



Queensland Irish Association

Newsletter

July 2025

Hats off to you, our wonderful Members



Bloomsday in Brisbane 2025 on Queen Street Mall. Picture: Alfred Photography Studio

Thank you to all our Members who have signed up to renew their membership. We thank you for your support and we look forward to having you join us for exciting events in the coming year.

As promised, this edition contains a selection of photographs from our Bloomsday in Brisbane event in June. And we have news of more upcoming events to note in your diary.

On Friday 22 August, from 4pm, we will have a Members' Gathering at Corparoo RSL. There will be live entertainment from 4.30pm to 7.30pm, and food and drinks available to purchase at the bar. We would love to see you

there! RSVP to Mavis Williams on (07) 3849 8271.

Also, the date of our AGM will be Saturday 22 November with the venue to be confirmed, and our Christmas Party will be held on Saturday 6 December, with venue also to be confirmed.

We held a draw this month for five double passes to see *Four Letters of Love* at the cinema.

Four Letters of Love is a romantic Irish drama starring Pierce Brosnan, Helena Bonham Carter, and Gabriel Byrne. Set against Ireland's windswept landscapes, it delicately weaves together themes of destiny, family, and the

quiet poetry of Irish life.

It opens across Australia on July 24. Locations will be available at <https://fourlettersoflovefilm.com.au/>, they include Denby Portside in Brisbane and Denby Southport in Gold Coast.

We had a great response to our competition, thank you to all who entered. Congratulations to the winners whose names were pulled out of a hat - they are: Veronica Ferguson, Jesse Flynn, Gerard Sammon, Robert Thomson and Matt Waters.

All the best,

Mary Allen, Director, QIA.



Queensland Irish Association

August Members' Gathering



Members and friends
are invited to join us on

Friday, 22nd August
from 4pm at

Coorparoo RSL,
45 Holdsworth Street, Coorparoo.

Food and drinks available to purchase

Live entertainment from 4.30pm

RSVP to Mavis Williams on 3849 8271



Big thank you to Mia, who drew the names out of our QIA hat in our cinema passes competition. Five lucky members got double passes to see Irish movie *Four Letters of Love*. Picture: Mary Allen

Call out for dress makers - we need your talents!

Are you handy with a sewing machine? Fancy trying your hand at making an Irish outfit?

Queensland Irish Association is planning to take part in a celebration of 100 years of Brisbane City Council, to be held on October 1.

The celebration will see cultural organisations from across the city take part and one of the many events planned will involve having people dress up in their country's traditional clothing.

We would love to be able to show off Irish style at its best, and are happy to cover costs. Ideally, we would love to have a women's Kinsale Cloak, or similar, plus traditional Irish guna with apron, and for the men, traditional plaid and knitted clothing.

If you can make these or know

where we can get them, please get in touch at mary@queenslandirish.com.au.

Having a Function

We can add a whole lot more to your evening

Photo's (6inX8in) printed the same night and returned before the function finishes.
We will do PR photos of the event at no extra cost.
(subject to numbers)
Studio lights if requested will be set up before guests arrive.
There is no additional cost beyond the price of the photo's.
This is a great way to have a memory of the evening.

Good Times Network Photography
Phone 0401450977
www.goodtimesbrisbane.com

Calendar

26 July 2025

Queensland Irish Choir Celtic Winter Concert, 2pm, Hills Church Auditorium, 79 Queens Road, Everton Hills.

8 to 10 August 2025

AIDA 52nd State Irish Dancing Championships at SunPAC, 470 McCullough St, Sunnybank. QIA is Silver Sponsor for this event.

3 to 5 October 2025

Australasia Gaelic Games Championships
Queensland Gaelic Football and Hurling Association, Willawong.

4 October 2025

CelticFest, Warwick, Queensland.

12 October 2025

Brisbane Celtic Festival, Auchenflower.

22 November 2025

QIA AGM, details TBA.

6 December 2025

QIA Christmas Party, details TBA.

Contact us

We welcome content from Members and friends in this newsletter.

If you have news or an article you would like to see included, email the editor, our public relations officer Mary Allen, at mary@queenslandirish.com.au

You can also reach us through our website, www.queenslandirish.com.au, and on our social media pages.

Another great way to interact with QIA is by joining our Facebook [group](#), Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters.

Editor and designer: Mary Allen.

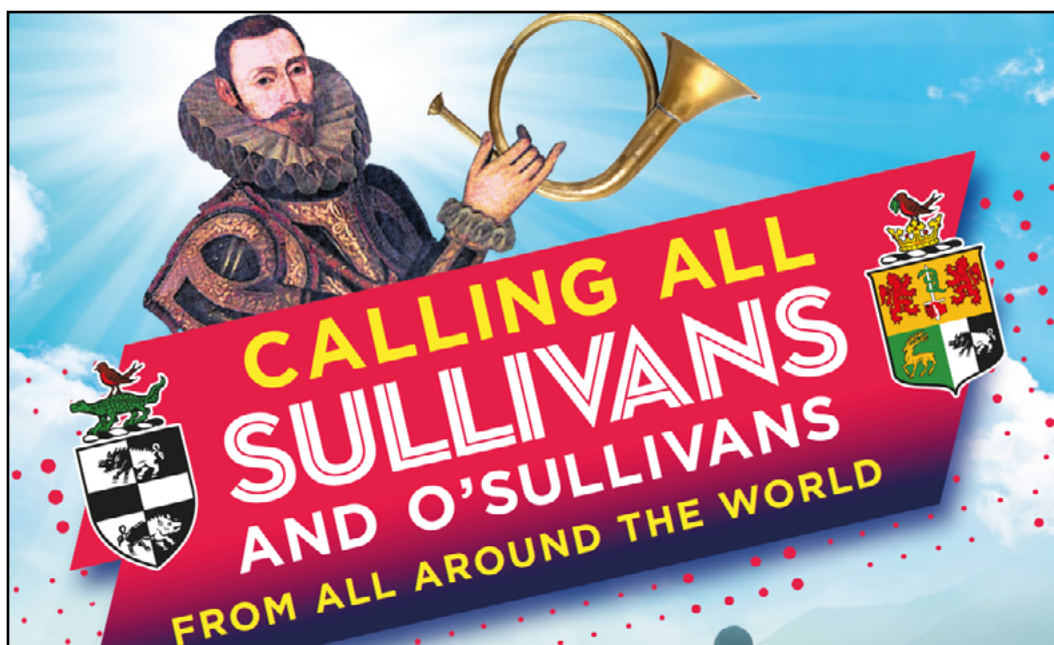
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Irish clan calling all the Aussie Sullivans

The O'Sullivan Clan is calling all its members in Australia and worldwide to converge on the Beara Peninsula in West Cork, Ireland from 30 May to 2 June 2026, in an ambitious attempt to set a new Guinness World Record for the largest gathering of people sharing the same surname.

Organised by the O'Sullivan Clan in counties Cork and Kerry, the event aims to surpass the current record held by the Gallagher Clan of County Donegal, which saw 1,488 Gallaghers come together in 2007.

The gathering will be hosted by Kelly Sullivan, the Chieftain of the O'Sullivan Clan, who was ceremoniously presented with the chain of office by the Cork and Kerry County Mayors on the steps of City Hall in



Boston in 2023.

Attendees can look forward to a weekend filled with family-friendly events, including music, entertainment, and educational tours of historical O'Sullivan sites. Participants are

encouraged to wear jerseys representing their local sports clubs, counties, or countries to showcase their pride.

This event not only aims to set a world record but also offers a unique oppor-

tunity for members of the O'Sullivan Clan to reconnect with their heritage and explore their ancestral homeland.

For more info and to register for the event, visit osullivanclan.org.

Celtic festival returns to Boondooma Homestead

Boondooma Homestead will come alive with the sights and sounds of Scotland from 13 to 17 August, as the much-loved festival Scots in the Bush returns for another five-day celebration of Celtic heritage in the Queensland bush.

Held annually at the historic homestead in the South Burnett region, the event draws musicians, dancers, history buffs, and tartan-clad travellers from across Australia for a spirited program of

entertainment and cultural connection.

The 2025 line-up features an exciting mix of returning favourites and new faces. Australian Celtic Women are set to bring their powerful harmonies to the stage, alongside crowd-pleasers like Brian Letton and Clyde Cameron. Traditional dance will be on full display thanks to the Rum City Highland Dancers, while festivalgoers can expect lively performances from Ishka Celtic

Music, the Moreton Celtic Fiddle Club, and Mouldy Haggis. Pipe bands from Hervey Bay and Noosa, the Maryborough Musos Ukulele group, and ceilidh dance sessions led by Dr Heather Clarke round out a program that mixes authenticity with fun.

Adding to the atmosphere, the homestead grounds will host clan tents, food and merchandise stalls, and a welcoming community spirit that encourages all to take part.

For those keen to perform, open mic and walk-up opportunities are available mid-week.

The festival is known not only for its Highland flair, but also for the camaraderie it inspires. Visitors are encouraged to volunteer in the lead-up or during the event itself, with working bees and jobs available for anyone who wants to lend a hand.

Tickets are available now at boondoomahomestead.org.au.

QIA's Bloomsday in Brisbane 2025



Bloomsday in Brisbane 2025 on Queen Street Mall.
Pictures: Alfred Photography Studio



Do Go as Hothouse Flowers return to Aus



Renowned for their explosive blend of rock 'n' roll, Irish folk and American gospel, Ireland's legendary Hothouse Flowers, are set to return to Australia for the first time in 20 long years for a highly anticipated tour in February 2026.

The Dubliners' passionate fusion of rock, folk and gospel has captivated audiences worldwide for the last four decades. From their humble street performing roots in Dublin to global stages, the band continues to deliver electrifying performances that blend cultural storytelling and raw musical spirit with spontaneity and soulful energy.

After winning the Street Entertainers of the Year award in 1985, the band caught the eye of U2's Bono, leading to a record deal with PolyGram. Their

1988 debut album, *People*, topped the Irish charts and hit number two in the UK, establishing them as a captivating live band with a dedicated global fanbase. The album features their highest streaming single to date, the utterly sublime, *Don't Go*.

Home followed in 1990 and featured the band's gorgeous cover of the Johnny Nash classic, *I Can See Clearly Now*, which was given a new lease of life and used to stunning affect in the opening scene of 2016's Jeremy Clarkson's *Grand Tour* TV show. Watch the incredible intro here. Home along with 93's *Songs From the Rain* cemented the bands place as one Ireland's greats. The Australian tour follows the release of their latest album, *Let's Do This Thing* (2020).

Known for their unpredictable

energy and impromptu improvisation, every Hothouse Flowers show is unique experience. From rock anthems to soulful ballads and traditional songs that evoke the emotional weight of Irish storytelling, the band's performances are a journey through musical and cultural landscapes.

Their shows are marked by humour, raw expression and a deep connection with audiences, making each gig a one-of-a-kind event.

Don't miss one of the most celebrated returns of the year!

• *Hothouse Flowers* will play on Thursday, February 19 (SOLD OUT) and Friday, February 27 at The Triffid, Brisbane. Tickets from <https://www.destroyalllines.com/tours/hothouse-flowers>

The Whistlin' Donkeys announce Aussie tour

After two sold-out tours and a tidal wave of fan support, The Whistlin' Donkeys are making their much-anticipated return to Australia for a third national tour, hitting stages across the country this September and October 2025.

Hailing from County Tyrone, The Whistlin' Donkeys have carved out a fierce following with their signature blend of traditional Irish folk and high-energy Celtic rock. Their explosive live shows, filled with pounding rhythms, soaring fiddle lines, and singalong anthems, have made them one of Ireland's most in-demand live acts — and an unstoppable force on Aussie soil.

Following the success of crowd favourites like “Bees Wing,” “South Australia,” and “Can't Help Falling in Love,” along with their powerful recent single “When The Ship Comes In,” the band is back with a fresh set, new energy, and a bigger production than ever before.

The band will play at The Triffid, Brisbane on Saturday 27 September.

Whether you're a die-hard fan or discovering them for the first time, this is a show that promises to be



loud, lively, and unforgettable.

Tickets are now on sale from trobadorpresents.com.

Don't miss your chance to witness one of Ireland's finest – live and unleashed in Australia.

Join A Celtic Christmas dance tour in Gold Coast

Direct from its Off-Broadway season, A Taste of Ireland presents its dazzling holiday spectacular: A Celtic Christmas – the must-see holiday event of the season.

What's in the sleigh?

Former World Irish dance champions and stars from Riverdance & Lord of the Dance; 100% live tunes, festive carols and heartfelt

ballads; Festive vibes, Irish flair, and just the right amount of sparkle.

Step into a traditional Celtic landscape where Irish wit, world-class talent, and festive cheer collide in an unforgettable experience on 23 December at Home of the Arts Gold Coast at 7:00pm. Further details at <https://www.atasteofirelandshow.com/>



Gather round: Ireland's storytelling tradition is reborn

The ancient art of oral storytelling is having a renaissance worldwide, and Ireland is leading the way.

Ireland is an island of storytellers. Even the most mundane event, when recounted to a group of friends, is embellished for maximum impact with the listeners willing to forgo a bit of accuracy for the reward of being entertained.

The love of a good story stretches back into the distant past when storytellers (seanchaí) were the highly respected custodians of local genealogy as well as being skilled tellers of folklore, myths and legends. Originally serving the heads of Gaelic ruling families by committing their ancestral trees to memory, seanchaí were also travelling entertainers, regaling communities with their stories in return for food and board.

This tradition of oral storytelling is now making a comeback in Ireland with a growing number of



Seanchaíche Event, Dublin City.

storytellers learning the ancient art. Nowadays they perform at events rather than at firesides and the form has evolved to include more modern

formats like spoken word.

One of the leading lights in the revival of oral storytelling is Seanchaíche, a storytelling platform that began in Dublin and has since grown into a global movement, with regular gatherings now held in over a dozen cities around the world. The name comes from the Irish words seanchaí (storyteller) and oíche (night), and means “storytelling night.” These cosy evenings invite people from all walks of life to share their tales, whether drawn from personal experience, imagination or crafted as spoken word. At the heart of Seanchaíche is a spirit of honesty, openness and connection. Each event is warm and welcoming, with an atmosphere that feels both intimate and magical, gently held together by a shared love of stories.

Upcoming events include an Irish-speaking storytelling night in Belfast (31 July) and a weekend of



Cape Clear Island Harbour Ferry arriving, County Cork.

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Gather round: Ireland's storytelling tradition is reborn

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Seanchóiche events at the All Together Now festival (1–3 August) at gorgeous Curraghmore Estate in County Waterford.

For a fuller immersion in the art of storytelling, Cape Clear International Storytelling Festival (5–7 September) is the place to go. Over three days, storytellers from around the world weave their tales transporting listeners into worlds of magic, mischief and heartfelt emotion. The unique festival celebrates its 30th anniversary this year and presents as its special guest Eddie Lenihan, an Irish author, storyteller, lecturer and broadcaster and one of the few practising seanchaithe remaining in Ireland. Among the MCs is award-winning storyteller Liz Weir from Northern Ireland who has performed all over the world and whose workshops are passing on storytelling skills to the next generation.

The festival takes place on Cape Clear Island, off the coast of West Cork. This remote and beautiful spot is accessible only by ferry so festival-goers feel like they are stepping into another world and another time. Events include storytelling in English and Irish, in boats, on walks, and by the harbour with the dramatic natural setting adding a special dimension to the authentic storytelling experience.

Over in County Kerry, another storytelling festival celebrates voices and traditions from Ireland and beyond. Listowel International Storytelling Festival (18–21 September) is a four-day celebration of the oral tradition inspired by the old 'rambling house' gatherings – casual community get-togethers in homes where music dancing and storytelling were the evening's entertainment. Organised by Kerry Writers' Museum, the festival mixes storytelling with music and local culture aiming to bring the ancient artform to as many people as possible.

The revival of oral storytelling on



Listowel Town, County Kerry.

the island of Ireland is opening the door for more people to share their stories, whether traditional tales of fairies and heroes or personal narratives of lived experiences. It offers the chance to come together as a community in unique events that

have a strong sense of place, a link to the past and a vibrancy born of human connection. And, moreover, it's good, old-fashioned fun.

Words and pictures:
www.ireland.com

Brian Friel's Donegal: A landscape of memory and magic



Poisoned Glen.

Explore the deep connections between one of the world's greatest modern playwrights and a part of Ireland, famed for its rugged landscapes and rich traditions.

High up in a quiet graveyard in rural Donegal lies the final resting place of one of Ireland's finest playwrights. At Glenties cemetery, a simple, dark slab marks the grave of Brian Friel, who died at the age of 86 ten years ago this year.

Below the graveyard stretches a patchworked landscape dotted with trees, farms and cottages. In the distance, the Bluestack Mountains rest quietly. This is Friel's land: Glenties. It's where his mother Mary MacLoone was born, where Friel spent his childhood summers, and which he transformed in his writing into "Ballybeg". In its Irish translation, Ballybeg means "Baile Beag", or "little town".

Small in name but vast in influence, Ballybeg echoes throughout Friel's



Barnesmore Gap, Co. Donegal. Courtesy Gareth Wray Photography

greatest works. We journey through Ballybeg in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), widely hailed as Friel's masterpiece; in *Faith Healer* (1979), named one of the greatest plays of

all time by *The Independent*; and in *Translations* (1980), which explores clashes over language and culture in 19th-century Ireland.

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Brian Friel's Donegal: A landscape of memory and magic



Five Finger Strand, Inishowen Peninsula.

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Place is central to Friel's work, says David Grant, senior lecturer in Drama at the School of Arts, English and Languages in Queen's University Belfast. "I think that's probably the strongest way of expressing Brian Friel's connection with Donegal – that it came to be the home place, the place where there was a sense of belonging," he says.

Grant once took students who were staging a production of *Translations* on a trip around the Inishowen peninsula, to help them understand the connection between Friel's work and Donegal. "They came away with such a stronger sense of what the play was about: that sense of connection between ocean and mountain and land," says Grant. "It all comes back to that rootedness, that sense of being almost rooted in the soil of the place."

A Place of Memory and Myth

Born in County Tyrone, Friel moved with his family to Derry in 1939. By the 1950s, he had begun his writing career, and his first full-length stage play, *The Enemy Within*, premiered in Ireland's national theatre, the Abbey Theatre, in 1962. Growing up, his

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Glenties, Co. Donegal. Courtesy Gareth Wray Photography



Isle of Doagh, Inishowen Peninsula, Co. Donegal.

Brian Friel's Donegal: A landscape of memory and magic



Storm Ciara Battles Gweedore, County Donegal. Picture: Gareth Wray

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family spent summers in his mother's hometown of Glenties, and in the 1960s, Friel made his home in Greencastle, a small fishing town about a 90-minute drive away.

While much of Friel's work is influenced by his life and heritage, it's *Dancing at Lughnasa* that is considered his most autobiographical play. Set during Lughnasa – an ancient Celtic festival that marks the beginning of the harvest season – it focuses on the Mundy sisters, who were inspired by Friel's mother and her sisters. The sisters had grown up in Laurels Cottage, which is now owned by the Brian Friel Centre and has been earmarked as a visitor centre. The play is dedicated to "those five brave Glenties women".

When *Dancing at Lughnasa* was made into a film in 1998, there was only one place it could be filmed: Glenties. Its star, Meryl Streep, told the Irish public service broadcaster RTÉ of "an especially wonderful moment up in Donegal where we were in a town and the kids got up at a school and they danced for us. We'd had a little Guinness as well on the way in – it was one of the most magical afternoons of

my life."

The splendour of Donegal

Friel once said that his memories of summer holidays in Glenties are "as intense as if they happened last week". Donegal truly does cast a spell on visitors. Winding your way through the rugged and verdant countryside, it often feels like you have only the rolling hills for company. And yet there's so much life in Donegal, with the people key to making trips here unforgettable. The local pubs are hives of music, chat and storytelling, and traditional crafts, such as tweed making, are flourishing.

In Glenties, keep an eye out for hands-on events such as willow basket-making workshops. Or pop into St Connell's Museum and Heritage Centre on Mill Road, named after St Connell Caol, who founded a monastery on nearby Inishkeel Island in the 6th century. Inside, local history is told through unique artefacts and memorabilia, as well as collections related to Friel and fellow writer Patrick McGill.

The area's appeal is accentuated by great places to stay that allow visitors the chance to enjoy a slower pace of life. The Highlands Hotel in the heart of Glenties town offers easy access to walking routes, such as the Bluestack Way. The hotel even provides packed lunches for those who want to take a long ramble and let go of some of life's stresses and strains.

In nearby Fintown, you'll find the Bird Box, a handcrafted treehouse for two with a cosy bedroom and views of the stunning Glenveagh National Park. Nature also takes centre stage at the Hide at Neadú, an intimate cabin offering optimum views of both Glenveagh and the rugged Derryveagh Mountains. Thanks to its wood-burning stove, it's a delightful spot to stay year-round for a secluded but comfy trip.

For a taste of the Gaeltacht – where, as in Friel's play *Translations*, the Irish language is spoken – head to Gweedore, a 40-minute drive from Glenties. This is a town alive with culture and tradition, and is the largest Irish-speaking district in Ireland. The Amharclann Ghaoth Dobhair

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Brian Friel's Donegal: A landscape of memory and magic



Walking on Carrickfinn Beach, Gweedore Bay, County Donegal.

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theatre here offers everything from music sessions to musicals. There are beautiful beach walks and exceptional sights, such as the derelict Old Church of Dunlewey at the foot of Errigal, in what is known as the Poisoned Glen.

FrielDays – a celebration of Friel

In 2025, a highlight on Ireland's cultural calendar is FrielDays – A Homecoming (2025–2029), curated by Arts Over Borders. This theatrical celebration of Friel and his works, building to the centenary of the great playwright's birth, will present performances of 29 plays across the northwest counties of Donegal, Tyrone, and Derry.

Events begin in August, with five of Friel's most significant plays staged in the places that inspired them. For example, *Dancing at Lughnasa* will be performed at St Columba's School in Glenties, near Laurels Cottage. Translations will take place in the Gaeltacht region of Dunlewey. *Faith Healer*, meanwhile, will be performed in three community halls and a hotel in west Donegal.

The site-specific plays will also be performed at the time of year in which they are set, linking them into Irish calendar traditions like Lughnasa.



Errigal Mountain, Co. Donegal.

There will be Irish-speaking actors, seanchaí storytellers and community-led festivals to add more enrichment to the FrielDays programme.

Meanwhile, more Friel celebrations can be found when Dublin's 3Olympia venue hosts the acclaimed Gate Theatre production of *Dancing at*

Lughnasa from 27 June to 26 July.

Friel rarely spoke of himself, preferring to let his work speak volumes. And through it, Donegal speaks too – a place of profound feeling, enduring stories, and quiet wonder.

Words & Pictures: Ireland.com



Celtic Winter Concert

**Queensland Irish Choir presents
an afternoon of Celtic music and song**

Saturday 26 July 2025

2.00pm

Hills Church Auditorium

79 Queens Road, Everton Hills

Doors Open 1.30 pm

Tickets: <https://www.qldirishchoir.org/events>

\$25 Adults \$10 under 15 years

At the Door – if not previously sold out



**Enquiries
0493 455 487**



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