



Members of Clannad, Ciaran Brennan, Moya Brennan, Noel Duggan and Pol Brennan performing at Leo's 50th anniversary concert on Saturday night. (Photo by Eoin Mc Garvey)



Paul Bonnar at FestiFal with one of his fans from Belfast, Phyllis Hillen.



Young FestiFal fans of David Craig.



Teresa McKimm and Sheila Geaney enjoying FestiFal 2018.



Bella's Burger Buns.....delightful burgers and delightful lassies at FestiFal Falcarragh at the weekend.

Gaeltacht leaps into high festive gear

BY SEAN HILLEN

Neighbouring west Donegal parishes – The Rosses, Cloughaneely and Gaoth Dobhair – have been proudly parading their finest talent this week before more than 3,000 people as the Gaeltacht leaped into high festive gear.

Crowds poured into the area in and around Leo's Tavern in The Rosses culminating in a ceili, children's talent show and jive night Monday, as the Brennan family in collaboration with community group, Coiste Forbartha Mhín na Leice, Fáilte Ireland and the Earagail Arts Festival, hosted a lively five-day 50th celebration.

Reuben Ó Conluain, a national Irish-language educationalist, who also brings performers to the annual Celtic music festival in Brittany, said, "There is simply so much wonderful

talent in Donegal, some of it showcased this weekend."

90-year-old west Belfast woman, Phyllis Hillen, was among those attending, "I'm having a ball of a time," the nonagenarian said simply.

Aside from diverse music including Donovan, Clannad, Hazel O'Connor, Moya Brennan, Aisling Jarvis, T with the Maggies, Clann Mhic Ruairí and Daniel O'Donnell, around 30 vendors set up stalls in and around a marquee for the traditional annual 'Aonach Fair.' Assorted wares being sold ranged from artistic Donegal-made pens to gourmet chocolates and even potent, health-giving bottles of organic bogbean juice.

"I've been making artisan chocolates out of a little white cottage in Bunbeg and in Gortahork for twelve years and really enjoy developing new recipes," said Maire Bonner owner of "Donegal Chocolates," whose sister Caitlin runs a restaur-

rant nearby, Caifé Kitty's. Delicious flavors include raspberry, caramel, toffee and even the more exotic Brazilian oil with coco nibs. Maire also takes specialized requests for celebrations of all kinds.

Young entrepreneurs, Rónán & Conor McGarvey, founders of 'Donegal Pens,' have met with great success with their popular pens, each individually turned and polished from wood such as oak, yew, ash, elm, beech, ebony, olive, beech, cherry, laburnum, purple heart, oak, jatoba, maple, pear, walnut, spalted beech and red cedar. Their craft product is sold in other countries.

Margaret 'Kitty' Boyle from Shaskenbeg sold her homemade, energy-giving tonic juice from bog-beans, traditionally used, among other things, for irregular menstruation and strengthening appetite, digestion and nutrient absorption. "It'll even make a new man of you," she

said, a glint in her eye.

Mary Ferry-Brennan, from beauty center, Genesis Skin Care & Laser Clinic, wife of Bartley, the tavern's manager, said of Leo, who passed away two years ago, "I'm sure he's looking down and wishing he was here enjoying the craic, his positive influence has certainly been felt in the fine weather we've been enjoying over the last few weeks."

Meanwhile, Falcarragh hosted its 7th annual FestiFal, with talented local comedian, Paul Bonnar, and fellow humorists Bryan Campbell, Andy McGranaghan and Barry Mack raising loud laughter from a packed audience at An tSean-Bheairic. Bonnar's witty repartee ranged from growing up in "The Cottages" area of town, otherwise known as "The Bronx" to his boyish embarrassment at having to wear rigid orange boiler suits made at the local sewing factory and the once popular fad of build-

ing turf sheds. Former local teacher Murray Learmont didn't escape a gentle ribbing either.

Under the direction of MC Denis Doohan the town's activities ranged from an Irish dancing costume exhibition (Taispeántas), 'Salad Days' at The Glasshouses, Killult, a busking competition, dance, live jazz music with the David Lyttle Trio, a 5k parkrun and illuminated sculptures at Ballyconnell Estate.

Meanwhile, as part of its ongoing summer series, Gaoth Dobhair's historic Amharclann theatre hosted sean-nós singer Noeleen Ní Cholla, and guitarist-singer, Noel Duggan, at the 25-year anniversary concert of international folk group, Norland Wind; as well as Donegal group, Arcanadh, and Breandán de Gallai's dance company, Ériu, performing 'Rite of Spring,' with Lords of Strut, The High Seas and the 'Selkie' show next week.