



'A raggle-taggle week of family fun'

Leo Hallissey looks back at another successful Sea Week

THE 29th Conamara Sea Week took place last month – a raggle-taggle fun-filled celebration that finished in style in Molly's Bar with the McCarthy family from Co Clare, via London.

The McCarthys are one of the most amazing families in the colourful history of Irish traditional music. Their house in London, where the present generation were born, was a 'mini Irish embassy' – a source of rich culture that provided a warm welcome for people who found themselves lost and lonely in the big city.

Sixteen musicians and dancers played tunes and rattled the boards until the wee small hours. Generous portions of 'Marty's Mussels' were served by Sally and Gerry, and it was a mighty climax to a great 10 days celebrating the best of Connemara.

The highlight of the festival was undoubtedly the 'After the Light' spectacle, which took place in Letterfrack on Wednesday October 23 (see opposite). All lights in the village were quenched and replaced by 10-foot



PHOTO: AOIFE HERRIOTT

Children at the mini-boat regatta, part of the ever-popular family fun day

fire sculptures.

This event is about moving from darkness to light, marking the fact that Letterfrack has moved on from its dark and troubled past and is now emerging as a centre of excellence, a flagship project for all Connemara.

More than 300 people took part in the parade – representing the crèche, four primary schools, Youthreach, GMIT, VTOS Letterfrack and Clifden – and more than 1,000 people were present on the night.

Other key moments of the festival were the Family Fun Day and art exhibition, beautifully hung in the National Park by Angie Williams and Mary Hession. Another great highlight was the after-

noon session in The Bard's Den with the Heron Family. The high energy playing of this group captures the audience and is fast becoming a cult event. The Hernons were joined by a scatter of great sean-nós whose fiery dancing was much appreciated by a fulsome and enthusiastic audience.

The beautifully restored new church in Kylemore Abbey certainly provided a lovely venue for two great events (reviewed opposite), which were enjoyed by a large and enthusiastic audience.

A lovely feature of this year's Sea Week was the high quality playing and dancing from our upcoming singers, dancers and musicians, which augers well for the future. It is a

tribute to their excellent teachers Gearoid Devaney, Emma O'Sullivan, the Cunninghams, Marie Walsh, the Kane sisters, Mary Finn, and Sr. Karol, whose workshops for teachers are receiving great praise indeed.

● We would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who greatly contributed to the success of the festival. Many thanks also to our sponsors: Leader, Forum, Connemara West, VTOS, GMIT Letterfrack, Galway County Council, The Arts Council, The Connemara Chamber of Commerce and The Killary Adventure Company. Without their continued support, festivals like ours would not exist.

Roll on 2014.