

**OCTOBER 09**

Comhaltas In London and the South

The Kilfenora Cielí band's Return to Camden Town Festival appearance was sponsored by Comhaltas

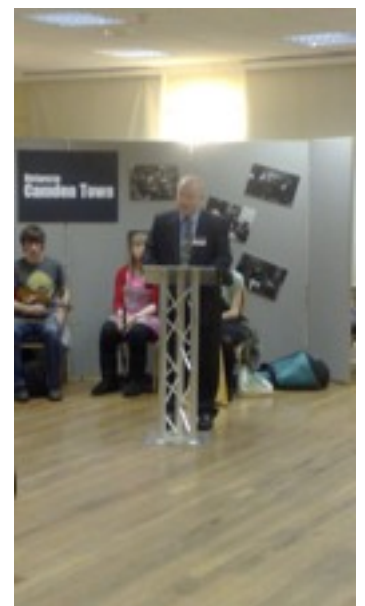


**Funded Through the Irish Government Emigrant Support Programme**

## Return to Camden Town

The Annual Return to Camden town festival, now in its 11th year, ran from the 23rd of October to the 1st of November, and once again boasted an impressive line up of the finest in traditional Irish music. The festival consists of Concerts, workshops, lectures, dance events and sessions, held in and around the Camden Irish centre. This years festival also saw the introduction of a festival club, hosted by

the Cobden Arms where there was an opportunity to enjoy a drink and a tune after the evening concert or Cielí. There were many opportunities for Comhaltas members to get involved, and a good many attended concerts and benefitted from the workshops. There was also an opportunity for the Trad Gathering to perform a brand new suite of music composed by Leitrim Fiddle maestro, Charlie



*Camden centre director  
Peter Hammond*

Lennon, specially for the group. Comhaltas also contributed financially to the festival by sponsoring the Kilfenora Ceili band. They played for a Ceili at the Haringey Irish centre on Saturday night and then again at the Camden centre on Sunday afternoon.

The festival began for me, with an invitation to the official opening reception in the presidential suite of the Camden centre. The assembled party of sponsors, dignitaries and helpers, was addressed by



***Old Friends, Tom Cussen, Mick O'Connor and Peter McAlinden***

the centre director Peter Hammond, The Irish Ambassador Bobby McDonagh and the Mayor of Camden, Omar Faruque Ansari, who spoke about the rich cultural mix Camden enjoys and what a fantastic contribution the RTCT festival makes to the community. Music during the reception was provided



***Mayor of Camden Omar Faruque Ansari***

by rising stars of the London Irish Music scene, Orlaith McAuliffe, Brogan McAuliffe, Daniel Gilroy and Laura Foley. I was invited to attend the concert that followed the reception, which featured all female group Liadan, and Kevin Crawford, Cillian Vallaley and Paul Meehan. Concerts were also held at venues other than the Camden centre, and on the following evening I attended a concert in the Lumiere, which is a lovely little venue, up stairs at the Kings head in Kilburn high road. The concert was opened by The Long notes, Jamie Smith, Colette O'Leary, Brian Kelly and Steve Burns. They were followed by Pauline Scanlon and Eilis Kennedy. The Headline act was Brian Finegan and Friends, that featured the astonishing piping of Northern Irish Piper

Jarlath Henderson. I popped in to the centre the following day and had an opportunity to meet Button Box virtuoso John Whelan. I've known John since I was a child, playing music in and around Luton, where he grew up, before moving to America more than 20yrs ago, John has always been heavily involved in Comhaltas activities, and we had a very interesting conversation that I hope will lead to developing a stronger link with him. John played a concert in the evening with another old friend, Karen Tweed. The Festival gig was part of a nationwide tour. Although I was unable to attend, I heard it was fantastic.

Monday night of the festival is traditionally album launch night. As well as bringing the finest traditional musicians from Ireland, the UK and America, to North London, the festival organisers are also keen to promote and support Local and London based musicians, by inviting them to host sessions and offering an opportunity to launch a CD during the festival. I think this a great idea by the organisers and an important part of the festival. I was invited to promote my own CD this year (available at [www.johndevinemusic.com](http://www.johndevinemusic.com) )



***The Comhaltas and other sponsor Logos, on the front of the main festival stage, whilst Tom Cussen and Tony Howley sound check with Pete Quinn.***

along side Jamie Smith, Liam O’Sullivan and Steve Burns([www.myspace.com/sboband](http://www.myspace.com/sboband)). I opened the evening with a short set that featured Sam Proctor on Fiddle, Noel Angland on Flute, Tad Sargent on Bazooki, Bodhran and Keyboards, Kathrine Rogan Vocals and Caz Devine on Saxophone. Jamie, Liam and Steve were joined for the evening by Dan Griffen on Bodhran, Anthony Davis on Keyboards and Oscar Cainer on Vocals and Banjo. A large crowd turned out for the evening and most of them finished the night at the festival club in the Cobden Arms.

I was invited to deliver a beginners piping workshop on the Thursday night of the festival and then there was a concert that featured the Trad Gathering, and The Good Mixer Band, Tommy Keane, Marcus Hernon, Henry Bennagh and Noel O’Grady. Tommy Keane of the band, ran a pipers club from the centre for many years before returning to Ireland. I was also invited to be M.C. for the Saturday night concert. This was held in the McNamara hall in the Camden centre and the evening was opened by Galway Banjo player Tom Cussen, and Manchester based, but originally from Sligo Saxophonist, Tony Howley. They were accompanied by Pete Quinn on Piano. The capacity crowd was then

treated to a terrific set from the London Lasses and Pete Quinn. The group feature festival director Karen Ryan on Fiddle. The Headline act for the night were Moonlighting, and featured Ciaran Tourish, Mike McGoldrick, Dermot Byrne, John Joe Kelly and Tony Byrne. The band came together after an impromptu set they put together during the Celtic connections festival. The crowd were delighted with the high octane performance they gave. I understand the music continued long after, in the Cobden Arms.

Having played for a Ceili in the Haringey Irish Centre on Saturday night, The Kilfenora Ceil band played another Ceili during the final Sunday afternoon of the festival, at the Camden centre, followed by a CD launch by the London Irish Pensioners Choir.

There was some fantastic music played in North London over the ten days of the Festival, and congratulations have to go to the organisers for the breadth and range of activities available. Long may their enthusiasm endure and I look forward to what has become one of the most high profile traditional music festivals in England or Ireland,

when it runs for its 12 year in October 2010.

### **Article For Piping Today.**

Following a meeting with Bedford based Whistle player and free lance journalist, Alex Monaghan at the Half way to St.Patrick's day event in Bedford during September, I was invited to write an article for the magazine Piping today. Whilst the article focusses on me personally, as a piper, it has also given me an opportunity to promote Comhaltas, my role as a development worker and some of the projects I have been involved with. The Magazine is published by the National Piping Centre in Scotland and as such, gives me an opportunity to communicate with a readership, with a different perspective on traditional music. The article is due to be published in the December Issue.

