

The 13th Annual Niel Gow Festival

18th – 20th March 2016

The 13th annual Niel Gow Festival will take place over the weekend of 18th – 20th March in Dunkeld and Birnam. It is a musical celebration of the life of local hero Niel Gow (1727-1807), regarded by many as the patriarch of the Scottish fiddle tradition, and attracts visitors from far and wide. With concerts, workshops, informal sessions and guided walks, there is something for everyone.

The festival begins with a solo fiddle concert at the Royal Dunkeld Hotel on the Friday night. Performers include students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Bernadette Kellerman (Germany) and local fiddler Liam Manion (Pitlochry), plus Northumbrian fiddler Roddy Matthews and, making a return visit, Gordon Gunn from Wick.

The festival is as much a platform for up and coming performers as for established musicians, and the ever popular “open stage” session kicks off on Saturday morning in the main auditorium of the Birnam Institute. This is an opportunity for visiting players young and not so young to take the stage and display their musical talents! Admission is free, and anyone wishing to perform can “sign up” when they arrive.

As usual, many of the weekend performers will also be presenting workshops, a rare opportunity to learn from some of today’s top traditional musicians. And not just fiddle! Other instrumental workshops this year include button accordion, whistle, flute, ‘cello and keyboard.

On Saturday morning, Pete Clark and Ron Shaw (‘cello) will be giving a recital in the wonderful setting of the music room at Murthly Castle. (Places are very limited for this concert, so early booking is recommended!)

The three concerts at the Birnam Institute during the weekend will be varied and exciting. Saturday afternoon features The Blackford Fiddlers, “Young Trad” competition finalist Ryan Young accompanied by multi-instrumentalist Innes Watson, the superb piano playing of Muriel Johnstone and Northumberland/Scottish duo Roddy Matthews and Jim Nichol.

Saturday night’s concert promises to be just as diverse. Alastair Savage takes a break from his orchestral commitments and makes a return visit to Birnam, this time with his quintet. Gordon Gunn will be joined by the ubiquitous keyboard wizard Brian MacAlpine. And Suzanne Houston, with her new 5-piece band “Las”, will present a programme of Scottish and Irish music old and new.

Dunkeld & District Strathspey & Reel Society open the Sunday afternoon concert, which also features duos Douglas Lawrence and Maureen Rutherford followed by Marie Fielding and Tom Orr. To close the concert and the festival, Pete Clark will be joined by Gregor Lowrey (accordion) and Jim Leighton (keyboard).

Informal and unpredictable music sessions in pubs throughout Birnam and Dunkeld are of course a highlight of the festival. The first session of the weekend will begin at 3pm at the Taybank on the Friday afternoon

For visitors who would like to learn a bit more about Dunkeld and its fiddling history, guided walks by David Martin (on Saturday) and Pete Clark (on Sunday) will provide an insight into this bonnie corner of highland Perthshire which inspired Niel Gow over two centuries ago. And the Sunday walkers might just get a cup of soup and a wee dram in Niel Gow's garden!

Tickets (all events) available from the Birnam Institute, and more information on line at: www.niel-gow.co.uk