

From the horse's

It's the highlight of the equine year in Ireland... thanks to people such as these

By Niamh Griffin

IT'S only five days, from August 5 to 9, but to those who love it, the Dublin Horse Show is known simply as Horse Show Week. First held in 1864, it has a special place in the horsey world.

This year, 500 volunteers will shepherd almost 1,400 horses and ponies through their paces. Over 100,000 people are expected to pass through the gates. Along with the equine events, 500 stands offer everything from crocheted clothing to intricate leather goods and antiques.

Magicians and clowns will entertain thousands of children. Bill Gates's daughter Jennifer competes for America as does Georgina Bloomberg, daughter of the former mayor of New York. And former Harry Potter actor Devon Murray returns again to the jumping arena.

The leafy streets of Ballsbridge fill up with the sound of horses and trucks, and of course the unique aroma of thousands of animals in one place. Food stalls serving chips or champagne sit side by side on the RDS lanes feeding thousands who arrive as early as 8am for the first competitions.

The highlight for jumping fans is the FEI Nations Cup on Friday, still known to many as the Aga Khan in memory of the man who donated the trophy back in 1926. Ireland last won in 2012.

But ask any proud parent of a young rider, and they'll say the Pony Club games are simply the best. Tiny ponies and equally tiny riders pound around the ring, jumping on and off between obstacles – a real treat to watch.

PICTURE: TOM HONAN



SUPERHOOFER: John Boyne is a fourth-generation farrier

PAT HANLY SHOW DIRECTOR

EVEN though 'show director' is a serious title, you get the feeling Pat Hanly is just another horse-lover living out his passion every day at the RDS.

Coming to the show since he was child, he said: 'This is a huge sporting event but it means something different to everyone. There's business being done, horses sold, Ladies' Day, the stands are all different. It's about the non-professionals as much as the elite riders – the amateurs and the Olympic medallists.'

He admits to favouring the Connemara pony classes when pushed but his enthusiasm for every event is clear.

'We would all be in for about 5.30am that week, and be here until about 11pm. Riders are in here walking the course by 7am, and we have to be ready for them. It's full-on,' he said.

'The volunteers put in the same hours as the staff. When I come in here at half five in the mornings, I'm not the first in. There are people out schooling horses... the thing is alive,' he said.

LONG HOURS: Director Pat Hanly

ONE JUMP AHEAD: Alan Wade finds his inspiration anywhere



WHEN the world's top show-jumpers compete at Dublin Horse Show, little do they know some jumps once decorated Alan Wade's living room.

The internationally renowned course designer gets inspiration from everywhere he says.

'An old green telephone box was in our living room, holding CDs. My wife said it would

ALAN WADE COURSE DESIGNER

make a lovely fence and it's been in there for six or eight years now. We use a minimum of sponsored fences; that gives us a unique look.

'This year we have a new fence inspired by the Dunbrody

Famine Ship in Wexford.'

Alan's father, Tommy Wade, was a successful showjumper and later chef d'équipe of the Irish team.

'I used to go with my father as a child. It was a big thing always and Friday is the best day with the Aga Khan. You're either a hero or a zero. It's a career highlight to win on that course.'

mouth



JOHN BOYNE FARRIER

JOHN BOYNE is the fourth generation of Boynes to shoe horses and the second to act as resident farrier at Dublin Horse Show. This year is his 35th show.

He started working at the show in his teens and even remembers getting lost as a toddler before a passing neighbour from home placed him under the famous clock until his mother came by.

'It's a five-star show. You have all the elite riders in Europe and our job is to maintain those horses. You wouldn't shoe as many horses as 10 or 15 years ago. There is a lot more access to good shoes in different parts of Ireland now.'

'We used to do a lot of aluminium shoes. They are 65% lighter than steel so they enhance the movement of the show horses. Now people might have them before coming to Dublin,' he said.

John, 45, works with a team of farriers out of a forge near the Simonscourt Complex in the RDS - with two people stationed permanently at the paddock or entrance to the main arena.

John said: 'You need two there. You could have four or five horses pull a shoe and you have to get them back out there. I suppose it does get stressful. There's a quick turnaround if they are competing in the next round.'

'You have people in the arena looking for the shoe. If they find it, you can replace it but if they don't, one farrier might have to physically run back to the forge to get a new shoe. It's a little like the pitstops in Formula One racing.'

He remembers 2004 as a particularly exciting year when Irish rider Billy Twomey was having problems with his horse Luidam.

'Luidam wasn't sound during the week. There were hoof problems. We got him sound, he jumped a double-clear and Ireland won the Nations Cup. That was a special time for me. You're always hoping you can be a hero though we're in the background.'



KATIE CONDREN VOLUNTEER STEWARD

KATIE CONDREN works in London now but her colleagues at Dubarry shoes know better than to schedule meetings during the Horse Show. But having once flown back from New Zealand for it, she says the trip from London is nothing.

Katie, 27, first came to Dublin as an 11-year old riding in side-saddle competitions.

'It's the one week in the year when all my family is in one place. My mother is on the committee and a steward. My two brothers are involved. My dad is not horsey but even he comes up for a day or two from our farm in Laois,' she said.

It's Katie's seventh year as a volunteer steward. This means she helps organise riders and horses in the rings outside the main arena - bringing them in, making sure no-one is late or misses their class.

She said: 'There's a lot of work. There are over 125 competitions and maybe 1,300 horses and ponies. You keep an eye on the Big Clock - you'd look up and think, "Crap! time to go", and move them along.'

'It's such a huge honour to compete in Dublin, whether you get a ribbon or not,' she said.

HONOUR: Steward Katie Condren

Clooney's not coming, say his agents... but if his wife visits Belfast, where will George be?

By Sarah Slater

GEORGE CLOONEY will not be making an official visit to Ireland this year - though speculation abounds as to whether the Hollywood heart-throb will drop in unofficially.

Hopes had been mounting that the Oscar-winner and his international lawyer wife Amal, would pay a visit to his ancestral homeland in Co. Laois, after he said several months ago that he would be here this summer.

However, a close friend of the Irish branch of the Clooney family, Andy Ring, from Irishheritagetowns.com, has said he received an email from



GEORGE: Will he or won't he?

Clooney's agents saying the trip will not go ahead.

Clooney's agents said: 'Mr Clooney is not scheduled to be in Ireland this year.'

Andy explained: 'Of course, his family here in Abbeyleix

are all very disappointed.'

Then he added: 'But his Irish family are hopeful that he will pay a surprise private visit here in the next couple of months for a family get-together.'

Added to this is the fact that Amal is expected to be in Ireland over the coming months. She is one of the lawyers in the case of 'the hooded men', who are taking the British government to court over torture claims during the Seventies.

And George's father Nicholas Clooney will be receiving a Certificate of Irish Heritage signed by Foreign Affairs Minister Charlie Flanagan soon.

More Savings
More Speed
More Business
with Ireland's best business bundle



- ✔ Unlimited mobile
- ✔ Unlimited 4G data
- ✔ Roaming in UK, EU & USA
- ✔ Free smartphone
- ✔ Unlimited landline
- ✔ Unlimited superfast broadband
- ✔ One straightforward bill

Get More

Call 1800 410 210

Shop online eircom.ie/businessbundles

eircom. Driving **Business** Forward



Terms and conditions apply. See eircom.ie/businessbundles