



Fiddlin' Around

The Saline Fiddlers

Volume 21, Number 1

www.salinefiddlers.com

Fall 2013

A New Day for the Fiddlers!

Building on the success of Bob Phillips and Ben Culver, Brad Phillips has stepped up to become the 3rd Artistic Director the Fiddlers have had in their more than 20 year history.

With a new director, changes are always inevitably in store. The first and most noticeable change is the black hats have been put on the shelf. This is the first step in modernizing the look of the group and many feel that it is easier to see the faces of the Fiddlers.

Brad is also attempting to have less of a stage presence himself. Traditionally, the Artistic Director has been on stage during performances. Brad is encouraging the Fiddlers to feel an ownership in the show and if he is on stage leading the performances, then the kids won't learn how to handle the inevitable quirks that are often a part of a live show. He trusts the kids to be themselves and show the audiences what a great group of young musicians the Fiddlers are!

People may be wondering why they haven't heard about a fall Hometown Show. That is because Brad wants to channel the energy into one big show each year. There is a lot of excitement about the show this year—not only because it is their only show, but because the show will be recorded and released as a CD. This will be the second time a hometown show has been recorded and released on CD. The first time was in 2002 and the CD is titled "Hometown Live". Brad says this a wonderful chance to capture the Fiddlers for what they are—kids being kids, fresh and uninhibited.

Brad says that he is continually inspired by the kids and is grateful he can share experiences with them as they enrich each other's lives. He says, "I am grateful to have this opportunity to pass along the knowledge and experiences I have gained throughout my career as a musician while giving back to the organization that gave me so much when I was a student."

20th Annual Hometown Show

Saturday, March 8 at 7pm
Saline High School Auditorium.
Tickets will go on sale in February.

A Tour of a Lifetime

Scotland, England and Wales

by Susan Cummings

For 15 days, the 27 members of the Saline Fiddlers were honored to have the opportunity to be youth ambassadors to Great Britain during their "Isle of Smiles" 2013 summer tour. They were eager to trade the sunny Michigan summer for the cool, rainy weather so typical in the British Isles and to share their particular style of fiddle music with so many welcoming and enthusiastic new people.

The Fiddlers performed 10 shows during their 15 day tour for many different audiences in many different venues. The first performance was in Ayr, Scotland where they were joined by the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra. AFO is a group similar to the Fiddlers—they are a school age (10-18 years) fiddle group founded in 1982. The Fiddlers toured Scotland in 1999 and performed with AFO then too—14 years later the pairing is still magical—the reaction from the audience was wild!

The AFO treated the Fiddlers to their first ceilidh after the show. A ceilidh is a party with music and dancing. The dancing is a bit like our square dancing—the dances are called out and are danced in groups or sets. The music is traditional fiddle music. Ian (guitar, 2013) commented, "How many people get to try ceilidh dancing with an authentic Scottish fiddle band?" The Fiddlers all loved the ceilidh and Keith (mandolin, 2013) says, "We should make ceilidhs a tradition here in Saline too." The Fiddlers were taught and led through the dances by members of the AFO. Could there be a better way to meet and mingle with kids from Scotland?

The second performance was in Edinburgh, Scotland where the Fiddlers were joined by the Lothian Schools Strathspey and Reel Society. Alisha (cello, 2016) says, "Playing shows with several different Scottish youth fiddle groups was a



The Fiddlers with their Brecon, Wales hosts

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Congratulations

Ben and Jen Culver
June 14, 2013



*On a picture perfect, made-to-order Friday evening,
Ben and Jen were married
at the Stone Arch in Saline, Michigan.*

Jen is a psychologist for Saline Area Schools and first met Ben while observing a student in his classroom. They later met through an on-line dating service. Ben asked her out for coffee and she said, "Yes". Nearly a year later they became engaged on Valentine's Day.

There were many Fiddlers present to help celebrate the day. Handling music and sound reinforcement were several section leaders and alumni: Eric Wharton (Bass, 2013), Cameron Tubbs (Cello, 2013), Mellissa Ungkuldee (Violin, 2013), Louie Remenapp (Violin, 2013), Brad Phillips (Violin, 2003 and Assistant Director, 2007-2013 and current Artistic Director), Jesse Mason (Guitar, 1998 and Assistant Director, 2003-2006), and JJ Wharton (Tech, 2013).

Fiddler Event Manager (2010-current) Priscilla Olsen took on the role of wedding planner and coordinated all the details. Dan Klos (Tech, 2003 and Tech Director from 2004-2007 and current board member) was an usher. Groomsmen were Barney Culver (Cello, 1997), Doug Rhine (Event Manager 2003-2010), and Reid Smith (Cello, 2001 and Assistant Director 2001-2005 and 2010-2012).

A dessert reception followed the ceremony to celebrate the "Sweetness of Love". The wedding cake was a special Strawberry Short Cake creation made by Fiddler mom, Judee Gniewek.

Ben is well known for his collection of bouncy balls—so each guest was presented with a bouncy ball inscribed with their names and wedding date to take home.

The couple spent a wonderful week honeymooning on Mackinaw Island.

The Passing of the Mic

by Taña Huyck

After 19 musical years, Ben Culver finally decided it was time to hang up his black hat and retire from the Fiddlers.

Ben has worked with the Fiddlers since its inception in 1994; first performing as a student, then serving as a Music Education Intern, Sound Engineer, and Assistant Director, before finally taking on the role of Artistic Director in 2003.

Widely sought as a composer, performer, educator, event producer, audio engineer, and clinician for his expertise in incorporating fiddling and "alternative string playing" into the classroom, Ben counts Fiddlers' founder Bob Phillips as one of his primary influences in life.

In April of 2005 Ben was awarded the "LEWIE" award from the Arts Council Lake Erie West. This award recognizes Ben's achievements in developing excellent string musicians through the use of alternative styles of music, especially American fiddling in the Saline Schools' orchestra program and in the non-profit Saline Fiddlers group.

A farewell picnic was thrown for Ben with many Fiddlers and their families, past and present, in attendance. He was presented with a floor lamp that incorporated a full size violin in the design from the Fiddler Board as well as many cards and other gifts from the Fiddler families.

On a sunny August afternoon the Fiddlers said good-bye to the graduating seniors and to Mr. Culver. There were many heartfelt words expressed by everyone present. At the end of his final "circle time", Ben passed the baton... or in the case the cordless mic over to the new Artistic Director, Mr. Brad Phillips.

Ben's 19 years of service has impacted many lives and the course of this group. We wish Ben well as he pursues new musical and life interests.



Brad Phillips, new Artistic Director humbly accepting the symbol of Fiddler leadership (a cordless mic) from former Artistic Director, Ben Culver

Welcome to the New Class of Fiddlers!



Hailey—Violin, 2016

Hailey has wanted to be a Fiddler since she moved to Saline in 5th grade. She plays trumpet in the marching band and enjoys singing and performing in musical and dramatic stage productions.

Hudson—Cello, 2017

Hudson is brother to Fiddler bass player, Tristan. He decided he wanted to join the group himself as he was finishing 7th grade. Hudson enjoys playing football, baseball and riding his bike. He likes being outside and enjoys performing.



Kirk—Bass, 2017

Kirk has been playing the stand up double bass in the school orchestra since 5th grade and is enjoying learning the electric bass while performing with the Fiddlers.

Hannah—Violin, 2017

Hannah wanted to be a Fiddler because it looked like they were having so much fun on stage and she wanted to be able to play as well as they could. Hannah also plays volleyball.



Brandon—Sound Tech, 2016

Sometimes the best things are a surprise! Brandon didn't know he wanted to be a Fiddler until Mr. Culver asked him. Brandon is a fanatic about New York City and their sports.

A Special Friend

The Saline Fiddlers are sad that their friend Tom Vasbinder died on October 18. The Fiddlers first found out about Tom while he was in the Saline Evangelical Home. Tom suffered from a disease that made him unable to communicate himself—so his wife placed a sign by his bed letting everyone know that what he wanted most was to have his favorite music playing on his CD player—The Saline Fiddlers!

The Fiddlers heard about this and visited Tom in his room and played for him, which he enjoyed with a huge smile and his toes tapping. Tom's wife Leda said, *"As his illness progressed, we discovered that the music of the young Saline Fiddlers made those challenges easier to handle and provided a way for Tom to continue to express the joy and life that remained in him, even when he was unable to speak. When the challenges became too hard for him, the happy songs of these young people took him to a place where he was able to find the courage to continue on and a way to join in and revitalize."*

Sadly, Tom died just 12 days after the Fiddlers visited him. The visit meant so much to him that his wife asked the group to perform at his funeral too. Leda says, *"These young people are able to reach a special place with their music that is unknown to most of us. Tom and I have been touched by these sincere and exceptional musicians. Their music eased our worries, comforted Tom in his lonely and most frustrating moments, and brought him peace and strength when he and others were unable to find a way—and they did it from their hearts. I will always be grateful to them and to their parents and teachers who surely have guided them to be the kind, giving, and accomplished individuals that they are."*

The Fiddlers are grateful that the family requested that memorials be given to the Fiddlers in lieu of flowers. The Fiddler family will miss Tom and are comforted knowing that their music brought him happiness.

Another Successful Event

On Wednesday, October 30, the Fiddler parents and staff completed their third highly successful fundraiser to benefit all things Fiddler. The Fiddlers were first offered the opportunity in 2011 to coordinate and serve pizza and drinks to over 1,600 students from southeast Michigan at the JUST BUILD IT! Construction Career Expo that is sponsored by the Washtenaw Contractor's Association. JUST BUILD IT! introduces students in grades 8-12 to architecture, engineering, project management, the skilled building trades, and other careers in the construction industry.

Gretchen Waters, executive director of WCA and Fiddler alum mom (Ian, 2010 and Amelia, 2013), with the approval of the WCA board of directors, was able to offer this opportunity to the Fiddlers after the previous caterers were unavailable in 2011. Gretchen had experienced the enthusiasm and abilities of the Fiddler group for several years and was confident they could easily accomplish this task and use it to raise some much needed funds. They did so well the first year that they also took on the additional task of catering a nice lunch for the exhibitors the following years.

Fiddler parents, alum parents, staff and board members all stepped up and pitched in to serve 450 pizzas to almost 1,700 students, and to prepare and set out a lovely lunch buffet for the WCA staff and the over 140 exhibitors that come in and donate their time and materials to help kids and show them career possibilities in the construction industry. All in all, a satisfying and successful event for everyone!

The New Fiddler Family of Directors



Top to Bottom:
Brad Kuykendall—Assistant Director
Luke Panning—Assistant Director
Brad Phillips—Artistic Director
Louie Remenapp—Intern

Brad Kuykendall—Assistant Artistic Director

Another former Saline Fiddler, Brad is an emerging violinist and mandolinist in the Michigan music scene. Since graduating, music has taken him to festivals and music academies in the Czech Republic and England, as well as numerous places across the United States. Brad is currently pursuing a degree in Violin Performance at U of M. Brad says, *"It is great to be working with the Fiddlers again. I'm excited to be working with my former teacher, Brad Phillips, an outstanding musician that helped me so much in developing as a musician. The Fiddlers was such a fun group to be a part of when I was in high school, and I'm excited to get a chance to share what I know with them and to get them excited about this music."*

Louie Remenapp—Intern Louie graduated just last spring from Saline High School and the Saline Fiddlers. He has been accepted at the highly acclaimed Berklee School of Music in Boston to study violin performance and audio engineering—but he deferred because the school didn't have any available housing to offer him in September. He will be moving to Boston to start the winter term when housing will become available. He has been busy taking classes at Washtenaw Community College (all credits will transfer) and, fortunately for the Fiddlers, very busy helping Brad.

Brad Phillips—Artistic Director Brad is a true product of the Fiddlers. Brad first heard the Fiddlers perform a year after they first organized. He was in the 4th grade at Pleasant Ridge Elementary School in Saline when the Fiddlers visited and performed for the students. Brad immediately dropped his vague plans of taking up the saxophone like his older brother. Brad says that the violin felt good and made sense; he knew they were meant for one another.

Brad's musical genius and enthusiasm was immediately recognized by his teachers and he was assisted to find the best teachers and camps to help him along. He graduated from U of M School of Music with a degree in Jazz & Contemporary Improvisation in 2007. He performs with bands and artists such as Millish, Seth & May, and Brian Vander Ark. He is also on faculty at the Mark O'Connor strings camp. Brad produces, arranges and teaches all things music.

Brad says that he really didn't find his own voice until he met Jeff Daniels, a Michigan native from Chelsea, well known for stage, television and movie acting and, most recently, for his music. Brad first met him in 2007 and their friendship grew from there. Brad has performed, toured and recorded with him. Jeff offered him the chance to grow—musically, artistically and personally. He says, *"Jeff gave me trust. He trusted my musical knowledge and training—and that gave me confidence. He believed in me."*

He has taken on the special project of producing Jeff Daniels' new CD (yet to be named) that will be released in the spring of 2014. Brad is not only directing this effort, but he also is playing on most of the tracks. Brad will also be performing with Jeff Daniels, Onstage and Unplugged, at Jeff's Purple Rose Theatre in Chelsea over the holidays. It will be a seven show engagement from 12/26 through 12/31. (Tickets are on sale now.)

Brad is married to Kate, a nurse at U of M hospital and they have two children; Ally, who is 7 years old and in 2nd grade, and Will, a cheerful 4 year old preschooler. His family keeps him busy, happy and grounded while he teaches, performs, records and, most importantly, directs the Saline Fiddlers.

Luke Panning—Assistant Artistic Director Luke moved to the Ann Arbor area in early August from Holland, MI with his fiancée, Katherine while she attends medical school at U of M. Luke just graduated from Hope College with degrees in music and business management. Luke says that he knew about the Fiddlers, but it was actually his mom who suggested that he contact the group to see if he could become involved in some fashion.

Luke has been playing the violin since he was five years old and began studying fiddle music when he was nine. He has toured the country with his family band, Fiddlefire, recorded for national artists, won fiddle contests and taught fiddling. He is also a non-commissioned officer in the 126 Army Band in which he tours with the concert band, marching band, and the country/rock ensemble as an electric violinist, vocalist, and synth/keyboardist.

Luke just accepted a job offer from Edward Jones. He is excited to be asked to join their Financial Career Development Program, but is sad that he will have to take a break from the Fiddlers for a couple months while he goes to St. Louis to attend the training classes. He is already looking forward to returning to his new Fiddler home after he completes his training.

Luke says, *"I love what the Fiddlers do—keeping the tradition alive. I love working with Brad Phillips. He has an extreme wealth of knowledge and skill. I trust him and his experience with the Fiddlers; that he doing all the right things for the group."*

Tour—continued from page 1

great experience, as we were able to interact with them and share cultures, such as their ceilidh dances which they learn from a young age!"

The Fiddlers had to bid a fond farewell to Scotland and their new friends after that in order to head south to Rochdale, England and their next performance at the Healey Primary School. This concert was a favorite amongst the Fiddlers and their adult chaperones. Fiddler mom Judee Gniewek explained *"this was an interactive concert and included an instrument demonstration. The primary students are ages 4-11 and they were curious to see the 'Americans'."*



A young primary school student trying out a mandolin

The concert began with an explanation of the instruments and the type of music the Fiddlers play. A few students were selected to come up and try out each different instrument with a Fiddler. Judee Gniewek commented, *"Many were shy and afraid to play—but with encouragement from their Fiddler, they each smiled as they played a violin, viola, cello, mandolin, guitar, or the drums. The biggest smile came from the student working with Ian Kaferle when he perched his black Fiddler cowboy hat on the young student's head as he tried his guitar."* The performance finished up with a lot of lively tunes like "Big Brown Trout" and "Buffalo Gals." One young student exclaimed that she loved it *"because it made my heart beat fast!"*

They were scheduled for another show that evening just a few miles away in Whitworth at a dinner theater venue called The Riverside. Andrea Parker from Rochdale said, *"You played at my daughter's primary school that afternoon and she loved your performance so much that she insisted I take her to The Riverside that evening. We really enjoyed your show!"* The Fiddlers were joined by three local music groups that evening: That's All Folk!, The Jaywalkers and Cèol Tire. Andrew (violin, 2013) commented, *"This was probably one of my favorite gigs on this tour. The audience was fun and the venue was beautiful. The people there appreciated our music and the humor in our show. I also enjoyed listening to the other acts that evening. Overall it was one of the more memorable gigs I have played with the Fiddlers."*

The next evening the Fiddlers again joined That's All Folk! and Cèol Tire along with the Whardle High Folk Group in Rochdale. This time they were able to enjoy workshops with each other before the show. The Fiddlers taught and led the other groups through playing, singing and dancing "Buffalo Gals." "Buffalo Gals" has been a favorite since the Fiddlers were founded—almost 20 years ago now. The other groups returned the favor by teaching the Fiddlers some of their favorite tunes and dances.

An early start was in order the next day so the Fiddlers could get to Wales and Saline's sister city of Brecon! The Fiddlers were due by early afternoon at Brecon's beautiful

solar powered Theatr Brycheiniog on the Brecon Canal. It took a lot longer getting there than anyone anticipated, and since it was a free show for the school children of Brecon, it was imperative the Fiddlers arrive and finish the performance before their school buses had to take them home. Fiddler mom Anne Wharton said, *"When we finally arrived, the Fiddlers sprang into action and effected one the fastest set-up/sound checks in SF history... We were rewarded by a warm, appreciative audience who swayed back and forth to "Hoedown" and sang "Lollipop" along with the Fiddlers."*

The Fiddlers celebrated the 4th of July with a short jaunt to Cardiff. Cardiff is the capital of Wales and home to the Millennium Centre, the #1 visited tourist attraction in Wales. They were honored to be invited to perform on the Glanfa Stage inside the Millennium Centre.

One of the most eagerly anticipated performances of the tour was in the 900 year old Brecon Cathedral. August (guitar, 2014) said, *"I remember entering the cathedral and taking in the beauty. I was astounded that we had the honor of performing in this historic venue."* This performance was a benefit concert for the Mayor of Brecon's charities and to help fund the Cathedral Choir's trip to the Saline in 2014. The Fiddlers were joined by the Cathedral Choir, the Church Primary School Choir, the Cathedral Consort and the South Powys Youth Orchestra. The Fiddlers discovered that Brecon's mayor is a Michael Jackson fan so they included their "Michael Jackson Memorial Medley" in their set for the evening. Bailee (violin, 2014) says, *"My favorite gig was in the Brecon Cathedral. It is an absolutely beautiful place to play. We had a large audience that enjoyed the show very much. I had so much fun performing that night!"*

The last performance in Brecon was outdoors on an unusually warm and sunny Welsh day at the Mountain Cen-



Performing in the historic Brecon Cathedral in Wales

tre in the Brecon Beacons National Park. For this performance the Fiddlers were joined by the Aberhonddu Male Voice Choir. Alisha (cello, 2016) says *"We were able to view the breathtaking mountains even during our performance, so I really enjoyed that venue."* The Brecon mayor, the town clerk, many tourists and Brecon town

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Summer Fiddle Camp

by Taña Huyck



Fiddle camp was the first assignment for new Artistic Director Brad Phillips and new Assistant Director Luke Panning. The change in leadership brought several new things to camp. Brad woke all Fiddlers up with his attempt to play Reveille on the saxophone while standing on a tree stump in the middle of camp. Truthfully, the saxophone sounded like it was being tortured but the kids all looked forward to it and were up just to witness the amount of work Brad had to use to get that poor saxophone to make a sound.

Luke brought us morning calisthenics from his Army training. Before breakfast the Fiddlers spent a half an hour doing various exercises and yoga. Some broke a sweat and all were ready to eat! The first day of camp was the first time any of the Fiddlers had met Luke. He was well accepted and all were bummed that he was unable to be there for the last day of camp. So much so, that they made Brad lead morning calisthenics!

Camp was held once again at Whispering Lakes Resort in the Irish Hills and the Fiddlers immediately got to work on new songs; Three Tunes in G, King of Pain, What Makes You Alive and Men of Erin. Now that they are a smaller group and without a drummer, they also played through the past music to see what they could perform with confidence. Several alumni came to help teach the music; Scott Kendall (Bass, 2006), Louie Remenapp (Violin, 2013), Cameron Tubbs (Cello, 2013), Patrick Aretha (Viola, 2013), and JJ Wharton (Tech, 2013).

The theme for camp was, "Owning It:" Own the music, Own your performance—both individually and as a group, and Own your reputation. The students are the face of the Fiddlers and the audience wants to see them having a good time and enjoying the music. They also want to see them act responsibly and professionally. Brad and Luke both put a huge emphasis on watching each other and "feeling the music".....don't just play the notes.

To further punctuate "Owning it", Brad invited his friend and fellow musician, Tyler Duncan, to perform a private concert. Together they played music they had performed before and also made up songs on the spot to show the Fiddlers how to "watch and feel" music. Tyler then had all the students create a piece of music together. The cellos gave a starting note and each individual section as well as each individual Fiddler added their own notes and rhythm. Together they created a beautiful masterpiece that they were all inspired by and proud of. They will tell you it was one of their favorite parts of camp.

As the sun went down each night the energy level went up! Luke, who is also a D.J., put on a dance party Monday night. The Fiddlers did all kinds of group dances and even some swing dancing! Next year he plans to bring his disco ball. Tuesday was karaoke to Mama Mia! By the end of the night all Fiddlers were behind the mic singing. Afterwards, they all enjoyed s'mores by the campfire.

Fiddler Camp started with much apprehension. Fifteen seniors had just graduated and there were new directors but after just three days it was apparent to everyone the Fiddlers were still strong, still ready to perform and just as proud of their music!



Morning calisthenics with Luke



Taña Huyck is pleased to take on the role of Event Manager. Taña has a busy life with her husband, Phil and their four children – two of them being Fiddlers, Tristan (bass, 2015) and Hudson (cello, 2017). She is the English Language Learner (ELL) Tutor at Saline High School and enjoys music and traveling. She loves working with kids and is looking forward to doing

some traveling with the Fiddlers.



The Fiddlers have engaged the services of **Dave Schall** of Dave Schall Acoustic. Dave comes in as needed to train the group on use of their sound equipment. He also works with the Fiddler student sound techs and travels with the group to gigs when needed. The Fiddlers are very fortunate to have such an experienced audio engineer helping

them. Check him out at daveschallacoustic.com.

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Performing at the Mountain Centre in the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales

residents were in attendance that day. After several days of admiring the sheep covering the hillsides throughout Wales, David Olsen, the Fiddlers' Executive Director joked that *"over 1,000 sheep also enjoyed the show."* It was a beautiful way to finish their visit in Brecon.

One last performance was scheduled in Stotsfold, England shortly before the Fiddlers left for home. School students opened the show with medleys of popular contemporary tunes before the Fiddlers closed the show with their usual fun performance. Dowon (violin, 2016) commented that *"everyone was very tired because it was almost the end of tour, and it was our very last gig... but in the end it turned out to be my favorite gig out of all the ones that I have ever played in. Everyone put in one final push of energy and we sounded great. The crowd had a lot of energy and it increased our already high energy levels. At the end, we were talking about how this was a great way to end an amazing tour."*

Ten performances is a lot, but the Fiddlers managed to squeeze in lots of fun. The first day took the Fiddlers right by the vacation destination of England, The Lake District, famous for their lakes, forests and mountains. It was a gorgeous place to stop. Dowon (violin, 2016) commented, *"It was rainy and misty—my favorite kind of weather. There was just enough fog that everything seemed mysterious, yet we could still see the mountains and lakes around us. We walked along a lake and through gardens, but my favorite part was all the old houses that we saw. They had ivy running up the sides and little black fences surrounding tiny gardens. I decided that I would like to live in a house like that someday."*

In Ayr, Scotland the Fiddlers had a chance to visit the Robert Burns Museum. Robert Burns is the beloved national poet of Scotland and a native of Ayr. Afterwards, the Fiddlers were escorted to the Ayr town center where St. John's Tower stands. St. John's Tower is the location of the first Scottish Parliament held in 1315 by Robert the Bruce. The tower was opened especially for the Fiddlers so they had the opportunity to climb to the top and take in the spectacular views of the town and the Firth of Clyde.

Time in the ancient city of Edinburgh, Scotland was a must! There is so much to see that choices had to be

made. With the help of hop-on/hop-off tour buses, the castle, the royal yacht Britannia and shopping the Royal Mile were some top choices. Keith (mandolin, 2013) commented, *"Edinburgh is an exciting city that has so much to see, there was no way that we could do it all. I've decided that I will return there someday so that I can really spend the time to appreciate the history and attractions the city has to offer."*



Fiddlers walking down the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, Scotland

Old Trafford Stadium in Manchester, England, home to the famous Manchester United soccer team was also on the itinerary. Amelia (violin, 2013) said, *"We were shown the locker rooms, the team benches, and, of course, the field itself. Knowing we were on holy ground, where the greatest players such as David Beckham and Wayne Rooney had walked and played—we were all a bit awestruck."*



Inside Old Trafford Stadium

In Cardiff, Wales, the Fiddlers were invited to tour the Welsh National Assembly to learn the history of Welsh politics and how it developed into what it is today. Another stop was at St. Fagan's Museum, just outside the city and is a bit like our Greenfield Village. There is a castle on the grounds that was built in 1580 and surrounded by gardens that were laid out in 1902.

A favorite time was the day the Fiddlers got to relax and explore the town of Brecon, Wales. Paris (violin, 2013) explained, *"We split up into small groups and wandered about our sister city for most of the day. Even though Brecon is different than Saline, it has the same kind of homey feel, but the streets are narrower and there are a*

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Tour—continued from page 9



The Fiddler girls on the streets of Brecon, Wales

lot more shops and restaurants. We rented a boat and took a slow, lazy trip down the canal which wound through town and then to the outskirts of Brecon where there were many walking paths, nature trails, and farmland. It was a lovely day.” Andrew (violin, 2013) said, “One of the coolest things that I saw in Brecon, and really on the whole trip, was the cathedral. There is an awesome Norman baptismal font that dates from about 832 in the back of the church and is still in use today! The coolest part of the cathedral though was going up into the bell tower. We had

to wear helmets since the ceiling of the staircase was so low—people were definitely shorter back then. The last stop was the roof where I took some beautiful shots of Brecon and the surrounding Beacon mountains.”

Fiddlers love to have a play day on a beach—and Wales



Overlooking Rhossili Bay, Wales

has many beautiful beaches to choose from. Rhossili Bay Beach was the top choice because it was voted the #1 beach in Wales. August (guitar, 2013) says, “After a beautiful drive through the Welsh countryside, we approached the shore of the sea. The beach was unlike anything I had laid my eyes on before. The level sand was surrounded by steep cliffs of green. We took a walk down to the beach where it met the cliff. Some of us ran and frolicked on the beach while others climbed the rocks discovering caves and crustaceans. I could have explored the sands for several more hours, but the sun was beginning to set and we had to end our visit. If I ever return to Wales, I will certainly spend a day at Rhossili Bay.” Bailee (violin, 2014) enthused, “I loved Rhossili Bay! It was so beautiful! That day was so nice and relaxing—to be able to hang out together on the beach and then afterwards to eat a lovely meal on top of the cliffs looking over the beach. It was my favorite day of all this tour!

The Fiddlers had some time for a short hike in the Brecon Beacons before their performance which took them

amongst the sheep across the Mynydd Illtyd Commons to a high point overlooking the Usk Valley. On the other side of the valley was a patchwork of fields spread out as far as the eye could see. The Fiddlers were all very taken with that view as there is nothing to compare here in the US. The guides thought that was funny because if they just turned around, there was a lovely view of the mountains—in their minds, that was the unique view.

Early the next morning, the Fiddlers sadly had to leave Brecon to begin their trip to London. There was time for a quick stop in Stratford-Upon-Avon and a tour of William Shakespeare’s birthplace. The Fiddlers especially enjoyed the reenactment of a scene from “Taming of the Shrew” performed by Shakespearean actors outside in the gardens. Alisha (cello, 2016) said, “We were able to connect it to our 9th grade English classes!”

The final day of tour was spent in London. In order to make the best use of the short amount of time left, a special Harrod’s tour was arranged. This included the exclusive use of a vintage open top double decker tour bus and a private tour guide. The Fiddlers made use of the “Tube” to make their way into central London and met the tour bus in Piccadilly Circus. The guide showed them many famous landmarks such as Big Ben, the London Eye and the hospital where the new baby Prince George would be born. The Tower of London to view the crown jewels, the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, a boat ride on the River Thames and visit to St. Paul’s Cathedral were all on the schedule. The Fiddlers were dropped off at the end of the day at the landmark Harrod’s department store for browsing and shopping before they caught the Tube back to their hotel for a final night in Great Britain.

The 15 days seems like a whirlwind when the Fiddlers reflect back on tour. They met so many new people, explored so many different places, and experienced so many new customs that, for many, it is hard to pick out a favorite. Fiddler mom Susan Cummings says, “The whole tour was wonderful—I only have fun and happy memories.”



Fiddlers with the Tower Bridge in London, England



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The Saline Fiddlers are
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 20th Annual
**Hometown
 Show**

Saturday, March 8, 2014
7:00pm
Saline High School Auditorium

Guest Artist TBA

Tickets will go on sale in February

*The Fiddlers are especially excited
 that this show will be recorded and
 released in the spring on CD!*