

Clifden celebrates its

CLIFDEN was bathed in sunshine for the official launch of the Clifden 200 celebrations last weekend – with everything from a street party led by the town's adopted son Ryan Tubridy to the first regatta of traditional boats seen the bay for generations.

The Station House hotel hosted the official launch last Friday with chairman of the Heritage Council Conor Newman spoke at the official launch to a packed house.

County mayor Cllr. Michael Maher was in attendance also and spoke warmly of the great tradition of Galway as the festival county and paid tribute to the local Clifden 200 committee for organizing such a varied and interesting programme.

The main events got underway on Saturday with a well attended seminar on "Connemara before Clifden" which explored the rich early history of Connemara with local archaeologist Michael Gibbons and visiting lecturers Dr Ronan Hennessy (NUIG) and Kevin

Whelan (University of Notre Dame) keeping the large attendance enthralled with the history and geology of the Connemara region.

RTE's Ryan Tubridy got the festive party started on the Market Square on Saturday evening where hundreds of locals and visitors alike came out to join in the music and craic at the gig rig on Saturday.

The loudest cheer was for Brian Cunningham and his dance group, Atlantic Steps, teaching a few Sean Nós steps to the RTE star on stage.

The Atlantic Steps went on to play the Station House Theatre that evening and brought the house down with their own brand of energetic traditional Irish song, music and dance show, again to a full house.

On Sunday Clifden Bay hosted its first traditional boats regatta in generations. This event hosted by the Clifden 2012 Committee and generously supported by Forum Connemara was one of the highlights in a packed weekend of events and activ-

ities. Hundreds thronged the Clifden Boat Club for an exhibition of Currach and Galway Hooker racing on a beautiful day for sailing. Entertainment from Clifden comhaltas group and traditional crafts exhibitions on shore made sure of a fun filled day for the large attendance.

The festival, which continues until Monday, has brought thousands of visitors to the area already and with the bank holiday weather set fair the town is gearing up for a party weekend. Highlights include a street party today (Thursday) with the town's Main Street closed for an open air gathering of the clans with a full programme of music to rock away the referendum blues. Carlistrane's Sean Keane is in concert on Friday in the Station House.

For the energetic the Sky Road 10k challenge takes place on Sunday over what is arguably the most scenic 10k route in Ireland.

Full details of the weekend's events can be found on www.Clifden2012.org.