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Celtic Woman
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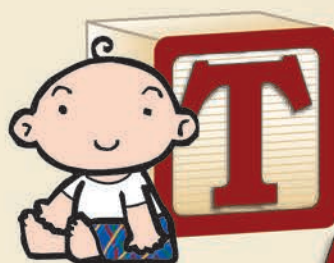
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Fáilte!

Celts love to talk about the weather.

In the Gaelic mythology of Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man, the Cailleach Bhéara is an "old hag" with influence over the weather. In Scottish lore, she brings the first winter snows to the land, washing her great plaid - féileadh-mór - in the Whirlpool of Coire Bhreacain. In Ireland she is associated with the Beara Peninsula in the southwestern region, and some say the old Irish poem "Lament of the Old Woman of Beara" is about the Cailleach.

Even recent Scottish research suggests that the Celts' flaming red hair may be influenced by the weather where the damp climate has provoked a genetic change stimulated by a lack of vitamin D.

Our early ancestors honored the forces of nature as evidenced by the erection of stone circles and henges aligned to winter and summer solstices and seasonal festivals such as Beltane (May 1st) and Samhain (November 1st). So, be it climate change or the start of a good conversation, weather is something that Celtic people know and love to discuss.

"What's your weather like today?" opened a recent conversation I had with a delightful lady from Eire's Beara Peninsula. Sue Booth-Forbes promotes Ireland like no other, and claims the Beara Peninsula stands alone with the rugged beauty of its shoreline mixed with architectural influences of the Vikings of centuries past.

We talked about arriving there from the Wild Atlantic Way in the country's west, and of enjoying the beauty of the countryside along Ireland's Ancient East, where rests a rugged and ragged coastline.

Our conversation ended with typical Irish hospitality, "Make sure you visit me when (not if) you are in Beara and I'll show you around".

In this issue, our Managing Editor Stephen Patrick Clare travels the harbor communities from Dublin to Cork, where past and present - Celts, Vikings, Anglo-Normans and, today, people from all over the world - live side by side amidst the ever-changing coastal climate.

Elsewhere in this edition, Alexander MacDonald provides a glimpse into the politics of the Vatican in the 1700s where you will find Bonnie Prince Charlie and the last of the Stuart kings resting among the Popes of Rome.

Enjoy and May God Bless!

Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher



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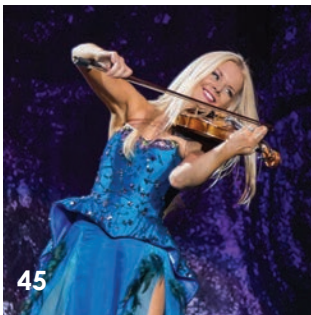
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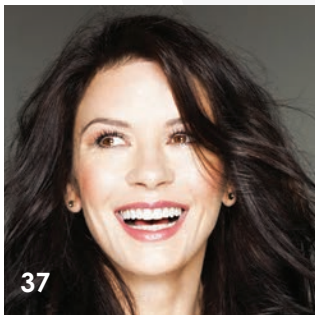
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Our April cover shot showcases the peace and tranquility of Ireland's Ancient East



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Scottish whisky gets left out of 2016 World Whiskies of the Year

Some scotch lovers are feeling snubbed after a Canadian whisky - Crown Royal Northern Harvest Rye - was named "world's best" by Jim Murray's Whisky Bible. Murray, a writer and whisky expert, reportedly sampled over 100 whiskies before narrowing it down. "To say this is a masterpiece is barely doing it justice," he noted of the Crown Royal rye. Although Scotland is world-renowned for its whisky, 2016 is the second year in a row that another country's brand took the top spot. What's more, not a single bottle of scotch is noted in the top five World Whiskies of the Year. However, the Irish Midleton Dair Ghaelach came in at number three. The other acclaimed bottles hail from the United States and Japan.

Castle in Brittany up for sale by luxury real estate agency

Who hasn't dreamt about living in a castle? It could happen...but first you might need a few million dollars. The château d'Epinay is located in the town of Champeaux, Brittany, and it's for sale. The castle takes its name from Simon d'Epinay, who belonged to the French-Breton nobility. It was built on the site of the 13th century fortress and also includes a 35-acre park. The interior of the castle has 25 rooms, including 10 living rooms. In addition, the property has stone outbuildings which consist of stables, garages and apartments. Barnes International, the agency selling the property, is not disclosing the price, but it is being estimated at € 3.5 million.



Rare humpback whale sighting off the coast of Cornwall

Humpback whales are only spotted off the Cornish coast every two years or so. However, two of the marine mammals recently appeared one morning for over an hour in St Ives Bay. St Ives' coastguards and wildlife enthusiasts were excited by the sighting, as the whales were just 150 yards from land. The larger whale was close to 45 feet in length - likely a male. Its smaller companion was either a female or a youngster. This is the second rare whale sighting in Cornwall's waters within five months. Back in the fall, a blue whale was seen and photographed off the Cornish coast - reportedly the first time a blue whale has been photographed within English waters.

Singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran records hit single in Irish language

Pop star Ed Sheeran has re-recorded his song "Thinking Out Loud" with an Irish twist. Thanks to some help from fellow musicians, the single was translated and recorded in Irish Gaelic, or Gaeilge. The singer-songwriter was born in England, as were his parents, but the family is of Irish lineage. Although he isn't fluent in Gaeilge, Sheeran is no stranger to the language - he has a Gaeilge tattoo on his right arm. The original version of "Thinking Out Loud" became the first single to spend an entire year in the UK Top 40. It was also nominated for three Grammy awards: Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best Pop Solo Performance. With any luck, the Gaeilge version will gain some popularity as well.



Have an interesting tidbit to share with our Celtic community? Drop us a line anytime at editor@celticlife.ca

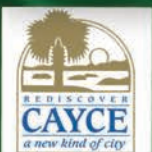
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Celts in the Community



Irene Robinson

A British bagpiper of Irish descent, Irene Robinson has decided to use her musical talents to help organizations in need. At the beginning of the year, Robinson launched her Bagpipe the World initiative. "It was a brilliant launch day... playing on HMS Victory in the historic dockyard in Portsmouth, England," Robinson told Celtic Life International. In just 50 days, Robinson travelled 50,000 miles across seven different continents. The reason? To raise money for charity.

Robinson is bringing attention to two causes in particular: Julia's House, a children's hospice; and The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, which supports both serving and former members and their families. After volunteering as an English teacher in Cambodia for three months, she returned home with a thirst to do more to help others. Robinson has been piping since age 13, so it was only fitting for her to do what she does best. She brought her pipes to a dozen iconic locations, including New York City, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo. She even arranged to pay Antarctica a visit. While she usually plays a set of David Naill pipes, Robinson was given McCallum Poly Acetyl pipes for the journey as they cope better in extreme temperatures.



Alan Shea

Though countries such as England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales have all legalized same-sex marriage, the Isle of Man is lagging behind. At the forefront of the fight for equality is Alan Shea. Shea began his activism when homosexuality itself was still illegal on the Isle of Man. In 1991, he wore a mock concentration camp uniform made from Marks & Spencer pyjamas to petition parliament on Tynwald Day – the Manx national day. The striped pyjamas with a pink triangle referred to the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazis. Shea and his campaign made international news, which led to the decriminalization of homosexuality the following year. But Shea's struggle wasn't over.

"When I started campaigning, I received death threats, abuse in the streets. I couldn't get a job. It was almost like I had been blacklisted," he told the Guardian in October 2015. These days, same-sex partners on the Isle of Man can now choose to have a civil partnership, but they still cannot marry. A bill to introduce same-sex marriage is scheduled to undergo its first reading in 2016. Shea is not hopeful the bill will pass, but acknowledges the strides the gay Manx community has made since 1991. His "uniform" is even on display at the Manx museum. One thing is for certain: when same-sex marriage does become legal on the Isle of Man, Shea will surely be acknowledged for playing a pivotal role.



Brian O'Brien

Brian O'Brien was a trailblazer through his work in ophthalmology. After working as an eye surgeon, teacher and administrator for 43 years, the Atlantic Canadian retired. But he's still hard at work. Eight years ago, O'Brien founded the Holy Cross Historical Trust in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Holy Cross is a pastoral cemetery, where about 23,000 people of mainly Irish Catholic heritage have found their final resting place. When the Trust was founded, many of the headstones had deteriorated through weathering and vandalism. Some were toppled and others were broken.

Since then, O'Brien and the rest of the Trust have volunteered their Saturdays through the warmer seasons to do much-needed repair and refurbishing. The group's resolve was tested in December 2015, after multiple vandals knocked over and destroyed over 50 stones. "This is the largest degree of damage that I've ever seen in any cemetery," O'Brien told Metro Halifax at the time. Overnight, about two years' worth of work was undone. Though heartbroken, the Trust fixed all that they could before winter and, with the help of other volunteers in the community, they were able to re-erect some of the stones. Final repairs, however, are on hold until spring.





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first word

In mid-January I spent a week touring Ireland's Ancient East (see this issue's Cover Story), travelling south from Dublin through Wicklow, Wexford and Waterford.

The trip was a revelation, as I had not seen this side of the Emerald Isle before; previous solo visits to Ireland (1989), Dublin (2013), Northern Ireland (2014) and the west coast's Wild Atlantic Way (2015) had not afforded me the opportunity to scour the lush southeastern coastline.

The trip was an elevation of sorts also, as the past year had taken a toll; in July, my father passed away after a nearly year-long battle with cancer, and then, from September to December, I struggled through a diagnosis for, and treatment of, my own life-threatening illness. Suffice to say that the past months have not been pleasant.

Through it all, however, the thought of returning to Ireland kept me focused and motivated.

In truth, Eire has always been an inspiration.

As a youngster growing up in Montreal, my grandfather often spoke of The Troubles in Ulster, at times comparing the conflict in Northern Ireland to the cultural divisions in Quebec. Though the issues were different – religion versus language – the fundamental sentiment was the same; oppression of the minority by the majority. Or, perhaps vice-versa, via the rules of divide and conquer.

I recall reading a Time magazine cover story about Bobby Sands and the H-Block hunger strikers, eager for daily updates in the Montreal Gazette newspaper or on the nightly CBC television and radio news. And while all of this seemed a world away, I found myself taken and touched by the gray and grainy images of “freedom fighters” wearing balaclavas and sunglasses, guns pointed to the sky.

Soon after, a family member gave me

a dog-eared copy of Leon Uris' seminal story on Ireland, *Trinity*. Based upon factual events leading to Irish independence, the fictional narrative of Conor Larkin and Seamus O'Neill was more than a history lesson for me; in my mind, it was a call to action.



By 1983, the music of U2 had caught my attention; “Sunday Bloody Sunday” and “New Year's Day” were all over the radio that year, and my copy of their “War” album quickly wore out from too many spins on the turntable. The following year, the Irish supergroup released “The Unforgettable Fire” – atmospheric and ethereal – and my own perspective began to soften. In March of 1985, I caught the band in concert in Montreal, and when Bono draped himself in the Irish flag I felt a connection, perhaps even a kinship of sorts.

Over the next three years I devoured Irish novels, poetry, plays and movies. In particular, the film “Cal” – starring John Lynch and Helen Mirren – left a lasting impression.

Finally, in 1989, driven by my obsession – and after months of pulling all-night

shifts at a local gas station to raise funds – I set foot on Irish soil for the first time since a family trip there in 1973 (of which I have little, if any, recollection.)

Over fifty-five days, from Dublin to Belfast, across the north, and from Derry to Kerry, I hitchhiked my way through the past and present, piecing together the great puzzle that Eire presented. Along with rolls upon rolls of film, and several well-worn journals, my souvenirs included a large scar on my forehead (I was mugged during a foolish after-hours foray through the Bogside), and a tattoo from a lost night in Killarney (damn that Guinness!)

Most importantly, however, I returned to Canada with a better and more accurate understanding of my ancestral land (both my parents have Irish roots.) It is said that one only becomes disillusioned if one has illusions to begin with. In my case, that was certainly true, especially with regard to the violence of Northern Ireland.

I am still deeply passionate about Ireland, and since taking on the role of Managing Editor with Celtic Life International magazine my curiosity with, and my knowledge of, the Emerald Isle has grown, albeit in different directions.

As stated, and as you will soon read, my recent sojourn through Ireland's Ancient East was a revelation. Largely untouched by famine, industrialization and revolution, the southeast is softer – perhaps better suited for my middle-aged self – its people and landscape unassuming, content, warm and welcoming.

And, with the country set to commemorate the centennial of its independence, I too – with my latest medical test results giving me the all-clear – am celebrating my own.

~ Stephen Patrick Clare, 2016



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UPFRONT

A move is afoot on North America's most easterly edge - rugged, sea-swept Newfoundland and Labrador - to bring a collective, energetic focus to integral ecology



Based on the simple yet erudite concept that the environment is everyone's issue, it stems from a belief that Newfoundland "with its unsustainable oil culture is ripe for organization around ecology."

The man with that vision is professor and Memorial University philosophy department head, Dr. Sean McGrath.

"We have a significant Celtic heritage and the Celts had a wonderful, mystical, non-exploitive relationship with nature," contends the resident of St. John's. "So it is fitting we should come together here to examine the future of nature."

A native Newfoundlander, McGrath believes the land visited by Vikings 1,000 years ago - and known for its complex geology, stunning seacoast, meandering freshwater fjords, majestic icebergs and sweeping barrens - can foster a new attitude toward nature.

"The consciousness is not here yet," he notes, "but the future of nature rests with cold water communities. We, in Newfoundland and Labrador, are responsible for the last bits of unspoiled nature on the planet."

The term "integral ecology" is one McGrath borrows from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, in which he calls for an "ecological conversion."

"Pope Francis is issuing an ecological wake-up call to the whole of society," he explains. "He calls for a total mobilization of all areas of human inquiry and creative activity for the sake of producing a plan of 'care for our common home.'"

The call, as McGrath interprets it, is to collectively "change our ecological imaginary."

"We need philosophers talking to scientists, sociologists talking to theologians and artists. For too long, scientists have had to carry the ball on ecology but when we all come together in a trans-disciplinary gathering, we talk as humans, bringing whatever strengths and resources we have."

That is the model McGrath used in crafting "a festival of ecological ideas" last fall in Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park.

"We had academics from a variety of disciplines but we also had the public, made up of local people, aboriginal communities and students from high school to the graduate level. No one had the luxury of remaining within his or her discipline. As a result, powerful alliances were forged among specialists who would otherwise never have met and genuine conversation occurred."

As a field component of the event, participants hiked with wilderness guides and toured picturesque Bonne Bay by boat.

"People were introduced to the amazing ecology of the area, not only to witness its beauty and power, but also to become more cognizant of its fragility and the special challenges it faces as the climate changes in the coming years."

The response to the event was so encouraging McGrath, in collaboration with MUN's Faculty of Arts and The Rooms - Newfoundland's provincial art gallery - is holding a second event titled The Future, the Arts and Ecology in St. John's, North America's oldest city, March 3-5.

"Ecology is essentially about ethics, so it is vital that the humanists and the social scientists be involved. One of the hurdles we face - and it may prove insurmountable - is a radical transformation in our thinking about ethics."

In the case of Newfoundland, he suggests, it is no longer helpful to simply rail against the big oil companies.

"In recent years, oil in Newfoundland has been everybody's business. We've all made our dollar off fossil fuels, including me, so there is no villainous oil industry. We all have to form a new plan for our common home."

McGrath, who hopes to stage a third ecological festival in Labrador next year, acknowledges his first intention for the movement, now known as For a New Earth, was to garner global support. To that end, he has already lectured in Iceland.

"I've changed my opinion, because I now believe trying to move globally actually dis-empowers people and results in total apathy. The problem is seen as so large that apathy becomes an acceptable response. The concept, of course, remains global but we have to concentrate on applying it locally."

Sixty years ago Newfoundland, which is not known for its agriculture, managed to feed its own people, McGrath points out.

"We're quite capable of starting a local food movement in St. John's but have we the will to do it? Do we really need to be eating New Zealand lamb? We can shop green as individuals but it has to become communal."

He is confident the March event will build on the success of the one held last fall.

"I'm worried about the future of nature but I am hopeful Newfoundland, with its relatively intact oceans and huge wilderness, can take a new role in ecological leadership. It should not be too hard to wake up a responsibility for the bit of earth that's been entrusted to us."

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Virginia resident Charlene M. Eska is the current president of the Celtic Studies Association of North America, which holds its next conference in Antigonish, Nova Scotia this May. Recently she answered our Seven Celtic Questions.



SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

What are your own Celtic roots?

My Celtic roots are a set of great-great-grandparents on my father's side of the family. They were native Irish speakers from County Sligo, who immigrated to Boston in the late 1800s.

Why are those roots important to you?

Those roots are the reason I took my first course in Celtic Studies as an undergraduate. The course was introductory Modern Irish, and from there I continued to take courses in medieval and modern Celtic languages and literatures. Soon it was my academic area of concentration. In my last year of college, I fell completely and utterly in love with the Old Irish verbal system and went on to receive a doctorate from Harvard in the field of Celtic Studies.

What does it mean to you to be of Celtic heritage?

Being of Celtic heritage connects me to a wide academic and cultural community.

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

I am currently the president of the Celtic Studies Association of North America (CSANA), which is the main professional organization in the field in North America. CSANA creates a scholarly community that fosters the work of young scholars in the field by providing opportunities for networking and mentoring with other scholars. Many scholars and students in the field are at universities where Celtic subjects are not regularly taught, and thus they frequently feel isolated from each other. As an organization, CSANA provides a means of bringing everyone together. We have recently started a new scholarly journal, the North American Journal of Celtic Studies, and the first issue will appear in 2017. The journal will cover all time periods and subjects within the field, creating a truly inclusive publication. Membership to CSANA is not limited to academics - it is open to anyone with an interest in any and all things Celtic. As an educator, I spend a great deal of time

in my classrooms debunking popular myths about the Celts. At the end of the day, the students always find the facts much more interesting than the half-truths which pervade so many publications and media representations of the Celts. My own work focuses on the early Irish legal texts. Many of these texts lack modern scholarly editions and translations. By making these early legal texts accessible, my work helps bring to light new information about early Irish law and society.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

It is vital to keep Celtic culture alive for very many reasons, not the least of which is connecting people to their heritage.

Is enough being done to preserve and promote Celtic culture generally?

At the university-level, we have seen a decrease in the number of employment opportunities for scholars who teach in the field. As professors of Celtic studies retire, particularly in the U.S., they are frequently not replaced by another professor in the field. This is even the case with Celtic at Oxford University, where all the teaching is currently carried out by means of limited-term appointments. Thus, the field is effectively shrinking, though student interest in the subject continues to grow.

What can we be doing better?

Universities in general need to be much more invested in the promotion of the humanities, and particularly the diversity within humanities subjects, such as Celtic. The field needs more endowed university professorships to ensure that Celtic will continue to be taught at the university level. Only in this way can we be certain that Celtic as an academic discipline will remain within universities, and that knowledge of Celtic culture in all its forms will always be passed down to future generations of students.

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If it were not for her cat, Rose Baldino would be tempted to stay put in Ireland

When Celtic Life International caught up with Rose Baldino of the Irish-American, Celt-rock band Burning Bridget Cleary, she was visiting Galway along with her boyfriend Brian Buchanan of the musical group Enter the Haggis.

"We're here for three weeks to play tunes and be irresponsible and so far, we've been very successful," laughs the fiddler-vocalist-banjo player. "There is music in several different bars every night, and the people and tunes are absolutely amazing."

The vacation has been a welcome break for the two musicians, each of whom had a very busy 2015. Baldino not only worked and attended grad school, but also performed and recorded an album with her band that takes its name from "the last witch burned in Ireland."

Burning Bridget Cleary's new CD, *These Are The Days*, is the Philadelphia-based group's fifth album, following in the footsteps of *Pressed for Time* (2013), which topped the *Roots Music Report's* Folk and Roots Country charts; *Totes for Goats* (2011), which was formally added to the Irish Traditional Music Archive in Dublin, and *Everything is Alright* (2008) - named Album of the Year by Boston's *CeltRadio.net*.

Burning Bridget Cleary's first album, *Catharsis*, came out in 2006, the band's inaugural year, when Baldino was just 16.

"We've really tried to step our game up with each album. And as I've grown older, I have become even more passionate and serious about traditional Irish music."

"Not that I'm in any way a serious person, but in the making of our last few albums, and especially with *These Are The Days*, I've wanted to increase the complexity of our arrangements and create something that I can look back on and feel genuinely proud of."

These Are The Days features customary, contemporary and original tunes, both instrumental and vocal. Along with Baldino, Amy Beshara serves as the counterpart of the band's characteristic "double fiddle sound," while Peter Trezzi handles percussion. Baldino's father, Lou, takes care of the guitar playing.

The recording also features several guest musicians, including Buchanan, John McGillian on the accordion, and Portherhead - a traditional Irish-Blues band from Galway.

Baldino remembers taping the jig set with Portherhead well. "I convinced them to record a track for the record, and when we got to the studio, our engineer Jim Salamone started pouring shots of Jameson for everyone. This was around 11 a.m., and we all learned three jigs right there on the spot that we could play together. Of course, the result made for a hilarious and bizarre day, but the jigs turned out surprisingly well!"

While she's proud of the whole album, Baldino points out the dynamic first track, *Madam I'm a Darling*, as a song where all the band members strongly make their mark.

She was also taken aback by her father's contributions. "I'm not really sure why that surprised me so much, since I know he's a really talented and brilliant musician, but I think that most of what makes this album so intricate and musical are his contributions...his rhythmic guitar playing combined with the different riffs and bass parts were the driving force of the record."

Celtic and folk radio programmers have been giving Burning Bridget Cleary's new album significant airplay, and supporters, who contributed to the band's Kickstarter campaign for making the CD, have shared "some super kind comments," Baldino says.

Irish American News' Jack Baker, who calls the band "damn good," describes the new album as "the best they've ever done. I love it and encourage you to give it a listen, you will not be disappointed."

The band has concert dates coming up in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and, this spring, on the Emerald Isle.

"I'm mostly looking forward to coming back to Ireland again with Burning Bridget Cleary this April for a week-long trip and tour with our fans," says Baldino. "We're going to Northern Ireland for the majority of the trip, and Galway for two nights, and we'll be playing tunes in many of the hotel pubs and at sessions. There is still some room on our bus if you want to come with us. And I might just have to bring my cat!"

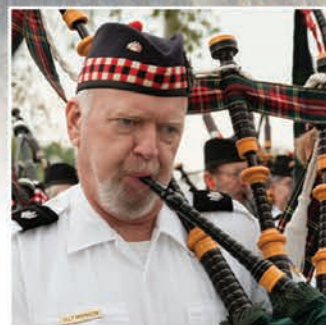
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TENDER

A NOVEL

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BELINDA
McKEON

Belinda McKeon

Over 15 years ago, Irish author Belinda McKeon put pen to paper and began what would eventually become her second novel, Tender

"I think it was too complex to write about at that stage, for me, I was too young," Belinda McKeon shares over the phone. "I didn't do anything more than some brief sketches, and didn't think about it for a long time."

McKeon's first novel, *Solace*, was published in 2011. The bittersweet love story not only won the 2011 Faber Prize, but was also voted Irish Book of the Year. In addition, *Solace* was shortlisted for both the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Kerry Group Prize.

It wasn't until after *Solace* reached completion that McKeon reached back to her other narrative. The recently released *Tender* tells the tale of an intense friendship between two characters, Catherine and James.

"It's the kind of friendship you can only really have in your late teens, or early 20s," shares the scribe. "It's about that time in life when two people connect and find something in each other. At first, it looks like that's going to be a very happy and fulfilling experience for both the characters...but, for various reasons, it becomes more complicated and the friendship becomes ultimately quite obsessive."

Set in Dublin during the late 1990s, the plot takes place not long after homosexuality was finally decriminalized in Ireland. The protagonist, James, is gay. And though Catherine tries to be supportive, her internal prejudices become an issue between them.

"She's actually inadvertently trying

to hide his sexuality rather than be open about it," notes McKeon, adding that while those longstanding biases still exist in present-day Ireland, James and Catherine were part of the first generation to come out and "come of age."

"Obviously, the shadow of decades of intense oppression and silencing is still hanging very heavily over them."

McKeon based the work on her own personal experiences. She stresses that while the "spark" of the story was autobiographical, the book is by no means a memoir.

"The novel, as it evolved, became a world of its own. That's what I do - I spend years in the company of my characters and try to follow them wherever their story goes."

Bringing aspects of her life into a fictitious plot, she explains, was an "irresistible challenge."

"I hadn't really read about that kind of relationship. It was such an intensely powerful experience for me, however, that I knew it needed to be written about."

Originally from County Longford in the Irish Midlands, McKeon also drew upon the lush landscape of her homeland for inspiration.

"I think when you're from a place, it arises naturally in your work," she muses.

At 17, she left the Midlands to go to

university in Dublin. "That place is just in my bones," she explains, quick to note that it isn't really something she consciously chooses to do.

For the last decade, she has been living in New York City.

"I suppose that after heading on to 11 years here, this place is starting to get in there as well. More and more of my work presents itself to me as being in New York. It's only been in the last year or so - when I sit down to write fiction - that the city will naturally and organically surface as a setting."

McKeon says that the subconscious is where her writing comes from.

"I do try not to push those decisions - not to force, but to let them arise organically."

In addition to being a novelist, she is an essayist and short story writer. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Irish Times* and *The Guardian*. This year, she will publish short stories in *Granta* and *The Stinging Fly* literary journals.

McKeon is also working on a play commissioned by the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. She has started work on a third novel as well, but it is still in the "murky, long-hand dreaming phase."

"My process is generally of immersion and of drafting - it is a lengthy period of experimentation. And that shaping part will last as long as it needs to last."

www.belindamckeeon.com



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Jo Spain

Irish author Jo Spain says she was inspired to write while growing up in the working-class suburbs of North Dublin in the 1980s

“I read books as fast as I could lay my hands on them and spent most of my days scribbling little stories,” shares the scribe via email. “I escaped my surrounds with faraway lands and magical tales. Because I loved how good books made me feel, I wanted to do that for other people when I grew up.”

Spain, whose debut novel *With Our Blessing* spent months atop Ireland’s best-seller lists in 2015, says that she continues to write today for the same reasons.

“I had a really vivid imagination, like most kids, the difference being I’ve maintained that into adulthood. I don’t need a special desk or place to write, I’ve no talisman or routine; when I close my eyes I’m in a new place in my head, creating people, developing plots. I still love reading and watching movies and great TV series, visualized stories, but my favourite thing is to create my own. I never stop reminding myself how lucky I am to have that talent and to be living my dream.

“Sometimes I meet people who think all writers are tortured artists, driven by creative muses who wake them at 4 a.m. in the morning to compose hours of astonishingly impressive prose. I see this as a job – a wonderful, enjoyable, dream job, but a job. I’m very lucky – writing comes very naturally to me in that I’ve never encountered writer’s block or struggled to come up with ideas, so far.”

A “vivid thriller that explores the dark secrets of Ireland’s past,” *With Our Blessing* took 18 months from start to finish.

“I was doing it at nights and on weekends - on top of work and children. My husband is a former editor - a very nice investment on my part if I may say so - though the scalpel he wields when he’s going over my pages really tests our marriage sometimes. Between us, we’ve spilled blood, sweat and tears to make sure my books are good enough for readers.

“That was something I had to adjust to. I wrote a first draft and thought it was brilliant, then re-read it and realized it was rubbish. Not bin-it rubbish, but it needed a lot of work. There really is no room for ego in this game – not when you’re a debut, not when you’re established. You’ve got to be your own worst critic and that’s pretty challenging.”

The rewards, notes the novelist, are many.

“There have been so many little and big moments, from getting the book deal, the reviews, to the launch, hearing about the sales figures, getting in the top ten best-sellers...

“But I have one moment that stands out. Recently I offered to do short story competitions for a couple of local schools. I had lots of Saturdays up to my neck in all these kids’ stories, struggling to read spidery handwriting and find missing back pages, asking myself ‘what the hell am I doing?’ And yet, it was an absolutely heartwarming, hilarious, moving experience. I see it in my own children all the time, that force of imagination, their crazy little brains – and I was seeing this in hundreds of kids and loving it. Then when I went to the schools to award the prizes, all these kids gathered around me and were asking ‘are you the famous Jo Spain?’ The famous Jo Spain. After all the hard work of the last couple of years, everything I’ve learned about myself as a

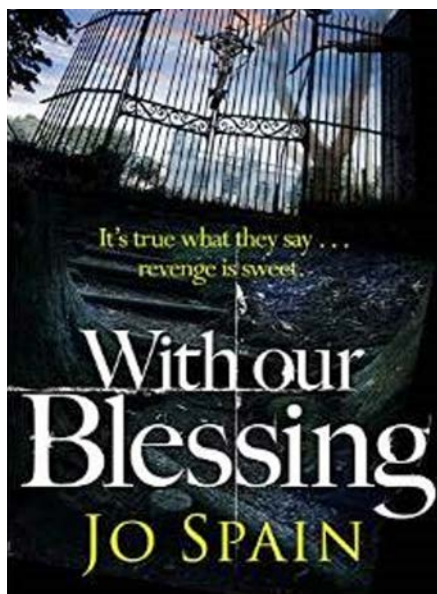
writer and a person, that felt like the most rewarding part – being able to give something to those kids and hopefully inspiring them to follow their dreams.”

Those responses have inspired Spain to keep following her muse.

“Book two will be launched later in the year, and I’ll start writing book three in the summer. I’ve a few more plots worked out for (protagonist) Inspector Reynolds and his team and want to develop them as characters, hopefully much-loved ones who’ll garner their own place in crime fiction lore...so, I’m keeping my ambitions achievable!

“In 2013-2014, I made the decision to give writing a try as a career option. I’m as shocked as anybody that that madcap plan has worked.”

www.facebook.com/JoSpainAuthor



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The Ontario Welsh Festival

Canada's foremost Welsh festival has been engaging Celtic audiences for over a half-century

Hefina Phillips feels that Welsh customs often take a backseat to other cultures in the Celtic community.

"I just can't understand it," she shares over the phone from her home in Oakville, just outside of Toronto. "I just wish that more people knew about us as a nation."

Originally from Swansea Valley in Wales, Phillips attended the annual Ontario Welsh Festival for many years before becoming involved behind the scenes in 2003. She says that a lot of effort goes on throughout the year to organize the events for the single spring weekend.

"All the hard work is worth it though if people are leaving with a smile on their faces."

Phillips is particularly passionate about the choirs that appear at the festival every year. Often, she has a group booked two years or more in advance. Fortunately, Phillips knows exactly what she is seeking in a guest choir.

"I'm looking for sound, I'm looking for personality, and I'm looking for Welsh-ness. I'm looking for a sort of 'joie de vivre' in the choir - a choir that will have a strong rapport with the audience."

This year, Cŵrddydd will be gracing the festival stage. The choir is a mixed voice group of about 50 from Cardiff. They have won the Choir of the Festival award at Wales' National Eisteddfod four times - more than any other choral ensemble. In addition, the Three Welsh Tenors will be performing.

"We are very blessed this year," notes Phillips. "It is going to be a big weekend."

She adds that each year's celebrations are memorable in their own way.

"They each have their own flavour, which is very difficult to explain. I come away, really, on a high every time."

Most of those who attend the Ontario Welsh Festival are Welsh, or have Welsh spouses. Ontario has a strong Welsh community, with the cultural hubs being in Ottawa and Toronto.

"There really isn't a day that I don't speak Welsh to somebody. I've a list of things to do today and they'll all be done in Welsh."

Many Welsh-Canadians are spread out across different parts

of the province, however, so the annual festival serves as a "family reunion" of sorts. For Phillips, it is extremely important to be able to speak her mother tongue on a regular basis.

"Those of us who speak Welsh - we all know one another and will gravitate towards one another. But I can be speaking to someone in Welsh, then turn to you and speak in English."

Fittingly, Phillips works as an instructor in the Celtic Studies program at St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. In February, she was in the midst of organizing a flash mob on campus.

"The students will march wearing Welsh rugby shirts and carrying a flag - just to make people notice."

The idea stemmed from her frustration about the lack of knowledge about Wales. She muses that there isn't a person on the planet who doesn't know about Ireland.

"But you could be walking down the street in Toronto, and I am sure that more than half the people you stopped to ask would have no idea where Wales is."

Phillips' work and commitment to the Welsh language and culture is one of the reasons she was the first recipient of the Ontario Welsh Festival's Gold Award.

The honour began in 2011 to mark the festival's 50th anniversary, and has continued ever since. This year's recipient is Roy Morris, who has been involved with the Ottawa Welsh Society, and who has conducted the Ottawa Welsh Choral Society, the Gwalia Singers and other Welsh choirs.

"It's an award given to people considered to have contributed the most to the Welsh culture, Welsh community, et cetera in Ontario," says Phillips. "That's really special."

The festival as a whole is special, she continues, as each year means a gathering of old friends in addition to meeting new ones.

"People you didn't know a week ago - suddenly you're best friends forever. It's just lovely."

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Tartan Day On Ellis Island

Ellis Island sits in Upper New York Bay – a small piece of land that is big on history

Over 12 million immigrants entered into the United States through Ellis Island. From 1892 to 1954, close to half a million of those new Americans were Scots. As such, it is perhaps appropriate that the landmark hosts the largest annual Tartan Day event in the world.

"Tartan Day is a day of recognition for Scottish heritage and history," shares Bob Currie of the Clan Currie Society, who is the founder and director of the annual Tartan Day on Ellis Island celebrations.

In 1987, Jean Watson of Nova Scotia decreed April 6 as Tartan Day. It quickly caught on with the rest of Canada and other parts of the world.

"Groups like the Clan Currie Society and the New York Caledonian Club had previously marked individual dates as being recognized as 'Tartan Day,'" continues Currie via email. "But this was the first effort at adopting Tartan Day as a recurring, national celebration."

Currie has been organizing Tartan Day on Ellis Island for the last 15 years.

"Where else to celebrate a national ethnic celebration than on Ellis Island - the 'golden door' to the United States for so many immigrants bringing their hopes and dreams of a new life into a new world? Ellis Island is a very popular international tourist destination. Visitor numbers are incredible. It's wonderful to see the faces on the visitors to Ellis when their ferry boat arrives on the dock to the sonic blast welcome of a 20-piece pipe band and the beauty of Highland dancers."

Currie's mandate has remained the same since the event's inception: to provide an introduction and celebration to Scottish heritage through traditional music, dance, storytelling and crafts. "And," he adds, "it's all presented free of charge."

In addition, the celebration usually includes an exhibition on Scottish history and culture. About 10,000 people show up for each day of festivities.

"We've covered everything from the history of tartan to the Scots who helped open the American West," notes Currie. "They have all been extremely well received."

In addition to celebrating the gathering's fifteenth anniversary, 2016 marks the Centennial of the U.S. National Park Service.

"The U.S. National Parks are the pride and envy of the world, covering everything from Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty in the east to the vast natural beauty of Yellowstone and Yosemite in the west," Currie explains. To honour the hundredth anniversary, Clan Currie was asked to resurface the Life and Legacy of John Muir exhibition they produced in 2005.

John Muir, an inventor-turned-naturalist, was born in Scotland but immigrated to America in 1849. The family made a six-week journey overseas from Glasgow until they reached New York. At the time, Muir was only 11 years old.

"John Muir is lovingly referred to as the 'father of our national parks.' His deep love of wild places and his poetic writings of the natural world served as an inspiration to people from all walks of life. He formed the Sierra Club, one of our nation's leading conservation groups and his influence played greatly in the formation of the U.S. National Park Service in 1916."

The John Muir exhibition is slated to be on display for the entire summer of 2016.

Currie says the size and scope of Tartan Day celebrations may vary, but all are equally important - whether they take place in the United States, Canada or Australia.

"We are proud to be counted among the vast array of programs. Sharing our rich and dynamic heritage is a privilege, and making it relevant and contemporary is our responsibility."

Given the popularity of Tartan Day on Ellis Island, it's only fitting that a tartan would be designed in its honour. In 2011, in conjunction with their exhibition on the history of tartan, Clan Currie commissioned the Ellis Island tartan - an array of blue, green, red and gold.

"We wanted to have a relevant and timely example of how a new tartan comes to life. Further, we had been aware for some time that most tartans were not perhaps as inclusive as a tartan might be. The result is the Ellis Island tartan, a symbol that is not just for those of Scottish descent, but for all races and nationalities."

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Gamefield

*Our award-winning photojournalist Tom Langlands
put his thoughts down as he puts his feet up at one
of Scotland's premier destinations*





I'm not good at relaxing, but after a hectic holiday season, the idea of chilling out with my family at a Highland retreat seemed rather attractive.

Perthshire is a favourite location of mine, so when Gamefield on the Ochertyre Estate near Crieff became an option for a few days of self-catering luxury, it wasn't a difficult decision to make. In no time at all the car was packed and we were off.

It was late afternoon when the remote-controlled entrance gates to Gamefield parted. My first impression was a definite sense of having arrived at somewhere special. Gamefield is large, but not ostentatious - it is secluded, inviting and homey. Architect-designed as a family home for local businessman and property developer William Frame, it was completed in 2002. As his property portfolio expanded, Frame and his wife Wendy created a new home on the Ochertyre Estate retaining Gamefield as an exclusive, luxury, five-star self-catering property. When I asked Frame why he had chosen to settle at Ochertyre his answer was instant: "It is a real gem of a place, teeming with wildlife and just a great place to recharge your batteries at any time of year." This was exactly why we had come and I was about to put it to the test.

Frame's mother-in-law, Audrey Bruce, acts as concierge, meeting and greeting guests arriving at Gamefield. Dusk was descending, and with a warm glow emanating from the open front door, Bruce welcomed us into a spacious hall with a roaring log fire and flickering candles. Bedecked with beautiful furniture and stunning paintings - a theme consistent throughout the house - it was apparent that this was at the top end of the self-catering market. The chill of outside evaporated as we were given a guided tour of the property.

We started in the large, fully fitted kitchen complete with a casual dining arrangement for all ten guests that the house can

accommodate. It is warmed by an AGA cooker as well as the under-floor central heating system and the many open fires throughout the house. We were not going to be cold. Off the kitchen is a utility room with full laundry facilities and a separate cloakroom.

The aroma of brewing coffee hung in the air as we progressed to the TV lounge, followed by the dining room with its purpose-built oak table and seating for twelve guests, and to a further wing providing access to a large sitting room, double bedroom and bathroom. Everything exuded quality. There are huge picture windows and glazed walls throughout, but with darkness falling, the outside views would have to wait until morning.

Ascending the sweeping curved staircase to the first floor revealed four spacious bedrooms, one of which is designed as a private suite, while the others have superb en-suite facilities. The master bedroom is stunning, and several hours and a couple of whiskies later, I slid into the huge bed with its luxurious duvet and Egyptian linen sheets to begin my quest to master the art of relaxation.

I awoke the following morning, reluctantly got out of bed, showered and dressed to gentle music from the home sound system before opening the curtains on a frost encrusted dawn. The garden is big, and my gaze wandered over the ice-sprinkled lawn before alighting on a Scandinavian style summerhouse complete with outdoor hot tub. As I wandered through the house, opening curtains I realized that everything about Gamefield is spacious, light and airy with a wonderful relationship between interior and exterior spaces. This is a great place for family gatherings and special occasions. With a lawn large enough to accommodate a marquee, it is also a perfect location for a Scottish wedding. There is even a separate Indie House providing a further two bedrooms if necessary. After breakfast, and still not able to sit and



do nothing, I explored the garden and surroundings before setting out to investigate what else the area could offer.

We headed for the nearby, world-famous Gleneagles Hotel with its 232 bedrooms, including 26 suites. Its many awards include 'Best Golf Resort in the World,' 'Top Ranked UK Hotel' and 'Best Hotel in Scotland'. Once referred to as 'the eighth wonder of the world', the Gleneagles resort is internationally renowned for its outstanding golf courses, but it also offers many other outdoor sporting pursuits along with indoor tennis. These all sounded much too energetic, so we opted for lunch in the calm surroundings of the Mediterranean-style Deseo restaurant. We shared some tapas; deep fried Padrón peppers, and morcilla - a tasty Spanish black pudding with pimento and egg and gordal olives with orange, chilli and rosemary. I followed this with gamberi linguine. As I savoured the outstanding flavours I noted the entrance to the ESPA spa. It, too, had received numerous accolades including 'Best UK Luxury Resort Spa'. Surely, there could be no better place to advance my relaxation studies.

Having allowed enough time to digest lunch, I booked in for the Serenity Treatment at the hands of ESPA Life wellness practitioner, Anna Smilowska.

Smilowska explained that after gaining her initial qualifications in Poland, she had spent time in Asia acquiring additional skills that formed part of the Serenity Treatment she had personally developed. I am no connoisseur of body and face oils, but when I was presented with the choice of oils that we could use, I was amazed at how rich and luxurious they were. I made my selection and for the next two hours I was massaged - although that barely describes the sensational muscle manipula-

tion that I experienced - and almost had an out-of-body experience with the amazing cranio-sacral therapy before drifting off as the warm liquids of the Shirodhara treatment enveloped my forehead. As I floated towards seventh heaven, Smilowska held onto my feet and completed the treatment with some Thai reflexology. It took me several hours to reunite body and soul, and as I reclined in Gamefield's hot tub later that evening, I looked up at a dark starry sky and still wasn't sure if I had succeeded.

The following day I embraced the sofa and a good book before we headed out in the evening to dine. With several superb restaurants in the area, a stay at Gamefield gives you the chance to sample the very best of Scottish cuisine. We opted for Barley Bree, a former coach house in the conservation village of Muthill. It is the creation of husband and wife team Alison and Fabrice Bouteloup. As one might expect from a French-trained chef and his wine-connoisseur wife, it was an outstanding experience. We were presented with cauliflower soup with caraway seeds and smoked fish bonbon as an amuse-bouche. I chose the seared hand-dived scallop and fennel gravadlax for a starter and guinea fowl suprême with cabbage and chestnut to follow. Our choice of wine was a Château Cissac, 2011, Haut Médoc, Cru Bourgeois. Its silky texture with plum, cedar and briar notes complimented the culinary delights of the 'auld alliance'. Evidently, my journey of relaxation was also one of cultural fusion. I finished with a selection of cheese and biscuits and a Balvenie Doublewood malt whisky. Complimenting Alison Bouteloup on an evening par excellence and querying what brought her to Muthill she explained, "We looked at properties all over Scotland, but Perthshire has everything - walks, activities and great

produce. There is a huge difference in the produce available from when we arrived in Scotland twenty years ago - there is much more on offer and the quality has vastly improved." I couldn't agree more.

Over the next few days, the nearest I got to exercise was giving my taste buds further workouts at the Glenturret Distillery in Crieff and The Highland Chocolatier at Grandtully. The Glenturret Distillery dates back to 1775 and is the oldest working distillery in Scotland. The Glenturret malt is an important constituent of Scotland's Famous Grouse whisky, and The Famous Grouse Experience is a five-star visitor attraction offering distillery tours and whisky tastings. You can even participate in the Bottle Your Own experience launched by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on a visit in 2014. The Highland Chocolatier also offers a visitor tasting experience. If you think you enjoy chocolate, then think again because what you consume is probably comprised of sugars, added fats and emulsifiers. The Highland Chocolatier produces chocolates made from a single origin cocoa from the volcanic island of São Tomé, infused with exotic spices and highly sought after by Michelin Star chefs. It is the confectionary equivalent of an outstanding malt whisky.

Back in Gamefield I poured a Glenturret Sherry Edition malt and unwrapped a Raspberry and Black Pepper truffle. I savoured both before crossing the dewy lawn for a final dip in the hot tub. Feeling wonderfully relaxed I looked at Andromeda sparkling overhead and I knew that our sojourn at Gamefield had indeed just revealed a small corner of heaven.

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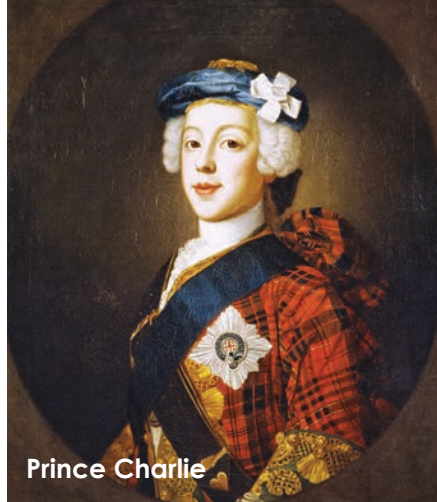


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The Stuarts: *Dynasty in Exile*

Near the entrance to St Peter's Basilica in Rome, a Canova sculpture commemorates the last of the Stuart dynasty. It is difficult to say how many of the 20,000 daily visitors to the Basilica actually notice it among so many other masterpieces. As Celtic Life International correspondent Alexander MacDonald explains, at five million cubic meters - almost five times the size of its closest rival - it is easy to be distracted upon entering the largest church in the world.



Prince Charlie

Also just inside the entrance of St. Peter's are masterpieces by Raphael and Giotto, and the world's most famous religious sculpture, Michelangelo's *La Pietà*. The tomb of Pope St. John Paul II is within a few feet, and Bernini's vibrant golden stained-glass window of the Holy Spirit shimmers brilliantly from the distance of the high altar 700 feet away, atop the bronzed Chair of St Peter. Here is a place of superlatives: the world's largest church, the world's most famous sculpture, the capital of the world's largest religion, the sleeping place of popes, emperors and kings, and a veritable reliquary of sacred objects including, among other things, the bones of St. Peter himself.

And yet, amazingly, within this holy place is a monument to the last of the Stuart Kings, James VIII of Scotland, and his sons, Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Cardinal Duke of York.

James Stuart, the "Old Pretender" came to Rome as an exile in 1719. Under the patronage of the Pope, who recognized him as the legitimate king of Britain, he set up his Royal Court in one of the Pope's palaces next to the church of Santi Apostoli. His court would be marked by political intrigue, English spies, religious bigotry, family quarrels, acid tongues, the "nasty" bottle, and the general misfortune that seemed to follow the Stuarts wherever they went; but it also included nearly unsurpassed culture in art, music and painting, a progressive experiment in religious tolerance, social consciousness marked by generosity towards the poor, and hope for redemption and reconciliation. The Scottish temperament, such as it is, took Rome by storm in the 18th century.

The Stuart palace still stands tall as the Palazzo Muti, also known as the Palazzo del Re (today the Palazzo Balestra). Here the Bonnie Prince was born on December 31, 1720. Charles Edward Stuart was robust and healthy, and would be followed

by a brother, Henry, five years later.

The birth of the Bonnie Prince sent Rome into a carnival. The wine flowed, parties broke out across the city, fireworks were let off, and congratulations came from cardinal-princes of the Church, Roman nobility and sovereign monarchs from across Catholic Europe. The Pope himself sent a large gift of money.

The Bonnie Prince was baptized Charles Edward Louis Philip John Casimir Sylvester Maria. While King James struggled to form alliances and to launch a military campaign to recapture his three crowns, the young lad had Rome as a playground in which to grow up.

From their palace in the centre of old Rome, not far from the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain, the Stuarts avidly attended the opera, concerts and social events of high distinction. In fact, the Stuarts were such generous patrons that they were given three boxes at the opera when most monarchs were only given one, symbolic of their title to the three great kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland.

The Bonnie Prince, even at the age of 4, was borne aloft a dais and carried through the streets of Rome to such events. Already gifted with a military instinct, the Prince is said to have shot curious onlookers with his toy crossbow as he was carried through the crowds.

As a boy, he was strong-willed and independent. Once, in an audience with Pope Benedict XIII, James and his wife ceremoniously kissed the feet of the pontiff, but under no circumstances could the young Prince be induced to do the same. He obstinately refused to succumb, by reward or threat. Under normal circum-

stances this would have been seen as the insignificant pouting of an intransigent child – but there were Protestants in the Stuart Court. Some observers wondered whether the Protestants were exerting too much influence on the young Prince, an issue that eventually caused a separation between James, who wished his son to have Protestants in his retinue so as to learn tolerance towards them as their future ruler, and Charles' mother Clementina, who saw them as utterly Godless.



King James VIII

By the time Clementina left, in large part because of the growing influence of Protestants in her Royal Court, James had already used up his political capital. Cardinals, bishops, kings and queens from across Europe took sides. James was alone. Compromises were made, staff was changed and the couple was reconciled.

Despite the conflict at home, the Scottish Princes showed no worse for wear.

As a teenager Prince Charles took flight as a prodigious musician and dancer. In fact, he impressed virtually everyone he met throughout Italy, either on social tours or in military engagements; at the age of 14, in a military engagement with the Spanish to capture the kingdom of Naples, he showed fearless skill "even when balls were hissing about his ears." When Naples was taken, the Prince was found serving in the trenches alongside common soldiers who were said to have adored him, finding his conversation "really bewitching."

After the battle, while at sea, a story is told that his hat blew off his head and fell away from the ship into the sea. As arrangements were being made to lower



Clementina

a boat to find it, the Prince told them not to bother because he would soon be fetching a better one in England - meaning his Crown.

His enemies abroad were watching these developments with interest. They were justly worried when he stepped ashore Scotland and began gathering an army to take the Crown usurped by the German succession. History records well how that enterprise ended.

But even the defeat of Culloden did not diminish the brilliance of the Prince in Rome. When he returned he was treated like a hero. The rags he'd worn during the campaign, tattered, rotting and filled with vermin, were collected by aristocratic women of the city and treasured as precious mementos, despite the contagions they contained. The tragic figure of the Prince was more handsome than ever to the Roman ladies, and they were said to be fighting over him "like fish-wives." At his first visit to the opera he was given a standing ovation upon entering.

When King James died on January 1, 1766, Charles was not in Rome, having wandered the length and breadth of the European continent seeking ways of launching another invasion. He returned to Rome only after his father was buried.

The funeral for King James was held at St. Peter's Basilica - an extravagant pageant even by Roman standards. The procession contained more than a thousand dignitaries, including twenty cardinals, with the king's funereal bed surrounded by the seminarians of the Scots, Irish and English colleges. He held a sceptre in hand and the arms of Great Britain were outlined in gold and jewels on his breast. He wore a crown on his head, a crown he was never to wear in life. Above the funereal bed was inscribed "Jacobus Magnae Britannicae Rex Anna MDCCLXVI." The sermon was given by the Pope.

James had requested to be buried in the church of Santi Apostoli where the heart of his wife had been placed in an

urn. It was Pope Clement XIII who insisted that he be buried in St. Peter's Basilica.

Charles was not present for the funeral, arriving three weeks later, demanding to be acknowledged as King. The cagey Pope allowed his cardinals to decide the issue - and they decided against Charles.

While Charles floated around Europe, Prince Henry's career thrived in Rome. As Cardinal Duke of York, he was given the bishopric of Frascati, just outside the city, and was also appointed Prefect of St Peter's Basilica, a highly honoured position in the Church which he would hold for the next 57 years. During this illustrious career, also characterized by plotting and scheming, he was only ousted from Rome by the power of Napoleon's armies which subsequently stripped him (and the Church) of virtually every possession. Henry fled to Naples, then to Venice.



After Nelson defeated Napoleon at the Battle of the Nile, Henry returned to live in Frascati, where his memory is cherished to this day; even more than two hundred years after his death he is considered by residents of Frascati to be "our bishop," having done much for the community by distributing free medicines, building social infrastructures, and patronizing the arts. When Charles died, Henry claimed the title of King, calling himself Henry IX.

As for Charles, he hit the "nasty bottle" in later life, had difficult relationships with women, but was eventually reconciled to the Church. He took a stroke in 1788, lingered for several weeks, and died on January 31 at the Roman palace in which he'd been born, Palazzo Muti. He was initially buried in Frascati, but when Henry died in 1807 he was buried in St. Peter's Basilica next to his father. In 1939 the remains of all three Stuart Kings were given definitive burial in a new travertine sarcophagus in the Basilica's crypt.

Rome still abounds with the touch of the Stuarts. The Venerable English College has two portraits of Henry, Cardinal Duke of York, and a chapel in the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere bears his



royal arms. In St. Peter's Basilica there is a memorial to Clementina, the matriarch of the Stuart's Roman household, whose sanctity so impressed the Pope that she is today one of only two women to be honoured in the Basilica (there was even talk of her canonization in the years after her death.)

To this day, prayers are said in the church of Santa Maria in Campitelli, as ordered by Henry Stuart, for the conversion of England. The Protestant cemetery, built at James' instigation near the Pyramid of Cestius, continues as an attraction in Rome and still functions as a burial ground. It contains the graves of poets John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Finally, in St Peter's there is the exquisite memorial to the Stuarts by Antonio Canova, in luminescent white marble. According to a report in *The Venerable*, the journal of the Venerable English College in Rome, the monument was erected by Pope Pius VII "assisted by a contribution of fifty guineas from George IV." Whether this was a symbolic trifle from a well-entrenched monarch who had nothing more to fear from the Stuarts or a sincere act of generosity, no one could say without speculating. It can be noted, however, that the sarcophagus of the Stuarts in the Basilica's crypt was restored in 1939 by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

The monument of the Stuarts by Canova, about a story high, has rampant lions carved in marble at the top and, in the middle, profile busts of the three kings. Below are two angels, praying and weeping with tangible pathos at a set of doors which, also carved in white marble, are symbolically closed forever.

Alexander MacDonald is a journalist and doctoral student living in Rome.





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Catherine Zeta-Jones Comes Home

Tony and Academy Award-winning Welsh actress, Catherine Zeta-Jones opens up about her latest film, Dad's Army.



Catherine Zeta-Jones was looking stunning on the red carpet in London's Leicester Square for the recent world premiere of her new film, *Dad's Army*. Despite the wet and windy weather in the capital, the Hollywood star oozed glamour in a plunging blue dress that was split to the thigh. The Welsh actress was then joined on the red carpet by fellow stars of the film, including Sir Michael Gambon, Blake Harrison and Toby Jones.

Dad's Army is directed by Oliver Parker and based on the 1970s TV series which was set in 1944 as World War II reached its

climax. Zeta-Jones plays a journalist, Rose Winters, who arrives in Walmington-on-Sea to write an article about the Home Guard.

Speaking on the red carpet about her latest film, the thespian noted "It was so much fun. It's great to be a part of this one. It's great to have something that's literally so dear to my heart. It's an homage to the original series, but it has its own thing going on as well."

The mother-of-two also spoke about glamping up '40s fashion for her role, what it was like filming back in the UK, what her family thinks of the movie and more.

Welcome home Catherine.

My dress is soaking! Thank you. It's nice to be here. When the water seeps up your dress you know you're home you know?

*Well you look
absolutely beautiful!*

Thank you so much.

*Sorry the weather
couldn't be better for you.*

I know, well it could be snow I guess. I did come in especially for the premiere from New York. So I got in ahead of time before that big storm. I didn't want to miss this night at all. So I came in on Friday, and I've had a lovely weekend with my family here.

*You must be proud
of this movie.*

It's great to be a part of this one. It's great to have something that's literally so dear to my heart. It reminds me of my great

childhood and I really did have a great childhood, and Saturday nights were about watching the show. My family is the kind of family, and I'm sure there's many out there, that can recite scenes verbatim. My memories are just wonderful, warm and nostalgic - and so it has a really, wonderful tender place in my heart. So when Oliver (Parker) asked me to do it, I had to do it. So I was really happy to be a part of it with a great bunch of actors.

*It must have been
a fun movie to make.*

It was. It was so much fun. It was everything and more than I wanted it to be. To be with this calibre of actors, you know they know their lines, they know what to do, they're going to have fun and they are professionals down to the wire. And it was just wonderful. I wanted to do more. They shot my scenes pretty much altogether, so I had finished and was like, 'Can you fit me into anything else?'

*And did the boys behave
themselves on set and look
after you?*

They were naughty, flirting with me and I loved every minute. Ha. No, it was wonderful. They were so welcoming and I would just sit in the make-up chair with them and listen to their stories and their banter. It was hilarious.

*Blake Harrison said he ate a lot
of mints before kissing you on
screen. Did you put him at ease?*

Yeah, it was such a funny scene that we wasted half the day laughing through takes unfortunately, to my director's horror, because we were up against the clock from the moment we started shooting.

Tell us about your character.

I play a journalist, Rose Winters, who is doing an article on the Home Guard for some lady magazine or something of that nature. And she goes into Walmington-on-Sea and really creates havoc.

*It's a very glamorous role
- did you enjoy the make-up and outfits?*

Yeah it was. I got to wear all the lovely '40s cut suits, I love that fashion era. It was wonderful.

*Rose is a new character that we haven't seen
in the original. Did you feel like that was an
advantage because you didn't have boots to fill?*

For sure, I didn't have any comparison, of course yeah. So it was an easy out for me in that way. I probably didn't have so much of, 'Oh you're playing that one, who played that in the original?' You know? The guys really threw themselves into these characters individually - they did such a great job. And it's turned out to be a real hoot, it's wonderful. And it's so nostalgic, you know, it's an homage to the original but it has its own thing going on as well.

You had to step into the sea?

I had a swim in the sea yeah.

That must have been cold!

I'd only do it for the British, I wouldn't do it for the Americans, I really wouldn't.

It must have reminded you of Mumbles Bay?

Yeah it's like childhood memories.

What was it like being back filming in the UK?

It was everything I hoped it to be. It was all these great actors, so professional, that knew what they were doing - we were laughing all the way through it. It just reminded me how much I love being in the UK to work and to be with British actors. It's nice to come home.

Have any of the family seen the film yet?

Yeah my son's seen it and my husband's seen it but we saw it all together, so I'm looking forward to seeing it tonight with an audience because this is the kind of movie you want to see with an audience, and literally I'm excited. And all my family, my mum and dad and my brother... my niece came in from Berlin this morning, so we're all going to be on masse watching it just like the old days.

*Do you think comedy acting is one
of the most difficult skills to master?*

Yeah, for sure, and it never gets enough credit as it should. The way that, you know, me watching Toby (Jones) play with the material is just fantastic.
It was so much fun.

*You've been involved in so many
blockbuster films, do you think this
film will have an American following?*

Oh I hope so but you never know, but I hope so. I mean since I've made the movie, I've been around, not literally around the world, but I've been to so many places and met expats and they're all excited, you know, the expats around the world. But I think it's such a charming, heart-warming story. Even though it's extremely British, there's something very, very touching about it.

*Did you feel much pressure taking on
a role in what is possibly the most
beloved sitcom of all time?*

No I didn't. I think it's because it's such a wonderful heart-warming story. It needs air to breathe on the big screen, it does, and it does it beautifully in the film. This is not a copycat, this is not actors impersonating. The cast in this film is incredible. It's a wonderful homage to the original but it has a real special sense of its own. It's just a lot of fun. I think it will inject a whole new generation of lovers of Dad's Army.

*So the rest of the year Catherine,
what's the plan for 2016?*

Oh I've got so much to do. I'm excited about this one.





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Emma *Donoghue*

*With an array of awards and accolades already to her name, and four Academy Award nominations for the big-screen adaptation of her bestselling book *Room*, Irish author Emma Donoghue considers her good fortune*





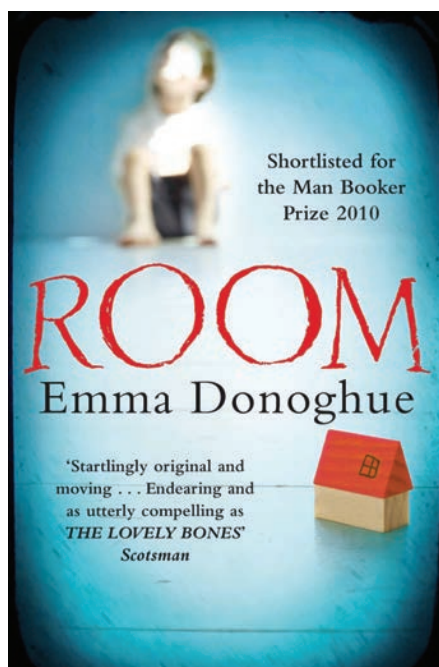
“Right now the only thing I am considering is another drink,” laughs Emma Donoghue over the phone from a restaurant in Nice, France.

“Perhaps drinks, in the plural tense, would be more appropriate,” suggests the

46-year-old scribe, who is entertaining a visitor from Sydney, Nova Scotia. “From what I have heard and know, these Cape Bretoners like their kitchen parties. We might be here for a while.”

The charming and chatty Irish author, playwright, literary historian and screen-

writer has good reason to celebrate. Her popular and critically acclaimed 2010 novel *Room* is poised to win four Oscars at this year’s Academy Awards, including Best Picture (Ed Guiney), Best Actress (Brie Larson), Best Director (Lenny Abrahamson) and Best Adapted Screenplay (Donoghue).



Despite all of the attention, Donoghue admits that perhaps the Hollywood hoopla hasn't hit home just yet.

"Don't get me wrong, I am very grateful and appreciative that all of this is happening. I would be foolish not to acknowledge my lucky stars and opportunities.

"It is only that I have been wrapped up with *Room* for what seems like a very long time now; from the initial conception of the story, writing it, re-writing it, editing it, and publishing it, all of the media interviews and readings, the various literary awards and nominations, to the optioning and negotiations for the film rights and the ensuing screenplay adaptation and production of the film itself – it's been a lengthy, albeit, amazing experience.

"And then, of course, I try my best to have some semblance of a 'normal' life as a partner and as a parent to two children."

Room has been a game-changer for Donoghue; the touching and tender tale of a young boy and his mother locked up in a small space for years was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2010, as well as for the 2010 Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize and the 2010 Governor General's Awards. It was also long-listed for the 2011 Orange Prize. The notable narrative won the 2011 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book - Canada and Caribbean, the Salon Book Award (2010), the Alex Award (2011), the Hughes & Hughes Irish Novel of the Year (2010), the Indies Choice Book Award (2011), and was named WH Smith Paperback of the Year (2011), an ALA Notable Book (2011), an Indigo Books

Heather's Pick (2010) and both a New York Times Notable Book of the Year and Best Book of the Year (2010). As if all that wasn't enough, the work was nominated for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2012.

"That one really touched me," nods Donoghue. "Perhaps I have a soft spot for home. Perhaps it meant a little more to be acknowledged by my country of birth. Ireland has such a long lineage of literary lions – Yeats, Wilde, Joyce, Beckett – to even be considered in the same breath is simply beyond me."

The youngest of eight children, Donoghue was born and raised in Eire's capital city. After graduating from University College Dublin, and Girton College, Cambridge, she relocated to London, Ontario, with her Canadian partner Christine Rouleston.

Before *Room*, there were a number of novels, short stories, plays, screenplays and academic works – all met with great praise.

"I would be lying if I told you that what the critics write does not matter to me," she confides. "Especially those critics who are established, whose job it is to know literature in a professional capacity."

One of those reviewers happens to be her father, Denis, a longtime literary critic, essayist and lecturer on the Emerald Isle.

"He's in his 80s and he is still going strong," marvels Donoghue. "Thankfully, I get a pass there. But he does send me the kindest notes now and again, telling me how much he enjoyed this or that work, and how proud he is of me. Like any parent, I suppose, he is happy to watch me grow."

That maturation as a wordsmith, she adds, has been subtle, yet steady over time.

"I am a different writer today, mostly because I am a different person. To some degree, I no longer see myself as an author or short story writer or playwright or screenwriter. I have become more like an artisan, I suppose, a craftsperson. I see the work as an engineer or architect might see it, taking bits and pieces and carefully piecing them together into something solid.

"And, from what I have been told, I have learned to say more with less. That is a skill that I was really able to hone during the screenwriting process for *Room*; allowing the text to breathe, leaving space for the set and scenery, and inviting the actors and the audience to fill in the blanks with emotion and imagination."



Working with director Lenny Abrahamson was a revelation as well.

"He was very sensitive to the storyline and to the characters. We were very much on the same page that way, in that we understood the challenges of bringing this little story to the big screen. To that end, there was much dialogue on what direction to take with the plot and with the characters. We wanted to stay as close to the original script as possible, while appreciating that there are certain compromises that need to be made for film adaptations. The end result might appear easy and seamless - but believe me - it was quite the task."

Not that Donoghue is afraid of hard work. Since the initial release of *Room* six years ago, the prolific penster has published another novel (2014's *Frog Music*), two short-story collections, two anthologies of drama, and an academic study entitled *Inseparable: Desire Between Women in Literature*. As always, other works are in the works.

"That's what I do," she says as a matter of fact. "I write. And I would write regardless of the awards and accolades. I'd do it for free. You see, I didn't choose writing, it chose me. From day one, this calling, this vocation if you will, was never up for negotiation. I have never considered doing anything else with my life.

"Right now, however, the only thing I am considering is another drink."

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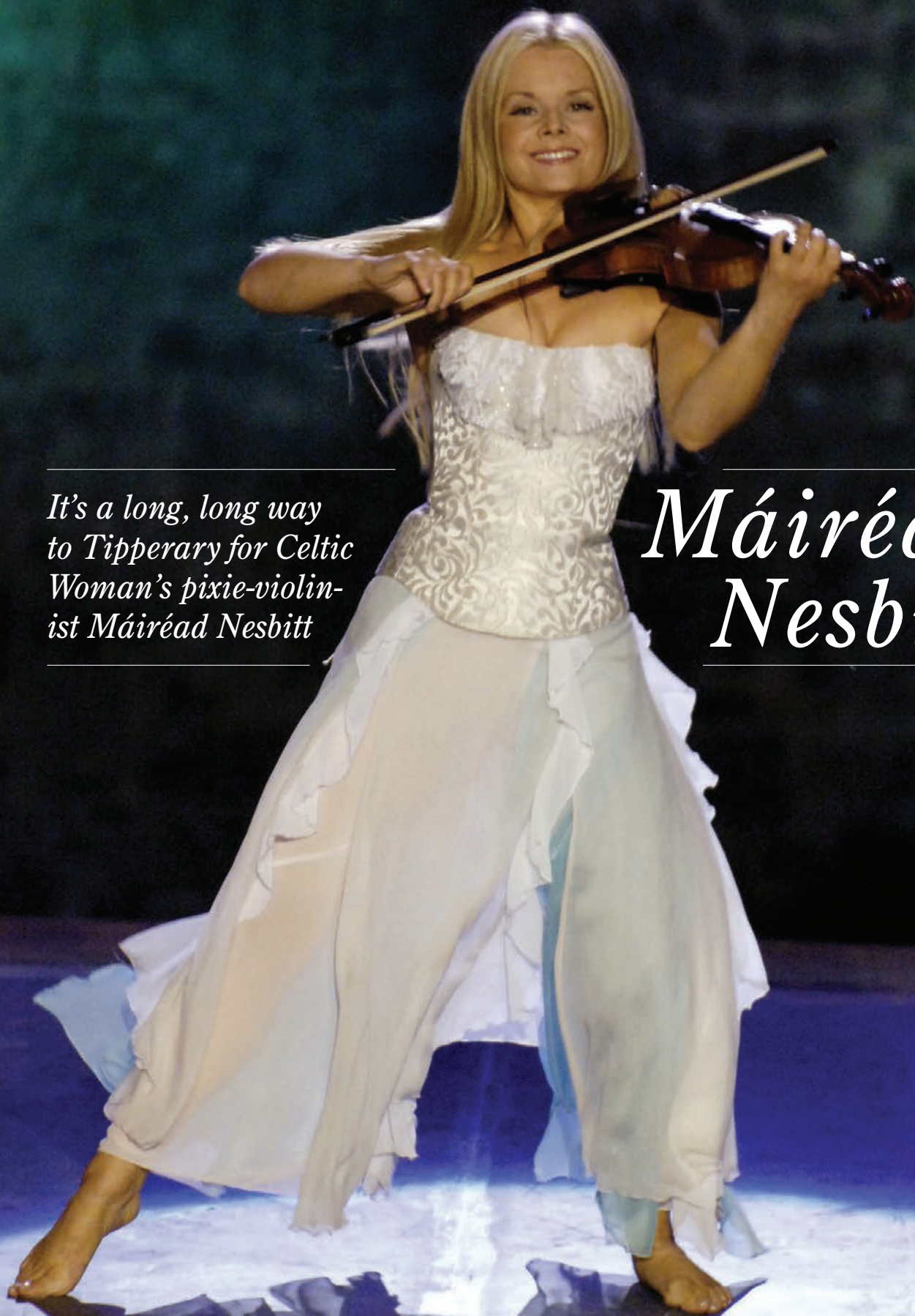
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*It's a long, long way
to Tipperary for Celtic
Woman's pixie-violin-
ist Máiréad Nesbitt*

Máiréad Nesbitt





"It's cold here today," shivers Máiréad Nesbitt over the phone from Mannheim, Germany, where she and her Celtic Woman cohorts - Máiréad Carlin, Susan McFadden and Éabha McMahon - are preparing for another performance.

The Irish supergroup is in the middle of a European tour, the first leg of a global jaunt that will see the band crisscross North America over the coming months in support of their latest recording *Destiny*.

"I don't mind the weather, actually," continues the energetic 36-year-old violinist. "I have homes in Ireland and on the east coast of the U.S., so I'm quite used to it by now. And, to be truthful, I'm really not much of a sun person. I don't think too many Irish people are."

While the weather might not be a factor on the road, touring for months on end does present its fair share of challenges for most musicians.

"Well for one thing, living out of a suitcase is never fun," shares Nesbitt. "Staying in different hotels, it's easy to miss the creature comforts of home. And it is not like we have a whole lot of time to do other things while we are on tour, like sightseeing or visiting museums or whatnot; most of our days are filled with working commitments - media interviews, appearances, sound-checks, rehearsals, running over the show, etc. It can be quite exhausting, to be honest, though we do usually get one day off each week simply to rest and recoup."

Though she has spent years on trains, planes and in automobiles, Nesbitt does admit that she occasionally gets homesick.

"I miss my family, absolutely. My Mom and Dad are still in Tipperary, and my sister and brothers are spread out across Ire-

land. I do speak with them regularly, and they did come over to see the final show of the last tour in London, but it is not the same as sitting around the kitchen sipping a warm cup of tea, catching up on the neighbours."

Born and raised in Loughmore, Co. Tipperary, Nesbitt was surrounded by music and melodies for as far back as she can remember. Her grandmother plunked away at the organ, both of her parents were music teachers, and each of her five siblings studied music as well. Nesbitt began playing piano at the age of four, before switching over to violin two years later.

Years of formal study at the Ursuline Convent in Thurles in County Tipperary, the Waterford Institute of Technology, the Cork School of Music, and the Royal Academy of Music and Trinity College of Music in London, paved the way for her profession.

After stints in the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, and the country's RTE Concert Orchestra, Nesbitt launched a solo career, working with the likes of Van Morrison, Clannad, Afro Celt Sound System, The Celtic Tenors and Coolfin.

Her big break came in 1996 when she was invited to join Michael Flatley's critically-acclaimed spectacle *Lord of the Dance* as the lead fiddle player. Subsequent gigs with Flatley's Feet of Flames and Riverdance only further cemented her status as Eire's premier 4-string-slinger.

In 2001, she released her first solo recording, *Raining Up*, showcasing her passion and talent to combine both classic and contemporary styles. Members of her family appeared on the album, though they did not tour with her in support of the 14-song soundtrack.



Three years later, Nesbitt auditioned for Celtic Woman.

"It has been a fantastic experience," she says, "and beyond my wildest dreams in so many ways; creatively, the touring and travelling, and all of the great work we have done in the studio."

Over the last twelve years, her collaborations with her Celtic Woman compatriots have resulted in almost twenty audio and video releases, including the band's latest effort - their tenth studio recording - Destiny.

Though just released internationally this past January, Destiny has already skyrocketed to the top of the charts around the world.

"I'm not going to deny it," smiles Nesbitt, "it's a great feeling knowing our work is striking a chord with audiences. A lot of love, time and energy go into both recording and touring, and there is no better reward than performing for appreciative audiences."

"Getting the ear of critics and receiving good reviews does matter, yes," she continues, "but there is nothing more fulfilling than getting feedback from our fans or from those who are hearing or seeing us for the first time."

Along with audience "meet 'n' greets" and other in-person appearances, social media has proven a positive pipeline for the band.

"Watching Twitter and Facebook blow-up after a show is really quite something," laughs Nesbitt. "It's amazing to see this huge Celtic Woman community interacting amongst themselves, sharing their thoughts and feelings on what they have just collectively experienced."

Response to the Destiny performances has been excellent so far.

"It is a very diverse and dynamic show; musically, the band has never been better or sounded tighter; the stage, sound, lighting suit the songs perfectly, as does the choreography. And our stylist has really outdone himself with the gowns and dresses this time around. The show has been quite carefully crafted so that our audiences may enjoy a complete audio and visual experience."

Though tightly wound, the concerts do feature moments of sheer spontaneity.

"We each have our solo moments during the show," notes Nesbitt, "and there is some freedom for improvisation there. I like that, as it allows me to stretch out as a player each night as the song speaks to me and tells me what to play. As

an artist, it is vital to challenge oneself and grow by trying new and fresh things on a regular basis."

Keeping that creative edge is especially important on lengthy tours, including this one, which will see the band take the stage in the USA from May to July.

"It is very possible that more dates will be added as we go along, including in Australia and Canada."

"I really love visiting Canada in particular. Everyone is so warm and welcoming, and there is such a great fiddling tradition there, especially on the east coast with players like (Donnell) Leahy, Natalie Mac-

Master and Ashley MacIsaac. It is very inspiring, and it almost feels like being at home."

And while it is a long, long way to Tipperary, Nesbitt is more than happy to be in Mannheim at the moment.

"This is the life I chose, and in the end I would not trade it for anything else in the world. Home is where the heart is, right? And right now my heart is in this place and with these people."

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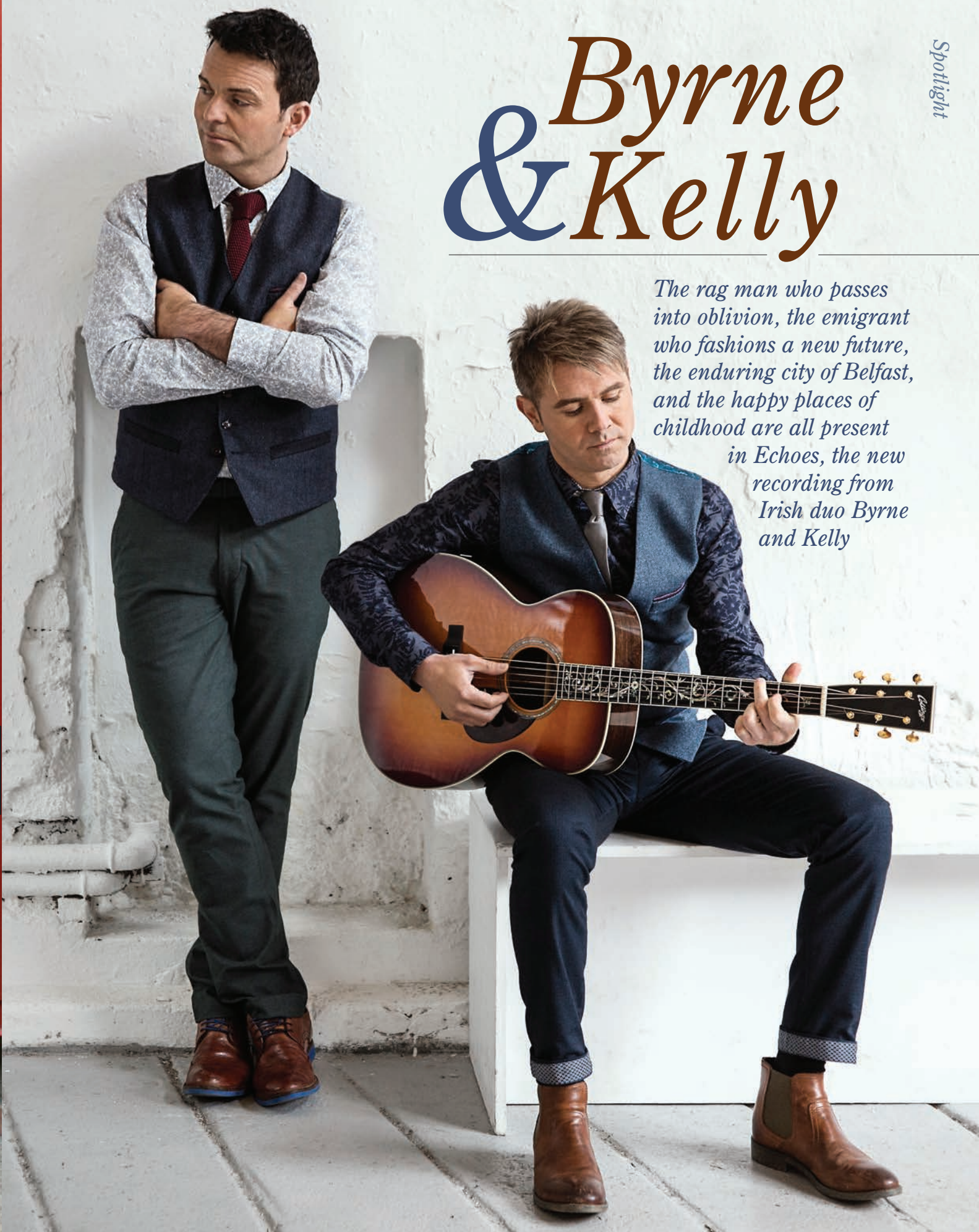
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Byrne & Kelly

The rag man who passes into oblivion, the emigrant who fashions a new future, the enduring city of Belfast, and the happy places of childhood are all present in Echoes, the new recording from Irish duo Byrne and Kelly



Echoes blends social history with natural beauty, then seasons the mix with the intricacies of love, friendship and life on the road. It is the third album for the duo who - despite their rapidly growing fan base - remain more familiar to audiences as members of the renowned Irish supergroup, Celtic Thunder.

Over the coming weeks, Neil Byrne and Ryan Kelly will embark on a month-long sweep of the United States before jumping back on the Celtic Thunder bus for tours of Canada and Australia. The intimate, stripped-down "two guys with guitars" Byrne and Kelly tour begins March 21 in Kansas. It will be a marked contrast to the full band, theatrical sets and detailed choreography of Celtic Thunder which attracts thousands. Musically, it is also different - most of the new album contains songs that they have co-written.

"I'm a wee bit apprehensive," admits Kelly from his home in The Moy, County Tyrone, southwest of Belfast. "But it is time to send the children out into the world and see how they make out."

Byrne, who hails from the seaside town of Bray, County Wicklow, south of Dublin, describes the album as an evolution.

"To be honest, I am relieved it is done," he notes. "We poured heart and soul into it for over a year, and I am delighted people are itching to hear it."

"We began with very traditional songs



(2013's *Acoustically Irish*) and then captured a live show (2014's *Live in Australia*), so now we are trying something entirely new."

On the road, the plan is to share stories about their songs and engage the audience in conversation, polishing a style first developed on past tours.

"The Irish are great talkers and we like to give the other fellow a chance to say something," quips Byrne.

The idea of teaming up for their own show was first sparked when Byrne and Kelly were touring with Celtic Thunder.

"We were asked if we'd ever considered doing something together, so that got us thinking," shares Byrne. "We have an easy relationship, and we like the same kind of songs, so after a while we decided we would give it a go."

The challenge of the first release was

to put a Byrne and Kelly stamp on classic tunes, including *On Raglan Road* and *The Water is Wide*. *Live in Australia* was recorded when the lads stayed behind after a Celtic Thunder tour of Australia wrapped up. After two chart-topping albums, they were open to fresh ideas.

"We had never co-written anything before, so we got a house and spent three days working," recalls Kelly. "We were likely both thinking it could be a great waste of three days, but the ideas just came one after another."

Moving from those initial ideas to finished music and lyrics took considerably longer, especially given the geographical distance between the two.

"We agreed that every song had to be able to stand on its own, and that each had to mean something to us," notes Kelly.

Byrne and Kelly still live in the towns that they grew up in, and credit that with influencing their music.

"We are both anchored in the places we come from," says Kelly. "Life on the road is busy and hectic, but I am always happy to come home."

Carefree days of children playing together are captured in one of Byrne's favourite songs on the new recording, *In the Garden*, which highlights County Wicklow's reputation as being Ireland's garden.

"I grew up in the same house as my father," he explains. "There are 30 houses, all in a circle, and lots of space for chil-



dren to play. In the evenings, when the rain would start to fall, the adults would go inside but we'd stay out until dark." He adds that as he drives into the area today, he still pictures himself and his neighborhood friends "playing on the green."

Growing up in the north, Kelly's equally happy family life was tempered by The Troubles. A teenager during a spate of retaliatory murders in The Moy in the early 1990s, he chose to attend university in the strife-ridden city of Belfast.

"I wanted to write a song about Belfast," he explains. "About all the city has been through, without dwelling on the negativity of the past. With The Troubles behind us, thank God, it is now a truly cosmopolitan city."

"They try to break us down/But they can't bend our steel," are a couple of lines from the song named after Northern Ireland's capital.

The Rag Man calls to mind the rag and bone man, a once familiar peddler in towns and villages.

"When I'd come in from play with my football under my arm, all covered in dirt, my mother would call me the rag man," remembers Byrne with a smile. "Years later, I asked her where she got the name and learned this is a character that has disappeared from the modern-day landscape of Ireland."

Kelly points out that the first single from Echoes, Home from Home, is an em-

igrant song that acknowledges the longing for home still felt by so many Irish - a typical theme in traditional songs, and one that might also speak to the satisfaction of creating a new home.

The Meeting of the Waters is a landmark in County Wicklow where two rivers flow together to create a third. As a child, Byrne marveled at how it seemed to touch people.

"They'd lower their voices at this lovely tranquil place and that intrigued me. Our song is about the landmark, but also a bit symbolic of friends who have lived 30 years without knowing each other, then meet, form a wonderful friendship and manage to put out a few albums together."

Nine years into Celtic Thunder, both men still speak of their good fortune in being chosen for the show.

"Working with (musical director) Phil Coulter you just knew it was going to be something good," muses Kelly, "but I had no idea where it would take us."

Byrne, the son of a professional musician, stepped straight from school into the music business. After years performing in a few bands, including one with his brother, he was hired by the legendary Coulter to perform for his daughter's birthday.

"Phil, who is a legend in Ireland, played piano, I sang and we just hit it off. He invited me to perform on a cruise ship with him and I told him to sign me up straight away. Later he asked me to audition for

Celtic Thunder because they needed a lead guitar, a back-up vocalist and someone to play percussion. I've never looked back."

Kelly, who comes from a musical home with parents who played organ and sang in church choirs, never imagined a career in music. He was a chartered accountant in a bank, gigging on weekends in pubs and bars, when his brother suggested he audition for Celtic Thunder.

"I thought I'd go along to have the experience of an audition and that would be the end of it. When I was chosen one of the five it should have been a big decision to leave the bank but it wasn't. I'd never travelled or performed as a musician and I was sure I'd never get another chance."

The enthusiastic international response to Celtic Thunder took them by surprise. "God, I hope this can continue," Kelly remembers thinking daily throughout the first year.

Byrne admits there is some irony in heading out to play small, intimate venues after having performed before arena-sized audiences.

"The Byrne and Kelly tour is very personable, warm and cozy, and we're all set to go."

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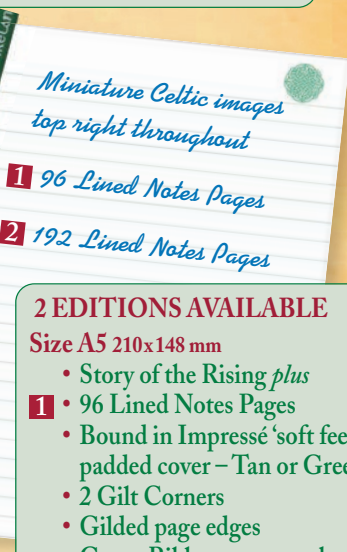
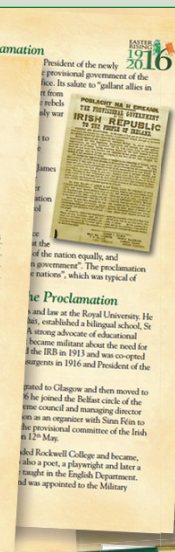
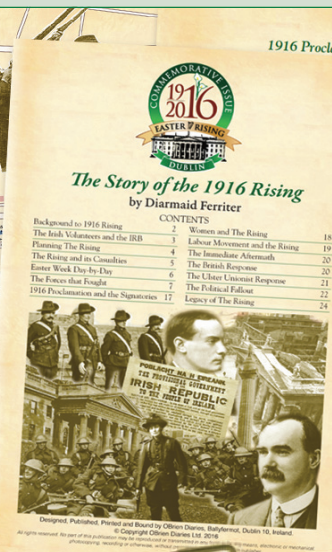
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Ireland's Easter Rising!

The American novelist William Faulkner once wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." As Celtic Life International's senior correspondent Eimear O'Callaghan reports, that is certainly true in Ireland's case

On a chilly Sunday night in April 1966, I was among 7,000 nationalists who gathered at Casement Park Gaelic football grounds in Belfast for 'Seachtar Fear, Seacht Lá' - a spectacular golden jubilee pageant commemorating the 'Seven Men, Seven Days' of the 1916 Rising.

Huge black and white images of the leaders who signed the Proclamation, declaring the 'Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State', glowed like ghosts under the full moon. Powerful spotlights illuminated rows of uniformed 'rebels' marching behind the green, white and orange of the Irish tricolour.

Spellbound, I clutched my father's hand in the darkness as the spirits of the executed men - who included poets and teachers - were summoned "from the shades of the past." Calling out

across five decades, they proclaimed, to the youth of Ireland, the dreams that inspired them to challenge the might of the British Empire on Easter Monday 1916.

"Green be their graves, green be their memories", the narrator declared, as the Artane Boys' Band, in their famous blue and scarlet uniforms, brought the audience to its feet with a stirring rendition of the Irish national anthem. As a 10-year-old, pre-Troubles Belfast girl, I quivered with patriotic pride.

Ireland has changed dramatically since 1966. To quote W.B. Yeats, "All changed, changed utterly." But the story of the Easter Rising, its idealistic leaders and their deaths by firing-squad still lends itself to dramatic retelling. The ghosts of the past call out to us even now.



On a drizzly winter's day, a motley group of visitors huddled by the huge stone pillars of Dublin's iconic General Post Office (GPO) - the headquarters of the short-lived rebellion. They examined the bullet holes on its granite facade, and listened intently as their bearded and bespectacled tour guide, Lorcan Collins, enthused about the people and places of the Rising.

"We did try the democratic process but we got nowhere. So, the Rising will kick off on Easter Sunday? What can go wrong?" asks the charismatic author and historian, rhetorically. "Well, it's Ireland, so everything goes wrong at the last minute."

Collins' passion for the Rising and its aftermath hasn't wavered during the 20 years he's been conducting his renowned '1916 Rebellion Walking Tour'. "You don't have to be the winner to be the victor," he announces proudly, over the city centre din. "That's the key aspect of the Rising."

Despite being a military failure opposed by most Irish people at the time, the insurrection was a seminal moment in Ireland's history, leading ultimately to independence.

Not surprisingly, its centenary has revived debate about its legitimacy, its legacy of violent republicanism, and the rel-

evance of the rebels' objectives. In 1966, the emphasis was on celebration. In 2016, scarred by a vicious 30-year conflict in Northern Ireland and near economic collapse, Ireland is being urged not only to re-tell but to reflect and re-imagine.

In a small, one-storey, red-bricked school, south of the River Liffey, a 31-year-old teacher prepares her class of inquisitive 9-years-olds for Proclamation Day on March 15. It's one of 1,800 historical and cultural initiatives planned for the centenary.



As in all the Republic's 3,200 schools, the pupils of St. Catherine's are writing a 'Proclamation for a New Generation'. An Irish tricolour, presented by the Defense Forces at a ceremony in November, is handled with care.

Stephanie McSweeney has been teaching her class about the flag's history and its significance for new Irish citizens. On Proclamation Day, this Protestant school and every other school in Ireland, will unfurl its tricolour and display it proudly. The children will sing the national anthem and celebrate Irish music and poetry. They'll read from the original Proclamation and from the versions they've written themselves, acknowledging Ireland's new multicultural identity.

"We never talked much about the Proclamation when I was growing up," reminisces McSweeney, who was reared in Spiddal - a small Irish-speaking village on Galway's Atlantic coast. "We knew about Padraig Pearse and the other rebellion leaders but not much about their cause. 'The English were bad and the Irish were great.' That's the education we had."

"Being a teacher and getting older, I'm aware that we're living in completely different times. I have to reflect on my attitudes and make sure I don't bring my own prejudices into the classroom. I've had to

explain that 1916 was a different time, with different rules."

McSweeney is incredibly proud of being 'Irish', although she queries its meaning nowadays. "We're not ruled by England any more but politically we're not Irish. We're very much under European control. We've left one rule for another."

"As a country, we're coming into our own internationally. US companies are setting up shop here, bringing cutting-edge technology. We want to look cosmopolitan, with our cappuccinos and lattes and our New York and Berlin-style restaurants. We want to be portrayed by more than our 'diddy-dee' music - not just a small island full of drunken 'paddies'."

"But by wanting to appear modern, we've had to forget a little about our roots," she continues regretfully. "It's meant shedding some of our identity. That's sad because it's part of what makes us unique."

A readiness to celebrate is an aspect of the Irish identity that taxi-driver Martin Jennings will flaunt this Easter. "I wasn't around the first time but I am now. I'm going to enjoy it. It'll be fantastic," he promises, during an early morning journey to Dublin Airport.

Easter Sunday will see him join thousands of others to witness an Irish Army officer read the Proclamation outside the GPO, heralding the start of the main public commemorations. After a wreath-laying ceremony and a minute's silence, Ireland's Defense Forces will lead a huge parade through the city, with an Air Corps fly-past

and a 21-gun salute.

The 54-year-old grandfather relishes the opportunity to celebrate events which shaped modern Ireland. Despite the lucrative prospect of thousands of visitors arriving in Dublin, Jennings is taking a short break to "re-live history" where possible.

"I'd love to see a re-enactment of what happened at the GPO or Kilmainham Gaol," he explains, "I want to know what it was like when those men were executed."

"I went through school and it was 'Easter Rising this...and Easter Rising that...'. But the teachers were only young themselves, reading it out of books. They knew less then than we all know now."

Jennings has instructed his daughter to record all five episodes of RTÉ's new television drama, 'Rebellion', and plans to watch it in one epic sitting. The multi-million euro production by the Irish state broadcaster attracted more than half a million viewers on its first night. "I start taxiing at 2 a.m.," Martin grumbles, "so I'm always in bed on Sundays when it's on."

Airport runs keep him busy. Dublin now ranks among the ten busiest airports in Europe, handling up to 80,000 passengers a day. A recent economic report revealed that one sixth of those born in Ireland, and aged over 15, now live abroad.

"It's a far cry from the Proclamation but we've a great country with plenty to celebrate. We could start before St. Patrick's Day and keep going through Easter and beyond," he laughs.

The differing attitudes of the tour-guide, teacher and taxi-driver reflect the challenge facing organizers of the 'Ireland 2016' program - how to strike a balance between commemoration, reflection and celebration.

The most significant events include a ceremony at the Garden of Remembrance for all who died in 1916, a reception for relatives of those who fought in the Rising and a synchronized wreath-laying ceremony marking the moment the first shots rang out.

Other highlights include the opening of two new visitor facilities at the GPO and Kilmainham Courthouse, a major exhibition at the National Museum, and seven themed concerts in the National Concert Hall. Libraries, history groups and community organizations will complement the program with hundreds of smaller events connecting the Rising to different localities.

Former RTÉ and BBC journalist, Póilín Ní Chiaráin, spent ten days recently in the rural west, in her home county of Mayo, and found people chatting about the centenary and deciding what to attend.

"Ireland has undergone huge changes, especially in the past ten years," the native Irish speaker reflects. "This centenary invites us to look again at the high principles enunciated in the Proclamation and to realize how little they have been delivered."

"Irishness nowadays isn't just for those who followed the 1916 tradition or aligned themselves to violent republicanism - its





more varied and inclusive than before.

"I know families, for example, who're talking freely about relatives who fought for Britain in the Great War. They wouldn't do that before. Now, it's no longer a matter of shame or something to hide. There's an acknowledgement of our diversity that wasn't there previously."

That acknowledgement has seldom been more evident than last May when Ireland became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage by popular vote. It showed too how the grip of Catholicism –

so fundamental to Padraig Pearse's ideology – had loosened.

"There's been a fragmentation and splintering of the old order," Póilín adds. "There's a loss of trust in government, and major establishments – like the Catholic Church and financial institutions – are now viewed with suspicion."

She says the erosion of sovereignty caused by Ireland's recourse to an EU bailout at the height of the financial crisis angered and upset many citizens. "Despite its being a relatively young state, people had come to take Ireland's sovereignty for granted. When they thought they'd lost it to Europe, they treasured it as never before. This will feed into the celebrations and media debates at a local level."



Póilín Ní Chiaráin

The Irish government wants to demonstrate that its 2016 program is 'inclusive and respectful'. An official event will take place to remember the 107 British soldiers killed in the Rising. But Northern Ireland's unionist First Minister Arlene Foster has already stated that she won't attend any official commemorations, describing the Easter Rising as "an attack on democracy."

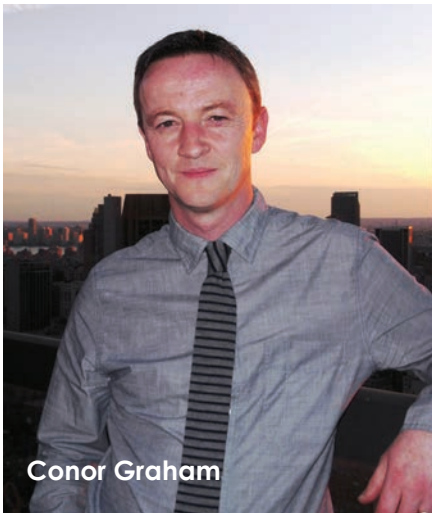
Thirty-three-year-old accountant Ciaran Nixon commutes regularly from his home in Donegal to work with a U.S. software firm in Dublin. Given the meandering path of the border separating North



Ciaran Nixon

and South, his route requires him to leave the Republic and cross into Northern Ireland before re-entering the Republic. He's well aware of the Troubles' impact in border regions and rejects any suggestion that commemorating 1916 celebrates violent republicanism.

"The Rising was a stepping stone towards establishing a republic, so it's important to celebrate what it eventually achieved. We're not celebrating the fighting – but it's how the country was founded. Just like in the American War of Independence, they did what was needed at the time. It's important to remember that."



Conor Graham

1916 is one of the first things he remembers learning about at school but it took the centenary to re-awaken his interest. Reading about it as an adult has revealed how little he actually knew about “what those guys were fighting for”.

“I’d have agreed with their ideals and supported what they set out to do. What they did was brave and high-risk, and by the time Ireland was officially declared a Republic 20 or 30 years later, the lives of a lot of people had changed.

“But the rebels’ idealism - the demand for an independent and sovereign state - is outdated now. The political landscape has changed massively.

“You’ll find people from all over the world living and working in Irish towns. The violence in Northern Ireland is gone.

The people who run the country now are basically working for Europe. What the rebels fought for in 1916 doesn’t have relevance today.”

Relevant or not, a new generation is measuring itself against aims and ideals identified a century ago, and believes society is falling short.

“The centenary’s creating a lot of fresh debate,” notes the owner of Irish Academic Press, Conor Graham. “People are taking a close look at the Proclamation - at aspirations like ‘cherishing all of the children of the nation equally’ - and asking how many of them have been realized, 100 years on.”

The County Kildare publisher says one of his most successful books to date is ‘Easter Rising 1916: The Trials’ - a re-examination of the rebels’ military trials, based on new archive material. “We published it first in September 2013 and it’s still selling strongly. It just keeps going.”

The Rising’s centenary has generated a glut of new publications too. Mass reproductions of 1916 newspapers sell out within hours. Visit any Dublin bookshop and see shelf upon shelf of biographies, memoirs and histories.

“Almost every Irish publisher and all the major UK houses have released at least one book. International publishers have some offerings too. Lots of amateur historians are writing about their great-grandfathers’ involvement. Some of it’s fantastic.

“There’s always been interest in the Rising but the centenary has caused an

upswell,” Belfast-born Graham observes. “Anyone from middle-age upwards is interested - even people I wouldn’t expect to be interested are talking about it.”

Clearly, 1916 still matters. Thousands will line the streets of Dublin on Easter Sunday and see the Tricolour raised to full mast above the GPO. Thoughts will turn to the rebels who stood under its vast portico a hundred years ago, proclaiming their vision of an Ireland that “guarantees...equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens.”

“There’s a lot of unfinished business,” concludes Póilín Ní Chiaráin. “For a state born in civil war and violence, that’s understandable to a point. But we lost an opportunity with the fiftieth anniversary to take a different direction and implement more of the Proclamation’s principles. The centenary offers us another chance.”

Shortly after the Rising, W.B. Yeats remarked to an acquaintance, “As yet one knows nothing of the future except that it must be very unlike the past.” As commemorations and celebration turn into reflection and re-imagining, the Rising looks set to haunt Ireland for years to come.

*Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.*

-W.B. Yeats



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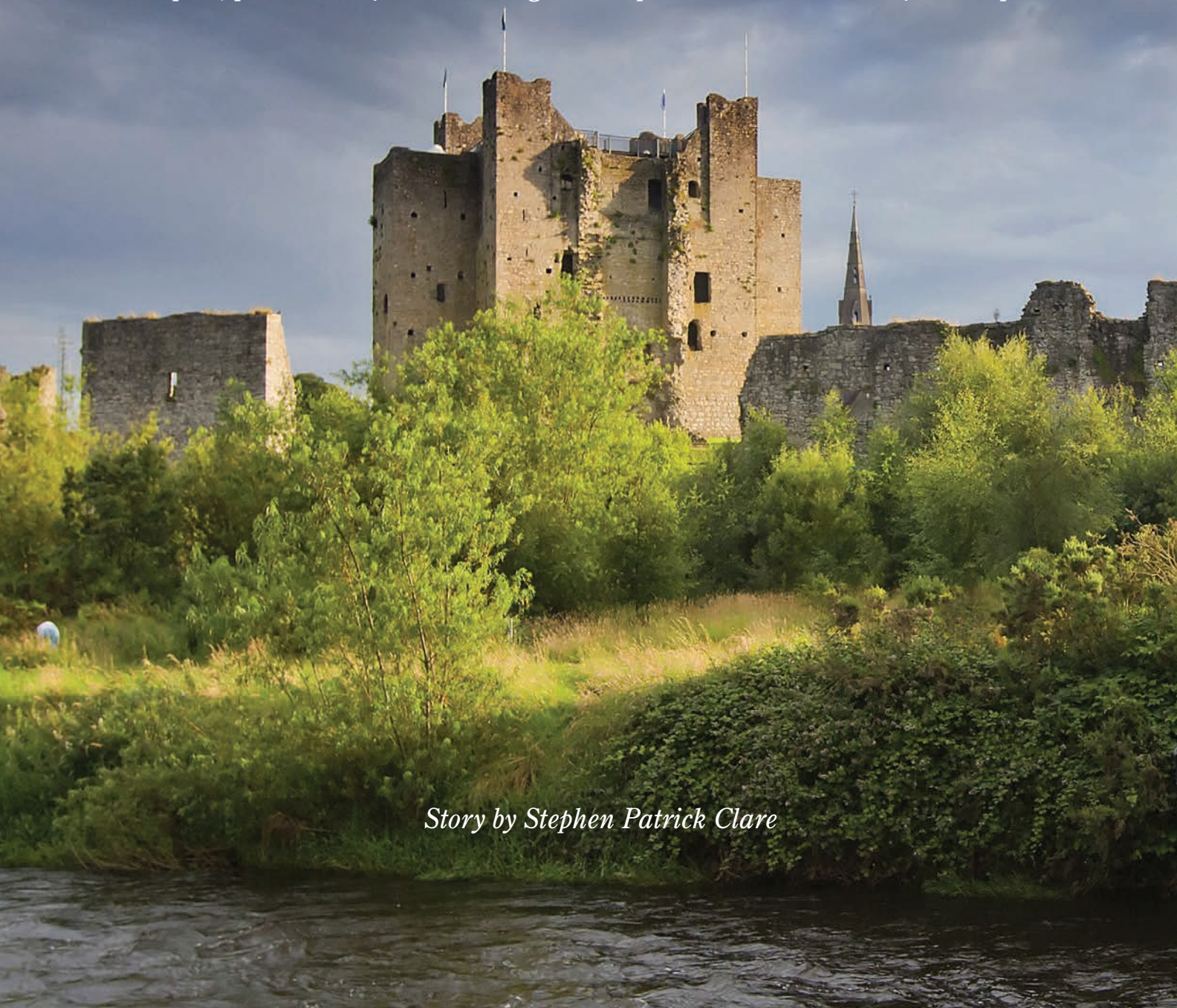
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Story by Stephen Patrick Clare



Home Is Where the Heart Is

The trip could not have come at a better time; with Canada knee-deep in winter, the milder temperatures of the Emerald Isle would be welcome relief from the continual cold and snow.

Re-reading my itinerary for the week, I am excited by the possibilities of Ireland's Ancient East; Dublin, Wexford, Waterford and Cork are the main stops, with side trips to smaller locales connecting the dots.

Along with its deep Celtic roots, the area is accented by an array of other cultures, including Viking, Anglo-Saxon, and more.

Aside from a short sojourn to Glendalough, just south of Dublin, in 1989, I have never seen this part of Eire. On that first trip 26 years ago, I circled from Dublin, through the north, and down the west coast to Kerry, eventually crossing the country back to the Irish capital city. In 2013, I spent a wonderful week exploring Dublin in depth. In 2014, I revisited Northern Ireland, noting the miraculous change brought on by fifteen years of peace there. Last year, I traversed the Wild Atlantic Way, trekking from Galway to Donegal, reeling in the romance of the region's raw and remote landscape.

All research aside, Ireland's Ancient East would only truly reveal itself once I had arrived, feet on the ground, eyes and hands recording my daily experiences.

I also knew enough to draw on the experiences of others, and on the trans-Atlantic flight from Boston, a few cared to share.

"This is our third trip over in the past five years," says Rick Flynn of Worcester, Massachusetts, who, along with his wife Olivia, has roots in County Carlow.

"I retired in 2010," he continues, "and with the kids out of the house, we had some extra time on our hands. I always wanted to explore my family's heritage, and thought, well, there's no better time than now."

Flynn explains the timing of the couple's annual trip.

"Oh, it's definitely quieter over there this time of the year," he says. "But that gives us a more choices of where to stay, what to see, and how to get around. And though the weather isn't exactly tropical, it's still better than the bitter New England winter."

Like Flynn, Mary Hanlon of Manchester, New Hampshire, is no stranger to the Emerald Isle's eastern shore.

"I've been at least a dozen times over the last two decades," she shares. "My husband and I would rent a car in Dublin and just drive up and down the coastline, letting the wind take us where it

would. And we always made sure to stop to say our prayers at St. Kevin's Monastery in Wicklow."

After her partner passed in 2007, Hanlon took a break from her travels, eventually returning to Ireland with her daughter Peggy in 2012.

"That first trip back without him was very, very hard," she recalls. "There were so many memories, and I cried and cried. But it was an opportunity for me to heal, and I also realized that those memories were meant to be shared."

"Mom and I celebrate Dad's life each time we go," pipes in Peggy. "I have no doubt that he is there with us the whole time. For Mom, it's a chance to remember him and their relationship. For me, it's a chance to know both of my parents a little better. And we're making new memories, maybe some that I can pass along to my own two children some day."

Alongside the lush landscape, historical sites, cultural landmarks, quaint inns and cozy pubs, Mary says that people are a pivotal part of the experience.

"The Irish, particularly in that part of the country, are so warm and welcoming - really down-home, salt-of-the-earth types. We have made so many great friends there over the years that each visit is almost like a homecoming of sorts."

As our plane touches down at Dublin Airport, and we disembark through customs and security, I share the sentiment of my fellow travelers; as soon as the soles of my shoes hit the ground it feels like I am home.

Dublin Days

The past permeates the present in Ireland's capital city, where classic and contemporary collide in a kaleidoscope of culture.

For travelers, Dublin is both manageable and comfortable. With an immediate population of just over 500,000, and a pace that is of equal measure, it is a city of scale: minimal traffic and clear, well-marked pathways for pedestrians make its many quaint quarters friendly for both cyclists and for those on foot.



On this day, the heart and soul of Dublin's commercial sector - Grafton Street - is wall-to-wall with mid-day window-shoppers, browsing brand names in both big-league boutiques and mom-and-pop shops, and bearing witness to the country's recent economic recovery. Many are students at nearby Trinity College.

Established in 1592, Trinity College remains the brain-center of Ireland's educational system. The world-renowned institution's alumni include a long list of notables, and it continues to graduate top-shelf politicians, scientists, business and medical leaders, artists and authors. Once the sole and strict domain of the country's citizens, the facility now hosts a flood of foreign accents.



Particularly popular with those students - and with tourists - the neighbouring Temple Bar district is a mish-mash of old and new; long-established pubs and shops sit aside contemporary boutiques and restaurants, while traditional Irish music - or "Trad" as it is now known - spills out into the street, blending seamlessly with modern rock, pop and EDM.

It is here, of course, that many of the city's great sonic pioneers first took to the stage, including the likes of The Dubliners, The Wolfe Tones, the Clancy Brothers, Thin Lizzy, The Pogues, U2, Sinéad O'Connor, and - more recently - chart-toppers Damien Rice and Hozier.

While Temple Bar speaks to the immediate past, two nearby monoliths - Dublin Castle and Christ Church Cathedral - testify to the city's long and rich heritage.

Built in 1205 AD, Dublin Castle sits atop the city's highest ground, commanding a view from east to west, and again from north to south. Once the crown jewel and throne to the region's landed gentry, the old walls are still steeped in noble history. Through the years, massive restoration and renovation projects have kept the castle current, and modern amenities are available to the influx of travelers and pupils that tour the premises daily.

Similarly, the close-by Christ Church Cathedral is a major attraction to locals and visitors alike. Even those with no religion are drawn to the still-functioning house of prayer, where saints and sinners have been worshipping since 1030. Though contemporized for convenience, aging stained-glass windows line the ancient stone hallways, giving a glorious glimpse into yesteryear. A few blocks over, the smaller St. Patrick's Cathedral is open for business as well.

A stroll along the River Liffey also reveals a city at a cross-roads; at one end, where the picturesque Ha'penny Bridge crosses a greenish divide, ages-old architecture houses financial firms

and IT centers. Down by the docklands, where the Liffey empties into the Irish Sea, bold and brash buildings - most designed and developed during the boom years of the 'Celtic Tiger' - now pepper the waterfront with chrome and steel.

That culture clash is also well-chronicled in the city's many museums, galleries, bookstores, concert halls, theatres and cinemas. The Irish have always had a beating and bleeding heart for the arts, and much of the Emerald Isle's creative lineage and legacy begins and ends in Dublin. Today, more than ever perhaps, the city's forward vision is tempered by a look over its shoulder.

That strong sense of self - where warmth, wit and wisdom are one - have been hallmarks of Dubliners since the city was first settled by Vikings in 839 AD. That spirit has stayed - like a single thread woven through the tapestry of centuries - and will be commemorated across the city, and the country, during this year's Easter Rising centennial celebrations, when the past permeates the present once more.

Feast of Friends

Irish poet W.B. Yeats once wrote "There are no strangers here, only friends you haven't met yet..." Nowhere, perhaps, is this truer than in Dublin.

Though the Irish capital has a lengthy and robust history, it wasn't until very recently that the city could be called a food and drink destination.

"Twenty or thirty years ago, Dublin didn't have the kind of delicious diversity it enjoys today," says Seana Cooke of Irish Food Trail, the city's foremost culinary tour company.

"The boom of the Celtic Tiger really opened the door to both economic prosperity and immigration, resulting in a host of new foods and flavours for the whole country."



A retired professional soccer player, Cooke is both engaging and entertaining as she leads our small group - including two Dubliners (Paul and Michelle) and an American (Glenn from California) - towards the city's bustling Temple Bar Food Market.

Less than a decade old, the open-air bazaar affords eaters the opportunity to meet face-to-face with local and area producers. Traditional stalls showcase fresh fruit and vegetables alongside all-natural, home-baked goods. A modern take on an ancient idea, the aromatic agora continues to grow in popularity with foodies of all ages.

Nearby, the award-winning Gallagher's Boxty House blends the best of old and new world cuisine. Here, the Irish potato-pancake is twisted, tweaked and turned on its head with dumplings, bacon, leaks, salmon, spinach, sundried tomatoes and more.

Down the road, across from Trinity College, Gallaher & Co. Bistro and Coffee House brings a mixed-bag of past and present to the table. Built in 1891 by renowned architect J.F. Fuller, the heritage building served the community as a tobacco shop for over a century.

Over that time, the site survived revolution, economic rise and fall and recovery, as well as changes in ownership and direction. An eatery for the last 20 years, the spot now serves up a mélange of Irish and Euro morsels, including Beef and Guinness Stew, Warm Leek and Mushroom Tart, bruschetta, and breads and cheeses of all sorts. The venue's vibrant veneer works well within the walls of the elderly edifice.

Back in Temple Bar, Oscar's Bar is a spectacular setting for something sweet. The chic, stylish saloon would be right at home in Manhattan's Lower East Side, or Montreal's trendy Plateau district, and - interestingly - the uber-hipster, low-set lighting and chrome furnishings make a fine fit for a classic Irish Coffee and dessert.

And while Dublin enjoys a cornucopia of classic and contemporary culinary options, Temple Bar is the go-to spot to tempt the taste buds. All types of global gastronomy can be found here, including delicacies from across Europe, North and South America, the Middle and Far East, Africa, and beyond. Whether out on the town for fine dining, a casual meal, or late-night, take-away fish and chips, there is something to satisfy all hungers.

Without good company, however, eating in Dublin - or anywhere for that matter - might leave one feeling empty. On this day, however, the conversation is excellent, sometimes spicy, though well-seasoned with Irish warmth and wit.

Also of note is the absence of android phones and other mobile devices during meals.

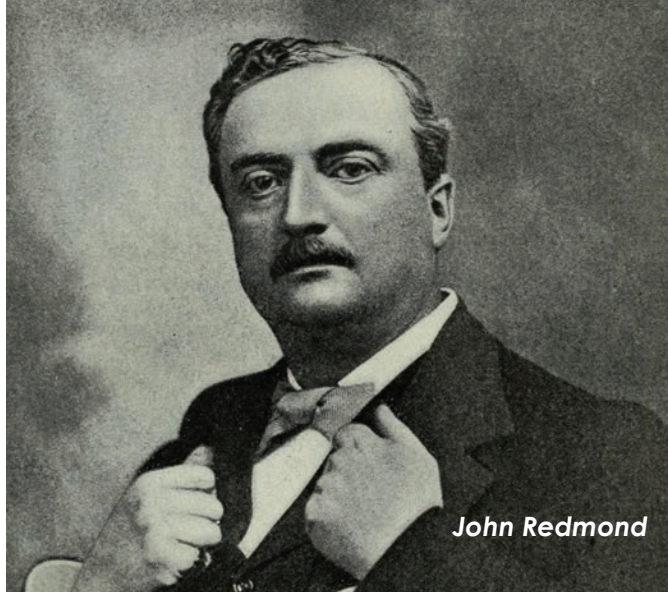
"My parents wouldn't have it," smirks Cooke, as the three-hour excursion comes to a close. "In fact, I don't know anyone's family that would allow phones or tablets at the table. Here in Ireland, we talk to one another, face to face - gift of the gab and all that.

"So, whether it is over breakfast, lunch or dinner, or at afternoon tea or with an evening pint, even the greatest of strangers can become the best of friends."

The Way to Wexford

Established in 888 AD by Viking raiders, the small seaside town of Wexford is a vital and vibrant stop along Ireland's Ancient East.

"Despite their reputation as fierce plunderers, the Vikings that settled here were quite amicable at that time," says Monica



Crofton of Wexford Walking Tours. "They were more interested in assimilating with the Celtic peoples than conquering them."

Evidence of that era is everywhere in this community of 20,000, including on the waterfront where remnants of those tribes' seafaring skills are still on display.

Over the years, that mastery would grow from generation to generation, eventually turning the town - which sits two hours south of Dublin, and whose motto is 'So Old, So New' - into a shipbuilding powerhouse.

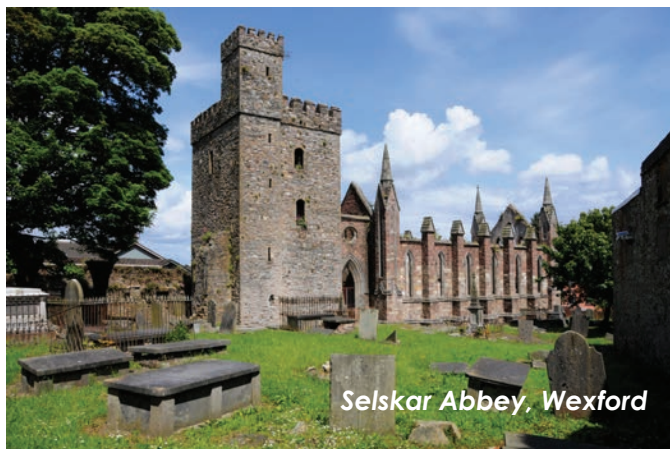
"Before Catholic emancipation (1829), and before the 1916 Easter Rising, the Redmond family built their fortune here by the ocean," continues Crofton.

John Redmond (1856-1918) represented the region in England's parliament, and became renowned for his efforts to push through the Irish Home Rule Bill at the turn of the 20th century. "Although he failed to finalize the independence agenda - soon after falling out of favour with his constituents amidst the winds of revolution - his affluence can still be felt."

Indeed, it is a testament to the will of one man and of one family that the community is still commercially viable today, even long after the collapse of the shipyards.

"It also helped that Wexford wasn't as afflicted by the famine as other parts of the country," notes Crofton, adding that Eire's neutrality in World War II spared it from further destruction and decay as well. "So we still have most of our roads, houses, shops, schools and the like intact from bygone times."

A fine example of the area's endurance is the once-regal and regaled Selskar Abbey. Originally founded in the late 9th cen-



tury as a place of worship, the site was “remodeled” during the Norman invasions of the 12th century, and then “renovated” in the 1400s, before being “renewed” by the Protestant Church of Ireland in the 1840s. Though today it lies in ruins, its roof gone to the trials of time, the original stone walls and towers remain intact, as does the Gothic-styled cemetery by its side.

The Road to Waterford

The weather in Ireland in mid-January isn't that off from other times of the year; aside from a seasonal dip in temperature (5 to 10 degrees Celsius most days), there is rain, mist and fog, with the occasional scattering of sunshine.



The small port town of Waterford (pop; 65,000) has seen its fair share of weather since first being settled by Vikings in 914 AD. And its citizens have weathered a myriad of change also.

As with its sister city Wexford to the north, Waterford was home to the Celts long before invaders set foot. A peaceful agriculture-based society, the Celtic people were welcoming hosts when the Viking tribes arrived, and the two communities quickly merged.

While evidence of that Celtic culture is minimal here - aside from the inherent language and music, there are almost no physical artifacts - the Vikings left behind substantial proof of their presence.

That presence is celebrated in Waterford's Cultural and Heritage quarter - a collection of narrow streets, historic public spaces and dynamic attractions known as the Viking Triangle.

“The entire history of our city is contained within this area,” says Donnchadh O’Ceallachain, curator of the Waterford Museum of Treasures.

A quick walk from the museum in any direction attests to his claim; nearby, the three-storey, 12th century Reginald's Tower houses an impressive display of Viking weapons and jewelry, along with an informative AV presentation of the building's past and present.

“When Richard de Clare (a.k.a. Strongbow) led Anglo-Norman invaders into the city in 1170, the Celts and Vikings were all but wiped out,” explains O’Ceallachain. “What followed was centuries of English rule.

“Actually, Waterford did very well as a Crown subject,” he continues. “Its strategic location as a port brought financial prosperity, and protection of the area by the English military ensured its allegiance to the Empire.”

That loyalty is on display at the city's Medieval Museum, which hosts a huge collection of prized relics, including the amazing four-metre-long Great Charter Roll dating from 1372,

the stunning 15th century Cloth-of-Gold Vestments, one of King Henry VIII's hats, and the fantastic Choristers Hall, which sits directly beneath the museum.

“Really, the only time that Waterford's motto - *Urbs Intacta* (untaken city) - was in question was following the Protestant Reformation,” notes O’Ceallachain. “Civic leaders here chose to keep the city Catholic. Suffice to say that the reigning monarch, Elizabeth I, was not pleased.”

Despite the slight, and a brief go at independence from 1642-1649 that was quickly quashed by Oliver Cromwell, Waterford continued to prosper for the next 300 years.

The area's architecture - including the beautiful Bishop's Palace - bears witness to that economic growth. Built in 1743



by the renowned Anglo-Indian architect Richard Castle, the edifice's open spaces house a dramatic collection of 18th century furniture, paintings, silverware and glassware, including the oldest piece of historic Waterford glass dating from the 1780s. Also there is a lock of Napoleon's hair and the only surviving mourning cross, commissioned by the emperor's mother to mark her son's passing.

And though the city continues to enjoy a distinctive English feel about it (and it is of note that area citizens remained loyal to the Crown during the 1916 Easter Rising, even sending local residents to fight the rebels), Waterford is very much a product of its locale.

“As a key trading port, ships from all over the world called here,” shares O’Ceallachain. “And, as a result, today we are one of the most multi-cultural centers in Ireland.”

Sure enough, an assortment of ethnically diverse accents and restaurants bring a kaleidoscope of colours and flavours to Waterford. In addition, a number a major arts events, including film and music festivals, invite throngs of visitors from around the world each year.

“When you think about it,” says O’Ceallachain, “that tradition of all roads leading to Waterford still continues to this day.”

Rebel Cork

Ireland's second largest city sits at the southernmost tip of the island.

And while comparisons to the country's other major center along Ireland's Ancient East trail is inevitable and obvious - like Dublin, Cork has Viking roots, flourished as a trade-based port, enjoyed centuries of shipbuilding prosperity, and still prides itself on a strong nautical culture - local and area residents are quick to distance themselves from their northerly compatriots.

“I wouldn't move to Dublin if you paid me,” laughs Patrick (Paddy) Malloy, who has lived in Cork all of his 67 years. “Not



even if hell itself froze over...

"Dubliners, you see, have a bit of reputation for being...all that," he continues, with a smirk. "We're not like that down here. We don't walk with airs about us. We've more of a sense of being grounded, or rooted I suppose."

While he admits that the cultural divide might be a case of envy - a sort of "kid brother syndrome" - Malloy notes that to him and others, Dublin seems as distant as Paris or London.

"Cork is a little country in and of itself. Sure, we're a multi-cultural city, with a history of immigration through the port and loads of international students today, but we are also very insular. I have family members, even older than myself, who have never travelled outside the area.

"I'm not saying that's always a good thing," he continues. "But at least here, you know where you stand and who your friends are."

Ciaran Murphy echoes the sentiment.

"Oh, I've been up to Dublin many, many times," shares the 27-year-old pharmacist. "It was all the rage to go to the shops there when I was a teenager. And in my early 20s, my friends and I would visit for the weekend, taking in concerts and hitting the bars."

Three years ago, fresh out of university, Murphy was offered a big-time job in the big city.

"Not interested," she states flatly. "Dublin is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there. There's nothing you can get or do there that you can't get or do here. Cork is the right size for me, and I've my family and friends around me."

Right size might very well be the right term. With a population of only 120,000, Cork enjoys the quaint and coziness of a small town, alongside the anonymity of a bigger center.

More pertinently, perhaps, Cork residents benefit from a wealth of haute-couture and high-cuisine; much of the city's commercial waterfront is lined with multi-starred restaurants - a culinary appetizer to the brisk and bustling nightlife.

A multitude of award-winning creative events take center-stage throughout the year as well, including the Cork Film Festival and the Cork Jazz Festival. The city is also home to the Cork School of Music, the Crawford College of Art and Design, the Institute for Choreography and Dance, the Triskel Arts Centre and the Cork Academy of Dramatic Art. Accordingly, it was named the European Capital of Culture in 2005.

As contemporary as Cork has become, however, its founda-



tion is firmly footed in the past.

Originally a 6th century monastic settlement, the city only took true shape after Vikings arrived in 915 AD. Like Waterford to the north, Cork was captured and converted during the 12th century Anglo-Norman invasions, and remained a loyal and prosperous Crown jewel until the late 1800s, when English taxation laws took too tall a toll on area farmers and businesses.

With widespread support for the Irish Parliamentary Party and its call for Irish Home Rule, Cork established itself as a center for Irish Nationalism in the early 20th century. While its repu-

tation as “the rebel city” actually arose from its support for the Yorkist cause during the English “War of the Roses” in the mid-1400s, the term took on new meaning during and following the Anglo-Irish war of 1919-1921. Even today, tee-shirts sporting the term “Real Capital” can be seen for sale in shop windows of every corner store.

“Aye, this place is the true heart and soul of Eire,” smiles Patrick Malloy.

“Look, surely Dublin is a brilliant city, and I have great friends and family there,” he adds, “but you might as well be measuring apples and oranges. I suppose it’s a little like the relationship between Boston and New York City; Boston might be the smaller town, but it’s got the bigger fight in it. And, ultimately, it is the spirit of the people in Cork that cannot be compared.”

Eire Entre Nous

As music exists in the spaces between the notes, so Ireland’s Ancient East lives in the distances between the dots on the map.

Ireland is a country of scale. At just 84,421 km², it doesn’t take long to get from points A - Z; two hours by car from side to side, and six hours from top to bottom. Though small in size, Eire is large in legend, lore and lineage, where history is hidden in plain sight.

57.4 kilometers north of Dublin sits the now-tranquil and non-partisan Boyne Valley, once the scene of a bloody battle between King William of Orange and King James that divided the faiths of families, friends and communities for centuries. Aside from a small landmark noting the infamous fracas of 1690, the area is overgrown with short grass and tall trees. Nearby, the rebuilt Neolithic monument of Newgrange - older than England’s Stonehenge and the Egyptian Pyramids - offers little evidence of its first inhabitants, inviting visitors to fill in the blanks with imagination.

South, in Dublin, it isn’t difficult to imagine generations of hardship and poverty. Books, movies, plays, monuments and more tell the tale of a terrible gap that existed between the wealthy and the impoverished until the mid-20th century. Today, that breach is bridged by a middle-class that evolved after World War II, and exploded during the boom of the city’s recent Celtic Tiger years; the divide and distinction between North ‘Dubs’ and South ‘Dubs’ has all but disappeared.

Between Dublin and Wexford, a distance of 131.2 kilometers, are the quaint and cozy seaside towns of Bray, Wicklow, Arklow,



Boyne Valley

Gorey and Blackwater, where time and family ties have stood still for over a millennium. The glorious hills of Glendalough are home to an Early Medieval monastic settlement, founded in the 6th century by St Kevin, where the souls and spirits of its Celtic-Christian settlers still walk among the ruins.

Between Wexford and Waterford, a distance of 59.6 kilometers, Viking history comes to life in Johnstown Castle, Bridgetown, Duncannon, Campile and Slieverue, as ongoing excavations continue to unearth relics of the region’s Norse heritage. Nearby New Ross celebrates the more recent past as the ancestral homestead of former American president John F. Kennedy. The port town of Rosslare Harbour still welcomes trawlers and travelers from around the world.

Between Waterford and Cork, a distance of 131.6 kilometers, the ages-old villages of Kilmacthomas, Conna, Tallow, Dungarvan and Middleton rejoice in their roles as vital links in the chain of Irish independence. Blarney Castle, just a few miles outside of Cork city center, stands as a reminder of the hundreds of years that passed between the community’s Celtic past and present.

From Cork back to Dublin, a distance of 259.4 kilometers, there rests a rugged and ragged coastline, whose many saltwater harbours are stained with the salty tears of those who said goodbye en route to new lives in the New World, Europe, and beyond.

Those same ports have welcomed countless others over time - Celts, Vikings, Anglos, Normans - all searching for land, prosperity, faith, or simply better lives for their children.

These shores still greet newcomers, and today the lush landscape is a myriad of multiculturalism, where the incumbent Irish live in peace aside immigrants from Australia, Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and elsewhere. While those bonds are strong - as bonds become in close quarters - each enjoys its distinct cultural identity.

It is in the spaces between these notes - where the lives of those who have been, who are now, and who will be, fill the distances between the dots on the map - that the past, present and future converge to compose the most timeless of masterpieces.



Hook Head Lighthouse, Wexford



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the National Opera House and the Wexford Festival Opera

A 65-year-old festival and a newly renovated opera venue bring a blend of traditional and contemporary sounds to Ireland's Ancient East

David McLoughlin says he was “head-hunted” for the role of chief executive for the annual opera festival in Wexford, Ireland.

Before entering the world of opera, McLoughlin qualified with an honours degree in economics from Trinity College Dublin. He then worked in the country's film and television industry before joining the Wexford Festival Opera in 2007 - the same year that Ireland's refurbished National Opera House reopened its doors.

“The new Opera House has enabled the festival to present larger and more ambitious productions,” McLoughlin explains via email.

With that increased mandate, the greatest challenge, he notes, is securing scarce financing.

“Restricted state resources have impacted on the Irish arts sector, but the levels of corporate and philanthropic support are increasing.”

The situation can further be improved, he adds, “through focusing on audience development techniques, more fundraising strategies, and following international best practice.”

“Our aim is to continually produce what is the most expensive performance art form to the highest international standard which Wexford is famous for.”

The annual fall gathering has been living up to that benchmark for 65 years. Back in 1950, the festival was the brainchild of three local opera fanatics, who developed the event as a passion project.

“What's interesting is that, at first, these gentlemen didn't bring in works that people necessarily liked, but rather ones they thought that people should like,” shares National Opera House spokesperson Elizabeth Rose-Browne.



David McLoughlin

Since then, the festivities have erupted into a must-attend event for music lovers and theatre enthusiasts alike, claiming a place among the world's leading opera festivals.

“Audience numbers have increased over the decades,” says McLoughlin. “We want to develop audiences for opera, and other performance art forms, through presentation in the state-of-the-art facility which has been recognized by the Irish Government as the only purpose-built opera house in Ireland.”

According to McLoughlin, the festival has remained faithful to its core directive through the years by “enabling audiences from around the world to discover both rarely performed opera works produced to the highest standards, and also emerging Irish and international operatic talent.”

This year's festival playbill includes *Maria de Rudenz* by Gaetano Donizetti - a dark tragedy of a romance gone wrong. The Italian opera was first performed in Venice in the early 1800s. Also on tap is *Herculanum*, a French opera by Félicien David, as well as *Vanessa*, an American opera by Samuel Barber.

Rose-Browne explains that the refit-

ted facility is the only building in Ireland which fulfills the strict acoustic and architectural criteria to be deemed a National Opera House.

“We may showcase artistic works that are hundreds of years old, but we now do so in the most contemporary of settings. The rooms were built with dark Canadian walnut and designed and treated with the latest in acoustic technology.”

The modern performance space also hosts an array of other acts and artists.

“We bring in musicals, plays, comedians, and musical performers of all sorts and styles,” says Rose-Brown. “This year we have everything from an Elvis tribute to The Royal Moscow Ballet and the Harlem Gospel Choir.”

Local and regional performers frequently take the stage as well. This spring, Dublin-born Damien Dempsey will share his eclectic mix of musical genres with the house audience. Shows such as this make the venue vital to the region.

“Both the festival and house play an important part in the local community in terms of social inclusion, cohesion and outreach,” shares McLoughlin. “They foster an appreciation of, and involvement in, the arts and culture. As well, they generate significant economic benefits...in particular as a major, and increasingly important, contributor to Ireland's cultural tourism.”

According to Rose-Browne, the opera house generates €8.2 million for the local economy each year. However, she points out, the artistic incentive still outshines the monetary gain.

“We are very excited about the opportunity to get more young people here involved with the performing arts in the future. Passing down that creative spark will keep Wexford vital and vibrant for generations to come.”

www.wexfordopera.com





Dermot Seberry

Dermot Seberry is a chef, culinary arts lecturer, author, food critic, and guide/owner of Food Tours - A Taste of Ireland's Ancient East. His book, Ireland, A Culinary Journey in The North East, was shortlisted for the Best in the World Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in 2014. In this interview with Celtic Life International, Seberry talks about his culinary journeys and shares one of his favourite recipes.

Where are you from?

From Monasterboice, a wee country parish tucked away off Ireland's Ancient East coast.

What inspired you to become a Chef?

As a young 'pheasant beater' for the aristocratic hunters when I was 11 years old, I was invited in to see the game dinner table in the Manor House. It was 21 feet long, covered in every type of game fur and feathered - snipe, woodcock, partridge, hare, deer – cooked and displayed in every imaginable way. I was hooked.

How would you describe Irish cuisine?

Irish cuisine is, in its most simple form, local ingredients picked fresh in season, prepared and cooked in a manner which maximizes their flavour, and the ability to marry them with other indigenous ingredients, keeping alive the traditions of our Celtic roots.

Tell us about your book, Ireland, A Culinary Journey in The North East.

Ireland, A Culinary Journey in The North East is a food tourism book. It has three very specific themes. The first is to create an awareness of a very unique artisan food region within Ireland. This region sits in the ancient eastern kingdoms where evidence of the first settlers farmed. It is so fertile that the greatest proportion of award-winning local producers can be visited on our food tour. The scenery, both landscapes and seascapes, are exceptional and therefore I wanted to create a 'good food travel guide' where tourists can take the hidden treasure routes off the main M1 route between Dublin and Belfast. Secondly, the producers themselves are so steeped in their work that I wanted to cap-

ture their craft in action and promote them within the hospitality and tourism industry. Finally, only the very best/consistent producers are featured, and only eateries with chefs who proved to me that they genuinely support and understand how to use local produce are featured. Also, video QR codes throughout the book can be viewed using smart phones. Watch a food tour in action or watch a food demonstration by a Michelin star chef using local produce. The local regional tourism board was looking for a way to attract tourists off the M1 into these hidden gems. After causing controversy over which eateries were featured and which were left out, I'd like to think this book, a food tourism book, has now provoked most hotels, restaurants and eateries across the region to use and support their local producers.

What do you like most about lecturing at the Dublin Institute of Technology?

What I like most about my job are 'the penny drop moments' and the 'self pride moments' when the student realizes they have it; and the opportunity to work alongside top chefs in Ireland (members of Euro-toques Ireland) to develop a current, relevant and modern culinary arts curriculum.

What have been some of your favourite or proudest experiences throughout your career thus far?

Making it in marriage after 15 years as a chef, being part of the culinary education of Mark Moriarty who became the San Pellegrino World Young Chef 2015, and receiving two international awards for my most recent book.

www.foodtours.ie

Dermot's Spelt Berry Salad

Ingredients

- 250 grams of Dunany spelt berries (whole grain kernels)
- 1.5 litres of water
- 1.5+ litres of vegetable stock
- chopped chives
- whole capers
- finely diced peeled celery
- finely diced red pepper
- very finely diced carrots
- fresh chopped mint
- lemon juice
- camelina oil
- Oriel sea salt
- dried chilli flakes
- diced grapes
- flowers from chive bulb
- pomegranate

Instructions

- Soak 250 grams of Dunany spelt berries in 1.5 litres of water overnight. Rinse and simmer in 1.5 litres of vegetable stock for 1 hour till soft. Top up liquid when it reduces below the kernels. Leave to cool and drain.
- Add texture, flavour and aroma with chives, capers, celery, red pepper, carrots, mint, lemon juice, camelina oil, sea salt, chilli flakes and grapes.
- Pluck the mini flowers from the chive bulb (they add amazing colour and flavour) and add a squeeze of pomegranate juice with the seeds.





Waterford Castle Hotel & Golf Resort

Past and present come together at Waterford Castle, where a rich and robust history blends seamlessly with contemporary comforts to make it a key component of Ireland's Ancient East

Originally erected as a single stone tower during medieval times, Waterford Castle has evolved into an extraordinary edifice, replete with wings of magnificent rooms and halls, each ordained with fine art, furniture and fixtures.

Located on a private island in the River Suir, the centuries-old site sits just downstream from its namesake city - the oldest civic community on the Emerald Isle. As both a longstanding strategic and scenic locale, the 310-acre sanctuary - only a three-minute ferry ride from the mainland - has seen more than its fair share of inhabitants over time.

Originally settled by monks from the sixth to the eighth century, the island was taken and guarded by Danes during the Viking era. A long line of Anglo-Norman Fitzgeralds - including a cousin of Richard de Clare (a.k.a. Strongbow) - owned and occupied the spot for another eight centuries, building the castle in the 1600s as a military outpost.

Waterford Castle was transformed into a luxurious four-star hotel and country club in 1987, opening its vast and lush grounds to both local residents and visitors.

Since March, 2015, current proprietor Seamus Walsh has taken the original vision for the facility to new levels, implementing further and more detailed renovations.

"This has been an exceptional project, in that all of our additions and refurbishments aim to showcase the castle's unique personality," says spokesperson Berna-



dette Walsh, whose background in interior design has been a boon to the building's renovations.

"Our team's enthusiasm, professionalism and genuine love of the resort have made this a project from the heart."

Recent renovations have included at least €100,000 worth of upgrades to the Des Smyth-designed, 18-hole golf course. A new 'short-game' area is set to open in the coming months as well.

Today, guests can choose to stay either inside the castle itself, or in one of 45 self-catering lodges located a short walk from the main building. Over the past year, those lodges have been going through a transition of "colour, texture, personality and warmth," with upgrades designed to make visitors feel even more at home.

Restoration of the Castle's historic furnishings and décor, via the addition of a collection of contemporaneous pieces, has also been a priority.

Once guests are done marvelling at the enchanting surroundings, they are welcome to enjoy an assortment of engaging activities. In addition to golf, the resort offers archery, clay pigeon shooting, falconry, tennis, croquet, and activities for

children. With its walking trails and picnic spots, the castle grounds are also prime territory for nature enthusiasts.

"The island boasts a vast array of wildlife from our resident deer, fox, badgers, hares, pheasants, peacocks and many more," says Walsh. "It really is a bird watcher's paradise."

A day on the grounds can be complemented with a fine meal at the Munster Room Restaurant, which has maintained its two AA rosettes since 2001.

With the stunning setting and the famous Irish homespun hospitality, more and more couples are keen to get married on the island. "Our mandate is to be the premier wedding venue in Ireland," notes Walsh. "Most of our wedding couples are American and have Irish heritage. We also have many Australian and Canadian couples." The locale is a popular nuptial destination for love-birds from across both the Emerald Isle and Europe as well.

Renovations will continue this year with the building of an "Island Spa" and with "refurbishments throughout the castle, lodges and golf club," Walsh says. "We are aiming to up the ante, and to become a five star resort, which is not very far away."

While upgrades carry on, Waterford Castle retains its old-world charm. As it was when the monks first settled the island 1400 years ago, guests and visitors are invited to "leave your worries at the shore."

www.waterfordcastleresort.com



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And Arun Gandhi.*

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A portion of the proceeds go to the charitable World Peace Tartan Initiative

A woman with dark, wavy hair and a jeweled headband is seated in a dark, ornate wooden chair. She is wearing a vibrant red, off-the-shoulder dress with a black velvet collar and a small brooch. Her right hand, adorned with a large ring, rests on the chair's arm. The background features a rich, patterned red and gold fabric. The overall aesthetic is classic and elegant.

Charlotte & Jane

www.charlotteandjane.com



Both of us have always had a love of clothing, not so much “fashion” but clothing and design. There is a big difference between loving and being interested in clothing and design and loving fashion.

When you have a true love and passion for something, you can never let it go; and so we will always be involved in clothing design, in some form or another, and feel completely blessed that we now have our own clothing design business, based in the place we love most in all the world, Kinsale, Co. Cork.

Our work is constantly evolving, which is wonderful. It is always interesting to look back on a journey and see how one path led to the next and the influences that fed into different dimensions and evolutionary processes.

We work closely with our dress makers as all our clothing is locally produced, and we also work closely with our fabric producers as the fabrics we use are all locally sourced from family

run woolen mills around the country. We now design and have our own tweeds dyed and woven for us.

A good piece of clothing must be good on the person wearing it. It must flatter them beautifully and fit them perfectly. It must make them feel wonderful, be comfortable, be the right colour and length for them. It must also be made well, with top quality fabrics.

The fashion industry in Ireland has the potential to be a real leader in Europe. We have many wonderfully talented designers. The Irish in general are such a creative nation.

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Michael Mullen
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Cabrinini's Kitchen Corned Beef & Cabbage

Corned beef's name was coined from the British in the 17th century to describe the size of the salt crystals needed to cure the meat - that of corn kernels. The Brits loved their beef and imported it from Ireland, though the Irish could not afford to eat it themselves. With the large quantities of cattle and the high quality of salt, Irish corned beef was the best on the market. Pork was the preferred meat in Ireland, since it was cheaper, with their beloved potato.

By 1845, with the outbreak of the potato blight completely destroying the food source in Ireland, the Great Famine began. Drones of Irish emigrants were forced to leave Ireland and migrate to North America. Many of them congregated in New York City. Pork had been their preferred staple, however, upon arrival in New York, the Irish discovered beef to be the more economical meat. They almost exclusively bought their corned beef from Jewish kosher butchers, so

Irish corned beef is actually Jewish corned beef boiled in a pot with cabbage and, of course, potato; two vegetables that were cheap and grown locally. The Irish and the Jewish were both escaping oppression, had lost their homelands and had a love for the arts. It is no wonder that the two races felt a commonality. Call corned beef Irish or call it Jewish but don't call me late for dinner.

INGREDIENTS

2 to 2 1/2 pounds corned beef brisket
1 tablespoon coarsely ground black pepper
1 teaspoon ground allspice
2 bay leaves
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 pound whole carrots, approximately 4 small
1/2 pound diced onions, approximately 2 small
1 pound potatoes, peeled and chopped, approximately 3 medium
1/4 pound diced celery, approximately 2 stalks
1 small head cabbage, chopped, approximately 2 pounds

INSTRUCTIONS

Place the corned beef, pepper, allspice, bay leaves and salt into a large 8-quart pot along with 3-quarts of water. Cover and set over high heat. Bring to a boil, decrease the heat to low and cook, at a low simmer, for 2 1/2 hours. After 2 1/2 hours, add the carrots, onions, potatoes and celery. Return to a simmer and cook uncovered for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, add the cabbage and cook for an additional 15 to 20 minutes until the potatoes and cabbage are tender. Remove the bay leaves and serve immediately.

Ith do shàth! Cabrinini

P.S: I would like to invite all readers to send me their favourite recipes, and their favourite memories that go with them. Please send to: cabrini@celticlife.ca





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Unmistakably *Irish!*

Whiskey is one of the fastest growing global drink categories, and is currently enjoying a new golden age. New distilleries are popping up all across North America, Europe and elsewhere. Nowhere, however, is whiskey's renaissance more evident than in Ireland.

Whiskey was most likely born on the Emerald Isle, and by the late 1800s its spirits were the most prized in the world. But history would not be kind to the Irish whiskey industry, and a series of misfortunes that befell the Irish people in the early 20th century nearly wiped out a 400-year-old industry.

By the mid-1960s there were only three remaining distillers in Eire: John Powers & Son, John Jameson & Son, and the Cork Distillery Co. The trio of companies merged in 1966 in an attempt to stem the industry's ongoing contraction. In 1975, Irish Distillers opened the New Midleton Distillery in Cork, closing its older facilities, and leaving Ireland with only one other remaining distillery - Bushmills in Northern Ireland.

A new Irish distillery, Cooley, began production in 1988. In 2007, Ireland's oldest distillery, Kilbeggan - originally founded in 1757 - re-opened, kick-starting a new wave of whiskey production. Today there are a dozen distilleries operating in Ireland, and a further seven are currently under construction or have been granted planning permits.

The first whiskeys in Ireland and Scotland were made from malted barley - essentially distilled beer. Unlike corn or wheat, barley has enzymes which convert insoluble starches in the grain into fermentable sugars. Barley is also a hardy grain, so it is ideal for storing

in cool, wet climates like Scotland and Ireland.

Scottish and Irish whiskey production in the 1700s did not escape the eyes of the government in London. Westminster sought to curb excessive drinking and tax its production. One way of doing this was by taxing malted barley by the ton. Although the alcohol yield per ton of barley can vary by strain and by harvest, taxmen could estimate the amount of whiskey that would result from a given ton of barley. They could also estimate a distillery's production for the purposes of taxation.

During the 18th Century, the British imposed a series of "punishing malt taxes." In response, Irish distillers began using a blend of malted and un-malted barley in their mashes as a way of avoiding or reducing their exposure to the "hated malt tax." Only a small quantity of malted barley in the mash bill, 10-15 percent, is needed for an efficient fermentation. With so many Irish distillers making whiskey from a small amount of malted barley - and a greater amount of un-malted barley - a uniquely Irish style of whiskey, Pure Pot Still, was born. In 2010, the term was legally re-categorized as Single Pot Still Whiskey.

The only Single Pot Still Irish Whiskey currently available comes from the New Midleton Distillery in Cork. Some Single Pot Still Whiskey is bottled pure, under labels like Redbreast, Powers, Green Spot, Writers Tears and Midleton Barry Crockett Legacy. But, as with the bulk of single malt whisky production in Scotland, most pot still whiskey is produced for blended whiskey. Cooley and Kilbeggan distilleries have both distilled a single pot still spirit, which is not yet

old enough to legally be called whiskey. It is estimated that over the next decade, a dozen or more new Single Pot Still Whiskies will be released. Until then, these four widely available Single Pot Still Whiskies will whet your whistle.



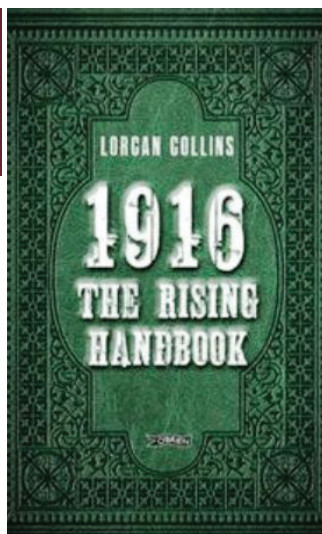
Red Breast 12 Year: This pot still whiskey is partially matured in Oloroso sherry, giving it a spicy, dark fruit character. **\$95**

Green Spot: Is composed of 7 to 10-year-old Pot Still whiskeys matured in Ex-Bourbon and Ex-Sherry casks; it was originally produced for Mitchell & Son of Dublin. **\$88**

Midleton Barry Crockett Legacy: Matured in Ex-Bourbon and new American oak casks; only 2,500 bottles are released each year. It is creamier and more delicate in style with soft fruits and spices. **\$265**

Writers Tears Pot Still: A private label, no age statement, pot still whiskey. **\$55**





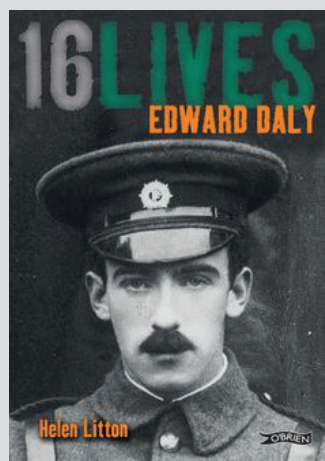
1916: The Rising Handbook
By Lorcan Collins
O'Brien Press
/ 240pp / €14.99

With a glut of literature flooding the market in advance of Ireland's centennial Easter Rising commemorations, there is no shortage of options for those looking to look back on the seminal events of 1916.

Thankfully, Irish author, historian and lecturer Lorcan Collins sums it all up neatly with this slim volume of forensic facts, true timelines, listings, and biographies of all involved. Accented with maps, drawings, photographs and newspaper clippings, the bite-sized details are easily digestible, and, added-up, are more than filling for either hardcore readers with a passion for the past or those simply looking to see what all the hype is about. Either way, the author has pieced together the puzzle of an historic time and the people who made that history happen. ~ SPC

16 Lives
Various
O'Brien Press
/ €14.99

This stunning and stirring 16-book series from Ireland's foremost publishing house goes well beyond the events leading up to Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising. With individual titles on Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, Michael O'Hanrahan, Edward Daly and twelve others, the collection digs deep into the psychology - and in some cases the psychosis - of the movement's main players. The idea to have different authors for each book was brilliant, giving the collection a greater sense of variety and vibrancy, as if the writers developed personal relationships with their subjects. With pictures, and more, peppering each edition, the total experience is certainly greater than the sum of its parts. To that end, 16 Lives is addictive, and will bring new meaning to the term "binge reading." ~ SPC



K

The K Club Cookbook
Producer to Plate
Celebrating 25 Years

The K Club Cookbook:
Producer to Plate
By Finbarr Higgins
Attic Press
/ 299pp / \$53

Weighing in at 5.5 lbs, and measuring 11" across by 12" high, The K Club Cookbook is 299 pages of pure awesome and delicious. With recipes drawn from a quarter century of exquisite dining at Ireland's elegant hotel and country club of the same name, this towering tome is a foodie's delight; along with simple and seasonal instructions and ingredients, author and renowned Irish restaurateur Finbarr Higgins serves up a proper plateful of photographs that will leave readers drooling and coming back for more. If the main dishes don't get you, then the desserts most likely will. While not necessarily designed for the kitchen counter, this delectable collection will definitely look great on the coffee table. This is food porn at its absolute finest folks! ~ SPC

My Celtic Journey
By Gerald Herter
Independent
/ 138pp / \$6.99

Suffice to say that American author, journalist - and Celtic Life International contributor - Gerald Herter has never been busier. Since retiring from a successful business career, he and his wife Lori - also a published author - have been pursuing their passion for all things Celtic by way of travel. Here, Herter recounts visits to Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Canada, and across the USA, with warmth, wit, wisdom and a prevailing sense of wonder.

Mixing insight, opinion, perspective with emotion and ideas, the author crafts a collage of "Celtisms" that is both clever and quirky, inviting audiences along for the ride. Along the way, readers come to know the couple personally - something that is often sorely lacking in the wide world of travel writing. ~ SPC





Enya

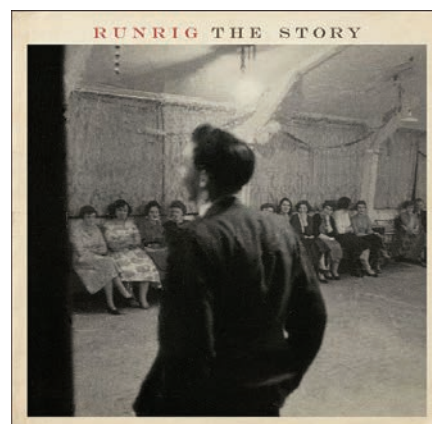
Dark Sky Island

Ireland's prolific prodigal daughter Enya Brennan returns with her tenth full-length studio recording *Dark Sky Island*, an 11-track mélange of moody, ethereal Celt-Pop. While the selection of sonic soundscapes is clearly a case of "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose", the Donegal native's winning formula, much like herself, seems timeless. The album is bookended by *The Humming and Diamonds on the Water*, each epic, haunting and other-worldly. In between, gentle piano and strings sit like fields of green, over which Enya's supple vocals hover like gentle Irish mist. In particular, *So I Could Find My Way*, *I Could Never Say Goodbye* and the title track will touch and tug at the heartstrings of ex-pats around the world. Hey - if it ain't broke... ~ SPC

Runrig

The Story

One of Scotland's best and best-selling bands, Runrig has at long last called it a day with its fourteenth and final studio recording, *The Story*. A shame, as the group - which has seen almost a dozen members come and go over its four+ decades - has never sounded better than on these eleven songs. Often tender - the lead-off, title-track is particularly moving, as is the stunning *Rise and Fall* - the sextet isn't afraid to toughen things up with *The Years We Shared*. Other standouts include *Every Beating Heart* and *When the Beauty*, which features the great guitar work of Nova Scotian Bruce Guthro. The stirring *Somewhere* closes the album, and the band's stay atop the charts, with charm and grace. Bravo gentlemen! ~ SPC



Damien O'Kane

Areas of High Traffic

Every once in a while a recording will come along that weaves and winds its way into the subconscious, softly sitting there for weeks as the mind sifts through sounds. Such is the case with *Areas of High Traffic*, the second solo release from singer-songwriter Damien O'Kane. The native of Coleraine, Northern Ireland hits the nail on the head like a blacksmith with these 11 songs, each remarkably crafted with simple guitar and voice. Though only 38 years of age, O'Kane finds himself both standing on the shoulders of, and keeping company with, giants of the genre like Van Morrison, Paul Brady, Luka Bloom and Damien Rice. Yes, he is that good, and this recording is an early frontrunner for Celtic album of the year. ~ SPC

The Mahones

25 Years of Irish Punk

Frontman Finny McConnell is quick to classify The Mahones as Irish Punk and not Celtic Punk. The difference is duly-noted, especially with this epic, quarter-century spanning best-of retrospective which draws heavily upon his distinct Dublin roots. It's easy to forget what a musical powerhouse the Kingston, Ontario-based band has been since forming on St. Patrick's Day in 1991. Re-recorded classics, including *A Great Night On The Lash*, *Paint The Town Red*, *Past The Pint Of No Return* and *Drunken Lazy Bastard* will remind listeners of the sound and fury that hallmarks both the group's studio recordings and their fierce live shows. Hardcore fans can choose from a variety of anniversary packages also, which include bonus tracks, concert tickets, rare recordings, tee-shirts and Katie Kaboom artwork! ~ SPC



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Inés Lobeira

The past and the present become one when piper Inés Lobeira stands on the craggy rocks that ring the rugged shores of Galicia

“I started to play the bagpipes at the age of eight with other children from my town,” shares Lobeira, who was born and bred in Bueu, a fishing village of 13,000 people in the northwest of Spain. “The bagpipes were the only instrument being taught there at the time, so it was our only opportunity to become involved in music.”

Lobeira comes from a family of music-lovers - traditional music, in particular - so the bagpipes had a great appeal. For more than two decades, she has played the gaita, a traditional Galician bagpipe.

“I still love Galician music a lot, and I also realize that bagpipes can promote my culture. At the same time, I can communicate with and learn from other bagpipe cultures.”

While it was the stirring sounds of the pipes that first attracted her, Lobeira’s appreciation of the region’s history has developed in step with her musical acuity.

“This area has a Celtic heritage that precedes the Roman Empire. The Kingdom of the Suebi, one of the first in Europe to separate from the Roman Empire, was located here as well. Nowadays, Galicia retains a strong ethnic identity, with its own language, music and tradition. This identity is very distinctive, so Galicia is enormously different from other regions in the Iberian Peninsula, such as Andalusia, Catalonia and Portugal.”

While she honours the tradition of her music, Lobeira notes that she is not constrained by it.

“I am not strictly a traditional bagpiper; in my band - Retrouso de Cela - we don’t just play the old tunes in a traditional style - we mix our older repertoire with newly composed tunes. But we always strive to demonstrate the greatest respect to the structure and form of traditional Galician music.”

Lobeira, who joined Retrouso de Cela six years ago, adds that the band’s repertoire has recently hit upon a “magic balance” between bagpipe melodies and the percussion performance of the tambourines and drums.

She admits to a bit of envy over the institutional position the bagpipes hold in Celtic countries such as Scotland and Ireland, but believes that Galicia is holding its own.

“I do think that Galician bagpipes and traditions still interest many young people. It is true our children have a large amount of activities to choose from, but bagpiping has continued to develop steadily in recent years.”

She acknowledges, however, that there are steps that need to be taken to preserve and promote Celtic culture.

“Modernizing the image of our bagpipes - so that young people want to get involved, and don’t simply see the instrument as an old-fashioned object - is essential. Also important is incorporating the bagpipes into more musical genres, so that audiences can appreciate them as deserving the same recognition and value as other instruments.”

Increased support from the Galician government, both in terms of financial support for pipe bands and other organizations involved with traditional Galician music and culture, would be advantageous also. Greater government-generated publicity and promotion of the music and culture within the region would be beneficial as well.

“Encouraging and promoting increased contact and exchange between Galician bagpipers and bagpipers from other countries and musical traditions would make a big difference too,” contends Lobeira.

Extra effort is required, she adds, because while the Galician piping tradition has steadily grown in importance in recent decades, other countries have a longer history of recognizing the bagpipe as a cultural emblem.

“We don’t think we can achieve the same level of penetration into Galician society at large that the Scottish pipes enjoy in Scotland, but there are definite steps toward improving our situation that can be taken.”

For Lobeira and Retrouso de Cela, the immediate challenge is to ready the band to participate in an upcoming international Celtic festival in France.

“Our goal is to work hard and do whatever is necessary to be in our very best form musically for that event. But overall, I just want to play as much as I can and always enjoy the music.”

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Kimberley Fraser

Canadian fiddler Kimberley Fraser returns to the landscape that inspired the vibrant Celtic music she carried to audiences in the United States and Europe for a decade

Fraser, who is renovating a home in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, cannot remember a time when the jigs, reels and strathspeys were not calling out to her. At the age of two, she sabotaged her older sister's dance recital by dashing onto the stage to dance along.

"It worked for me," she recalls with a laugh, "because I got a step dance solo of my own the following year."

Her dance teacher was Jean MacNeil, matriarch of Nova Scotia's famed musical family the Barra MacNeils, so Fraser grew up with a front-row seat to the popular Celtic band.

"I always heard the Barras, always pretended to be Lucy (MacNeil) and I listened to great players like Carl MacKenzie and pianist Doug MacPhee at concerts. When I was about five years old, I saw fiddler Ashley MacIsaac on the television show 'Up Home Tonight' and fell in love with him, partly because he was left-handed like me. My parents taped the episode and I watched it over and over again and pretended to dance and play along with him."

Desperate for a fiddle, she began lessons at age six.

"I can't say I ever found it difficult. I was very attracted to the music, I was surrounded by it and I was determined to be able to play it. I love the simple melodies and the gutsy, dirty tunes."

By the time Fraser was in her twenties, renowned Cape Breton fiddler Dan MacDonald was struck by her versatility, suggesting she was "equally at home at a house party, playing for a square dance or on the stage at a concert in Bras d'Or or Boston, Scottsville or Scotland."

At St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, on Nova Scotia's northern shore, she combined a degree in Celtic Studies and Music before jumping wholeheartedly into the music business.

"I considered it as taking a few years off to see what I could do with the music. It was a great education and I was fortunate to get into a lot of festivals."

Her first introduction to old-time American and bluegrass music was at the Festival of American Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, Washington, where she was surprised by the improvisation of the musicians.

"As Cape Breton fiddlers, we don't generally improvise on the melody of a fiddle tune. We play it through twice and move on. Any improvisation comes from the piano player. But with bluegrass and old-time, there is constant improvisation." The immersion into other styles, including American old-time, Texas swing, bluegrass, jazz and Irish fiddling, broadened her musical horizons.

"I'll always be a Cape Breton fiddler but exposure to other genres has given me so many tools to work with in arranging melody and harmony."

Fraser also noted many of the musicians she admired had studied at Berklee College of Music in Boston, so she enrolled.

"I've had the opportunity to perform at major festivals like the Tønder Festival in Denmark, Celtic Connections in Glasgow, and the Milwaukee Irish Festival, and to

teach at some great camps like Swannanoa Gathering in North Carolina."

Performing for NATO soldiers in Afghanistan in 2008 was a career highlight.

"Being there, performing for the troops, it was an experience beyond words."

When a repetitive strain injury forced her to cut back on touring, Fraser left Boston to return to her hometown of Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, where she now juggles teaching and performing.

Currently, she is one of the co-coordinators of a youth mentorship program there that seeks to introduce the Gaelic culture to another generation of musicians.

"There is tremendous musical potential among our youth, and among my own students, but the issues are different today. Young people are not surrounded by the music at parish concerts and family dances, as I was. They are also often torn between sports and dance and other pursuits that demand a good deal of time."

While passing down music customs has its challenges, there is little doubt Fraser will persevere. Her ancestry is a blend of stubborn Scots and French settlers who had a striking ability to improvise.

"Fougere is actually my family name – my grandfather's people were Fougères from rural Richmond County in Cape Breton. When his people moved to the industrial Sydney area, it was apparently easier to find work with an anglicized name so it was changed to Fraser."

www.kimberleyfraser.com





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Sarah de Bruin

In one of New Zealand's most Celtic corners, graced with rambling, sandy beaches and forested national parks, world class dancer Sarah de Bruin wonders why Highland dancing is not considered a sport

"In the area I live in there is quite a strong Celtic community," says de Bruin via email. "The Northern Wairoa Scottish Society is involved in Dargaville, and the Waipu Caledonian Society is a well-recognized society in the Northland."

The Waipu Highland Games is held annually on New Year's Day, while the Whangarei Pipe Band holds an annual concert where the 18-year-old has been a frequent performer.

"Five shiploads of Scottish settlers arrived at Waipu in the 1850s from Nova Scotia," she points out, noting she has danced at a re-enactment of that landing, "so I guess this is the reason for such a strong community."

In a country better known for its runners and rowers, de Bruin has been dancing since she was four years old and was recently named among the 20 most accomplished Highland dancers in the world.

"Highland dancing is incredibly physically demanding, requiring endurance as well as a great deal of muscular control to perform the complicated and intricate steps," she notes, adding the risk of injury is inherent.

She says some other countries have made moves toward regarding dance as a sport but New Zealand has not, perhaps because dancing has yet to acquire a country-wide profile.

"The physicality of dancing is not really taken seriously. Dancers don't have access to the same support they would have if they were in gymnastics or another sport."

Funding is also more challenging for dancers than athletes, she contends.

"New Zealand dancers have to travel to international competitions as there are not a large number of dancers here," she shares, adding that distances become greater as dancers progress. "Travel is expensive."

Interestingly, the same is true of athletes and the relatively small country sends its share to the Olympics.

"The (Highland dancing) world championships are in Scotland. I have been un-

able to qualify for or receive any funding to assist me in competing overseas. As a result, my trips are all self-funded with a few donations from businesses in Dargaville which cover entry costs. Each year I pay for my own airfare and accommodation in Scotland and I am extremely lucky that my parents pay the rest."

That is particularly notable, considering de Bruin has two younger sisters who are also dancers. Fittingly, perhaps, her mother is a kilt maker.

Many of de Bruin's Scottish ancestors - Johnstones, Stewarts and Flemings among them - made the long journey from Scotland to New Zealand a few generations ago.

"I am a New Zealand European with Scottish, Irish, English, German and Dutch ancestors," she explains. "Four of my great-grandparents immigrated to New Zealand from Scotland - therefore, I have Scottish blood on both my mother's and my father's side."

It is quite possible de Bruin was genetically predisposed toward Highland dancing.

"My grandmother and her siblings used to do Highland dancing and Grandma also used to teach. When I went to her house when I was young de Bruin would put on the bagpipe music and I would dance to it. So I suppose this was when I first became exposed to it."

As a three-year-old, she saw a Highland festival advertisement and demanded to be taken to the event.

"I love the feeling of accomplishment you get when you finally fix something you have been working on and the adrenaline rush of performing on stage. It keeps me fit and healthy and makes me feel strong and powerful."

Her years as a dancer have provided her with an extended family and a love of travel.

"The rewards are having so many opportunities other people my age have not had. I have travelled to Australia to compete 12 times, as well as travelled to Canada and Scotland three times. I have formed very strong friendships with other dancers, both here in New Zealand and overseas."

In addition to placing among the world's top dancers at the World Junior Highland Dancing Championship in Scotland last year, she has also placed highly in competitions in Tasmania and Canada. Her immediate plans are to perform in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Wellington and to compete over Easter in Australia.

De Bruin, who operates her own dance studio, will continue to teach a small number of students via Skype when she heads off to university this year to study biological sciences and history.





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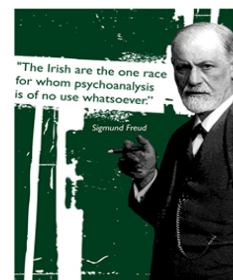
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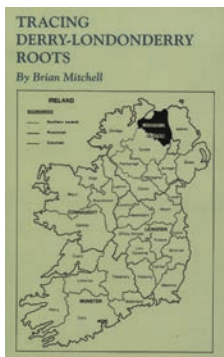
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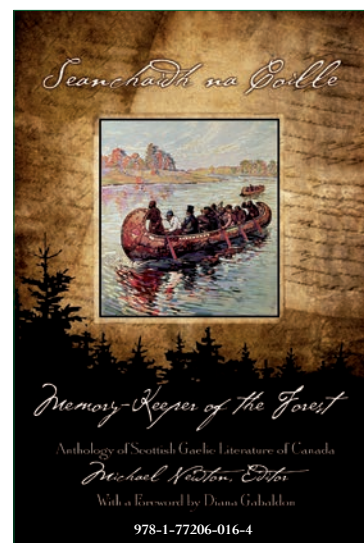
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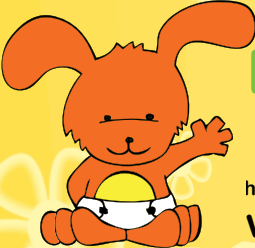
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Alan Rickman;

1946-2016



Depending on when you first encountered him, Alan Rickman was the villainous Sherriff of Nottingham Forest, the mastermind terrorist Hans Gruber in *Die Hard*, Russia's notorious Rasputin, or Severus Snape, a hostile but complex half-blood wizard from *Harry Potter*.

Rickman's family confirmed he died of cancer on Jan. 16, 2016 at the age of 69. His career spanned four decades on radio, television, stage and film. His death comes shortly before the release of a new film titled *Eye in the Sky* in which he stars with Dame Helen Mirren. His final work, as the voice of Absolem the Caterpillar, in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, will be out in the spring.

British actress Emma Thompson, with whom he co-starred in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Love Actually*, saw him just before he died and kissed him goodbye.

"What I remember most in this moment of painful leave-taking is his humour, intelligence, wisdom and kindness. His capacity to fell you with a look or lift you with a word," she said in a written statement carried in Britain's *Daily Mail*.

She described him as "the ultimate ally in life, art and politics."

"The intransigence which made him the great artist he was – his ineffable and cynical wit, the clarity with which he saw most things, including me, and the fact that he never spared me the view."

The *Atlantic* magazine credited Rickman with being an actor who could "take even the blandest roles and spin them into something wonderful. But offered more to work with, he was unforgettable, portraying countless distinctive characters until his death."

He was, according to the magazine, one of the finest stage actors of his generation, "blessed with a silky, mellifluous voice that became his trademark."

BBC News also zeroed in on the voice, describing it as "sonorous and languid," adding it was his calling card, "making even throw-away lines of dialogue sound thought-out and authoritative."

Alan Sidney Patrick Rickman, of English, Irish and Welsh descent, was born to a working class family in London in 1946. The second of four children, his father died of lung cancer when he was eight years old and his mother raised the family.

"She was a tigress," Rickman once told the BBC. "She could do anything. She had various jobs, trained in various others. She always reinvented herself."

At school he excelled in art and drama, later attending Chelsea College of Art and Design and the Royal College of Art. He initially believed graphic design was a more sensible pursuit than acting but he eventually gave in to his passion for drama and found work with a variety of repertory companies.

He became known to British audiences on television before breaking through with the role of Vicomte de Valmont in Christopher Hampton's stage production of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

The *Guardian*, in its original review, called him "a drawling sexual connoisseur who slips sly and inscrutable through the action like a cat who knows the way to the cream."

His next role, as Hans Gruber in *Die Hard*, brought him international attention and provoked a bit of a showdown when he balked at stage directions, claiming they were inconsistent with his character. Rather than being widely branded as difficult, he came to be known as a serious, thoughtful actor.

David Heyman, producer of the *Harry Potter* franchise, noted to the BBC that Rickman's sensitive portrayal of Severus Snape hinted at the character's anguished past long before author JK Rowling revealed it in books.

"He had a real understanding of the character and now, looking back, you can see there was always more going on there - a look, an expression, a sentiment - that hint at what is to come. The shadow that he casts in these films is a huge one and the emotion he conveys is immeasurable."

Rickman also excelled at directing, most notably the award-winning play *My Name is Rachel Corrie* about the American student who was killed by an Israeli army bulldozer on the Gaza Strip. In recent years, the eight Rowling films robbed him of the time necessary for directing.

For all his successes and awards, Rickman was notably private about his family and disliked comparisons of his characters. For him, it was never so much about whether he liked a character as whether the character came across as truthful. As a rule, he brushed off questions about the nuances of acting, claiming it was too difficult to articulate.

Speaking to the British Academy of Film and Television Arts last year, he simply described his craft as "the act of giving yourself over to once upon a time."



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