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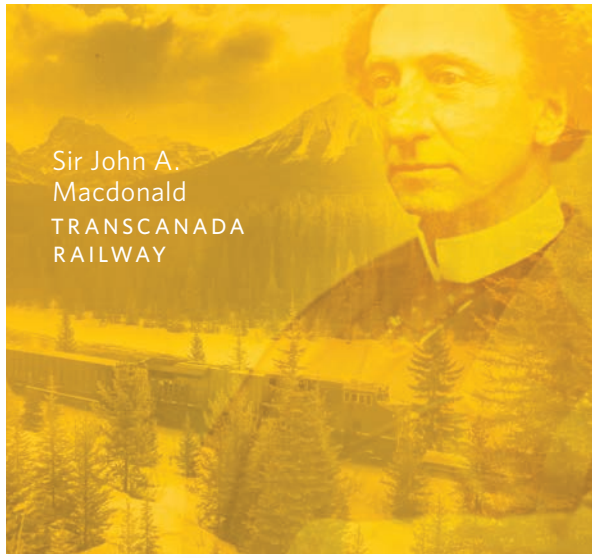
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Fáilte!

Recently, it was a delight to see Nova Scotia fiddler Ashley MacIsaac recognized by University College of Cape Breton with an Honorary Doctorate of Letters Degree for his “creative contribution” to the world, and in particular, Cape Breton Island.

The internationally-acclaimed, three-time Juno Award winning- and sometimes controversial - musician follows in the footsteps of fellow Cape Breton fiddlers, Winnie Chafe and Buddy MacMaster, equally honored in the past with Honorary Doctorate Degrees.

The early pioneers from the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland brought with them their customs, traditions and music to the New World. In contrast to the homeland, where oppression following Culloden and outside persuasions impacted its style, the Gaelic-influenced music of the Scottish Highlands was protected and preserved in the northeastern parts of Nova Scotia, especially Cape Breton.

Earlier migrations of French and Irish brought with them their musical backgrounds. Modern violinists draw from this rich cultural mosaic makingwhat is now referred to as Cape Breton-style music unique.

While this musical genre thrived, it did not go without its challenges. In the late 19th century, Rev. Kenneth MacDonald, a Catholic priest in Mabou, Cape Breton, was of the belief that fiddle music was sinful and led to excessive alcohol consumption. His solution? Burn the fiddles. Fortunately, this practice did not prevail, and today many of the area’s priests are excellent fiddlers themselves.

In the 1960s and 1970s, outside influences began to impact the region; Elvis Presley, the Beatles, and rock ‘n’ roll took its toll and the inventory of young fiddlers began to dwindle. In 1972, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced “The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler” - a documentary film suggestingthat traditional music in Cape Breton was declining and would soon be a thing of the past.

The survival of Cape Breton-style music owes a debt to many.The late Wilfred Gillisspoke of the early settlers exchanging fiddle tunes written on birch back with a piece of slate. Dan R. MacDonald, one of the most prolificcontemporary composers of fiddle music,told me of going to bed with a pen and paper by his bedside so when he woke up during the night with “a tune going through my head” he would write it down before going back to sleep. Others, including Angus Chisholm, Winston Scotty Fitzgerald, Dan J. Campbell, and Buddy MacMaster, perpetuated its survival and popularity.

Thanks to these men, and others, fiddle music remained alive in the kitchens of local Cape Breton communities. However, it was “The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler” that proveda pivotal point in its revival, inspiring the formation of the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association, and providing teachers and mentors - and a new sense of belonging, pride and desire- to the region’s young musicians. Because of this, performers like Ashley MacIsaac have been given the opportunity to carry thattorchon to future generations.

For universities to recognize the contributions made to the world by the likes of MacIsaac is significant. But, there’s more that can be done in this regard. Cape Breton-style music ought to be included within the academic programs at the university level.

St. FX University in Antigonish has an excellent Celtic Studies Department and amagnificent music program, and in my opinion, it would only make sense that Gaelic-influenced Cape Breton-style music be part of its academia.

Enjoy and May God Bless!
Angus (Marcie) Macquarrie, Publisher

INSIDE

Volume 30, No. 4, August 2016





















Special

57. Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo
63. Okanagan Military Tattoo
65. Antigonish Highland Games

Stories

21. Eddi Reader
23. Maui Celtic
25. Clodagh McKenna
29. Outlandish Canada
31. Travelers 411
35. Solway Tours
39. Shaking the Family Tree
43. Through Thick & Thin in Donegal
49. Epic Ireland

Style

53. Emma Manley

Standards

13. First Word
15. Up Front
17. Seven Celtic Questions
83. Taste
85. Dram
89. The Piper
91. The Fiddler
93. The Dancer
106. Last Word

Our August cover shot captures the majesty of The Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo



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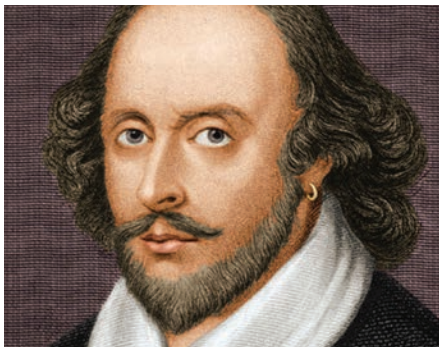
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William Shakespeare may have had a Welsh connection

While there is no record of William Shakespeare ever visiting Wales, there are hints in his writing that he was familiar with the Welsh language. For instance, Welsh prince Owain Glyndŵr appears in the play Henry IV Part 1. The playwright specified for Glyndŵr - as well as his daughter - to speak Welsh in parts of the play. While the Welsh words were not exactly scripted, it can be inferred that Shakespeare knew some Welsh, or at least had Welshmen in his company. In addition, a fictional Welsh captain named Fluellen (anglicized from Llywelyn) was a character in Henry V. A Swansea-based theatre company, Fluellen Theatre Group, even took its name from the character. This year mark's the 400th anniversary of The Great Bard's death.

"Manx" comet gives insight into Earth's formation

Look up - there is a Manx comet in the sky. Well…sort of. Astronomers initially spotted the comet in 2014. Since its "tail" (formed from water vapor) is very small and faint, they dubbed it a "Manx comet" after the tailless cat breed. Astronomers have since gotten a closer look at the comet and noted that while most comets are made of ice, this one is made of rock. Due to the nature of the rock, scientists believe it was ejected from the inner solar system when the earth was still forming. The cold temperatures of the outer solar system preserved the rocky surface, and the comet's recent return to Earth's region means it can be studied to provide hints at the planet's origins.





Macsween beats Guinness World Record for most expensive haggis

How much would you pay for a haggis? In January, the world's most expensive version of the Scottish fixture was launched from Macsween of Edinburgh. The meat wholesaler boasts making award-winning haggis for more than 50 years. Their recent take on the dish is priced at £4,000 - a hefty price tag. A closer look at the ingredients, however, explains the cost: Highland Wagyu beef from Perthshire, white summer truffle from France and Tellicherry black pepper from India are on the list. It is said the Indian pepper can only be grown from over 2,000 feet above sea level. For additional flare, the dish is sprinkled with 24-carat gold and presented in a handmade wooden cask. This "rare" haggis isn't something you can get your hands on just anywhere - Macsween makes it by commission only.

Irish star Enya declared top-earning female artist

Eithne Pádraigín Ní Bhraonáin - better known to music fans as Enya - is officially the wealthiest female singer in Britain and Ireland. With a £91 million fortune, the Irish songstress even beat out the likes of chart-topper Adele. Forty years into her career, Enya currently ranks at number 28 on The Sunday Times' Top 50 Music Millionaires. She was one of three female solo performers to make the list. Despite her success, though, she is not a fan of the spotlight. Enya has reportedly never toured as a solo artist, has never walked the red carpet, and is reluctant to do interviews with the media. That doesn't seem to hurt her cash flow, however: she has been living in Manderley castle near Dublin since 1997.



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Celts in the Community



Gordon *Aikman*

After being diagnosed with a fatal illness, Gordon Aikman didn't give up. Instead, the Scotsman took it upon himself to help others. In 2014 – at age 29 – Aikman's doctor told him he had Motor Neurone Disease (also known as MND, ALS or Lou Gehrig's). The disease is progressive, attacking the nerves in the brain and spinal cord. This affects the patient's mobility until they eventually die from the illness. Aikman launched Gordon's Fightback: a campaign to raise money for research into a cure for MND. So far, Aikman has raised almost half a million pounds. His efforts have earned him a spot on the shortlist for the awards given by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). "I never expected that such a devastating change to my life could also be so positive," Aikman told the SCVO. "As my body weakens, my resolve strengthens: we can and we must find a cure for future generations." Thanks to his work, the number of MND nurses in Scotland has gone from seven to 14. In addition, MSPs have since backed a law guaranteeing patients will have access to voice equipment. Aikman also wants patients to receive free personal care and double the funding toward MND research.



Amal *Azzudin*

Award-winning human rights campaigner Amal Azzudin began her activism when she was just 15 years old. Originally from Somalia, Azzudin has taken it upon herself to help other immigrants and refugees in Scotland. While she was attending high school, her classmate and friend Agnesa Murselaj was removed from her home and detained along with her family. This prompted Azzudin and six of her classmates to form a group now known as the "Glasgow Girls." It began with a petition for their friend's release. Momentum increased and, in time, the young women confronted First Minister Jack McConnell about the poor treatment of asylum seekers in the country. Three weeks later, Murselaj and her family were released. That was back in 2005, but Azzudin's work has continued. After obtaining her undergrad in 2011, she worked for the Mental Health Foundation, raising awareness of mental health of female refugees. "I'm very interested in the whole asylum system and how that works, and I think that's what I want to do now," she told Avenue magazine in January last year. "But eventually I hope to have my own charity and help everyone, not just asylum seekers." Now with a Masters in Human Rights and International Politics under her belt, Azzudin has participated in various panels and speaking engagements. In addition to advocating for refugees, she speaks on topics such as the importance of peace in Gaza.



Lynn and Graham *Lettice*

Lynn and Graham Lettice, a Cornish couple, founded a learning resources company called Easylearn back in 1992. Easylearn's goal is to provide tools for the classroom, making learning easier for students - especially those struggling with their studies. They provide resource materials in categories such as literacy, language, numeracy, as well as early learners. Recently, Graham and Lynn introduced a reading app called Froggy Match-It - a literacy game designed for children four to six who have just started to learn to read that can be accessed on a tablet or phone. The full app costs £3.99 in the App Store, but the Lettices are allowing access to the game's first level for free. They suggest the app provides good practice for any child preparing to take¬¬¬ the Phonics Screening Check (a test arranged by UK's Department for Education). "When we watch children learning to read and spell with Froggy Match-it we can really see the children learning," Lynn said in a press release. "They seem to get through the content faster, and the best part is that children can go at their own pace." In April, the pair began testing the app in classrooms, successfully introducing it to teachers at Bugle School in St. Austell.

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UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN



first word

Donnie Jack

Based in Washington D.C., Donnie Jack is the Scottish Affairs Counsellor for the Americas.

I was born in Aberdeen, and brought up in a small fishing village on the northeast coast in what was at the time called Banffshire. It was a great place to grow up and, looking back, I feel very lucky to have had that solid grounding in my life before venturing further afield.

As a youth I spent two years as a deep sea fisherman, following in my family tradition, but had to give it up due to chronic seasickness. I'm still not very good on boats or ships.

I joined the civil service as a young man with a firm belief in making a contribution to the public good. That conviction has never diminished. At times it has been tested, but it remains the driving force for me getting out of bed every day. I have been in public service for almost the whole of my working life. In my public service I have spent time working in different roles across government, covering issues such as fisheries, health, justice, and sport to name just a view. I am not a politician. I serve whichever government is in power, so in that sense I am not really involved in politics. But, of course, I work in a political environment and deal with politicians on a regular basis. I am both an old and an old-fashioned public servant, and I believe that it is a great honour to be invited to represent your country overseas. Having the opportunity to do this across the Americas makes it even more special.

> *"The principal reward is in knowing that I am able to make a difference, either through connecting people, in helping to forge links with organizations here and back home, or simply having the opportunity to speak to people about Scotland and how proud I am of my homeland."*

The challenges are probably not what you would expect. There are a large number of Americans and Canadians who claim Scottish ancestry, and everywhere I go I get a very warm reception. In some ways, we are pushing at an open door and the challenge for me and my team is to maximize the opportunities this provides. In terms of messaging, the biggest challenge is to promote modern Scotland and some of the exciting things which are happening there. Whilst we are extremely proud of our culture and our heritage, Scotland is a modern, vibrant 21st century nation and we have so much to offer the world. We have a good story to tell and we need to be more adept at telling it.

Is enough being done to promote Scotland internationally? I think that the answer is yes, albeit a qualified yes, given that we could always improve. The independence referendum in 2014 put Scotland in the international spotlight in a way never experienced before. People got to know about Scotland and what it has to offer, and we have been seeking to build on this increased awareness ever since. To put this into context I recall being in Santiago, Chile only a couple of weeks after the referendum had taken place. After a full day of meetings I decided to take a stroll in one of the main city parks. At the gate I was met by a park attendant who, clipboard in hand, asked in Spanish where I came from. "Scotland," I replied. "Ah, Scotland – no independent!" came his response. I very much doubt that he had even heard of Scotland previously. And the same holds true of so many people whom I come across. They are now better informed and more aware of Scotland and the Scottish people. And that's a good thing.

There are two things I miss most about home; the weather and certain foods. Okay, it does rain a lot in Scotland - why else would it be so green and fertile? But there is something about a bracing walk along a Scottish beach with the waves crashing on the shore and the wind howling in your ears. You don't get that in Washington D.C. And for the food element, I miss fresh fish full of flavour. Given my background you would expect me to say that, but I believe it to be true. Cod, haddock, prawns and such like. There is nothing to compare with the quality of Scottish seafood and I miss that a lot.

The rest of 2016 will be very busy; as I write this we have a new Government and Ministers will be setting out their priorities soon. My role, and that of my team, will be to ensure that we deliver these insofar as they bear on our work here in promoting Scotland and making Scotland's contribution felt on the international stage.

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Born and raised on the Isle of Man, Charles Guard left home as a student but returned to make a 25-year contribution to preserving and sharing his native culture

A talented musician, broadcaster, filmmaker, recording engineer, editor and public speaker, Charles Guard recently retired as an officer of the Manx Heritage Foundation - now known as Culture Vannin - but his newly found time off sounds strikingly like more of the same.

"I am involved in a number of new projects, including a film using the latest drone technology. I will be publishing two more books and giving a series of lectures, as well as fulfilling a commission for the Isle of Man Symphony Orchestra."

In acknowledging his many contributions, current chairman of Culture Vannin Phil Hawke said that Guard has helped the island people "reinterpret and rebuild our understanding of what it is to be Manx."

Guard credits "the loose way" in which the parliamentary act that established the cultural foundation was written with giving him the freedom to branch out creatively.

"It allowed me to be very creative in dealing with academics and authors, designing and publishing books, making films and composing music and much else. All these activities would have been my hobbies if I had simply worked in a dull job. However, as it turned out, they were what I was paid to do."

As a student at the Royal College of Music in London, Guard was taught English folk songs.

"It was then that I decided to explore the traditional music and culture of the Isle of Man. It wasn't something I had been taught at school, so I was very surprised to learn there was a huge untapped wealth of distinct Manx culture to explore."

After a couple of years in Ireland studying the Irish harp, he returned to his homeland. He credits a job at Manx Radio, where he hosted a daily current affairs program, for turning him on to local history and culture. From radio he moved on to work with a film company making documentaries and dramas for British television.

"I was an associate producer and wrote a lot of the music for the programs. I also started making my own documentaries as writer, presenter and editor. A position became available to run the Manx Heritage Foundation. I took the job and was able, over 25 years, to develop the foundation and expand it to the organization it is today."

Convincing politicians, who pinch the purse strings, that the preservation and promotion of culture should be taken seriously by a nation was a never-ending challenge.

"When I took over the job there were few resources for island schools to use when teaching Manx culture and history," he notes. "Over the years we have rectified this with many videos and publications. More than 30 books have now been published and circulated around the world to the Manx Diaspora."

Guard recalls the excitement that came with the delivery of each new resource.

"I think the moment a pallet of newly printed books arrived, or a case of new DVDs were delivered, was always one of anxious delight. When you open the first box to check the stock, seeing how marvelous it looks, but dreading in case there is a spelling mistake on the sleeve that you only now discover."

Because of these efforts, he is certain that the interest in Manx history and culture continues to grow.

> *"It is all a matter of making material available to people, creating the opportunities for workshops, performances and other outlets, and offering encouragement, sometimes financial, wherever possible."*

"The challenge is also to make the old tunes, the language, the things regarded as in the past, fresh and relevant for today, using all the latest social media and technological advances."

There is much still to be done, he concedes, but the past few decades have brought a remarkable resurgence.

"The whole scene of Celtic culture has changed beyond recognition. The number of festivals, government support groups, recordings and videos has grown exponentially and everything is now on a much more secure footing."

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Dr. Emily McEwan-Fujita is an author, researcher, and Gàidheal ùr (new Gael) living in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Recently she answered our Seven Celtic Questions.



SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

What are your own Celtic roots?

From my last name you can tell that I had ancestors in Scotland. On my father's father's side, my great-grandfather was from Scotland and my great-grandmother from Ireland. According to family records, they met in New York City in 1856. They made their way across the upper Midwest, and then unfortunately my great-grandfather abandoned the family. He was never spoken of again after my great-grandmother settled on the west side of Chicago. I read some of her letters to my grandfather during World War I and saw that she was very keen to instill a sense of Irishness - "never forget you're Irish, Joe." My grandfather passed that sense on to my father; my brother is named Patrick and I was almost named Colleen. The MacEwans were the hereditary bards of clan Campbell in Argyllshire.

Why are those roots important to you?

Everyone wants to have a sense of where they came from – there's a Scottish Gaelic proverb that says "Cuimhnich air na daoine bho'n tàinig thu,"- remember the people you came from. At the same time, I don't think it's healthy to get too obsessed with the fact that you were born in a particular family or place, especially if you are going to start judging others by the yardstick of birth or origin too. To me, Celtic is as Celtic does, or rather Gaelic is as Gaelic does. The most important thing to me is being able to speak the language and participate in Gaelic culture that way.

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

Being of Celtic heritage means supporting - and getting involved with - a Celtic language. It also means being inclusive towards people who are of a different background, but who want to share in that Celtic language and culture. So I think a sense of roots is great, as long as it inspires people with the confidence to welcome new members into their community, or get involved with a community that's working towards positive aims.

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

I have just published a book titled The Scottish Gaelic Tattoo Handbook: Authentic words and phrases in the Celtic language of Scotland. It's available on Amazon and other online retailers, and can also be special ordered by any local bookseller. The book grew out of the Gaelic Revitalization blog, where I've been writing about Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia and Scotland since 2013. I'm also excited to be teaching a course on Celtic Christianity at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax this summer.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

I really hate hearing that Gaelic is a dead language – I speak Gaelic and I am alive, thank you very much! Seriously, though, it saddens me that there is still prejudice against Gaelic in both Scotland and Canada. Americans might be surprised to hear it's a problem, but it's a bit like the prejudice against native Americans. Present-day attitudes are a holdover from the centuries during which the British government tried to destroy the language, and poison speakers' confidence from within. Unfortunately whole generations of Gaels were taught that Gaelic was like sex – it should only be done between consenting adults in private! Schoolteachers and other respected figures told parents not to "harm" their children by speaking Gaelic to them, and it was hard to question that. Unlike First Nations peoples, white Gaels had the chance for their children to assimilate as English speakers. Given the success of those efforts, it's somewhat miraculous that people are still speaking Gaelic today, but we are, in Canada and Scotland.

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

We can always do more to preserve and promote Celtic languages and their cultures. I would advocate that people not separate the two, the language and the culture. The language is the link, whether it's Gàidhlig or Gaeilge or Gaelg, Cymraeg or Brezhoneg or Kernewek. There are many ways to support Celtic language communities – for example, by buying commercial music recordings by artists who use the language in real life, or donating to crowd-funding campaigns. There are even Celtic language learning holidays! Or write letters to support activists who are working to provide Celtic language education for children in Nova Scotia or other areas. Celtic culture is not all fun and games by a long shot – anyone who tries to make a living working with a Celtic language can tell you of the financial and other sacrifices they've had to make. It's sometimes frustrating when we see the glossy fun side of Celtic culture being promoted in English, while our community groups can't get the funding we need to do basic language activities. So I would love to see more integration between the "sexy" side of things, and the economic support that historically Gaelic-speaking communities need just to stay in existence, for example.

What can we be doing better?

There needs to be more emphasis on Celtic languages in the promotion of Celtic cultures. One definition of a "Celt," in fact the main one accepted in the field of Celtic studies, is someone who speaks a Celtic language. I would love to see Highland games and other Scottish, Irish, and Celtic-themed events deliberately seeking out Gaelic or other Celtic language organizations to participate. I would like to see them proactively making space for language-focused activities or information.

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After a busy career in law and financial services, Diane Ness got a whole lot busier when she opened Dunmore Scotland just over four years ago

Though born in Edinburgh, Diane Ness moved overseas with her parents when she was 9, attending school in India and the Middle East. She returned to Scotland at the age of 17 to further her studies and to pursue a career. Today, she lives just south of Edinburgh, where her 4-year-old company, Dunmore Scotland, is flourishing.

"The germ of the idea actually came from a news story reporting the closure of another textile mill in the Scottish Borders. Living in the Borders, one is very aware of the rich textile heritage of the area, and at the time it seemed that one mill after another was closing. I was commenting on how sad it was and my husband said 'well, what are you going to do about it?' What could I do about it? I obviously couldn't save a mill singlehandedly, but it got me thinking about the textile industry in Scotland and what how I could utilize the skill and expertise of the weavers and do my bit to help the industry. As a long term handbag lover, it just made sense to start there.

"We began with one bag, and now we have an extensive range of luxurious and elegant handbags, luggage and accessories. They are designed in Scotland, made in Scotland using locally sourced materials wherever possible, and sent around the world from our HQ in the Scottish Borders."

The company currently carries two main collections, the Heritage and the Prestige.

"The Heritage Collection is very 'Scottish', using a lot of authentic Harris Tweed and tartans to make a range of scarves, bags and accessories. This range sells well to people around the globe who are either expats or who want to celebrate their Scottish ancestry. It is for these people, primarily, that we set up a bespoke option, enabling them to have two of our designs made in their own Clan tartan. The bespoke option has proved very popular with orders coming in from the UK, North America and, notably, a customer calling from an oil rig in the South China Sea! Harris Tweed is very popular in the UK at the moment and we have sold a lot of our Harris Tweed satchels from the Heritage Collection to businessmen and students alike, as they are the perfect size for everyday use and more stylish and less formal than a leather briefcase. Our Prestige Collection features leather bags and luggage and, again, there's no 'core' client for these. Our large weekend bag has sold to customers around the world and our bright leather totes are popular in the UK. We didn't set out to design pieces for a specific customer, a Dunmore Scotland bag is for anyone."

As Managing Director, Ness finds herself involved in every area of the business.

"A normal day could see me sketching out a design, speaking to customers on the phone, packing up sales for collection by the courier, or out visiting our manufacturers. We don't make the bags in-house. Instead we use a number of trusted small businesses across Scotland that, between them, have generations of expertise. I set up the business with the intention of using this knowledge, experience and expertise that I knew existed in Scotland, and this ethos continues to be at the heart of everything that we do.

"All that said, there is no such thing as a typical day - I might be speaking to one of the weavers on Lewis that we buy our Harris Tweed from, then need to nip out to see our leather manufacturer to check on the progress of a bespoke order, then back to a store in Edinburgh that stocks our pieces to replenish their stock, then home to package up any sales for the day. The biggest challenge is knowing when to stop for the day and leave something 'til tomorrow – I'm still working on that one!"

The long hours, however, are well worth it.

"The very best reward is getting a call or an email from a satisfied customer," she smiles. "There is nothing nicer than hearing that people are delighted with their purchase from Dunmore Scotland and we happily put these customer comments on our website for everyone to see! I also enjoy sending out a parcel to a new country that we've not sent to before. I just love the idea that in towns and cities across the world there are people walking about with a little piece of Scotland in the shape of a Dunmore Scotland bag."

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Eddi *Reader*

From street busker to circus act and session musician to a 30 year recording career, Scottish singer Eddi Reader's journey is captured in a new retrospective double album

The Best of Eddi Reader includes the songsmith's signature renditions of the works of Scottish national poet Robbie Burns, the chart-topping single Perfect, a new version of the old standard Moon River, and a cover of Amy Winehouse's Love is a Losing Game.

"When I listened through to the 'best of' collection, I found myself reconnecting with every chord, melodic shift, percussion push and vocal thread," shares Reader. "It reminded me of myself like little Polaroid photos. I can't believe how beautiful it is - I'm very proud of this music."

Growing up in Glasgow, the eldest sibling in a large working class family, Reader was irresistibly drawn to music and instruments from an early age.

"Music soothed and comforted me and excited me more than most other experiences. It was akin to the first bright spring morning I remember, or the warmth of my Gran's hearth fire and biscuits, or my neighbours' dog, Sheila, who became my constant companion as I trilled my way through my council estate, imagining it to be paradise."

Reader toured Europe with circus and folk performers in the 1980s, before working in London as a much sought-after session vocalist. She harmonized with Annie Lennox and the Eurhythmics before forming the critically-acclaimed band Fairground Attraction, attracting a wider audience and releasing numerous best-selling albums.

The songstress notes that she never chose music - it chose her.

> *"Nature drew me to it. I just harnessed what I could out of raw instinct. Others who approved encouraged me to make musical noise wherever I went."*

"I found that if I sang and played instinctively, it attracted a living. Without the cash I would have done it regardless - I'm not a businesswoman. Those are the challenges - to maintain that instinct and trust that all will be well even when your mind creates tricks to worry or panic you about feeding the kids and paying the rent."

The rewards, she points out, have been a long working life and the ability to be freely creative - making life joyful and full of purpose.

It was her manager, Tom Rose, who pitched the idea of an album spanning her musical experiences.

"The truth is I could never choose a list of my own songs. I've written and recorded so many, I love them all. Tom surprised me by showing me a tapestry of moments throughout my creative path in music."

She hopes that her love of writing and performing shines though on the new album.

"I was surprised at how bonny it all was. I move on so quickly that some of that music felt like I was hearing it for the first time."

While the initial response to the anthology has been favourable, Reader does not generally concern herself with reviews.

"I am very good at ignoring all things that judge. I like people, but I could never rely on them to know anything about what's good or bad about these musical expressions, even if they are the experts."

In keeping with her same free-spirited philosophy, she struggles to say whether her art is more inspirational or perspirational.

"I never notice the process - I only rest at the completion of the process. The real work is taking the joyful, inspired, musical dream and turning it into something I can wear and communicate with. I have to kick my own ass sometimes to do that work. I suppose it is the struggle with my own inner critic that I avoid."

An avowed Scottish nationalist, roots are important to Reader, her own being predominantly in Glasgow, although she had an Irish grandmother from Tralee.

"I think our ancestors are our chain and we wrap around this blue planet in an ageless, timeless way, resonating their story, our story and the future story. To forget it is to forget life."

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Hamish Burgess

Artist, bagpiper, entrepreneur, broadcaster, music promoter and all-around Celtic activist – Hawaii's Hamish Burgess brings his heritage to the Pacific

Named Scot of the Year by the Caledonian Society of Hawaii six years ago, Hamish Burgess is still finding new ways to promote Celtic culture. And while the Pacific paradise's expansive beaches and rolling surf might seem incongruous with Celtic traditions, it has given the transplanted Scot marvelous opportunities to share the culture of his ancestors.

"I was happily an instigator of having Douglas Herring's now famous Hawaii Tartan created in 1997," he shares via email. "It was actually made into kilts to be worn here in Hawaii before it was officially recognized by the state in 2008."

Burgess has also been Scottish ambassador for the Princess Ka'iulani Project, taking the story of Hawaii's most beloved Hawaiin-Scot back to her father's homeland in 2009.

His lifelong passion for all things Celtic was brought on by the love he and his brother shared for Celtic art from the time they were teenagers. With solidly Scottish ancestry, Burgess was raised in a Scottish household in England and later spent a decade in the Celtic stronghold of Cornwall. Lured by the surf and scuba diving possibilities, he immigrated to Hawaii in 1992, and was soon taking in Highland Games events in Honolulu. His first piece of Celtic art adorned his own black station wagon. By 2002, he was seeing more extensive marketing possibilities for his work, along with importing Celtic-themed products from Cornwall, Scotland and Ireland.

"I had the crazy idea that the Celtic pewter art and jewelry I had always liked in Cornwall might sell over here. Me and my partner, Jennifer MacKay Fahrni, ordered a stock of items and signed up as a new vendor. From there, our company - Maui Celtic - has become the biggest vendor in the region over the last 11 years."

Although Maui Celtic sells mostly online, its website incorporates Burgess' other ventures, making it a resource and archive for all things Celtic, including a syndicated radio show he has hosted since 2003.

"I promote Celtic culture here and internationally every week as a volunteer presenter and producer of my Celtic music radio program, the Maui Celtic Radio Show," he explains, noting the program has brought him new opportunities.

Burgess and Fahrni are also promoters of Celtic music, producing concerts in local and area pubs, church halls and larger venues. These have included the world's top Scottish fiddler, Alasdair Fraser, the late Irish singing legend Liam Clancy, Michael Black of the Famous Irish Black Family, and world champion bagpiper, Jack Lee.



"A radio interview with George Millar of the Irish Rovers led to a Celtic art commission for an album cover, and a great friendship. Jennifer now works with the band's management team, and I am their in-house artist and photographer."

He notes that his art covers the gamut between traditional and modern Celtic themes and modes.

"My most ambitious piece to date was 'The Life of the Rover,' a commission for The Irish Rovers' 50th anniversary triple album cover. It was done in the style of the Book of Kells, but tells the story of the band over their five-decade career."

Burgess also learned to play the bagpipes in Hawaii, and was a founding member of the Isle of Maui Pipe Band. One of the high points of his musical career was returning to Scotland to represent the Hawaiian Islands in the Millennium Pipe Band March through Edinburgh in the year 2000. Now retired from the band, he remains an active solo player at weddings and cultural events.

> *"I'm able to make a living doing something I am passionate about, be my own boss, and still live in a lovely place with warm water for surfing."*

In Maui he has a choice of two Irish pubs, one of which regularly plays Celtic music. He and Fahrni have put on an annual Robert Burns night at a local watering hole for the past 12 years also.

"There seems to be a healthy renaissance recently, with lots of young folks playing traditional music in all the Celtic lands, and creating modern Celtic fusion, as well. I see indigenous art heavily represented. Celtic art is the indigenous art form of the British Isles and Ireland and should be celebrated as such."

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Clodagh McKenna

Ireland doesn't get enough credit for its food culture. At least, that's the opinion of world-famous chef Clodagh McKenna…

Sitting in The Old Triangle pub in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Chef Clodagh McKenna reminisces about her childhood in Cork, Ireland. McKenna is in town to film a television appearance featuring recipes from her latest book, Clodagh's Irish Kitchen. The now-renowned restaurateur began her culinary journey as a youngster.

"I grew up in a house where we cooked every meal at home," she recalls. "On Saturday mornings it was baking: we would bake the rock buns, bake the sponge cake, bake breads or biscuits."

McKenna emphasizes that although she savoured shuffling around the family kitchen, it was hard work.

"It was done because my mom just wanted to make sure that we had good wholesome food in the house. To this day, I still remember the smells of those rock buns."

Rock buns, as she describes them, are savoury and sweet scones made with nutmeg, cinnamon and dried fruits. McKenna has a version of the recipe in her new book.

"When I make it, and that smell is around the kitchen, there's nothing else that can transport me back to my childhood. That is one of the things that is so beautiful and so evocative - and so important - about food."

McKenna still loves traditional Irish dishes, but after almost two decades of cooking, her catalogue goes well beyond rock buns. After graduating from New York University, she returned to Ireland for formal culinary school and chef training. There, she fostered her fondness for farmers' markets, before leaving to study at the Slow Food University in Italy, where she remained for three years.

"What was great about living there is that the Italians are so focused on seasonal food, and on the origin of their ingredients. That is the biggest thing I took from my time there."



After returning to her home country, McKenna opened Clodagh's Kitchen restaurant in Dublin.

"It was then that I really started to concentrate on my interpretation of Irish food," she explains.

> *"I have a real passion and love to create dishes and recipes that people from all around the world will be able to make and enjoy."*

Today, McKenna splits her time between Dublin, London and New York, making regular television appearances to share her fervour. She has appeared on various cooking and talk shows, and has starred in her own television series as well.

"It was never something I even thought about doing; television just really happened organically. I was so immersed in the food scene, that when the opportunity arose, it all just happened naturally.

"I love television. I love what you can communicate and I love making people feel good," she continues, pointing to a recent UK television spot, during which she made a variation on her bread and ice cream. Within two days, over 300 people had contacted her through Twitter with photos of the bread they had made.

"That gave me so much pleasure," McKenna smiles. "It's why I do it. I know how food can enrich people's lives."

So far, McKenna has published five best-selling cook books, including Clodagh's Kitchen Diaries and Clodagh's Irish Kitchen.

Soda bread, a full Irish breakfast, and potato dumplings with spicy Cashel blue sauce are just a few of the finds in her latest literary effort.

"It's a fresh take on traditional recipes," she says of Clodagh's Irish Kitchen. "These would be considered your 'go-to dishes'."

And though she has seen a deep appreciation for Irish culture across the globe during her travels, McKenna wishes food played a bigger role in that love of the Emerald Isle.

"What I want is for people to go beyond the beer culture of Ireland, which is actually a very small aspect of life there. The real deal in Ireland is the cooking. When you visit, and you stay there for a time, you come to understand that everything revolves around the kitchen table."

As it is at home, she encourages people to create their own culinary customs.

"If you don't already have a cooking tradition in your family, you can start one. My hope is to help push that process along; people can make my soda bread every week, or make my Guinness cake on different occasions.

"I would love to see more people cooking Irish and bringing that food into their life."

www.clodaghmckenna.com

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Chef *Geoffrey Smeddle*



Geoffrey Smeddle is the executive chef of the Michelin star and Rosette-award winning restaurant at The Peat Inn in St Andrews, Scotland. Along with his wife Katherine, Smeddle is the owner-operator of the renowned "restaurant with rooms." Celtic Life International recently spoke with the award-winning chef about his culinary journey.

Where are you from?

I grew up in Kent in south east England until the age of 14. Then my family moved to Hong Kong because of my father's work. We lived there throughout my teenage years.

What inspired you to become a Chef?

Eating out in Hong Kong made a big impact as it opened my eyes to the diverse nature of restaurants. However, initially I did not wish specifically to become a chef, I just knew I was attracted to restaurants. To me there was a sense of drama and theatre, with the front of house and back of house being like on stage and off stage. It all just seemed incredibly exciting. My love for cooking emerged during my time at university studying history, so I decided to go to college and train formally as a chef.

How would you describe Scottish cuisine?

It is very diverse and covers every aspect of the market: there are simple seaside cafes selling lobster and crabs from the waters just yards away from where you are sitting; some of the best fish and chips shops in the UK, lots of family run restaurants, some outstanding ice cream parlours (Scots love ice cream, despite the cold weather!) and then of course there are smart Michelin-starred restaurants offering a culinary experience. Overall I would summarise it as always developing and growing more exciting every year. The diversity of eating out in Edinburgh is a great example

What is the experience like for guests eating at The Peat Inn?

I hope it is relaxing, first of all. I hate going to a place where you are made to feel like the owners are doing you a favour by having you in their restaurant. So I want guests to feel at ease, enjoy Scottish beers, whiskies and gins or some unusual wines which we have discovered, all at reasonable prices. I want the service to be relaxed and unobtrusive, but knowledgeable and professional if you wish to interact. The food should represent the restaurant's setting, so our food is very ingredient led. All this needs to be done, above all, at a price point which will encourage people to return. Chefs always think that the food is the most important part of the picture. In reality, for most guests, it is just one more piece of a larger puzzle and all the other pieces are just as important.

How does your restaurant showcase Scottish cuisine…or, specifically, your cuisine?

The restaurant is not huge: we serve around 45 - 50 guests so it is definitely geared up to showcasing the food I want to serve and the ingredients I want to use. The Peat Inn is near the coast, so we use local fruits and vegetables, lots of seafood and shellfish, Scottish meats, poultry and game, and so on. The ingredients are more important to me than showy 'cheffy' technique. Our technique should be there only to bring the best out of the ingredients, not to show how clever we are.

It sounds like you and Katherine are all about making The Peat Inn a holistic destination. What is it like staying overnight, or several nights there?

Just like the restaurant, our main goal is to make everything relaxing and simple for the guests. It is not a corporate style hotel room but an individually designed suite. We believe it is small touches that make a huge difference: anything which shows to the guests that you have thought through what it would be like to stay will make an impact and help them to feel in good hands. This leads to them relaxing quickly. So on arriving in your suite, you will find we have provided fruit, bottled water, a decanter of sherry, a full tea and coffee tray with fresh milk and brownies, magazines and so on. I want the outside world to stop when our guests pull into the drive.

What are some of the favourite or proudest experiences you've had throughout your career thus far?

Winning our Michelin star was obviously a big moment - not just for my wife and me, but for all the team. Since then we have been included in some prestigious lists too such as The Sunday Times Top 100 UK Restaurants list and the Good Food Guide Top 50 Restaurants list.
A major standout moment was having Chef Thomas Keller dine with us. He was a gentleman. But I think the best highlight has been building a team and having them stay and grow with us. Staff turnover is normally such an issue in our industry, so I am proud to have chefs stay for three, four or five years, and some key managers in the front of house stay almost a decade.

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This summer, fans of the Outlander books and television series can do some historical time-travel of their own in a picturesque Ontario town

Perth, a town of 6,000 located just southwest of Ottawa, is marking its 200th anniversary in 2016. The quaint community is also hosting its first annual Outlandish Gathering.

It is perhaps fitting that fans of the Diana Gabaldon books and the subsequent television series - starring Catriona Balfe as Claire Randall and Sam Heughan as Jamie Fraser - should gather in Perth, as the town owes much of its architecture to Scottish stone masons, many of whom came to Canada to work on the construction of the nearby Rideau Canal.

Gabaldon's books, and the acclaimed television series, tell the story of married Second World War nurse Claire Randall, who travels back in time to the Scottish highlands of 1743 where she encounters warrior Jamie Fraser just as the Jacobite conflict is heating up.

The theme for the Outlandish Gathering - which runs from July 29 to August 1 - will be the return of Bonnie Prince Charlie to Scotland, the marshalling of his supporters on the islands and in the highlands, and the subsequent Battle of Culloden. The stirring narrative is outlined in Gabaldon's book, Dragonfly in Amber.

Among those already registered to attend the event is Cindy Penney of Timberlea, Nova Scotia, who took in last year's Outlandish Gathering in Creiff, Scotland.

"I am an avid reader but I never knew I had such a love of history until I started reading the Outlander books and discovered that Diana had woven a fictional story into a (mostly) historically accurate tale that spans Scotland, France, Jamaica, the United States and Canada," notes Penney.

Interestingly, she has no Scottish ancestry.

"My family is more Irish and British based. But despite that, when I travel to Scotland I feel as if I belong there."

Penney met fans from around the world in Crieff, most notably Debby Jo Hill of Stittsville, Ontario, who is the driving force behind the Perth gathering.

> *"Our goal is to bring Outlander fans, as well as those who have a love of Scottish culture, together for a unique experience and a celebration of culture and history."*

Registrants can expect good food and fine entertainment, as well as several educational seminars and lots of Outlander chatter. One of the key participants will be Scottish herbalist Claire MacKay, who has a consulting role with the hit television series.

"She is a naturalist and ecologist, quite well-known in Scotland, and has been getting international acclaim since becoming involved with the show," explains Penney.

Gabaldon was so impressed with MacKay's knowledge she asked her to write a chapter of Volume II of The Outlander's Companion released last year.

"She is very personable and enthusiastic and loves sharing her joy and knowledge of natural uses for plants and herbs."

Plans are in the works for Gaelic and crafts events, as well as visits to local theme and specialty markets. Optional activities include a charity walk and a whisky tasting session. Re-enactors will display costumes and armaments, and discuss the battle strategies employed at Culloden.

A Scottish ceilidh, featuring music and a formal dinner, will be held at Codes Mill - Perth's answer to Outlander's Castle Leoch. Celtic dress is suggested, but not required.

"Costume events are not my usual thing," confides Penney, "but I have a 17th century evening gown that I made myself and wore at last year's event. Many of the registrants will be wearing period gowns and plaids. Some of the men will be wearing formal kilts with sporrans."

The weekend will end with a 'Calling of the Clans', a casual barbecue, and a campfire in Perth's Last Duel Park - so named as it was there that two friends fought over a woman in the last known duel in Canada.

For Penney, the hard work of marketing a new event is offset by the joy and fulfillment she has experienced as an Outlander fan.

"I am a member of various Outlander groups and have attended several larger gatherings. I have made many new friends from various walks of life that I would never have met under ordinary circumstances."

www.outlandishca.com



Cindy Penney

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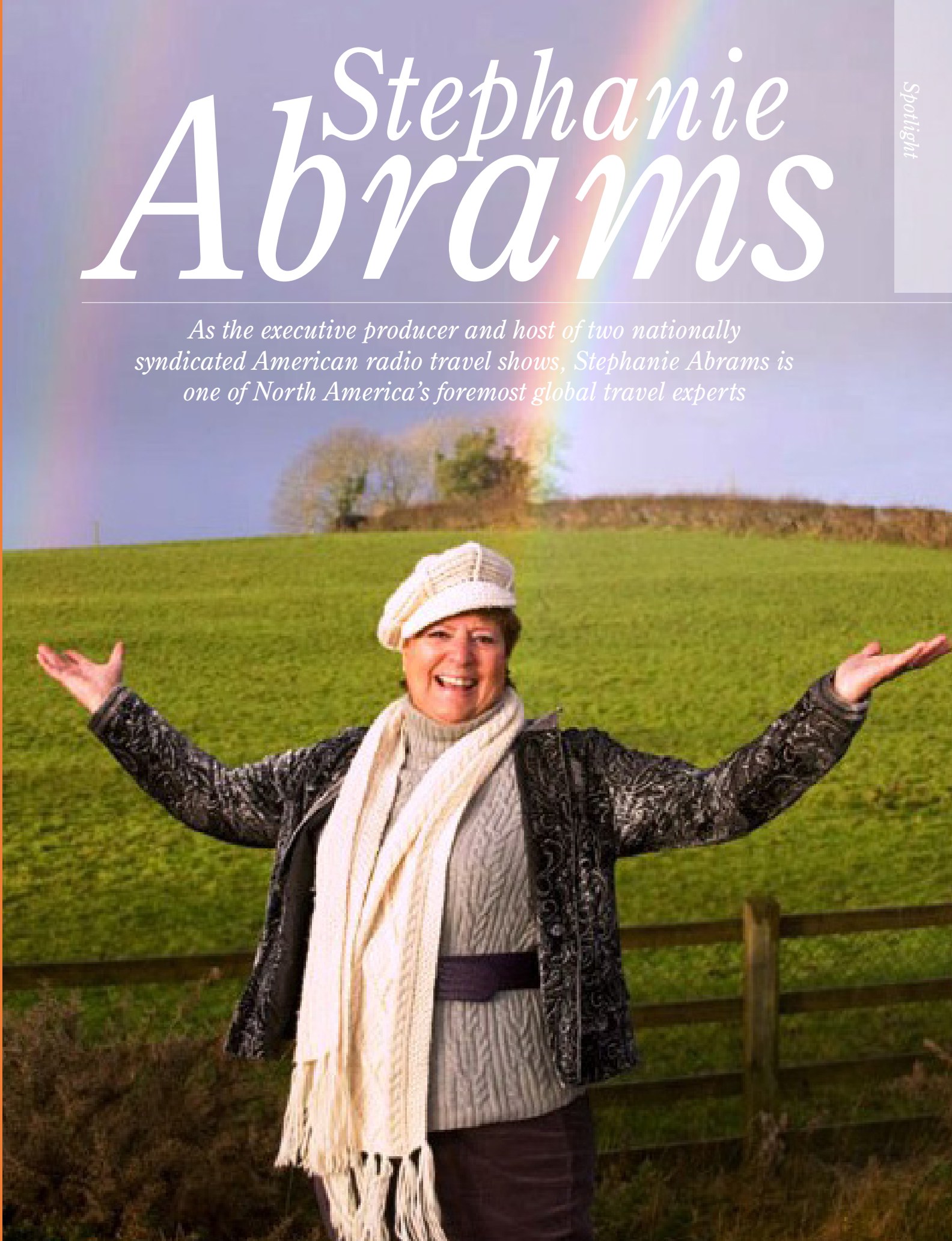
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Stephanie Abrams

As the executive producer and host of two nationally syndicated American radio travel shows, Stephanie Abrams is one of North America's foremost global travel experts





"My mission has always been to educate and motivate people to travel to great places," says Stephanie Abrams via email from her home in Massachusetts. "Places that I believe they will return from enriched, enhanced, inspired and uplifted, and somehow knowing that they are better people because of the experience they just had, whether they are travelling for business or pleasure."

Both of her radio shows - Travel with Stephanie Abrams and Travelers 411 - began as one hour programs, expanded to two hours, and eventually evolved to their current format of three hours. She recently reached the milestone of 3,000 broadcast hours.

Abrams' broadcasting career began in 2002 when she was invited to talk about travel on a local business radio show. The response was so strong that she was recruited to do a regular 15 minute segment each subsequent Sunday.

"St. Patrick's Day 2002 came on a Sunday," she recalls. "I suggested to the host that we do the whole show on Ireland, and I jumped on the chance and set everything up."

Abrams arranged for the broadcast to take place in St. Patrick's Centre in Downpatrick, County Down, in Northern Ireland, inviting key personnel from both the Irish business sector and the tourism industry to participate.

"I was boarding a plane from New Jersey to fly to Ireland, and just as I was stepping aboard my cell phone rang. It was from the CEO of the radio network offering me my own radio travel show. Needless to say, I flew to Ireland higher than the plane."



While she admits that her experience with radio may have been limited up until that point, the timing could not have been better after 16 years of working with a major travel company.

"From 1986 to 2001 I was second in command of a $1.5 billion U.S. travel company. We were a travel agency franchise company - akin to the McDonald's of travel agencies - and part of my responsibility was to grow our global presence in 21 countries by developing commercial partnerships with leaders in the travel industry worldwide."

When New York's Twin Towers were brought down by terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the sector immediately contracted.

"After 16 years of super-dedicated service - and making a significant contribution to the growth of the company I worked for - it took less than three minutes for my boss, the CEO, to tell me I didn't work there anymore."

Although a new adventure, radio soon proved to be one way to hold onto her passion for travel. Given her experience, however, the challenges were not particularly daunting. She notes that she had previously been recognized by Travel Agent Magazine as one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in Travel, and she had no difficulty choosing locations or attracting guests for her show.

"I come from a history of serving on advisory boards of major destinations, suppliers in the travel industry, and prestigious organizations in travel, so I truly understand both the destinations and the insider knowledge that comes from being a professional in travel and tourism."

Abrams believes listeners find her travel shows engaging, and points out more people are travelling than ever before.

"We have produced programming on location in Asia, Hawaii, Europe, the Caribbean Islands, and from all over the U.S. In Canada, we have done remote broadcasts from Montreal."

She estimates that 70 per cent of her interviews are done by phone. The pieces are podcast for a year, and then archived in the notes for each show, creating a historical reference.









And while her job may be mostly in front of the microphone, she also ensures that her shows have sponsors. Along from the emotional rewards that come via feedback from listeners and visitors to her websites, Abrams enjoys shining a light on unique travel destinations.

"There is the satisfaction of being able to bring under-marketed, best-kept secret destinations and the nooks and crannies therein – as well as the travel services I believe are important to travelers - to my audiences."

Her own favourite destinations include the Scottish highlands, the south and west coast of France, St. Kits and Jamaica in the Caribbean, Portugal's Madeira, and Montreal. But it is Ireland that has captured her imagination - so much so, that she has chosen to write her first travel guide about the Emerald Isle.

"Ireland is the quintessential destination that fits my mission," she shares, adding that the country can match any interest, whether in arts, literature, music, dance, history, spirituality, cooking, baking, sports, hiking, biking, architecture, gardening, jewelry-making or whatever.

"You'll find it in abundance - from ancient to modern - on the island that is Ireland. And there is one other special ingredient, and that is the people. "

Centuries of enduring hardship have failed to sour the Irish spirit, she notes.

"Instead, you find people who are the heart of generosity; people who don't know what a stranger is and embrace every visitor as part of the family, which includes those who are not part of the Irish Diaspora; people who have a great sense of humour, and who haven't met a problem they could not beat by ignoring it.



"I have travelled all over the world and I've met many wonderful people on every continent but there is nowhere on earth where the intersection of incredible culture and overwhelmingly wonderful people converge on one spot. The most difficult thing about Ireland is leaving it."

The Giant's Causeway on the Antrim coast of Northern Ireland may be her favourite spot.

"The place is sheer magic and I can't go home unless we visit. There are times when we've planned a trip to Ireland that does not include going to the Antrim coast and while we are in Ireland I realize I can't go home unless we stop there. So we make one of those great 'long-cuts' or I'll regret missing it."

Not surprisingly, Abrams is a great believer in enlisting the help of a travel agent in making travel plans.

"Too many think all you need to know is how to book an airline ticket and a hotel online which is what I refer to as 'self-inflicted brain surgery.' An agent who specializes in that particular destination plans trips to that place every day so I find it hard to understand why people would want to go off anywhere without professional help."

When she began her own travels it was in pursuit of something she calls "experience."

"The trend today is to do things you love to do, or to try something new, but do it somewhere other than in your home region. Value for money spent is still in fashion."

Abrams has also authored a fictional novel called Rumors, and is working on a sequel which she plans to title Secret. She will also publish her Irish tour guide, 1001 Reasons to Visit Ireland, in the coming while. On the travel front, she has a long list of places she plans to go, including Galveston, Texas, and New Brunswick and Newfoundland in Canada. She will be back in Ireland before the year is out.

"The invisible threads that each trip has created in my mind over the years are woven into a fabulous, colourful, textured tapestry that is wrapped around me wherever I go."

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In Good Company

Our award-winning photojournalist Tom Langlands travels back in time with a little help from his new-found friends...





I avoid long coach journeys whenever I can, but I wanted to visit the WWI Battlefields in Belgium and France during the year that marks the centenary of the start of the Battle of the Somme. I also wanted to expand my rather scant, schoolboy knowledge on the subject of WWI, and the easiest way to do that was on a guided coach trip. I made a few enquiries, and having received glowing reports about local company Solway Tours, I booked myself on their five-day WWI Battlefields trip.

Back in the days when I was made to study history at school, the emphasis was on how many dates and events one could remember rather than any deep understanding of the people, politics and circumstances surrounding such events. I always found it a dull, lifeless subject. During the obligatory forays into WWI history, I don't remember any teacher trying to immerse me in the characters and emotions of one of the greatest conflicts in human history. Consequently, for me, WWI always belonged somewhere in the past and was consigned to some corner of a foreign field'. That was about to change in a way I never anticipated. I had expected my trip to be emotive, but I was not prepared for the gut-wrenching, fascinating, educational, anecdotal, story-infused, and life-changing experience it proved to be. It was all of these things and more, thanks to Mark Turner and Lesley Watson, owners and history tour guides of Solway Tours.

From battlefields to cemeteries, monuments to museums, and death cells to trenches, Turner and Watson brought the story to life. Their knowledge of WWI is outstanding, as was their ability to research at short notice anything they didn't know - and that wasn't much! We recited war poems over gravestones and even had a wartime singsong around an old piano in Talbot House, the soldiers' rest and recreation centre in Poperinge. Intrigued, I caught up with Turner and Watson in a bar in Ypres one evening, and over a beer quizzed them about Solway Tours, how they had acquired their knowledge, and what drove their intense enthusiasm.

Turner grew up in the small, picturesque, fishing village of Garlieston in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland. He decided at an early age that the family's trawler fishing background was not for him, and he headed to Glasgow to study history and politics. "My love for these subjects comes from both my family background and some fantastic teachers at high school," he explained. "I completed my joint honours in history and politics at university and loved learning more about the impact that decisions made by individuals can have on a community, nation, continent or beyond." Following postgraduate studies in education, and a twenty-five -year teaching career, he found himself back in Dumfries and Galloway as head of Dumfries High School.

Watson was born in Dumfries and always wanted to pursue a career in education. "I knew that I wanted to be a teacher and it became clear very quickly that I had a great passion for history," she shared. "On family holidays I was always the one who wanted to go to museums and I loved exploring castles and historic sites." She studied history, religion and education at Stirling University before she too found herself back teaching in Dumfries and Galloway, eventually becoming deputy head of school - one of Scotland's youngest ever - at Wallace Hall Academy in Thornhill.

Fuelled by their combined passion for WWI, Scottish history and Dumfries and Galloway, Turner and Watson spotted a niche in the market, combined their expertise, and embarked on a career change, launching Solway Tours in February of 2015. Although Turner has immense knowledge of WWI and has led over twenty trips to its battlefields, it is his passion for his native Scotland that comes to the fore in conversation, and for that reason the three of us agreed to meet back on home territory.

Two weeks later we were drinking coffee at Brodies in Moffat. Such is Turner's enthusiasm that, quite casually, he pointed out of the window to an old graveyard opposite, remarking "Did you know that John Loudon MacAdam, the inventor of the MacAdam road surface - later to become tarmacadam - is buried in there?" I did not, but it was so typical of the interesting factoids that are sprinkled through any conversation with Turner or Watson. We took a drive into the surrounding countryside exploring corners of an area I have lived in for over thirty years and thought I knew reasonably well. We stopped at the Grey Mare's Tail waterfall and climbed the hillside to get a better view of this stunning example of a hanging valley. On the way Turner nodded towards an innocuous mound in the landscape, "That used to be a Roman Fort." At every juncture I picked up another morsel of information.

Although Solway Tours uses larger vehicles when necessary, the company has its own seven-seat vehicle, with the aim



of offering unique bespoke tours for small groups or families. Watson laughs as she recollects the company's first ever trip, "It was on Valentine's Day 2015, for a group of women and was called Castles, Cakes and Cava. We all had a great time and appropriately enough ended up at Sweetheart Abbey." Fifteen months down the line, business is booming. Initially, they thought that work would be divided equally between local history tours and tailor-made ancestral trips. That has not been the case, with over ninety-five percent of their customers seeking ancestral, family-history tours. Many of these clients are overseas visitors with Scottish connections who want to explore their roots in a more personal way than the average Scottish travel tour will provide. This is perfect for Turner and Watson, who love nothing better than delving into new lines of research. Armed with nothing more than some basic genealogical information they will 'flesh out the facts' adding locations, backgrounds and layers of additional history. This is all done in advance of any tour.

Once prepared, they collect clients from airports, cruise ships, hotels or anywhere else in the UK. Tours last for as long, or short, a period of time as required, and can cover as large a geographic area as necessary. They have taken visitors as far north as Orkney, and on four occasions have travelled to Ireland. For longer tours, accommodation can be arranged en-route. They are happy to provide an overview of Scottish history and take in any of the major landmarks as well as concentrating on more personal stories. Spend time in their company and you will be transported on a journey across the centuries captivated by the unusual, hidden gems of a nation's history, or that of your own family. Be prepared to be amazed, to laugh and to cry all in one day - I speak from personal experience.

Solway Tours is the only operator offering bespoke tours of this nature in southwest Scotland, and Turner and Watson pride themselves not only on being one of the best in the country, but also having been awarded five-star status from Visit Scotland.

On the way back to Moffat we stopped by the Devil's Beef Tub and gazed down into this huge natural depression in the landscape. In the late afternoon sunshine it was impressive and I would have settled for that until Turner pointed to the hill on the opposite side, "A covenanter was shot there." Watson looks down into the bottom of the bowl, "And that's where the Border Reivers used to hide their stolen cattle."

I had only spent a couple of hours in their company and had seen how history could come alive in the right hands. I wished I could have gone back in time and brought along some of my old history teachers to show them how its done.

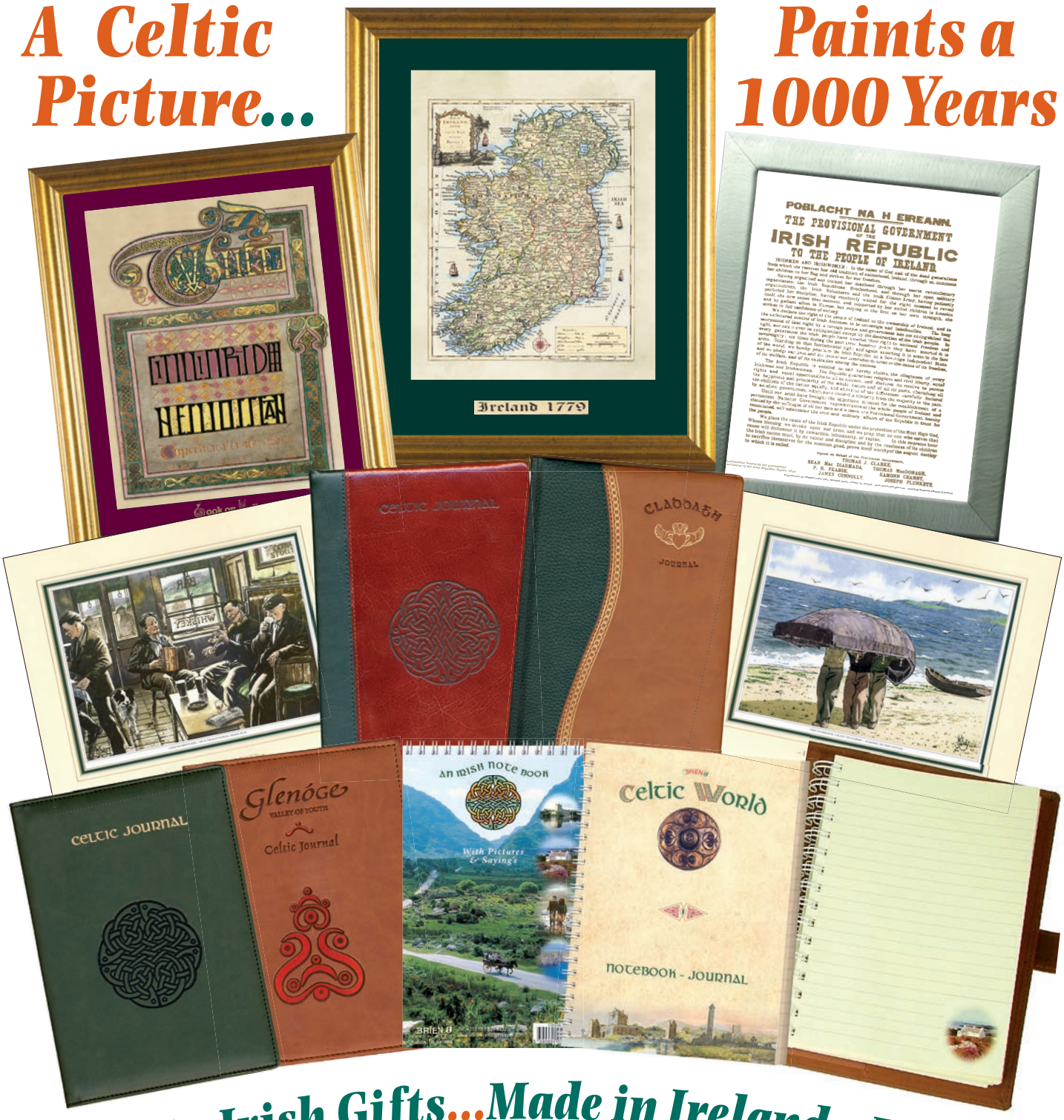
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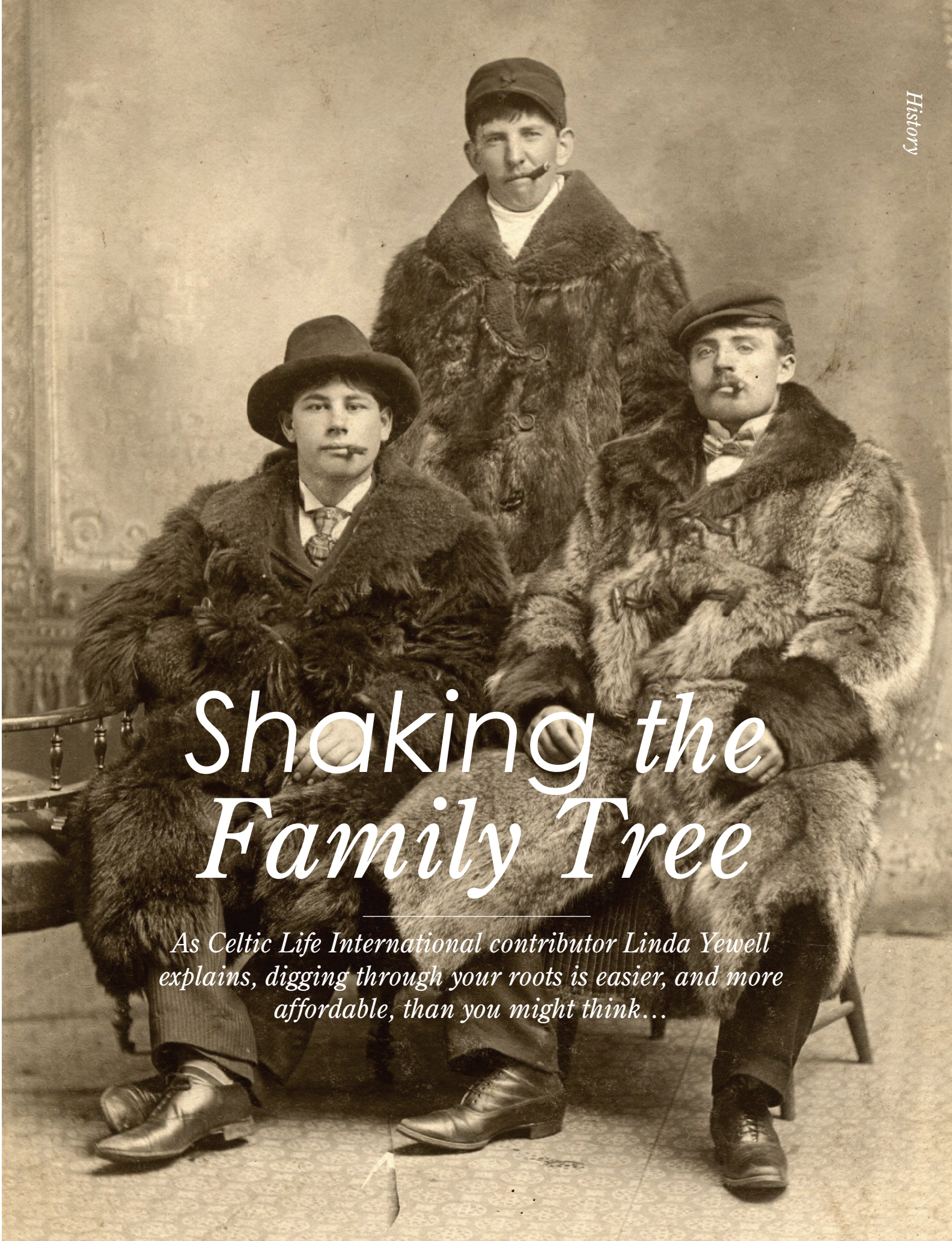
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Shaking the Family Tree

As Celtic Life International contributor Linda Yewell explains, digging through your roots is easier, and more affordable, than you might think…



Now that I am retired, I am constantly on the lookout for inexpensive and/or free things to do. As I have always been interested in my family tree, I joined a genealogy group. At one time, I thought I would have to sign up to expensive websites or go to the library to research my family. Not anymore. I have discovered several sites on the internet that are both free and have plenty of information about my Irish, Scottish and Welsh ancestry.



FamilySearch.org belongs to the LDS church. The LDS church has been collecting birth, marriage and death certificates, along with census and military records - and more - for many years. There are several headings on the menu bar, but the ones I use the most are 'Search' and 'Family Tree'. Under 'Search', simply type in your ancestor's name on the left hand side of the page, hit submit, and you will find birth, marriage, death, census and sometimes military records. I found out that my maternal grandfather was drafted during World War I but did not serve, most likely as he had a wife and a child. My paternal grandmother was born on a farm in 1899, and though there was no birth certificate, I have the census of 1900 which lists her as a one year old child. Also under 'Search' is the 'Genealogy' heading, but you need to watch this page as it is based on members plugging in what they know or think is their family tree. That leads to the other menu bar I use on this site, 'The Family Tree'. This heading has 'Tree', 'Person', 'Find', 'List' and 'Family Booklet'. I use 'Find' the most, as this is where you can input a name and quickly trace your ancestors. You can also tab to the 'Family Tree', where you can use your own research to set up a family tree. There are slots to put birth, marriage and death information, and you can also add pictures. This will only be as complete as the person who did his or her research, however. I found a minor error in my paternal family tree that someone else created. You can edit this tree, or you can send an email to the creator of this tree with the correction. Here, I traced another branch of my father's family to Robert I of Scotland. I found this hard to believe at first, but apparently one of King Richard III of England descendant's is a carpenter from Canada, whose DNA was verified. So maybe some of us 'commoners' might actually have real connections to royalty.

A site my brother told me about is FindAGrave.com. You can also download this as an app on your smart phone. FindAGrave.com is run mostly by volunteers who go to cemeteries, take pictures of tombstones, list the birth and death dates, and note spouses and children. Sometimes there is also a bio on the page. You can find someone by name, or you can pull up cemetery listings on both the website or mobile app. Simply put the name, country (and state and county if USA), and if someone has documented the grave, you will find it. This is a global site, so if one of your ancestors died during World War II and was buried in Europe, you should be able to locate his or her grave. You can also pull up famous people's grave sites by states or countries. I found out that I am related to a 1960s TV actor named Gardner McKay, who is buried in Kentucky. Again, as this site is mostly run by volunteers, there are occasional errors. On my great grandmother's page I found a mistake, and I sent an email to correct this, though I am still waiting for a reply. I was also given the opportunity to sponsor the grave site. As I have the app installed on my phone, I use it while I am surfing FamilySearch.org to verify birth and death dates.

If you have a library card, you should be able to pull up HeritageQuest.org at home by setting up an account through your local library. There are several headings on the menu bar such as 'Family Names', 'City Directories', and 'Immigration Records', but the two I use the most are 'Census' and 'Revolutionary War Pension Records'. The 'Census' will pull up entire available polling records from a particular state. I have also used this site to verify ancestors that moved out of state. Since you have a copy of the original census, you can see who your ancestors lived next door to, as sometimes neighbors were also family. The 'Revolutionary War' menu bar also has pension requests from revolutionary soldiers or their widows, and will note whether or not that pension was granted. I found my ancestor, Amos Goodwin, who served in Virginia, via his asking for - and receiving - a pension in Kentucky. Often, you can see the original pension request with your ancestors' signature. The 'Military Records' option also has this information.

DaughtersoftheAmericanRevolution.org is devoted to Revolutionary War soldiers as well. This site has many headings, but I use the 'Library' page the most, which displays the patriot's name, and his or her descendants. Not only have I used this site to verify my own ancestors, but I have back-traced ancestors whose lines stopped in FamilySearch.org. It can be a long shot, but sometimes this approach works if that ancestor fought in the American Revolution.

Two other good volunteer sites are USGenWeb.com and RootsWeb.com. USGenWeb.com is broken down into individual states, and if there are many historians working on a particular state's page, there will be a lot of information. I discovered my ancestors' land deed in Duplin County, North Carolina, but on other state's pages I found little that was helpful. Rootsweb.com has 'Searches', 'Family Trees' and 'Message Boards' on its menu bar. If someone has done a lot of work on your family's name you will find all that information here. However, if little or no work has been done you are out of luck. On the 'Message Board', I did find several notes from others about one of my ancestors in North Carolina, Jesse Ellison, who shows up until the 1790 census. He was born in North Carolina but he has no listed parents, which, I am told, is not uncommon. I also found my McCormick ancestors, and learned that they came from Northern Ireland by way of Scotland. Apparently, I have both green and orange men in my family.

I live in Kentucky, where the public libraries offer complimentary access to Ancestry.com. I will sometimes plan a free afternoon and log onto the popular site, which often has the same information as on the aforementioned portals, but occasionally offers new data. You can also set up your family tree here.

I know this is a lot of information, but



the good thing is you can work on this at home. For me, it has been both fun and rewarding, especially when I discover something new. For example, I recently learned that I have branches from Wales on both sides of my family that none of us knew about. I also have an ancestor who was born illegitimately in Virginia, and who later became a doctor in Kentucky. On my mother's side, I am apparently related to the Vanderbilts. Now those are the kind of relatives you want to have!



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Through *Thick and Thin in* Donegal

Bestselling author, poet, publisher, professor, musician and surfer Lesley Choyce shares seven spring days in Donegal



Although I had travelled a fair bit around Ireland over the years, I'd never spent more than a day in Donegal. I had a sense that the region would have a real feeling of remoteness, and so I rented a small house in the tiny village of Carrickfinn above Innishfree Bay. As my wife Linda and I drove out the narrow peninsula in search of our bungalow, we discovered we were not to be nearly as "remote" as I would have expected, passing a small but ultra-modern airport with a billboard boasting several daily nonstop flights to Dublin.

Only a year before, we had spent some time in County Sligo where I was on the search of "Thin Places" as research for a novel I was writing. I was on a similar quest here in County Donegal, hoping to experience those exotic locations where there is said to be only a thin space between the physical and spiritual world. From past experience, I knew that finding such places had less to do with maps and historical significance, and more to do with quixotic personal connections and timing. But I had my list: Glenveagh Forest, The Poisoned Glen, Maghera Caves, Slieve League and, of course, the legendary Mount Errigal, looming in the window of our abode, often poking up into a dense cloud that it wore as a kind of ethereal hat.

Still trying to shrug off the fuzziness of the overnight transatlantic flight, we decided to save Errigal for later in the week. We did drive past it, however, on our way to Glenveagh National Park where we made an easy trek to both the castle there and some strangely near-tropical gardens carved out of a pocket of land in the midst of a dramatically stark - and yes - remote chunk of wilderness. Realizing the day was turning into something less than a true spiritual quest, we opted to find nourishment at Leo's Tavern in nearby Meenaleck. The inn is run by the uncle of pop singer Enya, who flourished in the heyday of New Age music with her haunting and lovely version of Celtic music. The pub walls were festooned with images of her and the band Clannad, with gold records to boot.

Well rested the next day, we ventured south from our home in what is known as the Rosses. We passed through Dungloe, Maas and Glenties.

Glenties welcomes you with a sign stating that it is a "Prolific Winner of the National Tidy Towns Award." The sign made me wonder what they do to litter bugs in such a well-ordered village, but also what the competition is like to win such an award. Would a town "cheat" in some clever Irish way, or perhaps try to scandalize the competition with trashy posts on Facebook? Or was it all above board, and well...tidy?

Dungloe's claim to fame is that it was home of Daniel O'Donnell, and there is a museum there in his honour. Wondering out loud who this Daniel was, my Irish landlord later informed me he was a very popular sort of "country western" singer and that he'd "sold more records than the Rolling Stones." I smiled at the potentially exaggerated notion, promised to listen to his music on YouTube and had a sudden vision of the Rolling Stones hearing about this whopper and showing up at the museum to rudely refute the statement and then possibly later that night trashing their rooms at some local bed and breakfast in nearby Glenties.

Further south we made our way through Killybegs where we had bought groceries on our way to Carrickfinn. Irish town names often struck me as humorous. Who in their right mind would actually name a town Killybegs or Balleybofey, Gorta-



hork or Gillygooly? As far as I can figure, these "modern names" are merely the English corruptions of the Gaelic/Irish original names. They still have a mellifluous ring to them but clearly, in the murky misbegotten history of British domination, some fool aristocrat saw a fishing village with the name, Na Caella Beaga and said, "We can't possibly pronounce that, so we'll just call this place Killybegs."

Hence Leiter Ceanainn becomes something curiously anglicized like Letterkenny, Min an Aoire becomes Meenaneary, and An Bun Beag becomes Bunbeg. And so it goes.

Much of rural Donegal is considered to be Gaeltacht - districts where the Irish Gaelic language and culture are still strong. In the coastal towns and hill villages of Donegal the musicality of the language can be heard in the announcers on the radio and even, sometimes, in the voices of men drinking an afternoon Guinness in a pub like Bonners Bar in Mullaghduff near Annagry, where Linda and I dropped in for a pint.

Bonners is a tiny, ancient stone pub, where six older gentlemen were watching some sort of afternoon soap opera when we arrived. They stopped laughing when we came in and pretended they weren't engrossed in the show, but as soon as I grabbed our beverages and retreated to a quiet corner, they began laughing and chatting as they watched the telly. Our quiet nook was lined with aging, and somewhat mildewed books. One that caught my eye was a 200 page volume of jokes involving drinking and drunks. While it was undoubtedly of little real cultural significance, it did have a number of really funny jokes about men who imbibe too much, my favourite one beginning with: "What did the drunk say to the man doing push-ups in the park?" But you'll have to look it up yourself for the punch-line.

South of Glenties and Adara there is a poorly marked turn-off that leads to a wide, windswept beach. Most everything - as I soon discovered - was windswept in Donegal in the spring. Here we found the Maghera Caves. Fortunately, the tide was low and the rain had relented, so we walked through the dunes and out onto the flat hard beach. We were alone with the sea, sand, wind and massive rock face of the hill above us as we tucked into one of the caves. It reminded me of Tom Hank's home during his exile in



Castaway. It felt like one of those "Thin Places" most certainly, a sanctuary for the spirits of the sea and the distant past. Undoubtedly, this place had also been a refuge for shipwrecked sailors or possibly even a fire-warmed home for ancient families. Looking out at the stormy sea from the cave, I was transported briefly back into a world before humans occupied this coast and, from there, found myself drifting off to a possible future where human footprints were gone, but where sea and wind and wave would still make the daily rules.

Slieve League rises 601 metres directly out of the sea, which I suppose does not sound that grand for a mountain. But these are the highest sea cliffs in Ireland - nearly three times the height of the famous Cliffs of Moher - and possibly all of Europe. Whatever its notoriety, it is one hell of a chunk of rock and a long way down. We mistook a sheep gate for a roadblock to keep out auto traffic and thus walked several blustery kilometres along a narrow but paved path with cheeks turning red and eyes watering, only to discover yet another parking lot with several cars whose drivers knew it was okay to open and close the gate of their own volition. Taking in the grand sights from this remote magnificent outcropping, we turned back for several more damp blustery ki-





lometers. We were thinking we were somehow better than those who had simply driven to the perch, only to look up above us on the mountainside and realize that there were "real" hikers with back packs slogging along on a ledge much higher than ours and more narrow, reminding me that we could still legitimately be labelled "tourists" rather than adventurers or pilgrims.

Discovering that our coffee was still warm in its insulated mug back in the car, I thought of those headbanded and load-laden hikers hefting against that headwind and admitted that being a tourist had its perks, even here a few kilometres from what felt like the ends of the earth.

On our return trip, leaving Slieve League to make the turn back to Killybegs in the small town of Kilcar (originally Cill Charthaigh), I made a wrong turn that would take us even farther afield to Malin Beg. Some local resident had twisted the Killybegs sign around to send tourists like us off to get lost in the even more distant wilds of Glencolmcille. It was there that American painter Rockwell Kent had spent a year painting soon-to-be-famous stark coastal landscapes and "found peaks whose summits reached so near to God." Curiously, following in his footsteps was the young Welsh poet Dylan Thomas who, in a brave effort to remove himself from urban London decadence and drink, made his way to a pub in this most westerly part of Donegal and rented the converted cowshed where Kent had previously lived. Apparently, the isolation and endless rain took its toll on the poet and drove him to near madness as he was in his own words, "ten miles from the nearest human being… and lonely as Christ." He did write a few good poems there, however, and returned from his self-exile perhaps a bit less idealistic but wiser.

Fortunately for us, I soon realized the mistaken turn taking us to Kent and Thomas's lonely peninsula. I turned the car around and headed us towards Carrickfinn wondering at the intent behind the mischievous sign manipulation. Good drunken fun - or malevolent intent? I would never know. But since every soul I had ever met in Ireland had been kind to me, sometimes offering up free advice that would involve several entertaining and lengthy anecdotes about aunts and uncles, I decided to not make too much of one small prank.

Maps tend to lure me to destinations and that is usually a good thing. Forget about GPS and TomToms and Navigon. Sometimes you see the name of a place on a map and it just pulls you there like a magnet. And so it was that we were lured to the land of Gweedore, down to Bunbeg Harbour and on to the wide beaches behind Derrybeg, north to the "Bloody Foreland" which only refers to the blood colour of the rocky hills and nothing horrific. Beyond was Dunfanaghy, another tidy and most civilized place, but nearby Horn Head had that mildly euphoric Jurassic feel that can transport you back a millennia or more.

In search of Wi-Fi, we ended up back at the airport one day and I was reminded of how wonderful a truly small airport can be. Between flights, this one seemed like a small kind of sanctuary. A sign inside said, "Welcome to Ireland's Friendliest Airport," which seemed boundlessly charming. While wondering how such a thing could be judged, we were in fact greeted by a woman working there who offered to help us get our internet connection. A poster inside read "24 Euros One Way to Dublin," and noted that it was only a 40 minute flight. I daydreamed about what it could be like to live down the road from here on the waters





of Innishfree Bay and commuting to the bustling capital of Ireland for work, then whisking off back to these shores by evening.

We were waiting for good weather to hike Mount Errigal but it was not to be. So, armed with a thoroughly unreliable hiking guide to Ireland, some packed sandwiches and the necessary misguided optimism, we took the inland turn at Gweedore and parked at the foot of the iconic mountain, the tallest peak in Donegal. A single ominous cloud shrouded the top of the mountain as we tried to find the trail that went upward as the book so indicated. Of trails, there were many, all of them through mucky bog that we were ill prepared for. We quickly discovered that a mountain is one thing - a peat bog is something else entirely.

If you are ever in need of something to foment a good old-fashioned marital argument, I suggest you take your spouse to an Irish bog for a good hike. My guess is that it would work most any time of the year.

It was drizzling and windy and we were mucky-wet to our knees before we found our way to a patch of dryer solid land and loose stones. By then the cloud had descended and we had been swallowed by it. In the process, we had also become somewhat lost - not being able to look anywhere beyond a few meters to get our bearings. We soon realized we had walked upward, but sidled off onto a hill away from the destination peak.

Alas, we stayed put, finished with our harsh words as the cloud - recognizing that it had done its roguish duty - lifted above us and suddenly we could see far and wide; south to the Poisoned Glen and further on to the steep cliffs of the Derryveagh Mountains. We could now see that we had strayed from the proper upward path and with only a modicum of ill-words against Mother Nature, scrambled back down into the bog and across a gully to find an almost-proper path up the mountain.

So why exactly were we wanting to go to the peak of this stark and foreboding mountain? Well, I was pretty sure it was one of those "Thin Places" I was looking for. It was a gloomy day and we seemed to be the only hikers up to the task. And then, halfway up the slopes, I had stopped feeling like a tourist. Instead, I felt small and vulnerable, surrounded again by clouds, buffeted by winds, feeling cold and damp, and having made reasonable headway in repairing my marriage after the bog of despair, one which we'd need to pass through again if we were to find our way back to the car and civilization. But I did truly feel the presence of … well, something much larger and grander than the world that I knew.

It's hard to find the proper verb here, so you'll have to forgive me. We started out walking, for sure, and then we were slogging, shoes being sucked off us by bog muck and water. Then we were finally hiking upward and, as the trail grew steeper, scrambling upward. Ultimately, however, we found ourselves crawling towards the dark heavens. Climbing would be too dignified to apply, but we were working hands and feet together, going higher and higher until we found a bare windy perch where we simply clung to the rocks as we watched rain clouds from the coast bearing down on us.

We were breathing hard and the wind was doing its best to unhinge us from the face of the mountain; we knew it was time to descend back into our more familiar world. That dark cloud lowered upon us again as we let gravity guide us wherever it wanted, sure that we'd at least end up at the road in the centre of the valley. And, as it turned out, gravity was a reasonable guide, and cheaper than a bus tour.

We mucked it to the road and then east to our waiting rental car. Had we had our experience of a "Thin Place?" It's hard to know. But I would say the challenge took us out of our comfort zone, put us briefly - but dramatically - at the whims of the mountain and the weather. We lost our bearings more than once, and that is often necessary for a spiritual encounter. And we found our way back to some form of normalcy. That's probably about as good as a pilgrimage gets.

Returning to our village of Carrickfinn, we stopped off in Anagry at the recommended Caisleain Oir (Golden Castle) Hotel pub for an also-recommended pint of Guinness as we watched the sun come out across the bay. The late-afternoon orb cast its coppery light on the steep slopes of the quartzite mountain that had taken us into the clouds.

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Jump into Ireland



Epic Ireland

An informative and interactive exhibit in Dublin offers new insights into the influence of the Irish Diaspora

The new exhibit, entitled Epic Ireland, is an engaging, entertaining and educational examination of Irish emigration patterns, and the impact of its immigrants around the world.

Located in the CHQ building on the Custom House Quay along Dublin's historic waterfront, the permanent exhibit comprises a colourful collage of 21 underground galleries, each detailing the journeys - and subsequent contributions - of 10 million inhabitants who departed the Emerald Island in search of greener pastures, and their 70 million offspring.

The two-hour experience begins - in true Irish fashion perhaps - with melancholia and lament for those at home stricken by famine, economic hardship, political strife and war. Though not unfamiliar stories, they are rekindled with a refreshing mélange of audio clips, video components, and touch-sensitive screens. In particular, a true-to-life animation of five figures telling their tragic tales of leaving land and loved-ones behind is both tender and touching.

Scattering to the four corners of the globe, the Irish brought their rich and diverse culture to Europe, North and South America, Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

There, they wove vital and vibrant threads of homespun traditions into long-established tapestries.

Epic Ireland does well to depict that integration, with each display denoting the importance of Irish input; in one gallery, visitors will bear witness to the Diaspora's scientific and medical contributions. In another, the role of education is examined. A few doors down, a flavourful display dishes up details on Irish cuisine. Elsewhere, interactive media extols the significance of Irish sport, social justice, and spiritual belief upon their new communities.

Of particular interest is a section showcasing the country's shine for storytelling, and the necessity of passing history and heritage along to future generations via aural tradition. Similarly, the preservation and promotion of Irish culture on foreign soil through music - from the Clancy Brothers to the Boomtown Rats - is a reminder of the Emerald Isle's stature on the global stage. Of course, the classic arts of literature and dance are also well represented, as are the worlds of architecture, interior design, and high-fashion. It will likely come as a surprise to some that Eire has long been a secret hot-bed of haute-couture.

Children of all ages will cherish the chance to test their knowledge of the infamous Irish - including Billy the Kid, Anne Bonny, and Ned "Machine-Gun" Kelly - with a wall-sized questionnaire.

The Emerald Isle's emigrant offspring are featured as well, with some well-known names noted - Barack Obama, Ronald Reagan, Grace Kelly foremost - while others are a revelation, including Che Guevara, John Lennon, and Elvis Costello.

Coming full-circle, Epic Ireland closes by celebrating the soul and spirit of a people whose resilience has been woven into the daily fabric of communities far and away from Eire's salty shores - a culture that is fêted foremost around the world each March 17.

The project was funded by former Coca-Cola chief executive, Neville Isdell, a native of County Down in Northern Ireland, who told The Irish Times that he was interested in "telling the story of all the successful Irish people and what they have achieved internationally."

"I have experienced just how people abroad react favourably to you when you tell them you are Irish. They will tell you they have a relative here, or they want to visit Ireland. There is a specialness about Irishness. It is the friendliness and the storytelling and the enjoying life. I knew that was something to be celebrated."





Neville Isdell

For those looking to dig a little deeper into their roots, the exhibit has partnered with the Irish Family History Centre to provide a free genealogical consultation, along with greater online access to Birth, Marriage and Death records, Census records, Parish records, and travel and migration records.

Epic Ireland is one of several new and existing initiatives that form Dublin's Northside Attractions (DNA) project.

DNA

While the Southside of Dublin continues to draw record numbers of tourists each year, it is the city's north end that is proving to be the Irish capital's hidden gem.

Dublin's Northside Attractions (DNA) treats travelers to an amazing array of local landmarks to explore and enjoy, including the General Post Office (GPO), Epic Ireland, Croke Park and the GAA Museum, Glasnevin Cemetery, the Botanical Gardens, the Jameson Distillery, the Guinness Storehouse, and more.

Once a rural haven for the city's elite, Dublin's Northside became a blue-collar community by the end of the 19th century. Fáilte Ireland Publicity Officer - and proud Northsider - Rory Matthews says that, in recent years, the area has enjoyed a revitalization of sorts.

"I wouldn't call it gentrification. I'd say it's more that we have finally recognized the vital role that this area plays in the city's history and heritage."

"Everyone knows about the GPO and its part in the 1916 Easter Rising," he conitues, "and most people who come to Dublin have been to either the Jameson Distillery or the Guinness Storehouse, but connecting the dots makes it easier for visitors, and locals, to experience what the Northside has to offer."

Each stop on the four-mile trail provides a profound perspective into the city's past and present.

Still in service today, Dublin's GPO was the sight of the 1916 Easter Rising. A new exhibit about the centennial event - entitled Witness GPO - brings artifacts, audio and video clips, dress sets, memory walls, and eyewitness accounts together into an engaging experience.

"The centre is enjoyed by all age groups and nationalities," shares General Manager Aline FitzGerald.

"It is an immersive, interactive experience, with interviews from a variety of historians and a very powerful short film called "Fire and Steel" where visitors experience the week of the rising from the GPO. GPO Witness History features Ireland from 1913 through to today. It begins with the lead up to the Rising both in Ireland and abroad and how the Rising has shaped who we are



today. A variety of views are shared and debated in audio interviews throughout the exhibition."

Many of the heroes of Irish independence are buried at nearby Glasnevin Cemetery, including the likes of Daniel O'Connell, Michael Collins and Charles Stewart Parnell. Over 1 million people have been laid to rest over 124 acres there - more than the current population of Dublin - and the venue hosts the highest concentration of Celtic crosses in the world.

"We try to engage in our community on many levels," says Sales Manager Ann Kilcoyne.

"Throughout the year we run a series of events that involve the local community. One of our key sectors is education and many teachers bring their students to Glasnevin. We ensure that the tours we offer are tailored to meet the needs of the teacher and the particular elements of the curriculum that are being studied at any given time. We collaborate with local enterprises and events, and showcase offerings from our local cultural festivals, theatres, photography groups, and art groups, to other wider cultural events such as Bealtaine - celebrating creativity as we age, or Bloomsday - celebrating James Joyce, or Culture Night, where we offer free tours on the night and Heritage Week, to recognize and promote our cultural legacy. We also run an annual series of lectures in collaboration with Trinity College."

On site at Glasnevin are the gorgeous National Botanical Gardens, where visitors can take a gentle stroll through lush flora and fauna. A number of interactive exhibits have been designed specifically for children, making it a great day-long experience for the whole family.

Just to the east, Croke Park is the home of the country's GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association), hosting year-round Irish Football and Hurling matches. The 82,000+ seat stadium is one of the largest in Europe, and continues to play an active role in the preservation and promotion of the Irish identity. The venue's museum is a testament to the popularity of the highly-paced games, and sporting types are invited to try their hand with a hurly stick and ball.

Ambitious walkers can also take in the James Joyce Centre, Mountjoy Square, the Henrietta Street Tenement Experience, and the Dublin City Gallery - The Hugh Lane, each of which offer vital insights into the Northside's vibrant history. A hands-on 1916 Rebellion Tour is a great way to add to the trek as well.

Visitors can top the day off with a stop at either (or both!) the Jameson Distillery and the Guinness Storehouse. Each locale offers personalized tours recounting the origins and growth of the renowned family businesses, followed by complimentary samples of their world-famous wares.

"I never get tired of these tours," laughs Rory Matthews, sipping a wee dram of Jamesons' finest whisky. "It's a perfect way to wind down after a busy day."

And while the DNA trail can be done in a day, it is recommended that travelers allot ample time for each experience.



"You'd be best to set aside two or three full days if you really want to enjoy each stop fully," suggests Matthews. "Glasnevin and Croke Park alone are worth half a day each, and the Gardens are so beautiful it could take you a full day.

"And then, of course, you may never want to leave the Jameson Distillery or the Guinness Storehouse."

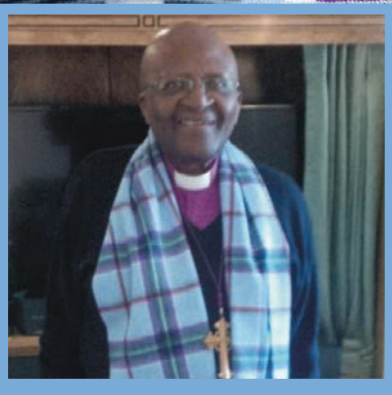
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Fashion is in the blood as my Mum was a designer. I grew up with it and I honestly knew no different. I thought that everyone's Mums made their clothes and their doll's clothes. I saw my Mum create beautiful pieces for real women and I loved that. I loved the process, I loved the passion that went into it, and I loved seeing the happy customers leave with their brand new piece.

For me, starting off as a one man band meant the buck stopped with me for everything. I was designing a collection for the following season, while trying to sell this season's collection, doing accounting, production, shoots - you name it, I had to do it.

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Gwen Lambert recalls the first time she attended the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo (RNSIT), though she can't remember what year it was exactly – 1981 or 1982, when the event was in its early years. She won tickets through a local radio contest and talked a friend into going with her.

"I had never attended anything like it," she shares via e-mail, "and I was enthralled during the entire performance. The sound of the bagpipes and the marching of the bands is something I remember well."

Originally from Liverpool, Nova Scotia, Lambert now lives in Halifax — also the hometown of the RNSIT. Although she has seen the Tattoo several times over the years, her initial experience is still the one that stands out in her mind.

"There was this one act where they had buglers scattered around the arena, about mid-way up, and from where I was sitting I did not know they were there until one by one they started to play. Very low light and the sounds of a clear, lone bugle sounding – then another over there, then another up there...it gave me chills, and still does, when I think of it."

Like Lambert, people from across the region and around the world have been enjoying Nova Scotia's Tattoo for close to four decades.

The walls of the Tattoo office in Halifax are decorated with posters from past events, including the inaugural Nova Scotia Tattoo. The text on a plain red background reads: "A unique Nova Scotia extravaganza involving lighting, colourful costumes and set, wide range of music and over 600 performers." That was in 1979.

Since then, some things have changed, but others have stayed the same. As RNSIT producer Jim Forde puts it, "It's what's old and new again."

Tattoos, or "tap toes," originated in the lowlands of Europe during the 17th century. At a certain time of night, drummers would be sent through the streets to tell the soldiers in the village to go back to their barracks. They would yell, "doe den tap toe" (meaning "turn off the taps"), which let innkeepers know to turn off the beer taps and close for the night.

"I guess because of the drummers and the soldiers marching through the towns and whatnot, it eventually turned into a military spectacle," says Forde, adding that the term "tap toe" was anglicized to "tattoo."

"These little military shows developed all over the world for the last few hundred years."

Tattoos caught on well in the British Isles, so it was only natural for them to become popular in Canada. Forde says the premiere of the Nova Scotia Tattoo was catalyzed by the International Gathering of Clans, which was being held outside of Scotland for the first time.

"Of course, what better place to have the first International Gathering of Clans outside of the home country than here in New Scotland?" he muses.

Soon enough, plans were put in motion. Highland games and dance competitions were a must, but with Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother as the royal guest, something extra special was called for. Cue Colonel Ian Fraser: as the director and producer of multiple military shows, including the 1962 Canadian Forces



Tattoo at the Seattle World's Fair, he assumed both roles for the RNSIT, continuing to do so each year until 2015.

The first RNSIT was originally supposed to run only three shows over two days. The demand was so high, however, that a third day was added. In 2016, the show is as popular as ever, with eight shows taking place over eight days. It's hard to pinpoint exactly why the Tattoo is still so well-attended, as everyone seems to have their own favourite aspect to the show.

"If I had to choose, it would be the marching bands," shares Lambert, "and specifically the bagpipes. For some unexplainable reason the sound of those pipes as the band marches around just stirs something deep inside me."

Lambert isn't alone. Mike Savage, the mayor of Halifax, also feels a connection to the bagpipes.

"When the pipes come out…it's an evocative kind of feeling that you have," says Savage, who has been the city's mayor for almost four years. "It makes you feel like this is a special land, a special people, and that this is representative of that."

Many Nova Scotians have a Celtic background, Savage included. Born in Belfast, the mayor has both Irish and Welsh ancestry. As a child, he wasn't a fan of pipe music, but it has grown on him over the years.

"When they break into something like 'Scotland the Brave' at the Tattoo, it's electric," he says. "To a lot of other people, I think it is too."

Although Savage has a personal passion for the Tattoo, he also understands its widespread importance both to the municipality of Halifax and to the province as a whole.

"Economically, it's a big draw," he explains. "Every single year that I've been mayor, I can walk out that door during Tattoo week – early in July – and I can bump into people from South Carolina or the state of Washington or Florida, who come up just about every year to see the Tattoo. That's the anchor around which they build their trip to Atlantic Canada."



It all adds up to a significant bump in summer tourism numbers, bringing a boon for local businesses.

"A week-long event that brings people from all over the world to come and see it – that's pretty rare," says Savage. "It fills hotel rooms, it fills restaurants, it fills shops. It's really important."

In addition to its economic impact, Savage feels the Tattoo has great cultural value.

"In terms of the pride that we take in the people that we are; I think there's an intrinsic value in that."

Cindy MacNeill, another long-time Tattoo attendee – and former RNSIT performer – certainly feels that pride when she attends the event. From 1998-2001, she was part of one of the marching bands loved by audience members such as Lambert and Savage.

"Performing in the tattoo allowed me to develop many friendships over the years," she says. "Today, I still have Tattoo friends who perform in the show yearly, as well as past cast members from overseas who I have been exchanging Christmas cards with since 1998."

Aside from the times she's been on the performance floor, MacNeill estimates that she has seen the Tattoo about 10 times.

"My favourite thing as both a performer and an audience member is when O Canada is played in the Finale. It has remained the same since I first heard it in 1992, and I feel such a sense of pride as a Canadian when it is played. When I performed in my first Tattoo in 1998, I remember standing on the floor during the Finale, as a sold out audience sang along to O Canada. It was amazing."



Lambert feels similarly, attributing the pride to her family's military connection.

"My grandfather fought in World War II, and I have had many uncles, cousins, a brother and even myself in the military. I served in 1975-1976 when I was Honourably Discharged due to a family issue. Also, my son is in the military – an officer in the Air Force and is currently deployed to the MFO in northern Egypt."

The Stadacona Band of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force Band, as well as Cadets Canada, are just a few of the military-related performers in the 2016 show. This year's RNSIT is also honouring a specific theme: the commemoration of the First World War, with a focus on the 100th anniversary of the formation of the No. 2 Construction Battalion (the only black Canadian battalion in WWI).

Fittingly, the Tattoo acknowledges military audience members in a special way: at every show, a moment is set aside to ask all current and former military personnel to stand and be recognized. For Lambert, the moment can be overwhelmingly emotional.

"Sometimes I stand and sometimes I don't, but I always feel a great deal of pride – so much so that I have to hold back tears. Pride for our military and our country. A few times my son has been able to be here when the Tattoo is on and we have gone together. When he stands up for that part my heart near bursts with pride and the tears do sneak out."

Unfortunately for Lambert, her son has not been home for the Tattoo for the past few years due to his work in the Forces, including a posting in Alberta, followed by two deployments overseas.



"I look forward to the next time he is able to be here in early July and we can go together again."

According to Forde, the military's involvement in the RNSIT has evolved over time, but it's always remained a major component of the show.

"I think the biggest thing that's stayed the same over the years is the Tattoo's desire to honour the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and our first responders," he says.

Although that aspect of the gala is important to Lambert, she stresses that it's more than a military event.

"I fear many people never consider going as they aren't all that into the military, but if they'd only go once they'd know it's not all military. I'd say it's like the best parade you have ever been to with lots of extras thrown in."

Forde echoes Lambert's words, adding that at least 75 or 80 percent of the Tattoo cast is made up of civilians.

"There's a huge national and international component to the show," he says.

True enough, while the RNSIT has maintained its connection to the military and marching bands, the show hosts performers of all kinds, from acrobats to choirs to dancers.

Sixteen-year-old dancer Katrina Carver is gearing up for her second appearance in the Tattoo with the Nova Scotia Irish Dancers. The Haligonian teen has been a fan of the event for a few years now. The first time Carver attended the show as spectator she was 12, and it was right up her alley.

"I'm a bit of a Nova Scotia culture geek," she admits. "I'm a really big fan of all the Celtic music and stuff, but I hadn't really found any way of expressing it, because I wasn't in Irish dance yet."

At that time, Carver was training in other dance styles, including jazz and ballet. She had been to a couple of ceilidhs and had enjoyed them, and seeing the Tattoo re-kindled her interest.

"There was just so many people on the floor – coordinated, doing the same things – and it was so cool."

Today, Carver is in the thick of it, with three years of Irish dance experience under her belt. She remembers stepping out into the Scotiabank Centre arena for her initial performance last year.

"Waiting backstage and hearing all the music up close…it was absolutely insane. Just seeing all those people watching you and appreciating what you're putting out there, and knowing all the work you put in has paid off."

The work is hefty. Starting in February, the Nova Scotia Irish Dance troupe practices together for an hour and a half each week. Around June, it gets more intense.

"We start ramping it up and we start coordinating our rehearsals with the Highland Dancers, because we usually do a piece with them," says Carver. "It's a lot of hours."

To up the ante, the dancers also hold a couple of rehearsals with the pipers and drummers in the Halifax Armoury.

"At least for me, that was a point where I was like, 'This is happening. I'm going to be in a huge arena with all these people.'" says Carver. "It's a really special feeling."

She notes that dancers often need to do a lot of additional practice at home, as they want to be sure to have their choreography down cold.

"You have to remember the piece, because we only have such a limited time to rehearse it together that everyone has to make sure they're on the ball. A lot of times, we'll film (the dance) and send it out to the whole troupe so people can watch it throughout the week."

This means the individual dancers really rely on each other to work as a team. Luckily, Carver says everyone gets along very well – and their choreographer, Zeph Caissie "is such a visionary."

"We're very lucky here in Halifax to have him and his exper-





tise. I don't know where I would be in my dance career without his leadership and guidance."

Even with all the hours factored into the dance, Carver believes the reward outweighs the work.

"We've spent so much time on the choreography and so much time rehearsing it, that it's just like, in our legs. Your muscle memory just kind of kicks in and all you can do is smile and be like, 'Wow, I'm out here actually doing this. Someone pinch me!'"

Like Carver, many of the Tattoo performers are homegrown, but others come from far and wide to participate.

India Morrow is travelling from Scotland to join the RNSIT Highland Dancers. According to the troupe's choreographers – Marla MacInnis and Elizabeth McCorkell – they had an overwhelming number of applicants from around the world this year. Morrow was one of those outside of Canada who made the cut.

"I've danced in a few tattoos already," she shares via e-mail, "including the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and the Military Music of Oman. I love using my hobby as a reason to travel the world."

Born in the town of Wick in north Scotland, Morrow now lives in Edinburgh. She is an avid dancer, having started when she was only two years old.

"I started because I saw some dancers in the square in my hometown and wanted to be like them," she reminisces. "It's now 20 years later and I still love it."

Morrow adds that she's always wanted to visit Canada, so being part of the RNSIT seemed the perfect opportunity. She found out that she would get that chance this past March.

"It was super exciting," she continues. "I really didn't think my audition was very good and so I was shocked and delighted to be accepted."

Set to land in Halifax just six days before the first show, Morrow has been taking on the added challenge of practicing separately from the Nova Scotian dancers before she arrives.

"I've just been attending my regular dance classes twice a week with my teachers. We've also been given some videos to learn the choreography from, which has been a great help. I think we will do most of the learning when we arrive in Halifax, however."

Morrow is not letting her nerves get the better of her. Since she has performed in other tattoos, she isn't feeling anxious about this one.

"Being on the performance floor is the best thing ever. It's by far my favorite part of being a dancer."

Hailing from even farther away are the Simba Zambezi Acrobats from Nairobi, Kenya. Most of their members have been performing together since 1999.

"We have all worked overseas in different groups but never as one," says Thomas Odak Mungoma, the team manager. "We have come together as an elite group of performers for the Tattoo to represent our beautiful country."

The group does a variety of acrobatic manoeuvres, including human pyramids, hoop diving and limbo dancing under a pole as low as about eight inches.

"We are very excited to be invited to Canada and feel very humbled. We rehearse every day to make sure that Canada gets the best performance we can give. The challenge for us is to beat our nerves as this is a huge event and we do not want to disappoint."

There's no doubt that the show takes tons of time at effort at the hands of performers and stage crews. However, the Tattoo is about more than what goes on at the Scotiabank Centre – it's a week-long occasion. These days, says producer Jim Forde, it's generally referred to as the "Tattoo Festival."

"It's been an important element of the show. It's been an extension of the Tattoo for sure," he notes, highlighting the Canada Day parade in particular.

"That's become a real staple in the lives of Haligonians: we get thousands out lining the parade route on the first of July to watch the parade."

In addition to the parade, educational workshops and other events are part of the festivities. For the first time, much of the festival will be talking place on the Halifax Waterfront. All of this, in combination with the show, is what fills the streets of Halifax during the beginning of summer. For Mayor Savage, it's something he feels people who live in the area can sometimes take for granted.

"In some ways, we wouldn't know the real value of the Tattoo (unless) it stopped," he says. "If you took it away from the city, you would need a number of events to take its place

"It's in the heart of the city. It brings people to Halifax at a great time of year. In many ways, it's kind of magical."

~ Rebecca Dingwell

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Okanagan Military *Tattoo*



Just a few short years ago, Norm Crerar was a man with a burning inspiration. Today he is a man with a tattoo – the Okanagan Military Tattoo

The RCMP Ceremonial Troop, the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, the band of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment, the Vancouver Naval Veterans Band, and the Delta and Winnipeg police pipe bands will all converge on the city of Vernon, British Columbia this July, for the annual Okanagan Military Tattoo.

"Most successful tattoos have military installations close by," notes director and producer Norm Crerar, pointing out Vernon is home to the oldest cadet training centre in Canada, the first cadets having arrived there in 1912.

The tradition of a military tattoo dates back to 17th century Belgium, he continues.

"British drummers marched, summoning soldiers back to quarters and signaling to innkeepers "doe den tap toe' meaning 'turn off the tap, too.' Shortened to 'tap toe' and eventually 'tattoo,' this ritual has evolved into international celebrations of music and entertainment."

Crerar's drive to produce the event can be traced back to a series of pivotal happenings, the first of which awakened his interest in Canadian history. Back in 1967, he was one of 100 young Canadian men to complete the 104-day Centennial Voyageur Canoe Pageant, paddling from Rocky Mountain House to Montreal.

"It left me with a deep respect for the early explorers, and a passion for the great country of Canada."

Crerar's interest was piqued again a decade ago when he heard of plans to re-enact Canadian explorer David Thompson's 1808 voyageur canoe trip from Rocky Mountain House to Thunder Bay, Ontario. When a shorter trial-run event - paddling from Canal Flats to Trail, BC - was organized in 2007, Crerar added a mobile theatric component to tell Thompson's story in performances along the way.

> *"Because there was no money to hire a piper, I decided to learn to play the bagpipes so I could play Amazing Grace at the end of each performance."*

Describing himself as having some Scottish ancestry but being more "Canadian Heinz 57," he joined a local pipe band, the Kalamalka Highlanders. As a member of the band, he participated in a large musical tribute to BC veterans.

"Being immersed in a massed band of 400 pipers and drummers was a powerful experience. I imagined it felt like being in a military tattoo and presto, the idea for a military tattoo in the Okanagan was born."

Enlisting the help of local history buff Derek Hall, who had experience in fundraising and promotional work, the first Okanagan Military Tattoo - featuring 500 performers including 200 cadets from the Vernon training centre - debuted eighteen months later.

"Even after only two years, the OMT is now known throughout the Okanagan as a premiere entertainment event that appeals to a broad audience; everyone from toddlers to teens to grandparents. By including other ethnic groups in the performances, such as our local Ukrainian and Punjabi dance troupes, we attract a broader audience."

This year's Korean Military Traditional Band will be the tattoo's first international guest.

"They are a really exotic act," says Crerar, "with colourful drums, traditional horns, pipes, stringed instruments and dancers. The Calgary Stampede Band of Outriders, popular at the first tattoo, will be returning also.

> *"Aiming to give the audience a roller coaster of emotions, the tattoo will be heavy on traditional patriotism but will also feature drama and light-hearted comedy."*

"The OMT helps keep our Celtic arts alive and in the public eye. The five pipe and drum bands in the region and our highland dancers, as well as other local arts and culture groups - including ethnic dance groups and choirs - all benefit from the opportunity to perform."

The growth of the tattoo has created many new opportunities for Vernon and the Okanagan Valley, he believes.

"This is a beautiful area with lakes, wineries, golf courses and endless recreational activities, so it is a popular destination for tourists. And Vernon is a vibrant centre for arts and culture. I see the opportunity to expand the OMT into a broader celebration, to branch out into pipe band competitions and to incorporate a gathering of the clans and Highland Games."

Crerar hopes his future role with the tattoo will shift toward mentorship rather than production and direction, but he says the past years have been very rewarding.

"I always feel the same strong emotion of being part of something big and dramatic and meaningful to the community. I feel the vibration of the music as I stand on the floor with all the performers during Amazing Grace. How can you not shed a tear?"

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Antigonish *Highland* Games

Pipers, drummers, dancers and athletes converge in northern Nova Scotia this summer for the 153rd edition of the Antigonish Highland Games.

A week-long celebration of music, dance and athleticism, the Antigonish Highland Games is one of the oldest North American gatherings of its kind, suspended for only a couple of years at the height of wartime. Steeped in highland Scottish history, the small university town and surrounding communities offer leisurely lobster and salmon suppers, planned concerts and impromptu ceilidhs, road and cycling races, church services, street fairs, and three days of intense competition.

A dozen or so pipe bands, their 400 members decked out in distinctive tartans, and 200 dancers in colourful kilts lead the competitors. They are far outnumbered, however, by the thousands who come to watch and listen, sharing Gaelic greetings and stories.

"People plan their holidays around the Games," says Paul Boyd, president of the Antigonish Highland Society. "We'll have some for whom it is a homecoming, but we draw visitors from all over Atlantic Canada and well beyond. If you love highland culture and competition, Antigonish is one of the events you have to visit."

> *"The heavy events attract professionals who travel the festival circuit each summer. An added feature this year will be a competition between Canada and the United States for cash and bragging rights."*

"We'll have all the usual events including the caber, hammer and stones and we're really looking forward to the international competition between five athletes from each country," notes Boyd.

Another crowd-pleaser is the Cuairt nan Tuthanach - or Farmer's Walk - which harkens back to the days when a farmer's physical prowess often held the key to the success of his harvest.

"It is a bit of a change from the professionals, as anyone can compete," explains Boyd. "You just have to be able to carry a 202 lb torpedo-shaped weight in each hand and walk a distance of 100 feet in as short a time as possible."

A few years ago a young man from a farm in a neighbouring county delighted the audience when he won the event. At six feet tall and just over 200 pounds, 25 year-old Marco MacLeod was one of the smallest competitors on the field when he completed the distance in a triumphant 9.01 seconds.

The caber toss at the Antigonish games is considered particularly challenging, Boyd points out.

"We will be using a Nova Scotia spruce weighing in at somewhere between 100 and 150 pounds so that is going to take strength and skill."

A scenic bike race from Antigonish around Cape George Point is also part of this year's games package. The winding route - sometimes referred to as the mini-Cabot Trail – will snake up and down hills, passing a picturesque lighthouse and several fishing communities along St. George's Bay, including Ballentyne's Cove, known for its tuna fishery.

"We'll also have quite a gathering of the clans with tents set up around the field," adds Boyd. "People can drop by to get information on their own clans or clan activities."

> *"Another highlight will be The Keppoch Ceilidh, a 1950s-era kitchen party where Scottish and Irish neighbours from a mountain community gather to share a few songs and tunes on the fiddle and pipes."*

"It is reminiscent of the era where people generated their own entertainment, either on the fiddle, in song or through stories and jokes about the challenges of farming or the goings on at home or in the Boston States," explains producer Duncan MacDonald.

There are evening ceilidhs for those who like to retire early, other events where the music and drinks circulate late into the night, a kilted golf tournament, and a competitive program for children known as Tir Nan Og which, loosely translated, means "land of youth."

With three daughters who embraced highland dancing, Boyd has been to his fair share of highland games. The experiences triggered his interest in local history.

"My family is typical of many others in this part of Nova Scotia. Our people came out from western Scotland, a place called Arienskill, in 1801. They sailed into Pictou Harbour and made their way east to Antigonish, where they prospered through fishing and farming."

The land where the Boyd pioneers settled is still in his family so a few years ago he had a monument erected and added a Gaelic road sign, acknowledging the community along the Road to the Isles where the family originated.

"In 153 years the mandate of the games has never really changed. We honor the language, the music and the customs of the Scottish pioneers who settled here and we extend our hospitality to everyone."

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the Hidden History *of* Highland Games

People regularly come together at Highland Games to celebrate popular forms of Scottish culture. Despite claims of their antiquity, however, Highland Games are essentially inventions of the nineteenth century that contrast sharply with the ways in which Highlanders, and people of other parts of Scotland, celebrated their culture and identity in previous eras.

Like all societies, Scottish Gaels - the people of the Highlands - have calendar customs which bring communities together to celebrate. In the past, many of them occurred on a saint's feast day, and involved special foods, music, poetry, dance, and sports such as horse-racing, hunting, swimming, archery, and wrestling.

During the eighteenth century, however, many old traditions were terminated intentionally or as a result of social disruptions and changes in social norms. Clan chiefs and tacksmen (land holders) - who survived looked for ways to retain their social status and make a profit through transitions, and recruitment of former clansmen into Highland Regiments proved rewarding. The Highland Games as we know them were devised by these Anglophone élite who wished to imbue Highland culture with the values of the British Empire and emphasize the athletic prowess and military potential of Highland men. The first Highland Games were held in 1818 at St. Fillans, Perthshire.

Whenever new traditions are invented, people feel the need to connect them to the past, even if this involves fabricating origin legends. A story began circulating that Highland Games were instigated by King Maol-Chaluim III (Malcolm Canmore, 1031–1093). He was a real and important king of Scotland with strong name recognition, but there is no historical evidence that this was anything other than a romantic fable created by an advocate of the Highland Games to legitimize the new tradition.

Twelfth-century Irish literature describes a large annual "tribal" gathering at Carmun which included horse races, athletic competitions, storytelling, songs, legal proceedings and other activities. Some see this as evidence of the antiquity of Highland Games, citing common cultural connections between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, but if this were true, why is there nothing like Highland Games in Ireland?

The contrived nature of Highland Games has long been obvious to native Highlanders. Caroline MacDonnell commented in 1885: "Various efforts are being made to revive the old Highland Games, but it seems to be either unknown or overlooked that they were the pastime of the people - whereas now, several persons endeavour to gain a livelihood by them, which materially alters their character." Games were not the means of participation in a shared, living heritage, but a spectacle put on by performers and competitors for outsiders thirsty for exoticism.

New events were created, and older practices were selected from certain areas, in order to create dramatic entertainments. The caber toss, for example, was held in the Central Highlands in earlier times, but not in the Northern Highlands or Outer Hebrides, where there are virtually no trees.

The choice of activities demonstrates who was in charge and what their agenda was. Although initially a few Highland Games offered support for authentic forms of Gaelic cultural expression and a variety of physical recreations, the overseers soon narrowed the choice of activities to those that that would appeal to a non-native audience who shared their vision of the Highlands as a breeding ground of imperial soldiers. Such contradictions are revealed in a Gaelic text from 1880 written in the form of a dialogue between two native Gaels, one of whom had just attended the Highland Games in Oban.

The term "laird" refers to the landlords in the Highlands who also ran, supervised and judged these spectacles.

"Did many of them wear the Highland dress?"

"It was worn by most of the competitors and by a few of the gentry. …"

"Will you tell me this: were prizes given at it for Gaelic poetry?"

"There were not."

"I am very sorry for that. It was different in the time of Duncan Bàn Macintyre. …"

"Is it not surprising that the lairds do not encourage our own bards?"

"It is, considering that Gaelic is the language of the people. The lairds are generally intelligent and well-informed men."

"They are, but they are not so zealous about learning as they might be."

The dialogue contains innuendo and requires an explanation: "Highland dress" was not worn by the Highland natives attending the Games but only by competitors and the aristocrats displaying their pomp. Next comes a comment about the contents of the Games. One of the major Gaelic poets of the late 18th century, Duncan Bàn Macintyre, won the Gaelic poetry contests at the first several Falkirk Gatherings - precursors to the Highland Games - and the men lament that there is no patronage for Gaelic poetry as there once was. There is a hint of sarcasm in the compliment to the lairds' intelligence, but criticism of their lack of interest in Gaelic - the native language and culture of the Highlands - is more explicit.

Highland Games can be great fun, and sometimes some learning is imparted along with food and entertainment. Those involved with these events should realize, though, that the Games are not accurate representations of Highland culture or heritage but are by-products of its suppression and assimilation.


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What *to* Wear

Dressing for the Highland Games can be almost as much fun as attending them. That's because the Games offer visitors a chance to wear their Celtic hearts on their sleeves–and elsewhere.

LASSIES

Lisa Risley loves attending the Highland Games around her Nova Scotia home. "We have a ball at Games," says the owner of the Plaid Place in Halifax, Nova Scotia's capital city. "They are such a great celebration of our heritage."

Risley's favourite Games outfit is a tartan kiltie, T-shirt and flip flops. "I live in it all summer," she shares. "If it's raining, it's a kiltie and rubber boots. But I've learned my lesson and now wear shorts underneath. You know, the kilties are only 20 inches long."

While kilties are popular with the younger ladies, you may see other Games attendees in everything from traditional kilts to full ancient dress or clan-crested T-shirts. Wearing clan-crested jewelry is a traditional way to proclaim your Scottish heritage. Some use clan-crested badges to pin a square of tartan wool to their jackets while other ladies pin their sashes with them.

LADS

Innis Campbell always wears a kilt to the Games, but how it's worn depends on what he's doing. "If I'm piping, I wear an Argyle outfit with my kilt: Argyle jacket, sporran, belt buckle, hose and ghillie brogues," explains Campbell, who owns the The Scottish Lion store in Halifax. "If I'm doing other activities I like to wear a golf shirt



with my kilt, but everything is the same from the waist down. It could be a regular golf shirt or have our company name or a Scottish tartan crest of some kind."

Men who don't have a kilt in their closet often wear clan T-shirts, golf shirts or sweatshirts and many wear tartan ties. "If it's cloudy, they might bring a tartan umbrella along," notes Campbell.

On cool days, a wooly tartan blanket is essential and classic fisherman knit sweaters worn with a gentleman's kilt make for great casual wear. Tartan scarves made with worsted wool or lamb's wool can be stylish and cozy any time of year. These are quite easy to find in all the main clan tartans.

Fun items you may see popping up around the Games include Jimmy hats – the tartan hats with red hair on the sides. "Some people might show up with those on as a gag," says Campbell. "Another item that's very popular is the Instakilt, which is a towel that looks like a kilt. It can be worn as a towel when the Games are close to a beach, or they are worn just for fun.

"Most people are going to the Highland Games because they want to celebrate their Scottish heritage," Campbell adds. "A lot of people will wear something that represents their clan like a clan crest, or an emblem on their hat or shirt. The gentlemen sometimes like to wear their Glengarry or Balmoral hats with a clan badge."

BAIRNS

Small children are often seen wearing adorable tiny kilts, tartan tam o'shanters or Celtic-themed T-shirts. Highland dancer Emma Townsend, from Halifax, usually attends the Games ready to compete, and loves to use a beautiful brooch she inherited from her great-grandmother to pin the scarf on her Aboyne dress. "I like to wear it because it's a pretty brooch, but also for sentimental reasons. It makes me feel like she is watching me dance."

But when she's not competing, Townsend would rather be seen in a custom-made tartan top from popular Nova Scotia designer Veronica MacIsaac. "I like the style of her shirts even if they weren't tartan," Townsend says. "But if I'm at the Games, I like to show some spirit."

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This year, the St. Andrew's Society of Detroit is presenting its 167th Annual Highland Games, a highlight of the summer festival season for visitors from the northeastern United States and across the Canadian border. The festival kicks off with a ceilidh in Greenmead Park, and the following day is given over to the celebration of the pipes, drums, fiddles and dances of the Highlands. Heavy athletic events will be performed for both prizes and equally-important bragging rights. These heavy events were once the means by which Highland warriors maintained their strength between battles. One of the most popular involves contestants hurling a 56 lb. weight over a fence, with the rail set at increasingly high heights. Considerably less prowess and experience is required for the hilarious Haggis Toss Challenge. A Clan Row will be set up near the competition field, and visitors are welcome to drop by and learn a bit of the history their forefathers may have shared. The games, which date back to 1849, will open and close with massed pipe band performances, with bands coming from as far as Florida and Ontario. The gathering attracts more than 10,000 on average each year.

Fergus Scottish Festival & Highland Games

August 12-14, Fergus, Ontario, Canada
www.fergusscottishfestival.com



It is party-time for everyone in the town of Fergus on the bank of the Grand River, when the annual Scottish Festival and Highland Games come around. A massed pipe band parade through the downtown core kicks off the weekend, and local pubs, restaurants and community organizations kick in to provide "the best of Scotland but without the airfare." Entertainment at the opening show, Tattooed in Tradition, includes the fire and thunder of Scotland's Albannach, the furious fiddling and toe-tapping of The StepCrew from the Ottawa Valley, and the classic, punk rock Celtic vibe of the Mahones. The festival offers all the traditional competitions between dancers, pipers, drummers and heavy athletes, but it also has a lecture and workshop component. Award-winning Outlander series author Diana Gabaldon - a regular participant in the festival for two decades - will be reading from her books, and providing anecdotes from the smash TV series. Historian and author Lynn Boland Richardson will speak on the Scottish Diaspora, and there will be other lectures on the Scottish arts also. Workshops will include Gaelic language, Celtic ukulele, bagpiping, singing, and songwriting. Day's end is marked by a traditional sing-along in honour of the late John Allan Cameron, the festival's past chieftain and singer. There was a time, years ago, when the town of Fergus was open only to Scots, but today anyone with an interest in Celtic music and culture is sure of a warm welcome.

Scottish Highland Gathering & Games

September 3 & 4, Pleasanton, California, USA
www.thescottishgames.com



For more than a century and a half, the Caledonian Society of San Francisco - the oldest Scottish society in California - has produced its Scottish Highland Gathering and Games. For west coast competitors it is an event not to be missed, and visitors share the same sentiment. Its whisky tasting event alone, featuring 100 different whiskies from Scotland, Ireland, the U.S. and other countries, attracts 2,000 people. Scottish country dancers from around the San Francisco Bay highlight the festival with a variety of formations, including lively jigs and reels, and slow, graceful strathspeys with fiddles and piano accompaniment. Renowned fiddler Alasdair Fraser leads a fiddle rally where the old airs from the western isles of Scotland and Cape Breton are celebrated alongside more contemporary tunes. Kirsty Fitch, a singer and storyteller, performs Gaelic waulking songs and puirt-a-beul - or mouth music - explaining the meaning and purpose of each selection. Celtic harpists perform solo, in ensembles and in an orchestra of 20, capturing the essence of Celtic music. Clydesdale horses, Highland cattle, Belted Galloways, sheep-herding Border Collies, and birds of prey are all on display. When the pipe bands converge for the closing of the games there will be an estimated 750 pipers playing such standards as Scotland the Brave, Highland Laddie and Amazing Grace.

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New Hampshire Highland Games

September 16-18, Lincoln, NH, USA
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The New Hampshire Highland Games bills itself as one of the largest Celtic gatherings in the United States. Staged at Loon Mountain Resort, in the splendor of the famed White Mountains, the festival's musical agenda runs the gamut from "traditional to tribal beats to bagrock." That includes Scotland's Albannach, which describes it music as "aggressive, like a Celtic punch in the face," as well as two Eastern Ontario bands, the French-Highland Scots hybrid, alt-Celtic group Glengarry Bhoys, and the more traditional Brigadoons. Be sure not to get so caught up with the bands that you miss the harp and fiddle contests, as well as the piping, drumming and dancing competitions. Guaranteed to impress are the sheep dog trials, in which handlers direct their dogs to herd sheep through a variety of obstacles in the least possible amount of time. Historical re-enactors will be on hand to portray various periods in Scottish and American history, and the 74th Highland Regiment of Foot/Argyll Highlanders recreates the life of a Scottish soldier and camp follower during the 18th century. There will be historical encampments on the hillside beyond the Governor's Lodge throughout the games as well. A perfect summer destination, or a stop along a summer journey, the New Hampshire Games will also have food and merchandise vendors.

Charleston Scottish Games & Highland Gathering

September 17-20, Charleston, South Carolina, USA
www.charlestonscots.org



Fitting to the charm of Charleston, this year's Scottish Games and Highland Gathering begins with an evening of leisurely whisky tasting, followed the next night by a Tartan Ball at which traditional Highland evening dress is customary. Then the tartans unfurl as the bands, dancers, and clans parade onto the field as the old customs of a proud and stalwart people are performed. The gathering's Scottish heavy events include the sheaf toss, the stone of strength, and the caber toss, all of which are undertaken by professional and amateur athletes. Scottish country dancing will be performed along with the traditional Highland dances as well. For the younger crowd, none other than Ronald McDonald - a true and proud Scot - of hamburger fame will put in an appearance, and there will be arts, crafts and games. The Atlantic sea coast town of Charleston is home to one of the largest piping and drumming competitions in the southeastern United States, and Highland dancers come from afar to compete for honors annually also. Rathkeltair, a popular Celtic-roots band that blends catchy and compelling original songs with tight, driving, straight-ahead rock 'n' roll, will perform. Charleston, sometimes known as "the Holy City" for the churches that dot its landscape, ends its festival with a traditional church service known as the Kirkin' of the Tartans.

Indianapolis Scottish Highland Games & Festival

October 8, Indianapolis, USA
www.indyscotgamesandfest.com



Packing as much entertainment as possible into a single day is the goal of the Indianapolis Scottish Highland Games. Staged in German Park on Meridian Street, the seventh annual event is jointly organized by the Scottish Society of Indianapolis and the Scottish Foundation of Indianapolis. One of the highlights will be a Royal Court where children are knighted or made ladies of the realm, and a king's feast is served. Performances by the Irish Blessings Dancers will call to mind customs, costumes and geographic locations, while the Celtic Motion Irish Dance Ensemble demonstrates the joy of dance for all ages. At centre stage will be the 500 Gordon Pipers, a fixture throughout the Midwest and at the Indianapolis 500 auto race since 1962. Formed to honour the heritage of Scottish/Celtic culture, the band members are musicians and goodwill ambassadors who have a long affiliation with the Indianapolis Colts and frequently take part in the pre-game show. The traditional Highland games will be conducted on the athletic field, but music will be everywhere. The bands include Highland Reign, a "Progressive Scots-American Celtic" trio comprised of energetic lads singing songs from the old country as well as new songs, and Celtic Rain, a traditional group that performs age-old tunes, but personalizes them with a touch of jazz, classical and acoustic sound and style.

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Canmore Highland Games

September 3 & 4, Canmore, Alberta, Canada
www.canmorehighlandgames.ca



An idyllic locale for any festival, the town of Canmore is nestled into the Canadian Rocky Mountains, bounded by the spectacular Banff National Park and equally scenic provincial parks. Located in the Bow River Valley, 45 minutes west of Calgary, the town's name - meaning "big head" - is of Celtic origin, as were many of the coal miners who originally settled there. One of western Canada's major Highland gatherings, the festival in Centennial Park promises competitive Highland dancing, piping and drumming, as well as bands on parade and heavy athletic events, including a tug of war. Always popular are the sheep dog trials, the clan tents, the impromptu musical gatherings, the Celtic vendors and festival foods. A beer, wine and whisky tasting, accompanied by appetizers from Canmore's best restaurants, is one of the featured evening events. The two-day festival winds down with a colourful massed pipe band performance, the music of the pipes echoing against the magnificent backdrop of the mountains. That will be followed by an old-time kitchen party - a ceilidh for all ages - featuring singers, dancers, pipers and fiddlers. Picturesque Canmore was home to the Nordic events during the 1988 Winter Olympics and is a premiere mountain destination.

Trenton Scottish Irish Festival

September 9 & 10, Trenton, Ontario, Canada
www.trentonscottishirish.com



Quinte's Centennial Park, home of the Trenton Scottish Irish Festival, will again echo with the pipes and drums of the Highlands during this year's annual gathering. To up the ante, organizers are also bringing in Newfoundland musician - and former Great Big Sea lead singer - Alan Doyle. For a quarter century the Celtic festival has celebrated the Quinte West region's heritage with music and the Scottish arts. The festivities open with all the pageantry of an outdoor military tattoo, featuring Air Force pipe bands, as well as brass and reed bands. Doyle and the folk/trad Steel City Rovers, who delighted last year's audience, round out the opening night's agenda. The following day, the town's streets will be lined for a parade, before the focus shifts to the competition field where dancers, pipers, drummers and bands test their skill alongside heavy athletics competitors. Heather Boundy's efforts to set a Guinness World Record in the heavy events will be a highlight of the weekend. A fire captain from Lake St. Peter, Ontario, and mother of two, Boundy is an accomplished competitor. A new addition to the festival for 2016 will be the Kiwanis Children's Glen, where family activities will entertain the wee ones. Father and daughter duo Leigh and Alana Cline will headline the closing concert with Cape Breton-style guitar and fiddle.

Columbus Scottish Festival

September 10 & 11, Columbus, Ohio, USA
www.scottishfestival.org



A celebration of all things Scottish, the Columbus Scottish Festival broadens its cultural appeal by also offering a variety of popular Irish music and a European car show. You can count on pipe bands on the Bartholomew County Fairgrounds from start to finish, including the Southern Indiana Pipes and Drums - whose members range in age from seven to 78 - and the multi-award winning Fountain Trust Pipe Band of Covington. Clan tents will be in place, and the clan of honor this year is Clan Ramsay. Ramsays fought at Bannockburn, and took part in the settlement of South Carolina in the early 1700s. Highland dancers come from across the United States and Canada to perform and compete in 10 dances in five different categories. Always of interest are the re-enactments, which will include the Shire of Cuil Choluim - a Columbus-based entity of the Society for Creative Anachronism Inc. - which will recreate scenes from the Middle Ages and Renaissance era. Another crowd-pleaser is the festival's European Car Show, which is in its 25th year. European-made cars of any make, model and condition are on display, and last year's winners included a 1946 MG TC, a 1969 Morris Cooper, and a 1963 Triumph TR4. Highlighting the list of bands is the Irish-American trad group, The Sprigs, who will be joined by the Celtic folk band Dublin O'Shea and pop-piper mainstays Seven Nations.

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JULY 9–10, 2016

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Skajit Valley Highland Games & Celtic Festival

July 9 & 10, Mount Vernon, Washington, USA
www.celticarts.org/events/highland-games-home



The Celtic Arts Foundation - which organizes the Skajit Valley Highland Games and Celtic Festival - happily refers to the annual gathering as a Scottish three-ring circus, enthusiastically guaranteeing a memorable weekend for youth and adults alike. Held at Edgewater Park, the celebration is part of a yearly circuit of Scottish competitions held in the U.S. Pacific Northwest and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, with the namesake valley located between Seattle to the south, and Vancouver to the north. The foundation, with its goal of sponsoring, encouraging and promoting Celtic culture through events and education, contends that the quality of performers in solo bag piping and drumming competitions, bagpipe bands, fiddling, traditional Scottish athletics and heavy events, and highland dancing is at a very high level. The northern United States highland dance championship, staged in conjunction with the Clan Heather Dancers, is part of the festivities. This year, things get underway the night before the games with the second annual Gathering of the Clans dinner, co-hosted by clans Munro and MacKenzie, during which Scottish piper Stuart Liddel will pipe the participants into the banquet hall. The dinner was such a hit last year that organizers agreed it will be part of future festivals. Musical entertainment, parades, sheep dog trials and plenty of food and drink are also a part of the two-day gathering.

Glengarry Highland Games

July 29 & 30, Maxville, Ontario, Canada
www.glengarryhighlandgames.com



One of the largest Celtic gatherings in North America, the Glengarry Highland Games takes place in a tiny farming community in Eastern Ontario, an hour from both Ottawa and Montreal, and a half hour from the Canadian-American border at Cornwall. Ontario does not get any more Scottish than Glengarry County, so named for descendents of the MacDonell of Glengarry Clan that settled there in the late 1700s. In 1948, area residents feared their heritage might be lost, so they cobbled together a day of competitive events. The response was staggering, and the games - with its North American championship piping and world class heavy athletics - now set the standard for all highland gatherings. The Glengarry weekend has the distinction of having its own tartan, and in recent years tartan ribbons have been handed out to competitors. A golf tournament, a tartan ball, and a dance precede the games, but by July 29 all the action is on the field. Friday night features a military tattoo and concert, while the Saturday soiree brings more than 50 pipe bands together for a dramatic massed performance. In keeping with its tradition of annually honoring a distinguished citizen, this year the games pays tribute to 20-year Canadian Armed Forces veteran and sniper team leader Jody Mitic who was severely wounded when he stepped on a land mine during his third tour of duty in Afghanistan. He has since become a competitive runner and an Ottawa city councilor.

An Ri Ra Montana Irish Festival

August 12-14, Butte, Montana, USA
www.mtgaelic.org/an-ri-ra-montana-irish-festival



Regarded as one of the best of its genre in North America, the An Ri Ra Montana Irish Festival is both a celebration of the state's Celtic heritage, and the overall contributions of people of Irish Diaspora. For years the event has drawn people from across the region to take part in the music and general good cheer. Admission is free, so all that is required is a lawn chair and an umbrella for a bit of shade. Arts and crafts booths and food vendors will be set up throughout at the Original Mine Yard. Leading the entertainment will be The Elders, a six- piece band that is both musically progressive and rooted in tradition. Versed in Americana and Celtic folk rock, the group manages to channel something ancient and enduring, yet crisp and fresh. Also sure to please is a rousing Irish band named Gailfean, featuring button-box champion John Whelan, renowned fiddler Brian Conway, Don Penzien on guitar, whistle, bodhran and vocals, and Martin de Cogain handling dancing and storytelling. Further contributing to the musical extravaganza will be trio Makem and Spain, Dublin Gulch, and Derek Warfield and the Young Wolfe Tones. Kevin Doyle will supply the old time traditional step dancing and American tap, and the talented Trinity Irish Dancers will be on hand to perform as well.



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Festival of the Tartans

July 13-17, New Glasgow, NS, Canada
www.festivaloftheTartans.ca



The town of New Glasgow in northeastern Nova Scotia celebrates more than 200 years of Scottish heritage during its five-day Festival of the Tartans. The traditional "Cead Mile Failte" welcome appears on all festival promotions, but it is apt to be repeated in person along the streets of the town and on the competition field during festival week. With piping, drumming, dancing, fiddling and ancient heavy events, the gathering celebrates local history as Highland Scots first sailed into nearby Pictou Harbour in 1774, arriving in even greater numbers after 1801. The festivities include a kilted golf tournament, a garden party, a tartan tea, an antique car show, a concert under the stars, introductory Gaelic workshops, and non-stop music all over town. One concert features the Scottish Caledonia Fiddle Orchestra alongside Scottish country dancers. In keeping with tradition, there is a festival lunch of haggis and neeps, which the most adventurous can sample. Clan and genealogy tents are set up around the festival grounds, providing the opportunity to swap stories and family lore. A late night beer garden with rollicking Celtic music known as the Tartan Teardown is a high point of the celebrations, which come to a close the next morning when folks climb the hill above the East River to historic St. Andrew's First Presbyterian for a Kirkin' o' the Tartans ceremony.

New Brunswick Highland Games

July 22-24, Fredericton, NB, Canada
www.highlandgames.ca



The New Brunswick Highland Games, set on the beautiful grounds of historic government house in Fredericton - home to the province's Lieutenant Governor - strives to strike a balance between traditional competition and cultural education. Against the backdrop of the mighty St. John River, once so important in the settlement and economic viability of the province's United Empire Loyalist and Acadian descendents, this festival ranks near the top in terms of scenic location and sophisticated grounds. In addition to the pipers, drummers and dancers, the 35th annual edition of the games also offers a variety of workshops for those interested in exploring Celtic culture. Volunteer organizers invite all comers to bring a lawn chair and be a Scot for the weekend. The Kilted 5K Run, adopted a few years ago, gives all attendees a chance to participate as it does not require the years of practice needed to perfect a musical instrument, the intricate steps of the Highland fling, or a successful caber toss. Pipers and drummers entertain along the race route, which follows the city's path system. While kilts are not required, they are popular and some participants even opt to dress to a Scottish theme, appearing as Braveheart and Nessie.

Dayton Celtic Festival

July 29-31, Dayton, Ohio, USA
www.daytoncelticfestival.com



Though it is in its infancy as far Celtic festivals go, the United Irish of Dayton learned quickly to put together a program that delights audiences and brings them back again. It is all about the music, dancing and the family atmosphere at the three-day free festival, which has grown dramatically each year since its founding in 2002. As with past years, great bands are the key, with several coming directly from Ireland, including Socks in the Frying Pan, a youthful trio from County Clare playing guitar, accordion, fiddle and banjo. Four sisters from Bundoran, County Donegal make up The Screaming Orphans, who grew up singing trad, but later put together their own pop rock band. Goitse, a Chicago-based Irish-American band formed at Limerick University, is contagiously energetic, commanding a wide range of instruments to produce a brightly distinctive yet age-old sound. Gaelic Storm, a multi-national band that has straddled the line between tradition and innovation for nearly two decades, appeared at the first Dayton Festival and has been back every year since. Cultural exhibits and demonstrations will be set up around RiverScape MetroPark in downtown Dayton, and food vendors and purveyors of Celtic merchandise will abound. A children's area with games, crafts and miniature golf is always popular, and organizers are promising a 5K race and bike races as well as beer and whisky-tasting events. This year's festival is expected to attract 90,000.



The 75th Central New York Scottish Games & Celtic Festival

Long Branch Park, Onondaga County

August 13th 2016

9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m

Welcome Lads & Lassies, the Central New York Scottish Games committee invites you to attend the CNY Scottish Games and Celtic Festival at Long Branch Park in Liverpool, NY for an experience you will never forget! With Entertainment by Enter the Haggis, Charlie Zahm, Rince Na Sonas Irish Dancers, Harmony of Harps and more!

• • •

Come to the Syracuse, NY area and join us in the wee morning hours Saturday, August 13 and allow us to bring Scotland to you. The aroma of Scottish and American Food, the skirl of pipes, the cadence of the drums, the awe of massed bands, the beauty and form of the dancers, the strength and skill of the athletes and the feeling of clanship all contribute to hours of nostalgia and pure enjoyment!

• • •

www.cnyscottishgames.org

Central New York Scottish Games & Celtic Festival

August 13, Syracuse, NY, USA
www.cnyscottishgames.org



Calling all lads and lassies to don your kilts and sashes and make your way to the 75th edition of the Central New York Scottish Games and Celtic Festival at Long Branch Park in Onondaga County. As they have done for decades, organizers promise to bring Scotland to New York with a wide range of competitive events for pipers, drummers, dancers and sports enthusiasts. The heavy events include throwing stones, chained weights, unwieldy poles, and sheaves of straw. The caber toss involves a log of 10 to 12 inches in diameter and 18-20 feet in length, which must be picked up vertically by one end and thrown so that it lands on its other end. Distance and height matter not, as the measuring is done according to the hours on a clock, 12 being perfection. The sheaf, by comparison, holds 16 pounds of straw with the goal being to see how high it can be pitched. Enter the Haggis - a Toronto-based Celtic folk rock band featuring a blaze of bagpipes over a hard-driving rock rhythm section - will headline the day's entertainment. Charlie Zahm, who performs a mix of Celtic and country music, will also be featured, as will an Irish harp ensemble. The Rince Na Sonas dancers, a traditional Irish dance troupe from New York State, will perform as well. Clan tents will be set up to share genealogy and information about old families and pivotal battles in Scottish history.

Feis an Eilein

August 16-20, Christmas Island, Nova Scotia, Canada
www.feisaneilein.ca/feis



With its infamous name, this tiny community on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, is best known for the thousands of pieces of mail that go through its post office each year that are stamped with the distinctive and whimsical Christmas Island post mark. While it takes its name from early Mi'kmaw residents, the Bras d'Or Lakes area later attracted many highland Scottish families. For the past 26 years the region has been home to the first feis held outside Scotland. A decade after the event began on the Isle of Barra, Scotland, the people of Christmas Island launched a festival of their own, the first of five now held on Cape Breton Island. At Feis an Eilein, the locals gather to welcome friends, relatives and visitors, and ensure they have an unforgettable few days. "If you have even a little of the Gaidhlig, we invite you to use it during our events," organizers request. Some of the community's oldest residents grew up fluent in the Gaelic language, and efforts are currently underway to teach younger generations. With such a warm welcome, and amidst hours of piping, dancing and fiddling, endless and beautiful scenery, and lots of great home-cooking, attendees are likely to improve their Gaelic language skills. Those new to the language are sure to pick up a few phrases - and a few steps - at the local square dances or at the traditional milling frolic.

Jamestown Regional Celtic Festival & Gathering of the Clans

August 26 & 27, Jamestown, NY, USA
www.96thhighlanders.com/festival/Festival.html



The entire community of Jamestown takes on a Celtic identity for a weekend each August, with volunteers directing tourists, parking cars and buses, and doing whatever it takes to keep the annual Regional Celtic Festival and Gathering of the Clans rolling. Located in New York State's lush southern Chautaugua County, Jamestown is located between Lake Erie to the northwest and the Allegheny National Forest to the south. It is not surprising, then, that so many come for the fresh water fishing as well as the festival. Jamestown is also home to the 96th Highlanders Pipe Band, which will be front and centre on the performance field in Mayville Lakeside Park throughout the weekend. This year's heavy athletics competitions will include the Buffalo Heavies Kilted Throwers Club, with participants from New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Canada. One of the most notable events involves swinging a 56 lb weight between the knees and over a fence with one hand. Dancers from the Audrey Watkins Highland Dance Academy will be in attendance, and the Olean Irish dancers will also be back for their tenth year. More than 40 clans will be represented and available to provide information on their history. Barbecued chicken, meat pies, kettle corn and all the usual festival snacks will be available from an array of vendors, and thirsty visitors can also enjoy the plentiful beer and wine tent.

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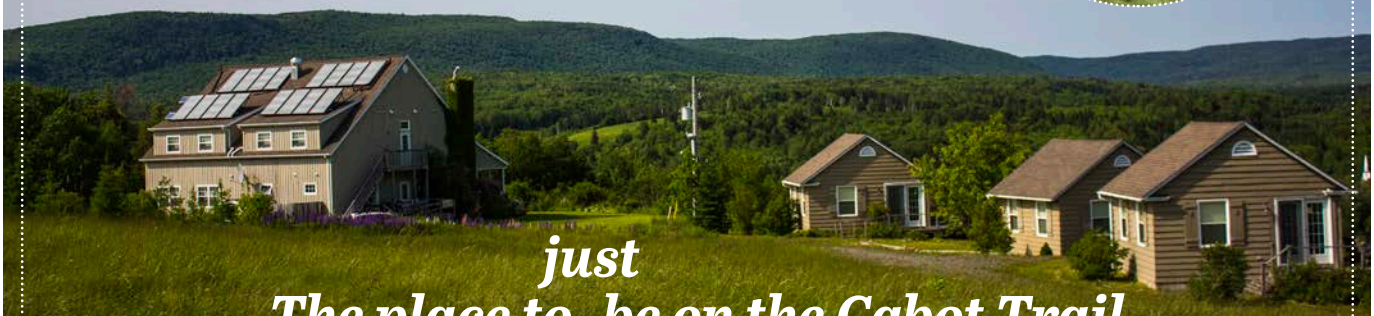
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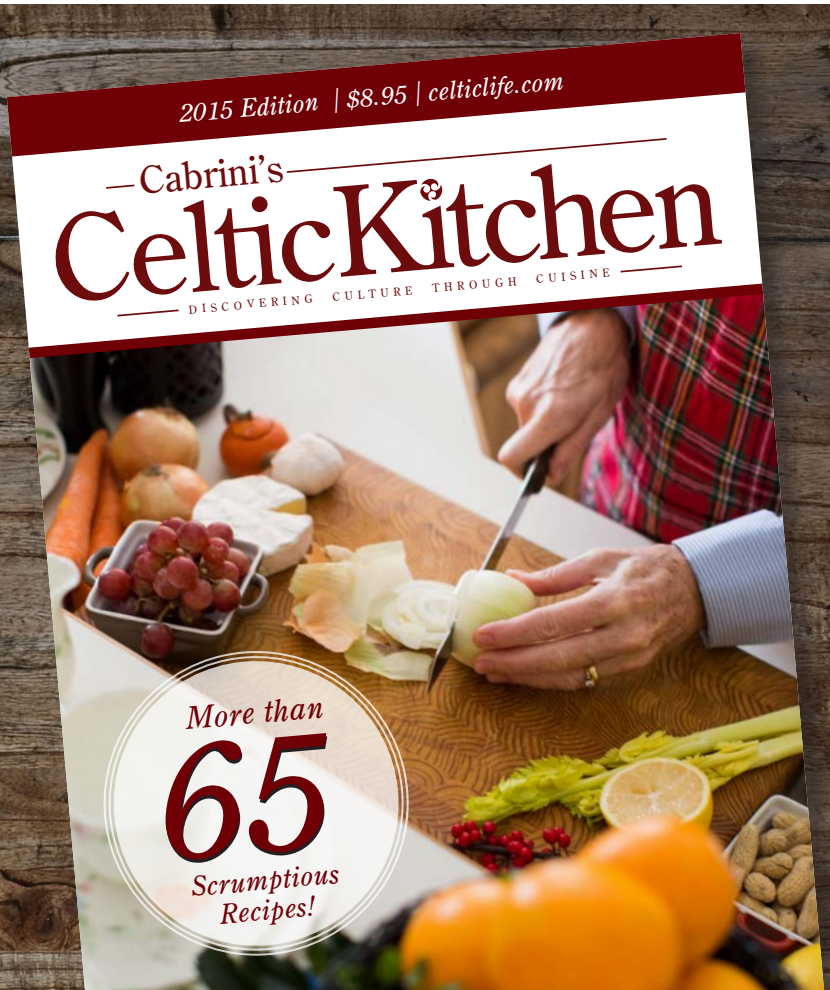




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Cabrini's Kitchen



Cape George *Fish Chowder*

Seafood makes hearty and wholesome meals that can be prepared in minutes, providing many essential nutrients, few calories, and little waste. One of my favourite dishes is fish chowder. On cool nights it simply hits the spot, and on warmer evenings - when fish is in season - I realize how lucky I am to live in a part of the world where seafood is still abundant. This particular recipe comes from Cape George, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia where life on the water hasn't changed much for generations. The ladies in this area know seafood and have kindly shared their recipe with me.

INGREDIENTS

4 slices of bacon, cut up
1 medium onion cut into thin wedges
2 garlic cloves crushed
2 cans of 12 oz. tomatoes
2 cups of water
2 cups dry white wine
2 cups diced potato
2 cups sliced carrots
1 tbsp. paprika
2 tsp. basil leaves
2 tsp. thyme leaves
2 tbsp. salt
2 lbs. cod, haddock, or other fresh white fish
2 tbsp. chopped parsley
Grated parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

Cook bacon, onion, and garlic in a large saucepan over medium heat, until bacon is crisp and onion is transparent. Stir in tomatoes, water, wine, potatoes, carrots, paprika, basil, thyme and salt. Cover saucepan and simmer for one half-hour. Cut fillets into large chunks and add to vegetable mixture in pot. Continue simmering until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Garnish chowder with chopped parsley and serve with grated parmesan cheese. Makes twelve 1 & 1/4 cup servings.

Ith do shàth! Cabrini

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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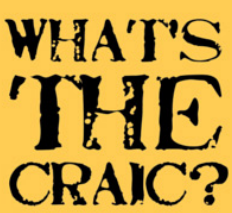
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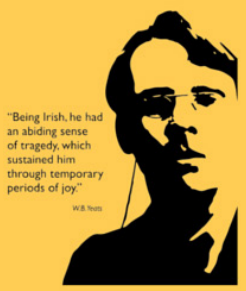
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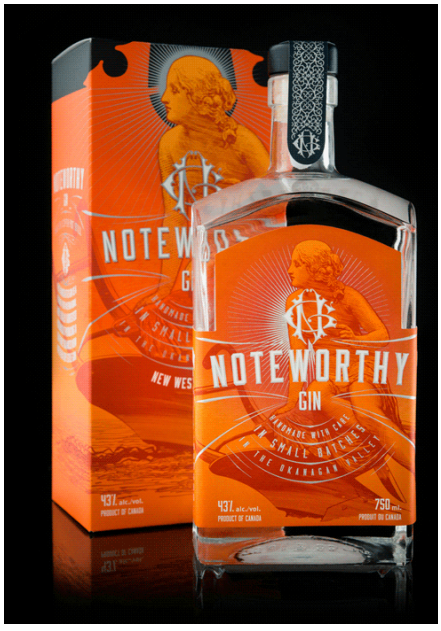
Filling my Barrel with Stevely

To say there is a craft distilling boom currently underway in Canada is a gross understatement. In British Columbia alone - the epicentre - there were more than 34 craft distilleries operating last year, a figure that may double over the coming decade. And while the boom might be especially prominent in BC, the trend is a national phenomenon with distilleries popping up coast to coast to coast.

In early June, during a heat wave, I made the eight-hour drive from Calgary to Oliver, BC, to pay a visit to one such facility. Dubh Glas Distillery was established by Grant Stevely near the southern end of the Okanagan valley in 2014. It took five years of research, planning - and no shortage of red tape - to see the project through, but later this month the company will be celebrating its first anniversary.

Stevely, as he's affectionately known, built the distillery on a small parcel of land a few kilometers north of Oliver. The current locale is small, and crammed with brewing, milling and bottling equipment, as well as a custom Holstein still and a small bar for visitors. Built with expansion in mind, the property has plenty of room for warehouses when they are needed down the road. Situated just off the main road, the site is very accessible to the throngs of tourists who visit the Okanagan in the spring, summer and fall for its warm weather, beautiful lakes and renowned wineries. But most crucially, the distillery sits atop a pure water source, the inspiration for its name, Dubh Glas (dugh-luhs), which means "from the dark water" in Gaelic.

The vision for Dubh Glas is to create world-class craft whisky, mainly single malt, though Stevely is also interested in pot still (an Irish style) and rye whiskies. To generate some cash flow, excitement and traffic, the distillery's first commercial product is a gin that has been taking BC by storm. The award winning Noteworthy Gin, billed as a New Western Dry, is made from BC barley in a copper pot still. The spirit is purified during the first two of three distillations, with the final one used to infuse the botanicals. The gin has been so popular that it has greatly delayed whisky production at the distillery, which is only now just starting to pick up steam.



While the gin is fabulous, it was the whisky - specifically single malt - that drew me to the distillery. I'd driven from Calgary with a Bernheim Kentucky Wheat barrel carefully secured in the back of my Volvo. The barrel matured a whisky I had bottled for my shop, the Kensington Wine Market. With a lot of life left to give I didn't just want this barrel to dry out so I hit on the idea of filling it with Canadian whisky.

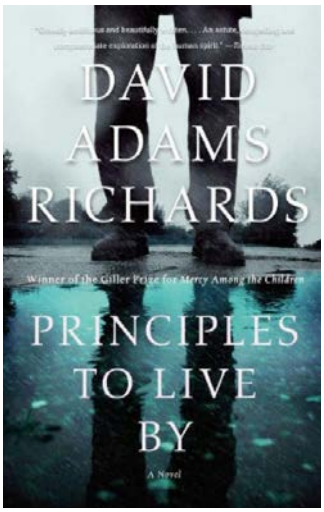
The process of distilling single malt spirit (it is only whisky after three years in oak) takes nearly a week when you factor in the milling, mashing, fermentation and distillation. For my own whisky, Stevely had already milled the barley, fermented the wort and performed the first distillation beforehand, so we would have time for the final distillation during my visit, a process that takes nearly 10 hours.

Everything at Dubh Glas is done by hand, from moving around bags of malt, to filling the mashtun and even the stills. There is no automation; bags of malt were emptied by hand into the mill and the resulting grist was carried by hand in the same bags to start the mashing process. Hoses have to be cleaned, moved and hooked up to move everything from hot water to wort, wash and spirit. Even the bottles are filled and labelled by hand. After a full day of working around the distillery I was exhausted, but we'd filled my 200L barrel with single malt spirit at 62.5%. The angels will take their share - possibly as much as 10% a year - and the hot semi-desert climate of the southern Okanagan will age the spirit into mature whisky in just a few years.

For Stevely, the Dubh Glas Distillery is not a road to riches, it is a passion project. When asked by a well-known retired distiller whether he would rather be rich from making a lot of whisky or respected for making good whisky it didn't take Stevely long to give him an answer. While he'd prefer both, the recognition was far more important. He keeps a foam roll on hand for sleeping in the distillery when working through the night - a frequent occurrence. I asked him how far away his home was, and I loved his response: "this is my home."

Noteworthy New Western Dry Gin is widely available in British Columbia and soon in select Alberta liquor stores. **$50**

www.thedubhglasdistillery.com
www.fergusonwhiskytours.com



Principles to Live By

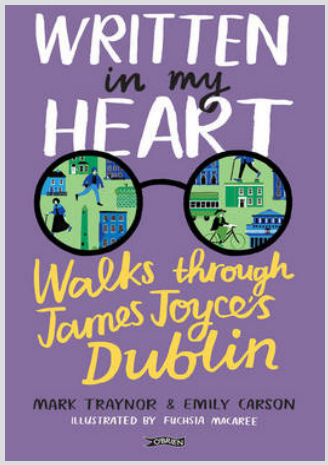
By David Adams Richards
Doubleday
336pp / $32

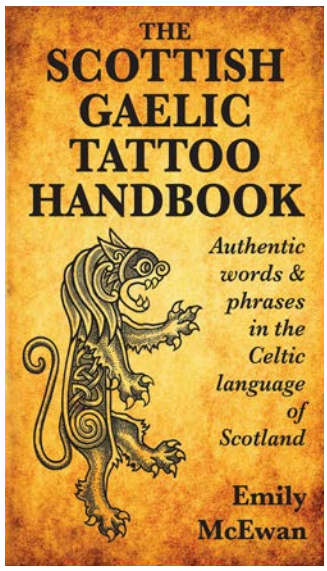
The 'Bard of the Miramichi' is back with perhaps his darkest and densest work in a decade. And while his new narrative is a challenging chew at times - chock full of choice-cut characters, platters of plot twists, and morsels of moral outrage - readers will be both full and fulfilled by novel's end. Driven by the death of his only child, Officer John Delano sets out to solve the disappearance of another youngster from years past. En route, taking him from Toronto and New York City to the backwoods of New Brunswick and the jungles of Rwanda, the protagonist encounters hyperbole and hypocrisy at every step. Delano maintains his ethical footing on the slippery slopes of justice, however, making this a damn fine read. ~ SPC

Written in My Heart

By Mark Traynor, Emily Carson & Fuchsia MacAree
O'Brien Press
96pp / €7.99

Hot on the heels of Bloomsday, when the world celebrates the life and love of novelist James Joyce - and the protagonist anti-hero from his epic narrative Ulysses, Leopold Bloom - a trio of Irish writers and illustrators have pieced together the ultimate guide to following in the footsteps of Eire's greatest bard - literally. Written in My Heart traces the scribe's daily outings through Dublin, stopping at significant signposts along the way to engage, educate and entertain readers (walkers?) with charming and curious tidbits of historical trivia. Easy-to-read trail maps and imagery accompany bite-sized chapters and paragraphs to shine a light on the acclaimed author, the magnitude of his work, and what it meant to a city on the cusp of a cultural revolution. ~ SPC





The Scottish Gaelic Tattoo Handbook

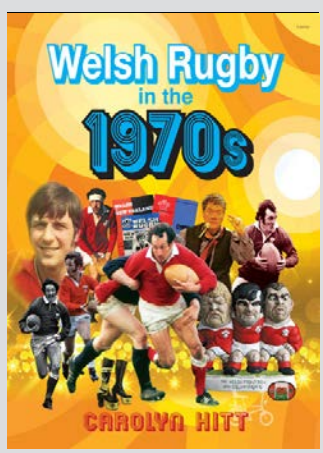
By Emily McEwan
Bradan Press
95pp / $12.99

Given the huge popularity of Celtic/Gaelic body art in recent years, McEwan's helpful handbook couldn't be better timed. Though a mere 95 pages, the author successfully runs the gamut, covering topics such as translation, pronunciation, spelling, fonts, accents, apostrophes, alphabet, and more. Subject matters, including military service, nationalist sentiment, and love for a partner, are all on the agenda as well. Most pertinently, perhaps, McEwan examines the history and description of the language, along with its current status. A long-standing proponent of Gaelic survival and revival, she continues to make a compelling case for the inclusion of the idiom in everyday affairs. To that end, and as stated, her book could not be better timed, especially for younger people looking for ink about body ink. ~ SPC

Welsh Rugby in the 1970s

By Carolyn Hitt
Gomer Press
98pp / €7.99

With the recent hooliganism on display at Euro 2016, the adage that soccer is a gentleman's game played by thugs while rugby is a thug's game played by gentlemen is more pertinent than ever. It takes the first woman to win the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame Journalist of the Year award, however, to flesh out the essence of that country's greatest passion, rugby, during its greatest era. Profiles on the game's finest fly-halfs, centers, wings, and backs - including Gareth Edwards, Barry John, Gerald Davies, Phil Bennett, and Mervyn Davies – are accented with text on tours, national and international play, scores, and colourful photographs. What Hitt does best, however, is capture and convey the unbreakable spirit of a people during an unspeakably harsh time. ~ SPC



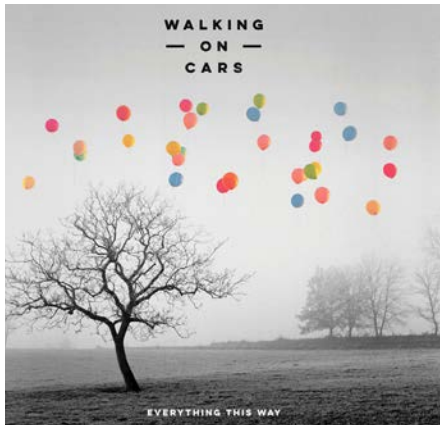


Nua
Flow

Canadian trad-trio Nua build upon the success of their 2014 debut Bold with a solid and satisfying sophomore effort; Flow is flush with both fast flowing melodies and songs as lush as the Irish landscape. It's amazing how far three instruments - guitar, fiddle and bodhrán - can take traditional tunes when this kind of award-winning talent is in abundance. From the opening notes of Wide Open to the closing run of YK Inn, these 12 terrific tracks will have listeners tapping their toes and, for ex-pats, wiping a tear from the eye. Highlights here include The Jacobite, Wasabi, and the pseudo-country styling of Manic Breakfast. A lock for major North American festivals, be sure to catch the band on tour in the coming months. ~ SPC

Walking on Cars
Everything This Way

With all the hype surrounding Walking on Cars, you'd be forgiven thinking that the Irish quintet is the second coming of U2. And while comparisons to the Dublin megastars are inevitable - anthemic melodies, uplifting choruses, poignant ballads - Walking on Cars carve out a strong sense of self with their debut recording. Vocals soar on the opener Catch Me if You Can, while guitars paint pretty on At Gunpoint and Ship Goes Down. Bass and drums drive Don't Mind Me and Hand in Hand, but it is Sorcha Durham's powerful piano that carries the day here, particularly on the first single Speeding Cars. Interestingly, despite their catchy pop-rock leanings, the band's Dingle roots shine through all twelve tracks with a wee touch of trad. ~ SPC





Bodénès-Hamon
Daou Don Dañs

As evidenced by both the popularity of the Festival Interceltique de Lorient and the resurgence of the Brythonic dialect, Bretagne is the Celtic hot-spot these days. That élan is ever-present on the latest effort from bombardist Steven Bodénès and piper Sylvain Hamon. With a little help from their friends (vocals, guitar, bass), the dynamic duo weave and wind their way through eleven tracks of traditional tunes from the east coast of France. Those with an ear for time-honoured jigs and reels from Scotland and the Emerald Isle will find something familiar here, as the main melody lines make it easy to connect the Celtic dots. Daou Don Dañs will remind us that, despite the geographical distance, our cultural esprit ties us together as a people. ~ SPC

The Gloaming
2

Almost amazingly, this Celtic supergroup's music is greater than the sum of its superstar parts. Comprised of five brilliant and established musicians, there is surprisingly little ego here as the three Irish and two Americans put it all aside to seamlessly blend haunting Celtic melodies with jazz, contemporary classical, experimental and atmospheric music to create a unique sonic hybrid. Despite the myriad of styles and sounds - or perhaps because of it - the quintet still draws a straight line through each of the eleven songs, giving listeners plenty of signposts to keep ears wide open and attention attuned. Drawing comparisons to the Waterboys, Avro Pärt and Sigur Ros, it will be quite an experience to hear how the band can stretch these tunes out in concert. ~ SPC



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Alex Gandy

It could be the genes, it might be the pipes, but whatever it is, Alex Gandy carries on a family musical tradition with great distinction

Alex Gandy might be the busiest bagpiper in Atlantic Canada. Along with his regular duties teaching the instrument, the 27-year-old resident of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, leads the 78th Highlanders (Halifax Citadel) Pipe Band, and has trips to two major competitions in Scotland on his immediate horizon.

To say he is a "natural" would be to disregard the years of hard work perfecting his craft, however. Instead, it may be fair to say that he inherited a great affinity for the bagpipes.

"Both my parents were pipers, as were both my grandfathers," he notes. "I was always surrounded by the music, and grew up listening to my dad at the house. I was attending highland games with my family since before I can remember."

Gandy began piping at the age of 10. When asked whether young people are still interested in piping, he points out that it can be a challenging instrument to take up, let alone master.

"It is not easy to play physically, and even with the best teachers in the world, if the student isn't willing to put the work in between lessons, it makes it even more difficult. Because the pipes have such a steep learning curve, they don't have the instant appeal that going to your first guitar lesson and learning Smoke on the Water might have."

There was never any question that Gandy would persevere. At summer piping camps his interest was piqued when he met accomplished pipers, always judging them according to how they placed against his father, Bruce.

Born in Ontario, he moved to Summerside, Prince Edward Island, when his father took a job at the College of Piping. Later, the family relocated to Dartmouth.

To this day Gandy plays both for the sheer love of it, and because he continues to be driven by the desire to improve.

> *"I push myself to get better, to better help my students. I teach quite a bit, and I think having a teacher who is still 'walking the walk' as opposed to 'talking the talk' is a must."*

He admits the original goal he set for himself as a youngster was to beat his dad in a solo piping contest.

"I know some of my students will have the same goal about me, and I encourage it. I certainly don't want to make it easy for them, though."

Gandy currently has two sets of pipes that he plays regularly, both of them previously played by his grandfathers.

"The ones I have had the longest belonged to my mother's father, Pipe Major Ronald Rollo. They are a set of ebony 1886 Duncan MacDougall bagpipes, mounted in ivory, and have served me extremely well. He gave me those pipes in 2008 and currently I use them as my band bagpipe."

The second set came from his father's father, Pipe Major Ray Gandy.

"They are Blackwood 1939 Peter Hendersons. These pipes were my dad's number one instrument since he was a teenager, and he won a lot of his major prizes with them. They have been treating me well since I started playing them about three and a half years ago."

Though he studied in Scotland with some of that country's finest pipers, Gandy believes that his father was his greatest musical influence.

Some of the highlights of his piping career include winning the World Pipe Band Championships while living in Glasgow in 2007, and playing with the Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band out of Belfast.

"In 2014, I led the 78th Highlanders as pipe major to win the North American Championships in Glengarry, Ontario. In 2015, we returned to the world championships and qualified for the final round, granting the group stature as one of the top 12 bands in the entire world."

As a soloist, he has been equally successful.

"I have won the jig contest at the Argyllshire Gathering in Oban twice, and the A Grade MSR at the Northern Meeting. I was twice overall-winner at the US Piping Foundation, five-time winner of the North American Ceol Beag contest in Kansas City, including the last three years in a row, and I have won the Canadian gold medal for piobaireachd at the North American Championships in Maxville, Ontario."

Not one to rest on his laurels, Gandy is headed for the World Pipe Band Championships in Scotland in August, and will make a second trip there in the fall to compete at the world's premiere solo event in Inverness.

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Shannon Quinn

Classically trained, and raised in an area where Cape Breton fiddle music fills the air, Shannon Quinn found herself irresistibly drawn to the Irish fiddling tradition of her ancestors

"I have been playing the fiddle for 20 years," says Shannon Quinn, who was born and bred in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "I started off with classical violin at age six and then, although I did study classical violin at university, I fell in love with the Irish fiddle around the age of nine and never looked back,"

Thanks to her father, musician Tony Quinn, with whom she still performs as a Celtic folk duo, she had a steady stream of singers and musicians coming through the doors through her youth.

"My grandparents are all from Ireland, and I think I felt a strong connection to my heritage when I was younger. I still do. I was very involved in the Irish dancing community for many years so I was constantly being exposed to Irish music as a child."

With a music degree from Toronto's Humber College, Quinn has been touring for the past two years with the internationally renowned Scottish group, The Paul McKenna Band.

While she considers herself a traditional Irish fiddler in terms of ornamentation and general sound, she allows for her classical training to show up in her bowing and vibrato technique.

"My biggest influence growing up was probably Martin Hayes. I saw him perform in Boston when I was 10 years old and for years after that I listened to his albums very regularly. I loved how slow and melodically he played – he made tunes sound like songs. Every time he repeated a tune, it sounded as though it was a different verse, trying to say something different."

Quinn's finesse on the fiddle has taken her from Symphony Nova Scotia to Cirque du Soleil and Disney World's Epcot Centre. She has also performed with The Chieftains and the award-wining group



Down with Webster at Massey Hall in Toronto, as well as at Nashville's Music City Roots and Bluegrass Underground concerts.

Currently into pre-production on her third album, Quinn released her second recording, If All the Young Ladies a year ago. Recorded in Glasgow, it features her singing as well as fiddling. Her first album, The Irwin Lake Sessions was recorded in 2008.

> *"The fundamental reason I play today is that I am still so in love with it - playing fiddle is when I am in my happy place."*

She has a passion for arranging new tunes and experimenting with her music. Always interested in the history and geography of a tune, Quinn is careful in making modern adaptations.

"I am drawn to obscure tunes that lend themselves to non-diatonic chord changes or have interesting off-beat accents. My favourite Irish composer is Ed Reavy for those reasons, as his tunes are so melodically unexpected. I think a good tune is memorable and a lot of time has an identifying hook within it."

Her approach to music, she explains, depends on the day.

"If I am suddenly inspired I will definitely drop the day's to-do list and run with the idea, but I regularly set days aside where I make no plans and just lock myself in a room to be creative from morning until night. I give myself writing and arranging challenges to try and keep my chops up in those areas."

As a 10 year-old, she set herself the goal of one day playing with famed Cape Breton fiddler Ashley MacIsaac. Her wish came true recently when the duo recorded together for a television production. She also did a western Canadian tour with singer Lennie Gallant, whom she described as one of her favourite lyricists.

More recently, Quinn opened her own music school and recording studio in Halifax.

"I've always wanted to open a school because I had such positive experience growing up with music, but I also had negative experiences with different teachers along the way. Through my music and lesson experience I've tried to create a balance where - although I have high expectations for students as far as focus, effort and practice - I also realize most kids who take lessons are not trying to become professional musicians or concert violinists."

Music lessons also instill life skills; self-motivation, accountability, patience, confidence and the ability to handle and overcome failure.

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A tiny Nova Scotia university town continues its tradition of sending a strong contingent of elite highland dancers to the Canadian Championship Series

Six top caliber dancers from the Antigonish Highland Dancing Association, chosen at a national selection meet, will be among 21 Nova Scotians officially representing their province in competition at the premiere dance event in Winnipeg this summer.

"I'm happy to say it is not unusual for us to have six dancers heading to the Canadian championship series," says Shauna Grant, an association member. "Our dancers work very hard to get there."

The success of the dancers may have something to do with their hometown being the site of the acclaimed Antigonish Highland Games. First staged in 1863, the 153rd edition of the games will run July 3 to July 10 this year, drawing crowds of dancers, pipers and drummers, as well as competitors in track and field and ancient heavy events.

Thirteen year-old Erin Gilfoy is making her seventh trip to the Canadian championships and it is no less exciting than the first time.

"My mom was a dancer and she signed me up for lessons," she shares. "I love dance and I love competition. My favourite dance is Blue Bonnets. It is light and it isn't super fast but it has lift and stretch and hold."

Erin also dances ballet and jazz and is a fierce defender on the soccer field.

Sisters Carly, 15, and Courtney MacDonald, 17, are equally competitive on the dance stage and the badminton court. Carly is making her fifth trip to the championship and Courtney, who has battled injuries, her third.

"It is really exciting to dance on such a big stage and to see so many amazing dancers improving each year," notes Carly, adding that badminton is excellent cross-training for dancing.

Carly followed Courtney into highland dance, badminton and step dancing.

"I was a shy child so my mother had to search for activities I might like," explains Courtney. "What I first liked about dance was that I didn't have to talk to anyone. I could just wrap myself up in the dance. It got more serious after a few years and I was ready for it."

The dance of choice for both sisters is the Highland Fling, an ancient dance, traditionally performed before or after battle.

"It is one of the first ones I learned so it is always special to me," said Carly.

For Courtney, the power coming off the floor is invigorating.

"It is a stationary dance with a lot of hopping, and posture is really important."

Megan Smith, 12, a third generation dancer and three-time Nova Scotia representative at the championships, is often running between her two passions, dance and hockey.

"I'm a centre on a Peewee AA girls' hockey team so I have to be serious about hockey, too. The two sports don't look much alike but they help each other because you are always strengthening your legs."

Her athleticism may be why the traditional reel is her favourite dance.

"It is a high, powerful dance that is always fun and I think it suits me best."

Abigail MacDonald, 15, will be a fourth-time competitor.

"It is just an amazing atmosphere and a huge stage. We're all pretty nervous prior to competition but Courtney and I are in the same category so we warm up together."

Abigail runs competitively and is used to going from one sport to the other during the school year. A Gaelic student, she also plays piano, frequently accompanying fiddle players at kitchen parties.

"My favourite dance is the Seann Truibhas, because it is powerful but graceful."

Hannah Delorey, 13, is the only dancer making her first trip to the Canadian championships.

"I'm hoping the other girls will show me around because I have never danced at this level before. I've been more of a fifth and sixth place dancer."

Her love of dance was offset by her distaste for practicing.

"Lately I've decided to see what I can do with practice. My grandmother loves dance so she is always encouraging me. I can hardly believe I am going to Winnipeg!"

Active in a 4-H outdoor education program, she has hung up her running shoes to concentrate on dance in the short term but she continues to play guitar.

Following Winnipeg, Courtney and Abigail will be flying to Switzerland to perform with 36 elite premiere dancers at the Basel Tattoo. For two girls making their first trip to Europe, the reward for years of twice-a-week lessons and countless hours practicing and competing could not be any sweeter.

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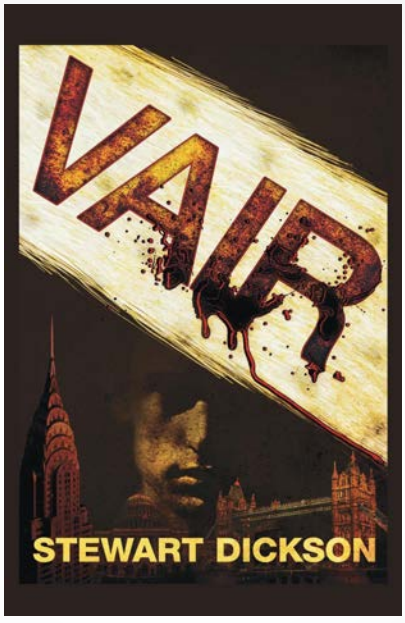
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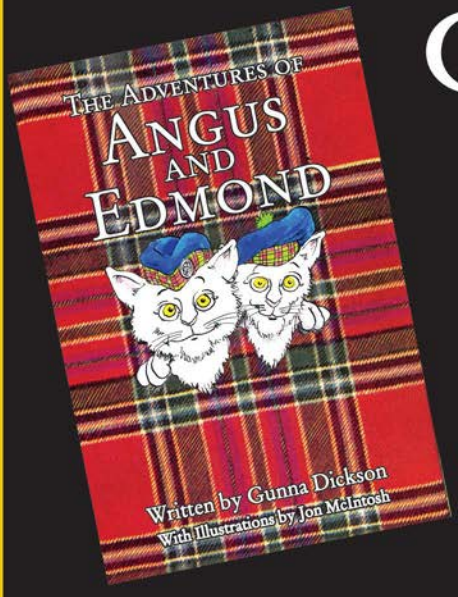
Leith-born journalist Stewart Dickson covered major international news stories in his native Scotland, London's Fleet Street, and as U.S. bureau chief of a British tabloid. He lives in New York City with his wife, Gunna.

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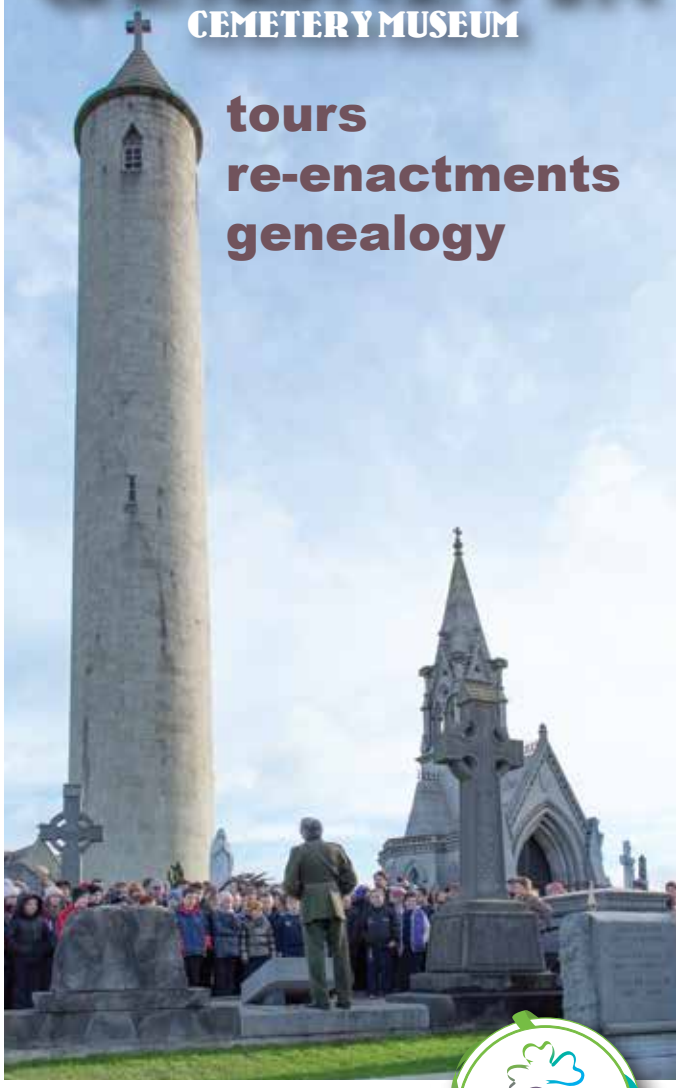
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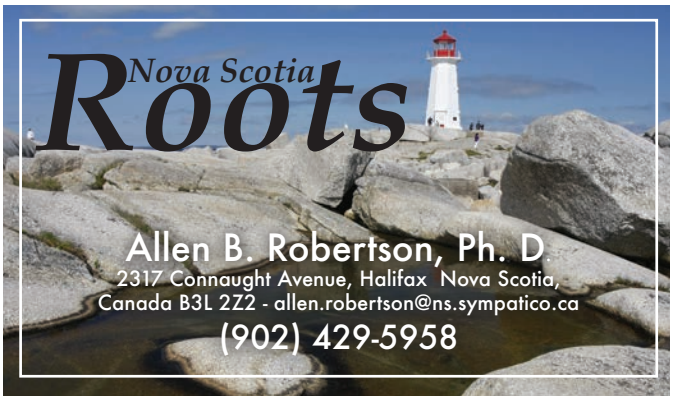


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Ronald Dingwell; 1957-2016

When I received the news of my father's death, it didn't seem real. Although he had been ill with Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, MND or Lou Gehrig's Disease) for more than two years, he was still living at home with my mom. As his physical strength faded, his emotional strength continued to tower over that of all who surrounded him, including me.

Dad was diagnosed in November of 2013, shortly after his retirement. He had served 35 years as a civilian member with the Royal Canadian Mountain Police, ending his career with the title of Regional Informatics Officer for the Atlantic region. Even post-retirement, and as the use of his arms and hands deteriorated, Dad continued to work.

As a consultant with the Province of Nova Scotia, he provided the necessary expertise on the radio communications network in the area. As a result, he saw the TMR2 Project to completion, for which he received the Ian MacKinnon Memorial Interoperability Award in October of 2015. One of the best things about my father was his persistence. If Dad said he was going to do something, you could be sure he was going to see it through. Until recently, I didn't realize that was such a rare quality.

My parents raised my brother Chris and I just outside of Halifax, Nova Scotia, but they are both originally from Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course, Dad had Celtic roots. "Dingwell" is a variation of the Scottish surname "Dingwall," and people often mistake our names as the latter - something which annoyed Dad to no end. Still, he took the time to



educate Chris and I on where our names came from, telling us we were part of Clan Munro. I recall sitting at my father's side at the family computer as he pointed out the Munro tartan. My interest in our Celtic background leaned more on the side of folklore, so Dad bought me books which told stories of creatures such as the fairies who had come to Newfoundland with the Irish, or the infamous Bell Island Hag.

For this reason, I often wandered the woods around our cabin with a nickel in my pocket.

About a year and a half after Dad's diagnosis, I decided I wanted to get a tattoo in his honour. At first, however, I was at a loss for what to get. Eventually, I began searching Celtic legends and symbols, coming across a story that spoke to me: "Brighid sat close to her dying father as she weaved a knot from rushes. Her father noticed and asked her what she was doing. She explained how each loop, although individual, is not able to be separated from the whole, just as their relationship was interwoven." An illustration of a Celtic knot accompanied the text, and the same symbol became my permanent ink a couple months later.

Over the course of the year that followed, Dad's physical strength started waning more dramatically than before. After he took a nasty fall on my university graduation day - getting stitched up just in time to see my class and I walk across the stage - it became clear he could no longer walk unaided. I visited him as often as I could, and each time it seemed that something about him had changed. In the last few months of his life, his voice weakened more and more. Though I needed to find another way to communicate with him, as lengthy conversations were no longer possible, I never got the chance.

Perhaps fittingly, the tearful phone call from my mother came on a dark, rainy night at the beginning of May. The weather reflected the feeling in the air as I hailed a cab from the street, heading to my parents' apartment immediately. I had seen Dad only a few days earlier - very much alive. But just like that, he was gone.

I later found myself thinking about my tattoo: why I got it and the meaning behind it. While it's frowned upon by some relatives, I know I have something that will connect me to my father always, just as Brighid expressed in the story with her own Celtic knot. It is something I will hold on to for the rest of my life.

~ Rebecca Dingwell

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