



A squadron of Hurricanes flies overhead in this painting made to honour the wartime experiences of a friend's father.

## Millar's just as passionate about this other talent

By LAKE BARNES  
CRUISE REPORT

In the Irish spirit of the week, the Finner Things Gallery at Shawinigan Lake invited everyone's favourite leprechaun, Will Millar, to showcase his music and his new love, painting, in a special show Saturday.

The former Irish Rover was in grand form, singing and playing Irish favourites with pal Chuck McCandless, greeting old friends and making new ones and talking about the paintings he had on display.

These show a wonderful range, with the artist finding his subjects in his memories and his travels all over the world.

One striking painting near a

window shows a Second World War scene with a flight of Hurricanes in the sky and an air force despatch rider in his motorcycle on the ground.

It's special because it was painted with a particular person in mind, Millar said.

A Shawinigan Lake friend, Doug Taylor, saw on a visit that Millar had a nice old Triumph Spitfire motorcycle and offered to restore it if Millar would do a painting of his father in return.

"He gave me a little black and white strip of his father on a motorcycle and I thought, 'What am I going to do with this?' I asked him to tell me about his dad and found he later went on to the Hurricanes

and he was serving on the Cliffs of Dover.

"So I did research on what the Hurricanes looked like, got some old pictures of the White Cliffs of Dover and of despatch riders. I added the guy with the Royal Enfield rifle."

Memories are long and careful research will pay dividends as viewers will be pleased with accuracy, Millar said. "I wanted to get it accurate because I thought some old guy would come along and say, 'This isn't right!'"

The reaction of his friend was validation enough, Millar said. "When he came, he stood stock still and said, 'That's my Dad!'"

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Millar sings Puff the Magic Dragon for some children who came to see his show.

## Pub seat just for grandma

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"So I captured his father. His father had a lovely face — an easy man to paint. I even wrote to England, and sent this photo to the British Vintage Motorcycle Association. They sent back saying they thought the motorcycle was a sixteen-inch Norton, that's what the RAF usually used. I thought, 'Right on!' It was great fun doing all this, getting the White Cliffs in there, and the squadron. I always think it's early evening in this picture."

Elsewhere in the gallery, a fine painting of a group of old gentlemen in a pub drew many eyes.

That canvas tells a little of Millar's own history. "That little pub was next door to our house where we grew up."

The proximity was a great temptation to his father and his brother, despite strict closing-time laws for pubs in Ireland.

"There was a wee door with a little window on the side, and on a Sunday or after

hours, they'd send my grandmother, old Liza Jane, to knock on that window. She'd say, 'I'll have six pints of Guinness,' and they'd hand it out to her through the little window."

Liza Jane got her own back, he is pointing to the wall behind the man in a painting. "Every morning, right over here, there was a wee sing and my grandmother was the only woman who drank in that pub. That was reserved for her. If any else would stagger in there, we'd all see 'em out of there, that's Liza Jane's. She'd come in every day of her life for a pint of Guinness and a shot of Irish Whiskey and for afternoon she'd sit there, sippin' and drinkin' and takin' 'erself. That's what the pub was."

There are interesting details in a Millar painting. "You notice how I got just right rings on the glasses as the lads get down and, if you look, this old boy is reading the Irish Times and right next to him the other is reading the Belfast Telegraph."



Millar raises a glass to a slice of his childhood — the pub next door.