

Festival season Gathering pace as Oughterard gets ready for grand reunion

BY PÁDRAIC Ó CIARDHA

THE village of Oughterard is set to host over a week of culture, sport and social get-togethers later this month as part of 'The Gathering' celebrations.

Between April 26 and May 6 a number of events, including concerts, parades and an international fishing tournament, will run as part of their 'Connemara Homecoming' festival.

The festivities will kick off with the Connemara's Hidden Heritage conference on Friday and Saturday, April 26 and 27, in the Church of Ireland, Oughterard.

David Collins is a member of Oughterard Heritage Group, who is hosting the event. "We're kicking off the week with two days of culture, with sponsorship from Galway County Council Heritage Office," he said.

The conference will see a series of eleven lectures taking place over the two days. Topics will range from 'The Engineering Heritage of Connemara' to '300 Years of Connemara Gardening Heritage'. Academics and historians from across the country are coming to speak at the conference, including lecturers from NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth.

Mr Collins said that the conference was just the beginning of a busy week. "This is just the start of the celebrations which will involve schools, local groups, organizations, the business community and most important of all, families," he insisted.

Events are scheduled to take place throughout the local area over the course of the eleven day festival.

Sunday, April 28, will see a full day of activities including community games and a vintage car rally before finishing

off with a concert being held in the town square from 8pm.

"The rest of the week is crowded with activities to suit all tastes, including genealogy, heritage walks, music, food, group gatherings, 'An Lá Gaelach', entertainment and even sheep racing!" said Mr Collins

Henry Healy, famous cousin of Barack Obama, will be visiting Oughterard on Monday, April 29, to give a talk in conjunction with Ireland Reaching Out about Irish genealogy.

The festivities will draw to a close with the International Mayfly Fishing Competition being held over the weekend of May 4 and 5. The competition will launch on Saturday evening with the contest proper taking place on Lough Corrib on Sunday. Prize presentations and a dinner for the competitors will take place that evening.

Last year's event saw over 130 entries and organisers are hoping that 'The Gathering' festivities will bring even more people to the competition.

A full schedule of the festival is available at ourowngathering.wordpress.com or facebook.com/ourowngathering. The festival organisers also have an office located on Main Street, Oughterard.

Oughterard native and Mayor of County Galway Cllr Tomas Welby will officially launch the conference both mornings at 10am.

The event is free to attend but those wishing to be present are asked to book their places. This can be done by contacting David Collins at (091) 550547 or County Council Heritage Officer Marie Mannion at (091) 509198. Registration takes place in the church between 9.30am and 10am each morning.