

Alton Mill Arts Centre presents 'Get Your Celtic On' festival next weekend

Written By Constance Scrafield

When a place is open all year around, as is the Alton Mill Arts Centre, housing a fairly regular crowd of people with their art to sell, it is a great thing to stir things up with a festival from time to time. Such is the plan for next weekend, May 5 and 6, with their Get Your Celtic On! Celtic Festival.

Outside the Mill, Doug Bell, well known dry-stone artist, is building a wall and inviting people to join him in the effort, even to a stone or two, just to follow how those beautiful walls are done. They define the landscape as they border the country roads for hundreds of miles all over Ireland and Scotland. There is increasingly an interest here too in this style of wall.

At some point, you can walk the Stone Discovery Trail. Ask Doug about it.

John McCarthy, wood worker, will be there as well, making Celtic knots in wood, showing a bit about the craft of carving wood.

Lots of choices, once you step inside. The Mill is replete with curiosities and wonders, such are the calibre of the artists who have their studios there. Start your visit with a walk up stairs or take the elevator, located beside the desk of people welcoming visitors each day of the weekend.

C.J. Sheldon is a Celtic artist, there to demonstrate something about the knots and how to draw them. There are potters and painters, all creating fine work, all delighted to talk to visitors.

Encaustic artist, Andrea Bird, making paintings with bees wax, will show how this is done. Fascinating.

Follow the passage back to the right and visit the studios as you go all the way to the Pond Gallery. For this weekend, this gallery acts as the Celtic Market Place, dance stage for the Claymore Highland Dancers and the tasting room.

The dancers are planned to perform 20 minutes each time, three times each day. A range of ages from tiny to teen prove that Highland Dancing is eternal, dating back centuries and still appealing to modern youth.

The vendors in the Pond Gallery for the weekend only are visitors to the Mill, coming with their own specialities to augment the theme and the fun of the weekend.

Diana Skeates calls herself a Contemporary Celtic Artist. Her work has been praised by David Rankin, probably the most famous Celtic Artist in Canada. A display of Giclees and prints of Diana's work for sale will be on deck.

The Olivar Corp is bringing specialty olive oil which was cold extracted during October's full moon in honour of the Celtic Full Moon goddesses.

Sterling Silver Celtic jewellery is brought to the Celtic Festival by Celtic Fair. A stand of beautiful pieces, some exclusive to the company with semi precious stones. Lots of stories to go with the silver about the knots and symbols.

Hockley Valley artist, Brian Blakeman will bring his Isle of Skye paintings. Brian, once a water colour artist, moved on to acrylic, which he enjoys for its versatility. His paintings reflect the special feeling of the Isle, a different sense to the view.

TresBello is there with clothing- things unique and enticing.

The Pond Gallery will also host tooney tastings of craft beer and cider: , Caledon Hills Brewing Co.,Badlands Brewing Company, Heartwood Farm & Cider,Wellington Brewery, and Hitchhiker Beverage Company. On Sunday, try a Headwaters favourite, GoodLot Farmstead Brewing Co.

Tickets for all the tastings may be purchased in Pond Gallery, including the whiskey tastings. The whiskeys are located down in a pleasant little room off the Rare Threads installation: three fine single Malt Scotch whiskies, with some history and tasting notes.

The tastings all have a small price and the proceeds have two destinations: the Alton Mill's AMA which is concerned with the

natural environment of the property and its ongoing care and restoration.

The other is the arts work of the Facilitation Wellington Dufferin (FWD). This charity was originally established by a group of parents, looking to find alternative support for their Autism spectrum children, in 2010. It has rapidly expanded to include many more families.

Its purpose is to encourage and expand the abilities and talents of individuals with special needs. Long since including people with special needs of all ages, one artist has come to light, Sarah Godfrey, who has always painted. The donation to FWD will be directed to an art show, already scheduled for the last week in July, 2018, at the Mill of Ms Godfrey's work, possibly along with the work of other such artists.

Continue your tour on the ground floor of the Rare Threads, a new gallery of textiles, mainly wearable, handcrafted and of interesting materials.

Noodle Gallery is given to the odd and unusual. Some beautiful, others whimsical; it even includes furniture.

Fine paintings adorned the walls of the Headwater gallery. Stroll, admire, every one is for sale.

Gourmandissimo is running the cafe in the Mill, with a Celtic themed menu for the weekend, to send your taste buds on a journey of nostalgia, if your granny was a Celt.

No such thing as a Celtic Festival without music and we are very pleased to announce the return of the Celtic band, NUA, and Rhythmfoot with the Leahy family. Two concerts, two days.

On Saturday, May 5, NUA's Jacob McCauley is offering two workshops during the day. One is a lesson about the bodhran (Celtic hand drum ? sort of), in which Mr. McCauley will bring a couple of instruments along for people to try and will talk about them ? their history and what makes them so particularly a wonderful percussion.

The second is a talk about Celtic music, what distinguishes it and keeps it in our hearts whether we know it or not until we hear it.

Later, in the evening, is NUA's perform a concert, opened by two acts. The old Mill will raise its roof with the party and we will be calling for more long after the lads say good night.

Before they take the stage, in the Saturday afternoon, at 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., the Georgetown Folk Collective invite one and all to come and jam with them. Bring your fiddles, pipes and whatever you play for a fun time.

All this music is accompanied by a cash bar with more than the basics. This bar will sell cocktails, designed specifically for the occasion, as well as the regular craft beers, cider and wine. Fun.

Sunday, Rhythmfoot with the Leahy family will strut their considerable stuff for one concert at 2:00 p.m. Fiddles and flying family feet have entertained audiences all around this region and we will always enjoy their music so much.

There is no admission, as such, although a donation is invited, if you like. All the details, prices and tickets are online at altonmill.ca. If you are in the neighbourhood, tickets for the concerts can also be purchased at the cafe in the Mill.

Get Your Celtic On is on during the weekend of May 5 and 6. Doors open at 10:00 a.m. Both days.