

My... band

**Fiodhna Hyland, 36,
plays the low whistle
in Abu Dhabi's only
traditional Irish band**

The name of our band is Inis Oirr (pronounced Inisheer). It means "the eastward island" and is named after an island in Ireland. We chose this name because, by a miracle, all of us musicians met in Abu Dhabi, our own eastern island. We were also playing a song called *Inis Oirr* at the time and as Mick, who plays the guitar and mandola, says, we couldn't have called the band *I Buried My Wife And Danced On Her Grave*, another song we were performing.

The band started when Mick Giblin and Ged Palmer, who plays the fiddle, banjo and mandolin, met at a party. After discovering their mutual love of music, they played together all night long. "Until our fingers were bloody," Mick says. Then in 2004, they met me and my husband Pdraig at a Christmas party. Marianne Campbell, our Scottish fiddle player, joined in 2007 and then St John Kelliher, our percussionist, came on board last year. He's the newbie.

It's really unusual that so many accomplished musicians who play traditional Irish music should have met in Abu Dhabi. I play the low whistle and recorded on a family CD. My father is a renowned accordion player called Bobby Gardiner. Marianne used to



Inis Oirr (from left to right):
Ged Palmer, Mick Giblin,
Fiodhna Hyland, Marianne
Campbell, St John Kelliher
and Pdraig Hyland.

play with one of the best Scottish bands ever called Deaf Shephard, while Mick has collaborated with many well-known artists.

When it comes to traditional Irish musicians, it's not six degrees of separation – it's three. We all have mutual friends and colleagues and so this makes it even more special that we met here. If you were in Ireland, the chances of getting a group like this together wouldn't be any more likely.

We have a regular gig at the British Club where we have a core group of followers. We've also played for the president of Ireland at the Emirates Palace. We find that people from the region love the music too, especially the faster tunes they can dance to.

We will be playing at the Irish Village in Dubai on St Patrick's Day [Tuesday March 17]. And on the 19th we're playing at the Irish Society's St Patrick's Ball at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Abu Dhabi.

The tunes keep us sane and bring a little bit of Ireland to the UAE. We all miss the tradition of jamming with fellow musicians back home. On occasion, the lack of music will hit you like a kick in the gut, and this group helps that.

Most importantly, we've all met friends that we hope to know for ever. This wouldn't have happened without the music.

As told to John Mather