary local, professional Irish boxing icon "Irish" Danny Morgan will bring us an exhibition of boxing which includes history emphasizing the intertwining of the sport with that of the Irish here and in Ireland, demonstrations & lessons that focus on the art and fun of boxing.

You can also get *in on the action* by learning or practicing your Irish dance steps at the Crossroads tent. The tent will feature social dancing (Ceili and Set) lessons from 5pm-close on Friday, and all day Saturday and Sunday with special guest teacher Gerard Butler, from Co Roscommon, Ireland.

Hurlers from our own fabulous Twin Cities Robert Emmets Hurling Club will be out demonstrating their fast-action sport. Or you could get in on a round of Tug of War, including a novice competition. If none that suits you or your family, try your hand at the hand built, mini-golf course.

For more details about the 2006 Fair, visit the website at <http://www.irishfair.com/index.php>

Until Next Time, Best Regards from the

irish fair of
minnesota

Did You Know...?

Valuing physical as well as mental development is not a new-fangled fad for the Celts. We have long, *long* had a commitment to an active & fit lifestyle, both due to the requirements of the early warrior society and a strong appreciation for beauty, founded on good health.

The Greek author Strabo, writing before the birth of Christ notes: "They (Celts) try to avoid becoming stout and pot-bellied and any young man whose waist exceeds the measure of the normal girdle is fined."

Celtic women were also celebrated--or dreaded, depending ---for their robust natures. Roman foe Marcus Borealis wrote: "the women of the Celtic tribes are bigger and stronger than our Roman women. This is most likely due to their natures as well as their peculiar fondness for all things martial and robust. The fair-haired maidens of the north are trained in sports..." His fellow Roman Ammianus Marcellinus adds "a Gallic woman, fighting beside her man, is a match for a whole troop of foreigners".

In the modern era, the Gaelic Athletic Association, founded in 1884 was part of the movement toward a vigorous and positive renaissance of the Irish identity, battered by centuries of colonialism. The League, which aims at promoting *Gaelic games for non-professional athletes*, such as hurling and camogie, Gaelic football and handball, and rounders (as well as promoting music and dance) is the largest and most popular organization in Ireland, boasting of some 800,000 members out of the island's ~5 million people.