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INTERNATIONAL

INSIDE!

Celtic Travel Guide

Nicola Benedetti

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Wonderful

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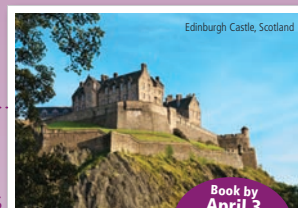


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Fáilte!

The Case for Cultural Tourism

It was a beautiful sunny afternoon in Scotland several years ago when I stopped to ask a middle-aged gentleman, removing groceries from his car, about Gillis families who once lived in the area. All I knew was that my Gillis relatives left Bracara, near Morar, Scotland in the late 1700s. "My wife is a Gillis. Park over there and come in," was the reply.

As we sat on his deck overlooking Loch Morar, my host - Paul Galbraith, author of *Blessed Morar* (Morar Bheannaichte) - enlightened us with stories of the area's early days and its people. He pointed out Meoble on the far side of the Loch, and recounted the legend of an cuth glas Meobhail or the grey dog of Meoble. The legend relates the appearance of a grey dog as a "forerunner of death" for the Morar MacDonald's and their ancestors. I told him of hearing the same story back home in Cape Breton, where Morar MacDonald's had settled and are said to have had similar experiences.

Four hours later, and the best of a bottle of Glenfiddich behind us (I had a driver), we left with a list of people to meet, places to see and local events to take in. Our well-informed and entertaining host made my day all the more memorable. It was my first introduction to cultural tourism.

Both Scotland and Ireland have been aggressively promoting the homeland to all ages of the North American Diaspora. Campaigns such as Homecoming Scotland and The Gathering Ireland 2013 have brought back hundreds of thousands of visitors.

My good friend Jim Taylor speaks of the warm welcome he received in Galicia, Spain, from hundreds of villagers, proud of their Celtic ancestry, as he trekked along the northern pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela, where the bones of the Apostle St. James are believed to lay rest.

In Brittany, France, the Festival InterCeltique - arguably the largest Celtic Festival in the world (August 7 - 16, 2015) - attracts upwards of 800,000 people from all over the globe with 200 events and 5,000 performers annually. It's a celebration of Celtic music like none other.

In this issue our Managing Editor, Stephen Patrick Clare describes his recent trip to Wales. Perhaps surprising to some, Wales might be the most Celtic of all nations. Evidence of the Brythonic-speaking people goes back almost 3,000 years to the Iron Age and Welsh is still the first language for most in the country's west and northern regions. Throughout the region ancient Celtic churches, crosses, burial grounds and other monuments dot the landscape. Culture and heritage is a big part of the Welsh economy, and their three-year Cultural Tourism Action Plan aims to provide visitors with an authentic experience that is distinctive to the country.

Cultural tourism represents one of the fastest growing sectors of global tourism. For the Irish economy alone cultural tourism meant more than \$2 billion last year. Throughout North America, Celtic cultural treasures are abundant. The music of Cape Breton is a cultural gem and events like the Celtic Colours International Festival showcase it to the world.

Celtic culture is unique because it is found and celebrated in so many countries. We invite you to join us as we visit these Celtic treasures. Throughout the coming issues Celtic Life International will bring you information on many of these hidden Celtic gems. For now, we invite you to enjoy our feature on Wales in this issue.

We wish you a very Happy New Year and the very best in 2015.

Enjoy and May God Bless,
Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher



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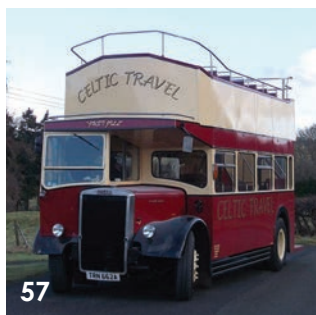
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Our Jan/Feb cover shot showcases Conwy Castle in northwest Wales



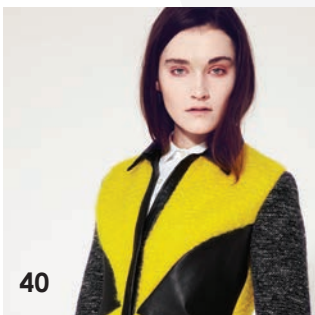
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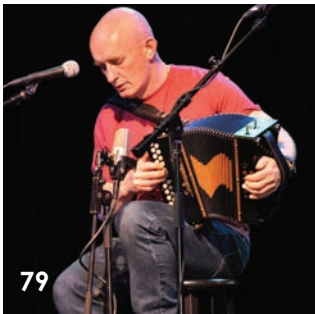
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Gaelic goes digital

A comprehensive database of Gaelic language is now online after eight years of work. Celtic and Gaelic researchers at the University of Glasgow have completed the first phase of the world's most extensive digital archive of Scottish Gaelic texts. The work is part of a landmark project meant to revolutionize access and understanding of the language to the public around the world. The Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic has two components: a searchable online database bringing together full texts from the 12th century to the present day. It comprises almost 10 million Gaelic words, which over the life of the project is expected to grow to 30 million. The second component is a field-work archive containing over 22,000 "headwords" taken from speech recordings in Gaelic speaking Scotland and Nova Scotia during the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Rob O'Maolalaigh, professor of Gaelic at the University of Glasgow and director of the digital archive, said: "Having access to a large database like this will enable us to see new patterns in the way the language has been used over the centuries and how it continues to be used to this day."

Say what?

International coffee chain Starbucks' well-intentioned effort to provide Welsh signage at its newest branch in Aberystwyth, Wales backfired. The translations, baffling and nonsensical, proved to be quite entertaining to consumers. Phrases included one for blonde coffee which offered that the roast is "light of body and taste our coffee to most easy to drink," according to Walesonline. After receiving complaints about the signs, the company immediately removed them and made the necessary amendments. Starbucks shouldn't feel too bad, though. It's not the first large firm to find something lost in translation. In 2012 Walesonline noted that the supermarket chain Asda attempted bilingual signage in Cardiff – in English and Scottish Gaelic, which left Welsh speakers baffled.



New found glory

They were never top of the pops – to put it mildly. Glory Hunter is a Scottish rock band so obscure that, according to The Scotsman newspaper, their one claim to fame was placing second to an ELO cover band in a competition. The band is experiencing new-found fame, of sorts, in 2014. The only single Glory Hunter ever recorded is fetching up to one thousand pounds on eBay and other collector's sites. The Scotsman reports that Glory Hunter's single, Thoughts of Destiny (recorded in 1979), is listed higher than singles from the likes of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix and Bruce Springsteen. Shortly after recording the single, Glory Hunter disbanded. Kenny Hanlon, the band's lead singer - now 59 and a grandfather – told The Scotsman: "I suppose I should be chuffed, but to be honest I'm more mystified. I have absolutely no idea why a single by an unknown band from Scotland that fell apart a few weeks after recording their first single should be so valuable."

On referendum eve, a virtual tartan

As Scotland struggled with the referendum, one of the odd side notes came from a collective of artists calling themselves The Projector Club. Using the latest 3D mapping projection techniques, the group turned a farm in West Lothian into a tartan-clad collection of buildings. Called Turning Scotland Tartan, the images were subsequently made into a film.

The Scotsman reported that the club issued a statement, saying: "This project stands for all that's fresh and vibrant about today's Scotland, while paying homage to the history that made us who we are." The tartan was a vibrant weave of lights incorporating red and purple which didn't showcase any particular clan, but rather was generic. The projections lit up a number of huts, and other farm buildings. The Edinburgh-based event company mclcreate came up with the idea for the projected tartan.



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



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In the first of a year-long, six-part series examining Celtic culture, Lewis MacKinnon – Executive Director of Gaelic Affairs for the Province of Nova Scotia – shares his perspective on what it means to be Celtic.

Hecataeus of Miletus, the Greek geographer, made the first recorded use of the name Celts in 517 BC, when writing about a people living near Massilia (modern day Marseille, France). According to the testimony of Julius Caesar and Strabo, the Latin name Celtus (pl. Celti or Celtae) was borrowed from a native Celtic tribal name. Pliny the Elder cited its use in Lusitania as a tribal surname, which epigraphic, or inscription findings, have confirmed.

The term Celt is a modern English word, first referenced in 1707, in the writing of Edward Lhuyd, a Welsh linguist, whose work, along with that of other late 17th-century scholars, brought academic attention to the languages and histories of the early inhabitants of Great Britain.

Celtic refers to a family of languages and, more generally, means “of the Celts” or “in the style of the Celts.” Several archaeological cultures are considered Celtic in nature, based on unique sets of artifacts.

The link between language and artifact is aided by the presence of inscriptions, or early writings. The relatively modern idea of an identifiable Celtic cultural identity or “Celticity” generally focuses on similarities among languages, works of art, and classical texts, and sometimes also among material artifacts, social organization, homeland and mythology.

There are two branches of the Celtic language family that have persisted down to the present day: the Brittonic (British) & Goidelic (Gaelic) branches.

The British branch includes Welsh, Cornish and Breton.

The Gaelic branch includes Irish language (some refer to it as Irish Gaelic), Scottish Gaelic, Gaelic in Nova Scotia (which has Scottish Gaelic as its origins) and Manx Gaelic.

Today, people who possess, participate in and support a Celtic language and its attendant (i.e. accompanying) cultural expression use the following terms to identify themselves and the Celtic language they speak or to which they have affinity:

Gaeil (Irish Gaels) and an Ghaeilge (Irish language); Gàidheil na h-Albann (Scottish Gaels) and a’ Ghàidhlig (the Gaelic language); Gàidheil na h-Albann Nuaidh (Nova Scotia Gaels) and a’ Ghàidhlig an Albainn Nuaidh (Gaelic in Nova Scotia); Manninee (Manx people) and Gaelg (Manx Gaelic); Cymry (Welsh people)

and Cymraeg (Welsh language); Breizhiz (Breton people) and Brezhoneg (Breton language); Kernowyon (Cornish people) and Kernowek (Cornish language).

In comparison, the English language is a member of the Germanic family of languages which also includes German, Dutch, Alsatian, Afrikaans, Frisian, Scots, Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish.

The attendant cultures of the respective Celtic languages contain within them the expression of the people who participate in and share the same. These cultures encompass poetry, song, music, dance, stories, traditional dress, foods, customs, world view, otherworld beliefs and spirituality. These can be viewed as the ethnic identities of peoples that come alive through their respective Celtic languages.

While Celtic language-based communities use terms from their respective languages, and attendant cultures, as identifiers that communicate to each other and the broader community who they are, in the modern period the term Celtic has been used in a variety of ways by a variety of individuals and groups to mean a variety of different things.

For the Gaelic community in Nova Scotia, those who speak Gaelic and participate in Gaelic cultural expression - and those who support and identify with these people - there seems to be consensus that it is important to assert the community’s identity in its own linguistic and culturally-based terms.

Asserting a clearer voice has helped to elevate the Gaelic language and cultural assets the community possesses and for which it is well known and of which it readily shares with local residents and visitors.

Understood in this context, the term Celtic is a reference point in that it communicates that the Gaelic language Gaels in Nova Scotia speak has common connecting points with other languages in the broader Celtic language family group.

Identity, in the case of the Gaelic Community in Nova Scotia, is most accurately reflected through terms that reference the language and culture, and the people who speak and support and participate in them: Gaelic and Gaels.

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UP FRONT

Carwyn Jones

Sixty of the world's leaders gathered in Cardiff, Wales in September 2014 for the NATO Summit. The event brought, among other things, 1,500 journalists to the country. The exposure for Wales was unprecedented, to say the least.

“The world now knows Wales is a great country to visit and do business in,” Wales’ First Minister Carwyn Jones declared in an interview with Celtic Life International.

Jones said the country basked in the praise of what delegates had to say about Wales during the summit, especially that of U.S. President Obama, who became the first serving president to visit Wales, something Jones said was a real honour.

“The NATO Summit was a great chance for us to show – once again – how well we manage major international events. It was also a unique opportunity to further raise global awareness of Wales and show people what a great country it is to visit, invest and work in.”

Jones is a proud Welshman through and through. His family hails from Brynaman in the Amman Valley and he was born in Swansea and attended school in Bridgend.

“I’ve studied, worked and lived in Wales all my life,” Jones notes. “My roots, my love of this country and the people of Wales are the driving forces that remind me of why I am doing this job.”

The First Minister says politics always interested him, but the attraction grew while studying at Aberystwyth University when he joined the Labour Party in 1987. He spent 10 years as a barrister working in criminal and family law. Then Jones made the decision to pursue a career as a politician because he wanted to make a differ-

ence to peoples’ lives.

Jones served as a county councilor on the Bridgend County Borough Council for five years and then in the late 1980s had the chance to become an assembly member for Bridgend.

“I took the opportunity and I’ve been an assembly member ever since.” Jones says the reasons that led him to politics are the same ones which keep him involved.



“Politics is not a job you drift into,” he observes. “It’s a vocation and I believe the work we’re doing as a government is bringing real and tangible benefits to the people of Wales.”

Of course, such a career is not without its challenges. The global economic recession impacted Wales as it did other countries, and the country faces continued economic pressures and budget cuts from the UK government.

“Politicians don’t get to choose their challenges,” Jones points out. “You stand for election to represent people and you do

your best for them.”

In that regard, Jones is proud of the work he and the government have carried out. He points to such achievements as the development of policies, including the ground-breaking organ donation bill and the modernization of the National Health Service through the provision of care closer to home. Jones also points to programs like Job Growth Wales, which has created thousands of employment opportunities for young people.

Asked if enough is being done to promote Celtic culture, Jones proudly enumerates, “We have three World Heritage Sites here in Wales, some of the finest castles and historic monuments in the world and areas of outstanding natural beauty. Needless to say, we’re extremely proud of our Celtic culture.”

As for the Welsh language, which Jones speaks, he says the government is working to strengthen and grow its viability.

“We’re proud of what we have delivered for the language by protecting its status through legislation, but we also recognize that big challenges remain,” says Jones. “It’s imperative we make Welsh a ‘living’ language, especially among young people outside the school gates. Education is an important part of nurturing the language, but people need to use it in everyday life.”

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Dragon Tours is owned and operated by Dr. Mike Davies, a published historian and specialist in Welsh history and culture. Mike was born, raised and continues to live in Wales. He has taught at the University of Wales and is able to provide a unique insight into the ancient land of his birth. He has been providing tours in Wales for over 20 years.

For visitors with Welsh ancestry Dragon Tours offers a service to help you trace your family tree in Wales. Mike has helped numerous clients in this way and can even provide a genealogy tracing service prior to your arrival and can assist in your use of libraries, record offices and archives when you are here. We have helped many people find 'the old family home' and even long-lost relatives! We can plan your tour around places where your Welsh ancestors lived and/or combine a general tour of Wales with visits to places of family interest.

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Dr. Michael Davies is an expert on Welsh history, a published author, a food and wine connoisseur, and the owner-operator of Dragon Tours. Recently he answered our Seven Celtic Questions.

SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

What are your own Celtic roots?

Most of my Celtic heritage is from Wales. I was born in Wales and have lived here all my life, as did most of my immediate ancestors. I have traced my Welsh roots back to the 1600s, but believe that my Welsh ancestry goes back a lot further than that.

I also have some Irish blood through my mother's side of the family and some Scottish heritage on my paternal grandmother's side. So I feel very Celtic indeed.

Why are those roots important to you?

My roots have always been of great importance to me. I grew up hearing stories of the old days from my grandparents and came to love Welsh history, which became a passion of mine that continues to this day. I also believe that it is very important to pass on my Welsh and Celtic heritage and so my son, Llywelyn, has a very Welsh name and is now bilingual in Welsh and English. The Welsh people

are the direct descendants of the original Ancient Britons who made up the population of Britain when the Romans arrived almost 2000 years ago. The Welsh language and culture preserves an ancient tradition that has to continue.

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

For many people outside of the UK, "Britain" and "England" are interchangeable terms. If you are brought up Welsh or Irish or Scottish you know that although we share a land space with England, we have a more ancient, shared, Celtic heritage that is different and tangible. It is sometimes hard to explain. I believe that a lot of our Celtic nature is held in our subconscious. It is very important for people from Wales to be recognized as Welsh (as opposed to being confused with the English). We are British, we are from the UK, but we are Welsh (not English).

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

My five-year-old son goes to the local Welsh school. The teaching of the Welsh language is now widespread in Wales (you can choose to have your child educated through the medium of Welsh wherever you live in Wales and Welsh is a compulsory subject even in the English schools in Wales now). It is very important to preserve the language - one of the oldest spoken

languages in the world and the most spoken of any of the Celtic languages. My business, Dragon Tours, provides small group tours of Wales and focuses on the history and culture of my homeland. I work closely with Visit Wales (the tourist board for Wales) and hope to encourage more people to visit Wales as we believe it is the 'forgotten jewel' of the British Isles and the Celtic Nations. I have written a number of books and academic papers on the history of Wales. Recently, my brother Sean and I wrote a book about The Last King of Wales, an 11th century ruler called Gruffudd ap Llywelyn.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

People of Celtic origin have a duty to preserve what has been passed down. So much has been lost: the Romans exterminated the Druids, the Anglo-Saxons pushed the Celts into the extreme west and north of Britain, the Normans invaded and settled, the English conquered and colonized and tried to eradicate the Celtic languages and culture. Yet we are still here and much has survived and flourished. We need to ensure that our heritage is not lost in this increasingly globalized culture.

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

I am proud of the way that Wales has preserved its culture and language. It is officially a bilingual country.

People fought hard for this. For many years the teaching of Welsh history, culture and language were suppressed or even banned. This situation has dramatically improved in recent times, but we must not be complacent. I think that Wales can be an example to other Celtic Nations in this respect. Sometimes Celtic culture can appear a bit twee or touristy, but if you come to Wales you will see and hear the language and culture in everyday life.

What can we be doing better?

I believe the key is the teaching of Celtic history in schools and the promotion of Celtic culture to the rest of the world through the various tourist agencies, tourist businesses and Celtic interest publications.

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The Red Hot *Chilli Pipers*

Imagine the consternation: you're anticipating the Red Hot Chili Peppers and then the curtain lifts and a bunch of bagpipers show up and begin playing. WTH? Yes, you've accidentally bought tickets to the Red Hot Chilli Pipers – and you aren't the first person to make that mistake. Willie Armstrong, co-founder of the Pipers, laughs. "We've never had any trouble. The odd person buys a ticket for our show thinking that they're going to see the Peppers, but even that is extremely rare."

Frankly, even if you were expecting the Peppers and ended up with the Pipers, it's unlikely you or anyone else would be disappointed. The Chilli Pipers are becoming a force in their own right to be reckoned with: their Facebook page alone has 225,000 likes; more than a lot of popular groups, much less bagpipe bands. And the Pipers offer a rocking show with all manner of covers and self-penned traditional music.

Formed in 2004, the Pipers began as a band to play corporate functions. Armstrong put the group together with Stuart Cassells.

"We thought we would create a corporate bagpiping act that would include very tight piping and drumming," Armstrong explains. "We had this idea that we would wear black kilts, black shirts and no sporrans and we would then play at corporate functions and generally have a good laugh. In the beginning we had to do a lot of gigs for free to see if it would catch on."

The duo became a trio when Kevin MacDonald joined, but the band still lacked a name. Around that time, Cassells asked his girlfriend of the time to arrange all his CDs into order by genre. Looking through, he discovered the Red Hot Chili Peppers in the pile for traditional music and asked her why she'd placed them there. "I thought that it said Pipers," she replied. And thus a band name was born.

Today, the group has 30 musicians who mix and match according to circumstances. The basic line-up is a kit drummer, a

percussionist who plays marching snare, a keyboard player, a bass player, a lead guitarist and three pipers. Sometimes three brass players are added to boost the sound. The group also employs professional dancers and sound and lighting engineers.

"We can have a band on tour in the USA and a corporate band back in Scotland taking care of gigs here," notes Armstrong. "We mix and match the players in the bands, so that the sound is maintained."

The band has a new DVD, *Live at the Lake*, which made use of eight cameras for filming, including a rail camera in the pit. Armstrong says *Insomnia* begins the show with a long build-up and by the time the three pipers kick in, the audience goes nuts. Another favourite is the Kings of Leon's *Use Somebody* because it also incorporates the Strathspey Susan MacLeod. The piper says he loves the idea of playing a rock cover one moment and then switching to the Strathspey.

Armstrong, 49, is a firefighter who lives in Cumbernauld, between Glasgow and Edinburgh. He originally picked up piping from Donald Gibson at the Glasgow Skye Association Pipe Band in 1980, but then dropped it until 1995 while he was serving in the navy.

"At the age of 30 I was completely smitten by the sound in a much bigger way than I had been when I was younger," Armstrong recalls. "I would practice for 12 hours a day and drove everyone to distraction."

The practicing paid off. This past year the Pipers opened the main stage at T in the Park and had no less than the Kaiser Chiefs off in the wings, checking them out. Up next: a sold-out tour of Scotland and Ireland, followed by work on a new studio recording in 2015.

www.redhotchillipipers.co.uk





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Seven musicians face one another inside an elongated retreat on a secluded seascape off the coast of Newfoundland. Together they cohesively play striking sequences of rhythms and notes and sing such lyrics as “Under the pitch and the pull of the moon/Sweet, silver medicines swim in my temples...”

This comes from Hey Rosetta’s video for Soft Offering (For the Oft Suffering) set inside and around one of the Fogo Island Arts studios. The song is one of 12 featured on the Newfoundland band’s latest album, *Second Sight*.

“They’re sort of these strange alien structures out in the middle of nowhere—even remote in terms of Fogo, which is pretty remote,” says Josh Ward, the indie rock band’s bassist/back-up vocalist, of the art studios on Fogo Island. “It was a really fun process. The hardest part was actually hauling the gear over the bog. It’s a good 20 minute walk from civilization to the studio space.”

The actual recording and production of *Second Sight*, the band’s fourth album, took place in Montreal’s MixArt Studios. The latest album’s release represents the longest gap between the band’s full-length recordings to date. More time and a bigger budget allowed the band amplified

freedom to experiment right in the studio, shares Ward.

“You’d spend a day doing something a certain way and then right at the end of the day the producer, Marcus Paquin, would say, ‘That’s great guys but let’s start again...same idea just do it completely differently,’” Ward laughs. “What used to be the chorus is now the verse, stuff like that. We’d totally mix it up. I think it was a good thing for us to have that possibility because we hadn’t had that opportunity before. I feel like some of the tunes on the record were almost written in the studio. Like with the tune What Arrows, the whole end was kind of created out of a little jam we had in the studio. It was something that was born out of us being able to be in the space and jamming together without a lot of pressure.”

Originally from St. John’s, Newfoundland, both sides of Ward’s family trace back directly to Ireland, a common cultural heritage among Newfoundlanders. He says music has always been part of his life and he has fond memories of sessions breaking out in his family home.

“I was kind of born into it,” he reveals. “My grandmother is quite an accomplished accordion player. All my uncles were in bands in the ‘70s and my mom is

actually a great accordion player and singer. I definitely was brought up into it.”

Ward has been a member of Hey Rosetta! since the band formed in 2005. Since then the band has toured across North America, Europe and Australia, won multiple East Coast Music and MusicNL Awards and been nominated for the Polaris Music Prize and JUNO Awards.

“We’ve had some real great opportunities and we’ve been really lucky we’ve been able to do this for a living for the last little while,” says Ward. “It took a lot of years to get to this point of course, but I think we’re pretty happy with what we’re able to do right now.”

Chatting over the phone in November 2014, the day before the band set out on tour across the U.S. with Montreal-based band Stars, Ward said he was pumped to be out on the road again.

“I feel like we haven’t done the real, full-on, get in the van and go kind of tour in a while now, so I’m really looking forward to it,” he beams. “What I do is play music—it’s the thing that keeps me in this....”

Hey Rosetta! continues their *Second Sight* tour across Canada starting late January 2015.

www.heyrosetta.com



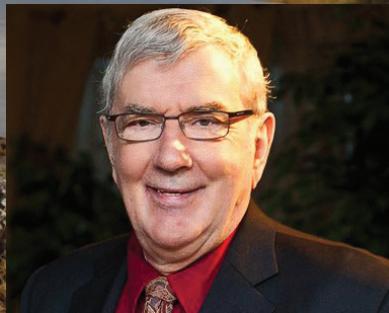
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Cape Breton Tenors

Peter Gillis describes his career describes his career as a dream come true “but not planned out.”

The Cape Breton Tenor is a handle operatic singer Peter Gillis wears with pride. A voice professor and visiting artist at Montclair State University in New Jersey, Gillis debuted at Carnegie Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and at Kennedy Center with the Washington Opera.

A regular at Italy's renowned Festival dei Due Mondi, he has also performed closer to home playing the lead role in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with Opera Nova Scotia. He toured internationally and has sung for a pope and a president, but lately he is polishing the songs he grew up with in the Whitney Pier district of Sydney, Nova Scotia.

“Historically, the tenor is the coveted male voice who plays the romantic lead in the opera and it is a very gratifying role to sing because of its great impact on the audience, but I also find myself wanting to return home in some form or other so I am performing the songs I grew up listening to,” said Gillis.

His father was a self-taught folk fiddler with a great appreciation of classical music who encouraged his son to explore music as a career while still urging him to perfect the old ballads of Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales.

“When we'd have family visiting I'd be called on to sing a few songs, perhaps *Danny Boy* or *Barbara Allen* or *Eileen Aroon*. I'd be given great encouragement as well as a few nickels and dimes for the performance, so I have great memories of those old songs.”

Gillis describes his career as a dream come true “but not planned out.”

“I was directing a girls' choir in Sydney when I left Cape Breton. I thought I was taking a four year leave of absence when I went off to study. I thought I'd be back to take over the choir again but it didn't work out that way.”

He studied at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ, and went on to do a master's degree in Indiana before successfully auditioning for Julliard School, going into its opera program and completing a doctorate and postdoctoral diploma.

“For a while I was doing regional opera work around the Unit-

ed States and loving it, but at the same time listening to tapes of the Cape Breton Summertime Review, which would have me in tears.”

When home for a visit through the years, he was often in touch with songwriter Allister MacGillivray whose iconic *Song for the Mira* he frequently performs. He also teamed up with Rita MacNeil and collaborated with the Barra MacNeils and comedian

Bette MacDonald. If the timing was feasible, he happily lent his voice to community fundraisers.

A few years ago Gillis recorded 12 of his childhood standards, including *Come to the Hills*, *The Foggy Dew* and *Cape Breton Lullaby*. More recently he put out a compilation of Christmas tunes called *A Cape Breton Tenor Christmas*.

“I'm always coming back to Cape Breton because it is where my family and my heart reside. I think I know the audience well and I can stretch their tolerance to include an operatic piece or two.”

After a recent sold-out performance at the Savoy Theatre with Paul Gatchell, Robyn Cathcart and Jonathan MacInnis as *The Cape Breton Tenors*, he was excited about the calibre of the show.

“I think we were very well directed by Stephen Muise and I believe we demonstrated our reverence for the repertoire we grew up with.”

Gillis hopes there will be opportunities for the group to perform together again.

“Paul has a lot of musical theatre behind him, thousands of performances at the Stratford and Shaw festivals. Robyn is a very skilled singer and actor who has performed all over Canada and has experience putting on shows. Jonathan, as the baby of the group, is a rising star with a big-hearted approach to singing.”

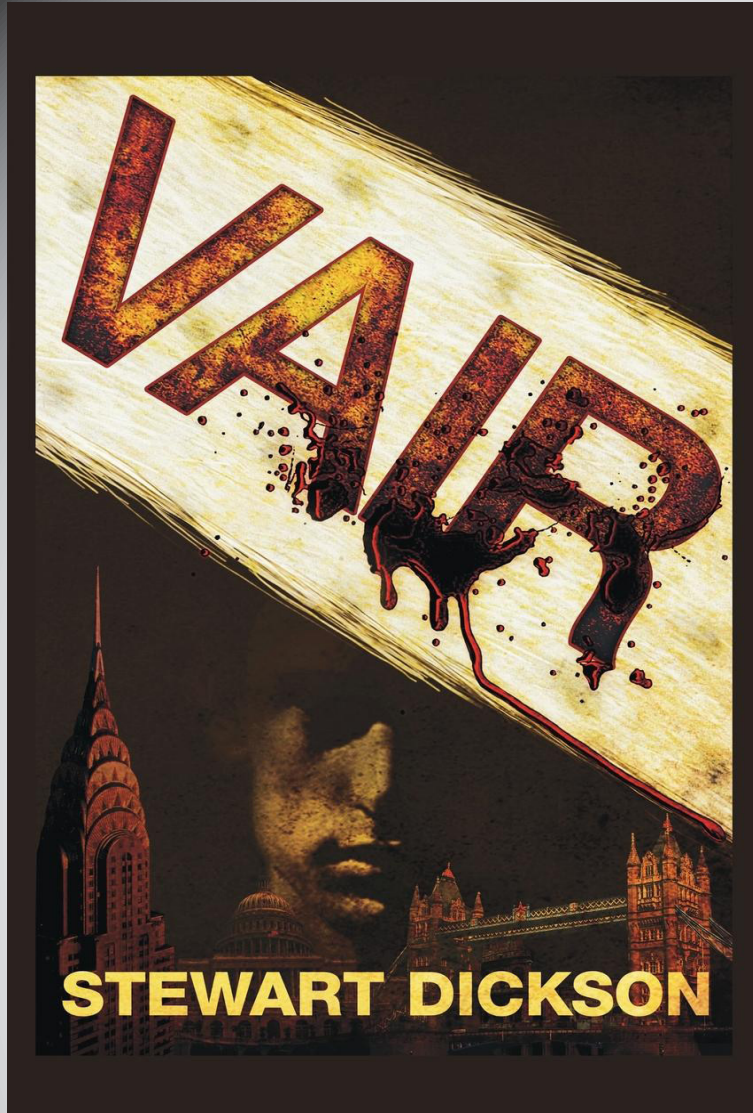
While performing solo or with the three other tenors, Gillis knows well that no performance on the home ground is complete without a rendition of *Danny Boy*.

“I've been doing that song all my life but these days it has a greater, deeper resonance for me.”

www.petergillis.com



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Sean Michaels

Scotland-born scribe Sean Michaels wins the 2014 Giller Prize



Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje, Mordecai Richler, Margaret Atwood, David Adams Richards—these are just some of the notable authors who have won the Giller Prize, Canada’s top fiction award.

On November 10, 2014, Sean Michaels joined those illustrious names and won the annual prestigious prize for his novel *Us Conductors*. In the award’s 21-year history, only two first time novelists - Michaels and Johanna Skibsrub - have won the coveted prize.

Michaels, who was born in Stirling, Scotland and spent his first six years living there, has been working as a journalist and writer of numerous forms for at least a decade. He describes the struggles and joys of writing as like “wrestling with your best friend.”

In 2003, while studying at McGill University, he began his famous *Said the Gramophone* blog. As one of the first mp3 blogs in the world, and the first in Canada, the blog continues to allow visitors to simultaneously read about and listen to the songs Michaels and his co-authors love.

Michaels has contributed to numerous other publications, from *The Guardian* and *The Globe and Mail* to *Rolling Stone* and *The Walrus*; his short stories have appeared in anthologies and literary magazines like *Maisonneuve* and *The New Quarterly*. He’s won two National Magazine Awards, served as a writer-in-residence for music festivals and helped expose musicians like *Arcade Fire* and *Feist*.

“I love this kind of idea of a secret world, you know that kind of magical world through the wardrobe,” says Michaels over the phone from his Montreal home. “So if I’m writing about a band, I love that feeling of going into a room with them and there’s just a gang of men and women with guitars or violins and they can transform this space for everyone there to this other world. I also like true stories that feel like they ought to have been made up. I think in my fiction, the inverse of that is I really like live fictions that feel true.”

Michaels’ Giller prize-winning novel combines “actual” history with the imaginary. *Us Conductors* is based on the life of Lev Termen or Léon Theremin (1896-1993), a Russian inventor and spy, who travelled between the “glamour of Jazz Age New York to the gulags and science prisons of the Soviet Union,” describes Random House Canada, the novel’s publisher.

The story also delves into the love story between Termen and Clara Rockmore. Termen invented the theremin, an electronic instrument played without physical contact, and Rockmore was quite possibly the best theremin player of all time.

“I was really interested in writing a story about the strange relationship that many people have with the idea of true love...” describes Michaels. “As I thought more about those ideas, the story of Lev and Clara seemed like a really interesting setting to explore that underlying love story.”

Michaels researched historical accounts about the lovers’ lives.

“I was kind of sceptical of that kind of perfect, mythic love story as it appeared in some of the texts,” says Michaels. “In some ways the book was my attempt to imagine what might really have happened. But then at a certain point, I’m not really that interested in what might have happened. I really just wanted to tell the story I wanted to tell, whether or not it was true—in fact deliberately not true. In my book, Léon is a kung fu fighter, there are a couple murders in the book...all of that is totally made up.”

For Michaels, winning the Scotiabank Giller Prize, accompanied with a \$100,000 purse, is more than just recognition. It is about his livelihood.

“It’s one thing to win a prize, but because of where I was in my writing life – you know I was, and am a first-time novelist – I was just hoping to carve out a chance to write another book,” says Michaels. “Working at all my other work and kind of fighting through, this isn’t just a prize where it’s like ‘Oh you did a good job.’ It is not just that a jury approved of my novel. That jury in a way has given me a career. So it’s bewildering!”

“I’m keen to start writing another book,” he adds. “Writing is always hard, but this time writing will be without this deep fear in my chest that no one will ever read it.”





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Gemma Baillie

A native of Westhill, near Aberdeen, Scotland, the champion dancer has competed and performed across Europe and Canada but these days she sits behind the judging table watching other dancers execute their steps. Recently, she stopped in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, to adjudicate a competition and lecture premier dancers.

"I was in Antigonish as a dancer in 2005 and danced with some excellent dancers, so it was interesting to be back in the town as a judge," she said, adding she met Antigonish dance teacher, choreographer and adjudicator Janice Macquarrie at international dance events.

Baillie has been adjudicating across Canada and the United States while completing a postdoctoral fellowship in pharmacology at the University of Toronto.

"Dance opened many doors for me. It has taken me places I might never have gone and it certainly made it easier to move to another country. Within a short time I had a group of Toronto dancers to practice with to keep up my fitness and technique."

Baillie began dancing at the age of seven with no idea she would three times place among the world's top six highland dancers.

"I have my older sister to thank as I followed her into highland dancing lessons. She didn't really like it and quit after a year but I loved it from the first steps."

Baillie was 11-years-old, taking lessons in Aberdeen, when she was awed by champion Scottish dancer Deryck Mitchelson.

"He was so full of energy, amazing to watch. I wanted to dance like him so I began taking lessons from his mother, Wilma Tolmie, who had taught him," Baillie said. "She was in Dundee, which is about



90 minutes from Westhill, but my parents were very supportive and made the trip for lessons twice a week."

Baillie perfected the Highland Fling, Sword Dance, Seann Truibhas and Reel, but describes herself as a bit of a late-bloomer, dancing her pre-championships at 13 and championships at 16.

"Things seemed to click for me as I got older and I actually did my best competitive dancing when I was working on my PhD," she said. "With so much school work, dancing was a release and I placed in the world's top six in 2008 and 2009, as well as in 2003."

Apart from the competitive dancing which took Baillie to the top events in Scotland, England, Ireland, Belgium and Canada, she has frequently performed in folk festivals and dance shows.

"The festivals are a wonderful opportunity to develop creativity and choreography. As a young dancer I'd go with my teacher to France, Belgium, Spain and Sardinia and it was tremendous fun," she said. "We'd perform our own numbers but we were also very often inspired by other performers."

Highland dancing has been Gemma Baillie's ticket to travel

She twice performed in New York's renowned Tartan Week; once with another highland dancer and a hip hop group from Edinburgh, and once with a troupe of 11 Scottish dancers. Equally memorable was dancing at Beijing's International Tourism Festival.

"In Canada, America and the European countries where I have danced, there was some awareness of highland music and dancing, but in Beijing we were quite unusual," she said. "It was amazing, though, to demonstrate our culture and to watch performances from so many different cultures."

Before coming to Canada, Baillie began teaching and became an adjudicator with the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dance (SOBHD).

"Initially, I found it challenging to go from competitive dancing to judging but it gets more enjoyable with experience. It is always interesting to see the styles and variety among dancers."

Through the years Baillie has used her profile as a world class dancer to raise money for Duchenne muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis and breast cancer, most notably with the Assemble and Leap show which marked the SOBHD's 60th year.

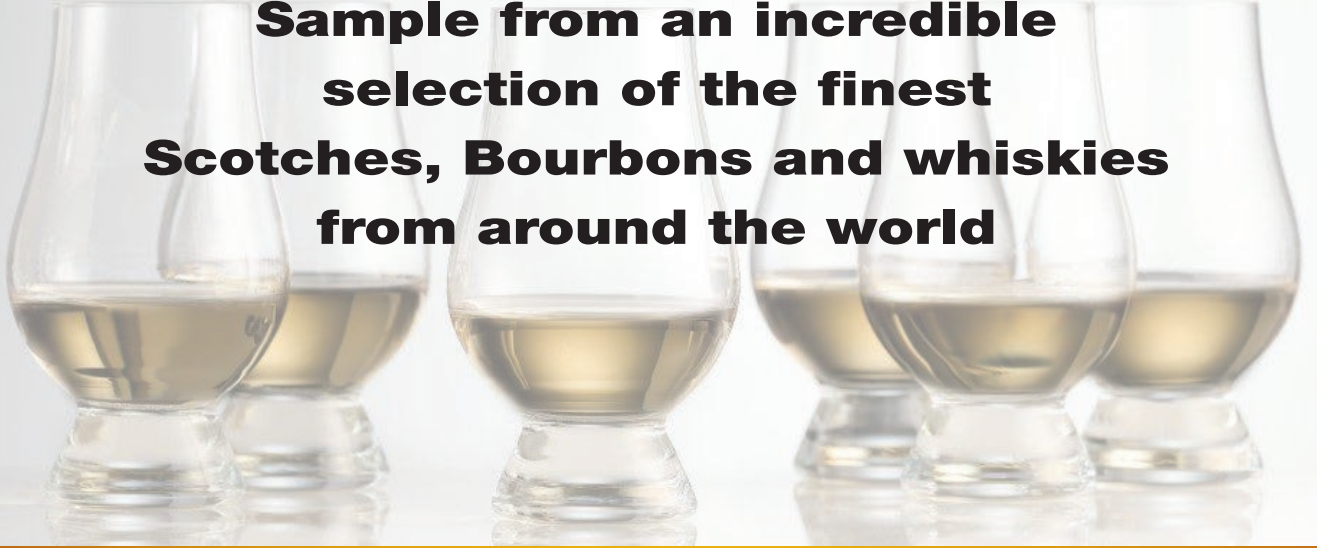
With her post doctoral fellowship completed, Baillie is beginning work as an assay development scientist at the University of Dundee in Newhouse, but it is unlikely that will keep her away from the dance studio or the judges' table.

By Rosalie Macheachern

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A full-page photograph of Nicola Benedetti, a young woman with long brown hair and bangs, smiling and holding a violin. She is wearing a yellow and black plaid dress with a black belt. She is standing in a field of green foliage and small purple flowers. The background is a dense wall of these flowers.

Nicola *Benedetti*

*Scottish violin virtuoso
Nicola Benedetti is more than
just another pretty face...*

“I really must get something to eat.”

Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti is on the phone from New York City, where she is busy making the media rounds in support of her latest recording, *Homecoming – A Scottish Fantasy*. The lovely, twenty-something “Scotalian” has just flown in from Pittsburgh, where she appeared with the city’s renowned symphony just the night before. And though she is happy to have her feet on the ground, she hasn’t stopped long enough to enjoy a proper meal.

“It is one of the many perils of performing on the road,” she says, “irregular meals and diet. As much as I try to keep my eating routine, I never get used to touring that way. And there is nothing I enjoy more than sitting down to a solid meal. You might never guess, as I am fairly petite, but actually, truth be told, I adore

good food.”

As for travelling itself, Benedetti has mixed feelings.

“It is the getting to and from the airports, the checking in, the going through security, the jet lag, etc – that’s the part most of us grow weary of,” she explains. “Once I arrive I am fine, and I cherish the opportunity to get out and explore a city like New York or Paris or London. I love the energy of these places, and the chance to experience and absorb new cultures.”

The challenge, she acknowledges, is finding the time to go sightseeing.

“Usually it is a bit of a whirlwind wherever I go; there are always meetings with the media or the people from the record company, and there are likely a number of social events and appearances planned for me also. And then there are the rehearsals

and concerts themselves, which take up most of my days. And somehow, through all that, I still have to find the time to practice, eat, call my family and boyfriend, and try to have some semblance of a normal life.”

Not that Benedetti is one to complain.

“Good Lord, no,” she laughs. “I am certainly the last one you would call a diva – my mother and father simply would not stand for it. I know my roots, I know where I am from, and I am grateful every day to enjoy the good fortune that I do. I make sure to count my blessings each night before bed.”

Born in West Kilbride, North Ayrshire to an Italian father and a Scottish mother, Benedetti is the epitome of a child prodigy; she began playing the violin at the age of four, and by eight was leading the National





Children's Orchestra of Great Britain. At ten she was admitted to the prestigious Yehudi Menuhin School for young musicians. By the age of 14, she had performed with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Scottish Opera, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, as well as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Two years later she was named the BBC Young Musician of the Year, and soon after signed a lucrative recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon/Universal Music Group.

In 2005, Benedetti released her first full-length solo recording – Karol Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 1. Since then, she has proven prolific, producing eight more CDs in just nine years, including *Homecoming – A Scottish Fantasy*.

"It was a recording that I had been thinking of making for a long time," she shares, "and it is one that I felt I had to make. The timing seemed right for me, and I knew where I wanted to go with it, so it was just a matter of bringing all of the pieces together and making it happen."

Including works by the likes of Max Bruch, Phil Cunningham, James Scott Skinner and others, *Homecoming* is an homage to her homeland.

"Growing up in Scotland, and being passionate about music from such a young age, it was almost impossible not to be influenced by our traditional culture," she notes. "It was everywhere, and it was a part of the daily soundtrack of my life. And even though I studied classical music exclusively, I have no doubt that those influences have seeped into my style and sound."

Benedetti believes that her perspective on Scotland has changed as she has matured.

"There was a time, as a young girl, when I had very little

appreciation or understanding of where I came from or the importance of having a sense of history and heritage. Scotland just always seemed to be there, and it was something that I took for granted would always be there. Of course, I missed my family when I went off to study in England – it is tough for any ten year-old to be away from their mother and father – but being away from my country at that time never aroused any sense of patriotism. It wasn't until I was older and travelling more often that I started to appreciate being Scottish."

She says that, despite being far from her family so frequently, she is still very much a product of her parents.

"I may look more Italian than Scottish, but I behave more like my mother," she chuckles. "I am typically Scottish in many ways; practical perhaps, and maybe even conservative or reserved by nature. Listen to me – I can't believe I am even admitting that!"

Being "Scotatian" isn't as rare a mix as one might think, she muses.

"There are a lot of us. Many Italians came to Scotland during and after World War II, setting up small shops and businesses all over the country. You would be hard-pressed not to find at least one Italian restaurant or ice cream parlour in each little town or village. The national palate has become a little, shall we say, stronger in recent years. Food is a very big deal with Italians, and we take it very seriously."

"Speaking of which, I should get going here. I have a wee bit of time before my next interview, and I really must get something to eat."

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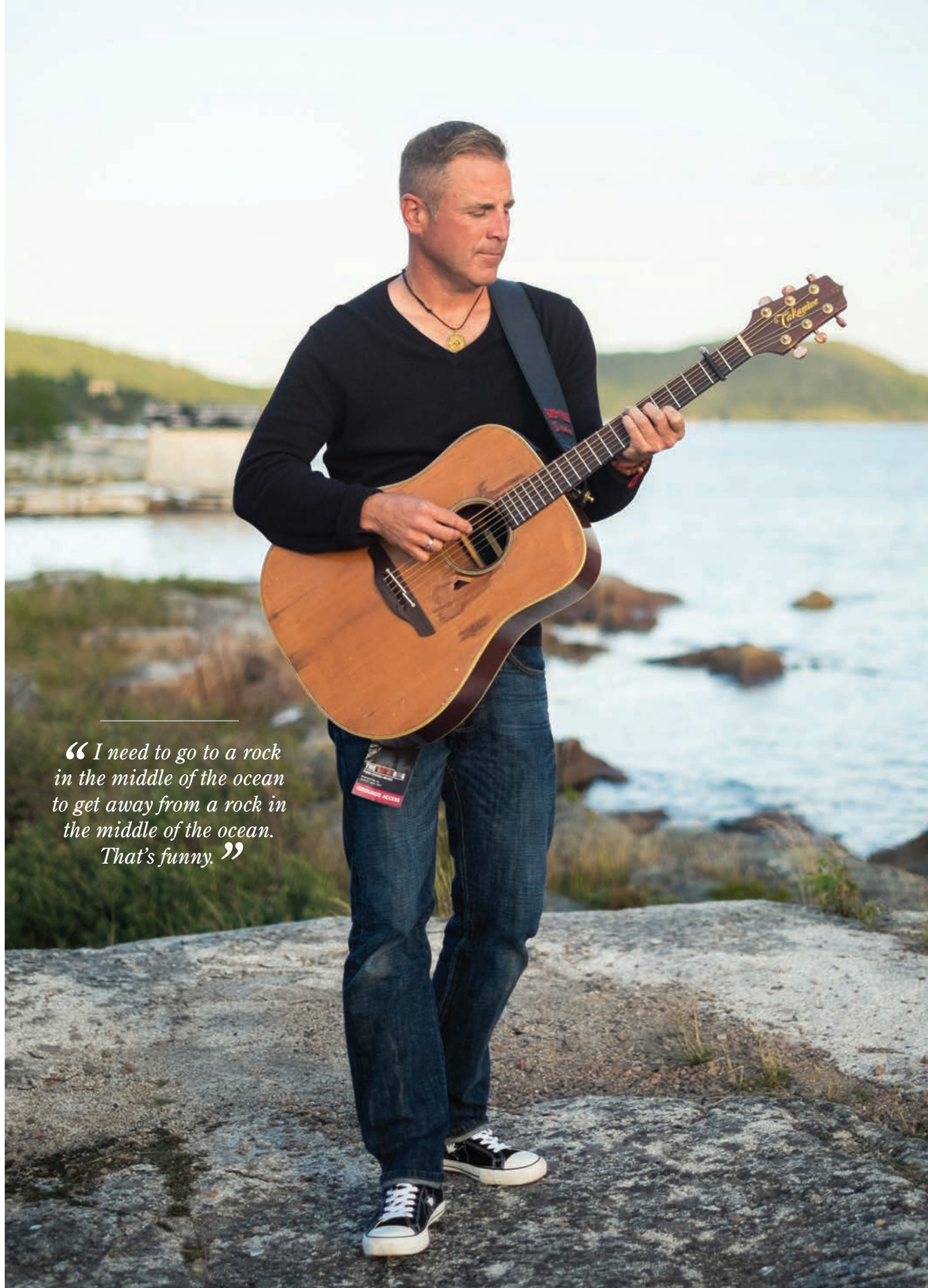
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Sean McCann

Since parting ways with his Great Big Sea cohorts, life has been good, busy and interesting for Newfoundland singer-songwriter Sean McCann...



*“I need to go to a rock
in the middle of the ocean
to get away from a rock in
the middle of the ocean.
That’s funny.”*

Fogo Island sits just atop the very northeastern tip of Newfoundland, on Canada's easternmost coast. The atoll is just 25 kilometers long and 14 kilometers wide. A 2011 census shows that 2,395 residents inhabit the island, though that number swells each August when the community hosts its annual Brimstone Head Folk Festival. The Great Fogo Island Punt Race takes place there each summer as well, honouring the area's seafaring past.

"It is quite remote," notes Sean McCann over the phone from his home in Newfoundland's provincial capital of St. John's. "That's why I haven't been in touch over the last little while; the phone and internet access up there is a wee bit dicey at the best of times."

The 47-year-old, singer-songwriter needn't apologize; artistic types need time and space to do what they do best – create.

"I took the guitar up there, along with a folder full of lyrics, in the hopes that inspiration would lead to perspiration. It's one thing to be inspired when you are writing music, but it's another thing altogether to put in the hours. It's a little like building furniture in that way; taking all the individual pieces and carving them into something cohesive and functional. And that takes time."

Time is at a premium for McCann these days. Along with his familial duties (he is married, with two children), he has been writing new songs for a forthcoming solo release, touring non-stop in support of his 2014 recording *Help Yourself*, making short films, managing his website and social media activity, writing regularly for his on-line blog, contributing to a number of social causes and working on his own personal development.

"I sobered up just a little over three years ago," he shares. "Things had become a bit unmanageable for me – not necessarily on the outside, but inside; emotionally and spiritually. Since then my personal journey of recovery has been my priority; it is the hub upon which all of my life-spokes turn. Without it, God knows where I would be now."

McCann is quite open about his 12-step travels.

"I wouldn't say that I'm one of those bible-thumping reformist types," he laughs. "But, I've had no problem sharing my experience, strength and hope in public. My hope is that by telling my own story, it might help or inspire others who might be suffering with the same affliction. Carrying the message of recovery is a big part of what keeps me sober, so there are selfish motives for doing it as well."

The troubadour was two years into his healing process when he made another life-changing decision.

"It was time," he shares of his split from renowned Celt-rockers Great Big Sea. "We had a great run for 20 years, and I will forever cherish the memories of working with Alan (Doyle) and Bob (Hallett) and our whole team, but it was time for me to move in a fresh direction. Things were getting a little stale there at the end for me;

the band had become a big business more than anything else, and I was feeling quite removed from the very things that made us successful in the first place; the music, the creativity, the let's-take-on-the-world spirit, the connection with the fans. And I felt that I could only get back to living those ideals – walking the talk – on my own.

"By then, I had already released two solo recordings (*Son of a Sailor*, *Lullabies For Bloodshot Eyes*), so I knew that I had it in me to write, record, release and tour my own music the way that I wanted to. Hitting the 'reset' button wasn't easy, and I was scared, but it was a step I had to take."

McCann adds that returning to smaller venues wasn't an issue for him.

"I love it," he smiles. "The warmth and intimacy you find at a place like The Carleton in Halifax (Nova Scotia) is simply something you don't experience performing in big concert halls and arenas; for me, the immediacy and interaction with the audience is far more rewarding and fulfilling as an artist, and I especially enjoy getting the chance to meet and speak with fans after a show."

Aside from music, chatting might be what McCann does best.

"Oh, you noticed did you?" he chuckles. "And I'm only on my second cup of coffee! You can blame my parents for that, and my heritage. What's that they say about the Irish having the gift of the gab? Newfoundlanders are notorious that way. We've a million stories, told a million different ways. Just look at the amount of books and musical recordings coming out of here each year. The numbers are staggering already, and they just keep growing. It must be something in the saltwater, or maybe the isolation of being out on a rock in the Atlantic Ocean."

I refer back to McCann's recent foray to Fogo Island.

"It's kind of ironic, isn't it?"

he muses. "I need to go to a rock in the middle of the ocean to get away from a rock in the middle of the ocean. That's funny."

The time and space seems to have served him well, however.

"Yes, it was productive," he says. "I'm piecing together material for a new album, which I expect will be released sometime in 2015. My hope is to again work with Joel (Plaskett, who produced *Help Yourself*) at his home studio in Dartmouth (Nova Scotia). He totally gets where I want to go with my tunes, where they need to be. As a creative person himself, he understands the intricacies and subtleties of songwriting and what it takes to best serve the songs in the studio."

"But I've still got a lot of work ahead of me before that; more ideas to sift through and more music and lyrics to pair up. I can certainly get some of that done here at home, but it's likely I'll need to start thinking about a return to Fogo Island."



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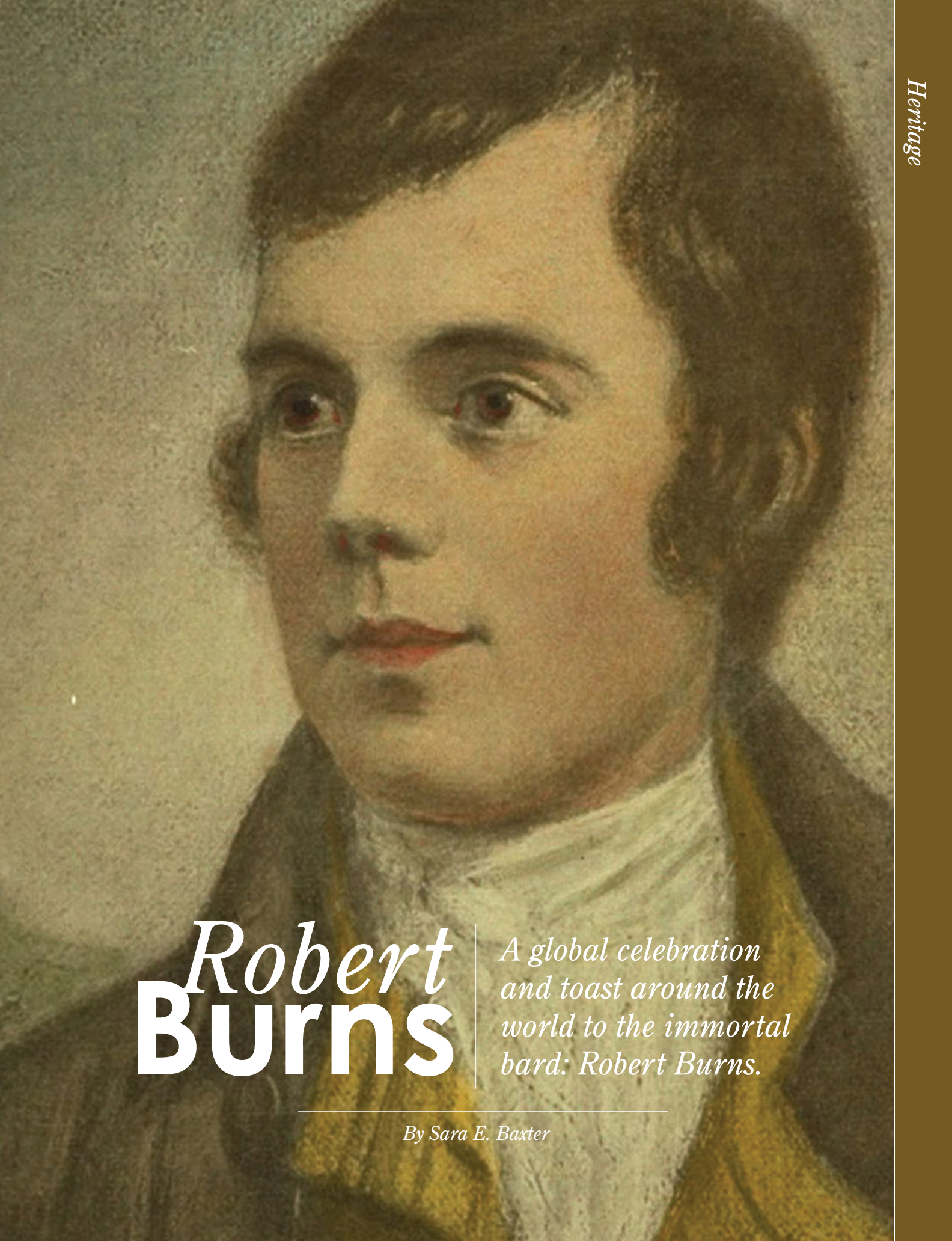
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Robert Burns

*A global celebration
and toast around the
world to the immortal
bard: Robert Burns.*

By Sara E. Baxter



Prepare the haggis! All over the UK, and well beyond, preparations are underway for the annual celebration of Scotland's best known son, poet Robert Burns. As is tradition, hundreds – if not thousands – of Robert Burns suppers will take place throughout the UK around the bard's birthday, January 25th. And what was once just a UK tradition has now spread around the world as people in countries as diverse as Australia, Canada and Jamaica celebrate the poet.

Burns was born in 1759 in the village of Alloway (now a suburb of Ayr), Scotland, and died on July 21, 1796 in Dumfries. Though only 37 at the time of his death, Burns did not fritter away his life. Considered a pioneer of the Romantic Movement, Burns wrote hundreds of poems and songs; sometimes in Scottish Gaelic, sometimes in English and sometimes in Scots dialect. Burns, who sired 12 children through four women including his wife, was first honoured in the 1800s with a supper in his memory.

In fact, the first Burns supper ever recorded dates back to 1801, on the fifth anniversary of the bard's death. That was when nine of his friends met to commemorate his work. The group agreed to meet again on his birthday to repeat the celebration.

Today, the national poet of Scotland is honoured all around the world every January, with countless suppers held in his honour. They all more or less follow the same storyline. Traditionally, the events include piping in the official party, an official welcome from the chairman of the supper, piping in and addressing of the haggis before a toast to the haggis. Next up is the meal, the Immortal Memory (an account of Burns' Life offered by the evening's main speaker), a Toast to the Lassies and a reply to the toast. The evening is filled with singing, dancing, readings from Burns' works, and capped off with the singing of Burns' Auld Lang Syne.

Arthur Bogues, Justice of the Peace, is the Honourary Secretary and past Vice-President of the Jamaican Caledonian Society, based in Kingston, Jamaica. The society is currently preparing for

its own annual Burns supper.

"The society is more than 150-years-old, and we've traced the Robert Burns suppers back to the 1930s," said 41-year-old Bogues who was born in Victoria, B.C to Jamaican parents.

With Scottish grandparents, it's hardly surprising that Bogues is so deeply invested in his Scottish roots.

"Jamaica has a stronger Scottish influence than the English do," explained Bogues. "We have a really rich Scottish heritage down here. Even a lot of the street names are Scottish."

The society's annual event attracts an assortment of people.

"We get a lot of expats from the British High Commission, and lots of Jamaicans with Scottish descent," said Bogues, noting the Burns supper is very traditional in nature. "We had a major distiller the year before last that came in from Scotland for a whiskey tasting," he said. "And we have an active Scottish country dance society that comes and does a performance."

Scotsman Charles Adamson is also a member of the Jamaican Caledonian society, and is already looking forward to the 2015 celebration. Although numbers have dwindled over the years, Adamson expects there will be a fair attendance at this year's event.

"Last year we did not have a supper, the year before was 50 and in earlier years we had up to 1,000 people," said Adamson who has participated in the event for 10 years. "Up to now it has been traditional with the expected speeches and after the Scottish Country Dance Society performs as well as soloists. This year the committee has decided to include a modern entertainer."

To some, Jamaica may seem like an unusual place for a Burns supper but logic dictates otherwise.

"Wherever Scots or descendants of Scots live and work, there are Burns suppers," said Adamson who came to Jamaica in 1969 after responding to a job advertisement. He has lived in Jamaica ever since, except for a short stint in Saudi Arabia from 1980 to 1984.



Bogues pointed out that regardless of how small or large the attendance at the black tie/highland dress affair each year, the end result always seems to be the same.

"Everybody thoroughly enjoys the evening," he said. "It's always a really great time."

Robert Burns suppers have also long since cropped up in Australia, where many Scottish societies and federations continue to host their own annual events.

"In Victoria, commemorative functions to honour Robert Burns have been held continuously since 1836," said Noel Wright, co-ordinator of the Scottish Resource Centre in Melbourne, Australia, which the Scots of Victoria Co-ordinating Group (SVCG) runs. "One example is the First Burns Festival conducted by the Melbourne Scots on the 24th of January, 1845."

The current Robert Burns Club of Melbourne has been thriving since it got its start in 1950, said Wright. The 2015 celebration will be the group's 65th annual Burns supper. The Brunswick Scottish Society, the Mornington Peninsula Caldeonian Society and the Bendigo Robert Burns Club also hold traditional annual Burns suppers in Victoria, noted Wright.

"Scottish immigration to Australia began in 1814 and between 1815 and 1914 over 500,000 Scots came to Australia and New Zealand," explained Wright, who pointed out that about eight per cent of all Australians claim Scottish heritage. "People attending these suppers range from Scottish-born to the general public who enjoy Scottish events. And yes, everyone partakes of the Haggis."

Gillian Leitch, possibly Canada's greatest haggis enthusiast, is a member of the St. Andrew's Society of Montreal.

"We were founded in 1835 and in the early '70s we took over the Burns supper from the Caldeonian Society of Montreal," said Leitch who is the Activities Chairperson and Historian for the society.

"It's a traditional supper that will take place on January 23rd at the University Club," noted Leitch who anticipates an attendance of 70 to 100 people. Leitch not only appreciates the suppers as a way of celebrating her Scottish roots but also because they provide an opportunity to enjoy a serving of haggis.

"I like haggis, and when I tell people that they think I'm either lying or I'm a really strange person," she laughed. "This will be my seventh Robert Burns supper and I am already looking forward to it. People always have a really great time."

The celebration of Burns has of course long since made its way into the Big Apple. Alan Bain, Chairman of the American Scottish Foundation in Manhattan, is one of the countless ex-pats who is in the habit of commemorating the bard every January.

"We are celebrating our 20th anniversary hosting the Burns night at a private club in NYC," said Bain who has presided over the foundation since 1993.

"We typically get somewhere between 200 and 230 people who attend. It's a black tie, highland dress affair in a very elegant most magnificent room."

The foundation's 2015 supper is scheduled for January 16.

"One of the interesting things is that this is an Americanized Burns night," said Bain, who noted the change from tradition occurred after three years to accommodate those not well acquainted with the Scottish bard and his life works.

"We have the toasts sung with Scottish singers performing for us," said Bain. "The address of the haggis is used as a little bit of an intro to Robert Burns and then it's sort of acted out. We don't have the immortal memory. We have a male and female singer performing duets."

Little Fire, a 25-year-old singer/songwriter from Scotland will perform at this year's event, while traditional dance will also be one of the evening's highlights.

"We actually close with reels, and people love that," said Bain. "It's a really fun evening. The guests get piped in, the haggis gets piped in. It's a real slice of Scottish life that people get used to."



On a romantic date that's not going so well? Not sure how to dress for the Robert Burns supper next week? Not quite sure what haggis is anyway? There's an app for that! The Works of Robert Burns is a free app, courtesy of Scotland.org. This app provides users with three helpful categories; About Burns, Poems and Burns Supper Guide. Users are provided access to 558 of Burns' poems and songs, and a helpful glossary for those not quite familiar with the Scots dialect. With the annual celebration of Scotland's favourite son in mind, The Works of Robert Burns also provides important information necessary to attend a Burns supper for the first time ever. The app also offers helpful hints about how to host your own Burns supper.

Four other Robert Burns apps are also available.

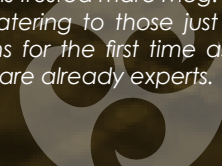
Robert Burns, from Momeida Ltd., is another free app that highlights the life of the ploughman poet. Through five sections (Quotes, Locations, Works, Timeline and Characters) this app proves to be a fine reference for the life and works of Burns.

Robert Burns Night is provided by Spot Specific Limited, and is available for the purchase price of 99 cents. The app includes a Burns Compass that, no matter where you are in the world, will always point you in the direction of Burns' home town of Alloway, Ayrshire. This app provides step-by-step directions on how to cook a perfect haggis, iPipes music that

can be used to pipe in the haggis, and tutorials on what to say and how to say it.

Robert Burns Poems is an app that sells for \$2.99, from Zuzteru Ltd. Books. A collection of the bard's works are included, with space provided for note taking and thoughts about each piece.

Finally there's the *Robert Burns Quiz* app, from AyeScot Ltd., for 99 cents. The more questions answered correctly, the closer Tam o'Shanter gets to finally crossing the Brig o'Doon before the witches can steal the tail of his trusted mare Meg. Quiz levels vary, catering to those just learning about Burns for the first time as well as those who are already experts.



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the Enchanted Forest

Dusk silences the birds of the forest. Moonbeams spear shivering autumn leaves, their twisted bodies spiraling down through the cool air. Strands of curling mist drift between twisted trees and something scurries past the toadstools at my feet. Twinkling lights play tag on the surface of a hidden lochan as gentle music entices the shadows to dance. This is The Enchanted Forest and there is magic in the air.





“There is a lot less technology than people realize. It’s a lot more human than that.”

The Enchanted Forest is Scotland’s premier sound and light show that takes place every autumn in Faskally Wood near Pitlochry. Over several weeks as the sun fades, the forest comes to life in an amazing display of coordinated music, light, water and fire. Here, visitors are drawn into the world of pure escapism that lies deep within us all. It is every fairy tale of childhood rolled into one. Such is the all-encompassing fantasy of this place that as I photographed mushroom sculptures changing colour one emitted a sudden puff of smoke that drifted upwards through the trees and a small excited voice piped up out of the darkness, “Look! The fairies have burned the toast!”

A shuttle bus service takes visitors from the centre of Pitlochry on the 10-minute journey to The Enchanted Forest with a recorded narration setting the scene on the way. On arrival, visitors are led to a twinkling forest path that meanders deeper into the woods. It is a journey of suspense, bewilderment and excitement. Distant lights come into view and ethereal music drifts through the darkness. Then the path descends, curving around a large area of water where fountains shoot skyward, changing colour and dancing in time to the music. Jets of fire emerge from the dark water as if a mysterious dragon might be lurking just below the surface. Costumed characters pass by as the path continues. Inside a yurt, a storyteller weaves pictures with words while a little further a lamp-lit bridge returns voices in strange echoes. Aerial artists swing high in the trees while the amazed onlookers below enjoy a warming cup of mulled wine or hot chocolate in the chill air.

The walk through The Enchanted Forest takes a very leisurely hour to 90 minutes, but there are few – and that includes the adults – who don’t do it all again for a second time before leaving.

Each year the event has a different theme and presents a significant challenge in coming up with an idea that will translate well through the use of water, fire, light and music. The latest theme was Elemental and Derek Allan, producer of the 2014 show, explained the design process.

“When planning the show, the creative team gets together: lighting designers, composers, sound designers and the producer and we brainstorm ideas to come up with a concept. We then research the idea on site, looking at potential places around the forest where equipment could go. Once that is decided we plan the route and create a master map with every single light – there are hundreds - on it.”

With the initial design established, the production team then sends the plan to a specialist company that can deliver the technical aspects of the show, refine the proposals and provide accurate costs. The lighting design is of course only one part of the event. Creating the musical score and working alongside the various musicians to record the soundtrack and coordinate it with the various lighting effects is the next stage in the process.

Kate Bonney, Lighting Designer for Elemental, worked closely with the musical director who was responsible for producing the unique soundtracks for the event.

“Our musical director is involved at the very early concept stage to get a good understanding of what the themes are for that year and then works on composing music that captures the mood and atmosphere of those themes. Much later on, the light and sound come together in the forest. Once the lights are all in place and working, the next stage is to start programming them to synchronize with the music. The lighting designers spend a lot of



“...in 2014 The Enchanted Forest event alone raised some £2 million for the local economy...”

time matching the lights with the music. It is a very collaborative process - a bit like being a choreographer. There is a lot less technology than people realize. It's a lot more human than that.”

The end result is a stunningly well-coordinated spectacle and the recent Elemental theme was certainly well received.

Originally founded in 2002 at nearby Dunkeld, The Enchanted Forest attracted 2,500 visitors in its inaugural year. In 2005 the event relocated to its current site at Faskally Wood where it has been held ever since. Visitor numbers have grown year on year and in 2014 reached 45,000. For the third time in the last four years The Enchanted Forest has been awarded the accolade of Best Cultural Event in Scotland and at the Scottish Event Awards ceremony in Glasgow in October 2014 it also collected a Best Large Event commendation with its marketing agency Volpa winning a Best Marketing Strategy award. In addition it has also just won Best Event or Festival in the regional final for the North East of Scotland's Scottish Thistle Awards and is hoping to add to its growing list of honours at the national final in a few months.

Since 2010 Highland Perthshire Area Community Interest Company (CIC) has managed The Enchanted Forest. CIC is a non-profit making organization run by a board of volunteer directors drawn from the local business community. It was created for the sole purpose of managing the increasingly successful event. The board's main objective is to ensure that The Enchanted Forest is run to benefit local businesses and help promote tourism within the Perthshire and Highland area. The success of CIC is evident in the increasing visitor numbers and also in the fact that in 2014 The Enchanted Forest event alone raised some £2 million for the local economy with hotels, boarding houses and restaurants seeing a

surge in bookings during the period of the event.

The Enchanted Forest is funded entirely through ticket sales, although, in recognition of the wider tourism benefits as well as the benefit to the local community, Event Scotland granted additional funding to the latest production. This was used to extend and further enhance the show with the addition of aerial artists.

Attracting such numbers of visitors over a period of a few short weeks also affords the opportunity for businesses to promote the other social, culture and environmental benefits of both the town and the wider community. Pitlochry has a population of around 3,000 residents although that number is boosted significantly in the summer months with an influx of tourists and the additional workers that they support. The town is also home to the famous Pitlochry Festival Theatre that draws visitors from all over the UK as well as further afield. Founded in a tent in 1951, its purpose-built home now occupies a prime location on the banks of the River Tummel and apart from hosting its own plays and musical events throughout the year, it also promotes additional cultural festivals such as the annual literary Winter Words Festival.

From its early tourism beginnings as a Victorian spa town, Pitlochry has always had much to offer its summer visitors but an extended programme at the Festival Theatre and the magical Enchanted Forest now make this a place to visit at any time of year.

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With its rich history and heritage, and its warm, welcoming, witty and wise inhabitants – Wales celebrates its Celtic roots with a quiet pride...

Story by Stephen Patrick Clare



Cardiff

The weather in Cardiff is iffy at the best of times. During the fall and winter months the sun shines at least part of most days, however, rain jackets and umbrellas are always close at hand. And though mainly mild, damp and grey from October to March, there is still a spring in the step of most residents here.

Like her sister cities Belfast, Dublin, and Edinburgh, the Welsh capital has enjoyed an economic and cultural renaissance in recent years, becoming an international hub for students and workers alike. Today, it is not uncommon to meet both transplants and transients from all parts of Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

The influx of immigrants and investment has brought a face-lift of sorts to Cardiff, as newer structures like the Millennium Centre and the Sherman Cymru now take their place alongside the traditional architecture of City Hall and the National Museum. The city's centerpiece remains Cardiff Castle, a magnificent monument to the country's majestic heritage, which stands En guard, watching over all with the dignity of a stately dragon.

Nearby, the massive Millennium Stadium dominates the waterfront. Built in the late 1990s, the 74,500-seat venue hosts a number of events annually: concerts, conferences, and a myriad of major sporting events, including motor racing, equestrian shows, boxing, and association football. Most notably, however, it is the home and heart of the country's greatest passion: rugby.

On the global sporting scene, Welsh loyalty to their "home-game" might only be rivaled in Manchester (United), Barcelona (FC), Montreal (Canadiens), and New York (Yankees),

"I haven't missed many matches over the last 30 years," boasts Martin Perry of nearby Newport. "I've been to most League games, Union games and almost all of the Autumn International and World Cup games that we have hosted."

A mechanical engineer by trade, the 53 year-old is one of thou-

sands who make the trek from Wales to England, Ireland, Scotland, France or Italy each February and March for the 6 Nations Championships.

"That's my winter holiday," he laughs. "Actually, the missus doesn't mind me taking off for a few weeks – that's her winter holiday"

Joking aside, Perry – like most Welsh rugby fans – knows and respects the game.

"The Irish deserved to win this year (2014)," he concedes. "They were the best team and it was good to see O'Driscoll (Brian, longtime Irish team captain) get another before he retired."

Perry's good nature, and his profound reverence for the opposition, speaks volumes about the Welsh character.

"Oh, we're not a nasty lot at all. We carry ourselves quite well both at home games and abroad," he smiles slyly, adding, "unlike our friends to the east."

Dr. Michael Davies agrees.

"We cheer for two teams in rugby here," smirks the forty-something owner and operator of Dragon Tours: "Wales - and anyone who is playing England."

He chuckles to himself, before adding "Rugby is a thug's sport played by gentlemen here in Wales, while football (soccer to some) is a gentleman's game played by thugs in England."

Davies' roots are showing. Born and raised in a small mining community in South Wales, he – like most Welsh – is quietly passionate about many things; his family, automobiles, skiing, good food, fine wine, travel, and, of course, the country's national sport.

And, with a PhD in Welsh Medieval Studies, Davies knows history. More poignantly, perhaps, he knows people.

"Don't get me wrong," he backtracks. "The English are lovely – they are our neighbours after all – it is only that, like a baby brother, we have lived in their rather tall shadow for a very long time.

"Still," he continues, "the Welsh have never been the sort to shout about themselves. We don't blow our own horns very often, if at all. In fact, we are more inclined to be a bit self-deprecating."

It is not false modesty, he notes.

"No, and I would not call us conservative or cautious either. Perhaps humble might be the right word. We have a humility about us that might be mistaken at times for reserve."

He is reminded that the real meaning of humility is about being right-sized, and about having a proper perception of oneself.

"Yes, that's it: humility. In spite of everything that has happened here – all of the history, the invasions, the rebellions, the mines closing, always losing to New Zealand in rugby – or maybe because of all these things, the Welsh have a firm understanding of who we are as a people – sort of a sure sense of self without the swagger."

That quiet confidence is the hallmark of everyone here; people are self-assured, cultured, educated, authentic, and polite.

That civility, he explains, makes Wales an ideal destination for those seeking an unruffled getaway.

"I think that when people travel – anywhere in the world – they are looking for some sense of safety and security first and foremost. They long to feel that they can trust and connect with their hosts on a deeper level. Wales is – and I don't want to sound like I'm blowing our own horn here or anything – one of the best places on the planet for that. It's like coming home to a warm and welcoming Celtic blanket."



The Celtic Blanket

While Cardiff savours its newfound global status, it doesn't take travelers long to uncover the country's roots. Only minutes out of the city sits the plush landscape of Caerphilly, where a 13th century Norman castle towers over acres of farmland.

Originally a Roman-era fort, Caerphilly Castle is one of 640 such structures across the country. In many cases, the Normans and other invaders built atop or beside the original edifices, often recycling the stones.

Evidence of this is found in nearby Caerleon, a quaint village with 1,000 year-old walls, where two small museums house even older artifacts from the Roman occupation (47 AD to 383 AD). The Sirules, an ancient tribe of Celtic warriors from the area, once fought the dreaded empire here.

Celtic culture abounds within an hour's drive of Cardiff; the towns of Cwmbran, Pontypool, Abertillery, Ebbw Vale, Abergavenny, Crickhowell, Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd are abundant with Celtic connections.

In spite of the influx of foreign influence – both past and present - Wales has retained its distinct Celtic identity.

"Truth be told, we might be the most Celtic of all the Celtic nations," explains Davies, citing a recent study showing that the Welsh have more Celtic DNA per capita than Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, Isle of Man or Galicia.

"Interestingly, it is Brittany that has the most in common with Wales," he continues, noting migratory patterns between the two countries, and similarities in language.

"What we know as Welsh today is rooted in the Brythonic Celtic languages. It evolved and took on a life of its own shortly after the Romans departed - and that really signaled the birth of Wales as a nation."

Unlike both Irish and Scottish Gaelic, however, the Welsh language has never been threatened by extinction.

"Very simply put, it never went away," notes Davies. "Although residents in the bigger urban areas like Cardiff and Swansea predominantly speak English, the rural population is still quite bilingual."

"In fact, up until only a couple of generations ago, for most people living in small villages through the central, western and northern parts of the country, Welsh was their first language, and often their only language."

Modern preservation efforts began in the 1960s – the country is now officially and legally bilingual - and today over 20 per cent of the nation's three million residents speak Welsh fluently.

"It is a lyrical language," says Davies, whose own 5-year-old son studies the dialect. "It is the language of musicians, writers and poets."



Swansea

Wales' second-largest municipality, the southern seaside town of Swansea, was the childhood home of the country's most vital and vibrant voice, Dylan Thomas.

The talented and troubled Welsh poet is a larger-than-life legend here, more myth than man. Both his verse and visage hover over all in Swansea, especially in 2014, as the area celebrated the centennial of his birth; at the downtown Dylan Thomas Centre, a permanent collection of his poetry, plays and short stories are accented with audio recordings and video clips; nearby, in the middle-class suburb of Uplands, the scribe's childhood home stands as a shrine to literary lovers; across the street sits the small park that ignited his imagination and inspired so many of his fantastic tales; signposts detailing where he walked, played, and went to school dot the cityscape; banners with his name hang from lamp-posts and his photograph stares out from Victorian-era windows.

Many of the local shops carry an array of Thomas-related items, including books, movies, T-shirts and tea towels.

Close to Swansea is the resort town of Mumbles, a pristine locale that the author adored and wrote of often. It is also where he flirted with the idea of acting, and where he first found his life-long thirst for alcohol.

Down the road a few miles is Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, where Thomas and his wife Caitlin rented a home by the water after returning from living in London. Quaint and cozy, with a 12th century castle nestled along the shoreline, Laugharne was the setting for one of the playwright's most famous works, *Under Milk Wood*. It is also where he was laid to rest at the all too-tender age of 39, having expired while on tour in New York City in 1953 after an evening of heavy drinking.

The details of that final night, like those of his complex personal and professional life, are blurred at best. What is fact and what is fiction is no matter, however. What is important is what Dylan Thomas left behind.

While the artist dabbled in an array of mediums – including screenplays, film, radio, vinyl recordings, the visual arts, and even wartime propaganda – it is his poetry and prose that have best stood the test of time.

Poems such as *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night, And Death Shall Have No Dominion*, *Fern Hill* and *Love In The Asylum* were labours of love for the master-craftsman, who poured over words with equal measures of attention and affection.

The stories – from energetic early works like *After The Fair* and *The Enemies*, to the more refined *Where Tawe Flows* and *A Fine Beginning* – only enhanced his reputation, alongside his creative counterweight Ernest Hemingway, as the finest wordsmith of his generation.

Many know him for his yuletide classic, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, which is much-read and loved during the holiday season.

His work has moved millions of readers all over the world, much as his love for his country once touched him. Wales' passion for her prolific prodigal son, though posthumous, is more evident today than ever before. Dylan Thomas spoke for all, but he mostly spoke – and continues to speak – for the Welsh. He was the country's first modern celebrity, and is one of its most renowned and recognizable figures. His words – lyrical and fantastic – helped to define and refine the nation's identity, soul and spirit.

Spirit

Like many nations, the history of spirituality in Wales is quite complex.

Druids and Celts ruled the religious roost here until the Roman conquest in the 1st century AD. Rome's conversion to the monotheism of Christianity under Constantine the Great was slow in reaching the empire's westernmost outpost, and it wasn't until after they had departed permanently in 383 AD that "the way, the truth and the light" found firm footing in the country.

In the centuries since, foreign kings, armies, cultures, bishops, merchants, preachers, and more have come and gone, but the seeds of that early Christian faith, sprinkled and sown mostly along Wales' western coastline, bloomed like wildflowers.

The Chapel of St. Non is nestled along the newly-named Celtic Sea (formerly the Irish Sea) in Pembrokeshire, in the southwest corner of Wales. It is the birthplace of the country's patron St. David. It is also a homage to his mother Non, or Nonna, who lived there in the 5th century. The small ruins are considered the



oldest Christian site in Wales, and are accompanied by a shrine, a Celtic Cross, and a holy well. Many devout Christians from around the world still make the pilgrimage to St. Non each year, throwing coins into the well waters in exchange for blessings.

St. David, who died in 589 AD, founded a monastery nearby. There, alongside his original house of worship, a massive Cathedral in his name was constructed in 1181, and still welcomes worshippers today.

A well-preserved 11th century Celtic Cross stands over the tiny town of Carew a short distance away. Early Christians thought to include the circle – a Celtic symbol for the sun, moon and wholeness – as a way of slowly integrating Celts into their religious fold.

Further up the country's western coastline sits the Parish of St. Brynach. Originally a 6th century Christian "ecclesiastical centre," the building was renovated and expanded by the Normans six hundred years later. A number of the church's original artifacts have survived, however, including the 10th century Nevern Celtic Cross, as well as a once free-standing 6th century Celtic Cross, which has since been cemented into the walls of the edifice.

Interestingly, the "kneelers" – small cushions which are used in the pews during prayer – are still hand-woven by parishioners today, highlighting a host of knotted designs, paying homage to the area's Celtic past.

Outside in the courtyard, Yew trees – once used as symbols of immortality by Celts – give shelter to aging tombstones and walkways. One tree – "The Bleeding Yew" – has been dubbed as such as it leaks red sap – the colour of blood – at various times through the year. Many still believe it to be a sacred space with healing properties.

And while the nearby Neolithic burial ground of the Pentre Ifan Dolmen predates Christianity in the area by 3,000 years,

local priests – perhaps sensing some sort of spiritual hot spot - regularly sought divine inspiration from the hilly locale, as well as from other, similar surrounding sites.

A few miles north and inland, at the confluence of the rivers Teifi and Afon Dulas, the town of Lampeter is awash in a sea of aging churches, monasteries and religious study centres. Once the stronghold of faith in western Wales, the area has secularized into an educational hub over the last century.

Similarly, all of Wales has undergone a transformation of spirit in recent years. While churches continue to sit squarely at the core of most towns and villages here, attendance is down significantly with each passing generation. And though a third of the population still identifies themselves as Anglican (Church of Wales), and another third continue to call themselves Catholic, a growing number now consider themselves to be “non-conformist,” with many of those saying they have “no religion.”

Perhaps fittingly, the fastest growing spiritual movements in Wales today are New Age, Neo-Druidism and Neo-Celtic. In search of greater “wholistic” experience, more and more Welsh are returning to their ancestral roots – spiritual seeds that were planted long before Christianity.

The Present is the Past

Scotland has William Wallace. The Irish have St. Patrick. The Welsh have Owain Glyndŵr - pronounced Owen Glen Dure.

Outside of Wales, and aside from online, you’d be hard-pressed to find any information about the father of Welsh nationalism; there have been no box-office block-buster movies made of his life, no bestselling biographies, no annual main-street parades or celebrations in major cities around the world. His story, however, is as important to the conservation of Celtic culture as those of

Wallace or St. Patrick.

Born in the mid-1300s into an affluent Anglo-Welsh family, Glyndŵr studied law and later joined the English military. Resigning from service in his forties, he returned to Wales and retired to his family estates. A land dispute with his neighbor - an Englishman - led Glyndŵr to petition the courts in London. When the case was dismissed outright, he took the slight as a slap to the face of all Welshmen.

By 1400, Glyndŵr had gathered supporters and rose up against the tyrannical King Henry IV. Over the next two years, the raggle-taggle band of rebels scored several strategic victories against their oppressors, eventually winning control of the northern and central regions of Wales. The following year, his efforts inspired Welshmen from across the country to revolt, and in 1404 Glyndŵr called his first Parliament at Powys in western Wales, declaring an independent Welsh state, sharing his vision for the country, and proclaiming himself the first Prince of Wales.

A tactical alliance with France followed, and soon the English were being attacked from all sides. After the French turned their attention back to domestic issues, King Henry IV changed tactics by cutting off the insurgent food and arms supply lines. The ploy worked; the rebel forces were depleted and demoralized, with only a few final skirmishes taking place over the next half-decade, including one, sadly, that resulted in the loss of Glyndŵr’s wife and two daughters.

By 1412, the country’s “Last War of Independence” had come to a close, and Glyndŵr retreated to the Welsh countryside, rarely to be seen or heard from again.

Acknowledgement and recognition of his contributions and sacrifices finally came in the late 19th century, courtesy of the newly-formed “Young Wales Movement.” He has since been celebrated by local, regional and national politicians, religious leaders, scholars, military figures and the like, and recently placed second in a poll of 100 Welsh Heroes.

Despite his smaller standing on the world’s stage, the evidence of Glyndŵr’s influence upon Celtic culture is everywhere in Wales: in Ceredigion, home to both the National Library of Wales and Aberystwyth University – each guardians of the Welsh language; in Machynlleth, where the Welsh flag flies high from every home and business; in Abermaw, where youngsters sport their national team jersey on the rugby pitch; in Portmerion, where a local architect designed a major tourist attraction that draws tens-of-thousands from around the world each year; in Caernarfon, where an enemy’s medieval castle remains an ever-present reminder of past struggles; in Llanelli, where the National Eisteddfod brought Welsh of all ages together for nine days of homegrown culture in 2014; in Colwyn Bay, where a local bakery has been serving up hot, homemade Welsh Cakes for over two centuries; in Holyhead, where a ferry connects Celtic cousins across the Irish Sea; in Tregaron, where a young mother and father encourage their 5-year-old son to say *dwi Cymraeg*.

It is the impact upon the everyday lives of everyday people here in Wales – from cosmopolitan Cardiff and lyrical Swansea, to the gentle hills and quaint villages across the west and north of this most wonderful part of the world - that is Glyndŵr’s greatest legacy: a quiet pride that permeates all.

“We are very fortunate to live where we do,” shares Michael Davies. “My family and I enjoy a very good life here in Wales, and we count our blessings every day for this great gift.”





a brief History of Wales

Cymru is the Welsh name for Wales while Cymri means Welsh people. Both words are derived from the term Combrogii, which is a Brythonic word meaning “fellow countryman.” The Celts in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany originally spoke Brythonic. In Wales, Brythonic gradually evolved into Welsh, a language that never died out. In fact it is still the mother tongue for some present day residents and has seen a boost in the 21st century. Like its language, much of Wales’ diverse and rich history has survived, not only in historical accounts and folklore, but also in physical, cultural and spiritual forms.

Prehistoric Times

Archaeological evidence suggests human life in Wales dates back to Neanderthal times; and the first full skeleton found there is tens of thousands of years old. Researchers with Oxford University and the British Museum recently determined “The Red Lady of Paviland” skeletal remains, found in Goat’s Hole Cave on the Gower Peninsula, are 33,000-years-old. The bones, which actually belonged to a male, are some of the oldest ceremonially buried remains ever discovered in Western Europe.

Today signs of Wales’ prehistory remain with such burial chambers as Parc Le Breos (circa 4,000 BC), Pentre Ifan (circa 3,500 BC) and Arthur’s Stone (circa 2,500 BC).

Sources approximate the Celts’ arrived in Britain some time between 1,000 BC and 500 BC.

1st to 4th century AD

In 43 AD, Romans led by Emperor Claudius invaded Britain. Five years later, the Romans arrived at the Welsh borders.

Although eventually all of Wales would come under Roman control, the Silures of the southeast and the Druids of Anglesey resisted for some time.



5th century to 6th century

With the Romans’ departure from Britain came the arrival of the Anglo Saxons. While the kingdoms in Wales faced battle, along with all of Britain, the Anglo Saxons had little success gaining control of Welsh territory. Legend has it that King Arthur, a “Brythonic hero,” led victories over the Saxons, notably at the Battle of Badon. The Battle of Dyrham in 577 gave the Anglo-Saxons control of southern England, causing Celts to flee to what is now Wales.

Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, lived during the 6th century. Today, St. David’s Day on March 1st is Wales’ national day. St. David’s Cathedral in Pembrokeshire is considered so holy that one pilgrimage to it is the equivalent of two to Rome.

8th century

Offa’s Dyke is named after King Offa, the Anglo Saxon leader of Mercia, who was thought to lead the construction of the

boundary between “Anglo-Saxon England and Celtic Wales” circa 784, says History-World. However, in April 2014, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust announced it had found evidence that sections of the dyke predated King Offa’s reign by two centuries.

11th & 12th century

In 1066, the Normans began their invasion of England. While in Wales it seemed at first the Normans had the upper hand, they were largely unsuccessful in permanently taking over the majority of the Welsh kingdoms’ lands.



In 1067, William Fitz Osbern of Normandy built Chepstow Castle. Overlooking the River Wye, it is credited as Wales’ first castle. Today, Wales boasts more than 600 castles. Notable examples include Pembroke Castle, the birthplace of Harri Tudor (Henry VII), the first of the Tudor monarchs; and Harlech Castle, the one time home of Owain Glyndŵr.

Wales is often known as “the land of song” and its first Eisteddfod (singing and poetry competition/festival) took place in 1176.

14th & 15th century

Owain Glyndŵr is ranked second among Culturenet Cymru’s “100 Welsh Heroes.” Beginning in 1400, Glyndŵr and supporters rose up against the English regime, gaining back control of some central and northern Welsh territories. (Wales had been under English rule since Edward I’s conquest over a century prior). In 1404, Glyndŵr, the “last Welsh Prince of Wales,” held his first Parliament meeting at Machynlleth.



16th century

From 1536 to 1546, the English parliament enacted a series of laws known as the “Acts of Union.” Wales was divided into shires each to be led by English-appointed Justices of the Peace. Welsh representatives could serve as members of parliament, but could only communicate in English.

18th & 19th century

At one time the mine at Parys Mountain in Wales yielded more copper than any other source in the world and by the end of the 1700s, it was responsible for half the world’s copper production.

By the 19th century, Wales was the world’s largest slate supplier.



In 1804, Cornishman Richard Trevithick tested out his innovative steam engine on the Penydarren, also called Merthyr, Tramroad in Wales. The engine successfully pulled a train carrying 70 men and 10 tons of iron.

Narrow gauge railway systems became very useful in industrial Wales. Today, visitors can delight in the Welsh countryside aboard one of the traditional train lines.

Bute Dock in Cardiff was built in 1839 to accommodate high iron exports. Cardiff quickly became Wales’ largest city. Coal exports, reaching approximately two million tons by 1862, began to overtake iron. At the country’s coal production peak in 1913, Wales produced some 56 million tons.

20th century

In 1908, Wales won its first Grand Slam rugby title as part of the Home Nations

Championships, which was contested between the country, Scotland, Ireland and England. Since 1908, Wales has won the Grand Slam title 10 more times as part of the Home Nations, Five Nations and Six Nations—which includes France and Italy—Championships, the most recent being in 2012.

In 1935, the BBC started broadcasting the very first radio program in Welsh from its Gwynedd studio.

In 1942, the Welsh Courts Act removed the 400-year-old “language clause” that had prohibited the Welsh language in the courts.

The hub of activity at Cardiff’s docks attracted workers from all over the world. “In the 1950s, some 57 nationalities were counted among the 10,000 people living in Butetown, the mile-long stretch of dockland at the southern end of the city, commonly known as Tiger Bay,” described The Guardian’s Alison Benjamin. Although outsiders viewed Tiger Bay as seedy or dangerous, some who have lived or descended from that area say it was a place of “racial harmony.”

In 1982, S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru), the Welsh language television channel, was launched.

In 1984 Cadw, the “Welsh government’s historic environment service” was founded. One of its recent projects has been to run a consultation process to draft the Heritage Bill, which will be introduced to the National Assembly this coming spring.



In 1997, a narrow majority voted “Yes” in the country’s devolution referendum. Based on the 1997 results, the first National Assembly for Wales officially began in 1999.

A majority voted “Yes” in a 2011 referendum in favour of the National Assembly for Wales having increased legislative power, such as not having to consult the UK Parliament in certain law-making areas. Recognizing both English and Welsh as official languages in assembly proceedings was the first act to be passed by the National Assembly for Wales and it was given royal assent in November 2012.





Wales' Moment in the Sun

As Celtic Life International contributor Gerald Herter explains, before the September 2014 NATO Summit, Wales was, for many, just the little known appendage attached to the side of England.

That said, the Welsh people lay claim to a colourful and violent past. Yet unlike the drama that has characterized Scotland and Northern Ireland lately, Wales has proved to be the more stable member of the United Kingdom in recent times.

Determined to welcome the world with a display of pride and confidence, the people of Wales came well prepared for their brief moment in the spotlight.

Two days before the NATO world leaders' dinner at Cardiff Castle, my wife Lori and I were enjoying tea in the seventh floor lounge of the Hilton Hotel across the street. From the broad lounge windows, we felt like we could almost reach out and touch the striking 11th century castle looming large in the sunlight.

But what stood out even more from our vantage point were the ever present police in their striking yellow vests. On the sidewalk, patrolmen strode in pairs at 50-yard intervals. On the street, motorcycle teams of six zoomed by every few minutes, as well as frequent squad cars and

troopers on horseback. Officers peered out from atop the castle tower, while their colleagues swarmed the grounds like bright ants among the tourists.

When we planned our trip to Wales nine months earlier, we had no idea our visit would coincide with the summit of the 28 NATO country leaders. Even as we toured the castle's ornate banqueting hall earlier in the afternoon, the guide made no mention that the likes of President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel would soon gather for a historic



meal in this storied room.

Our peaceful afternoon tea was disrupted suddenly as three vested police officers strode into the hotel lounge, metal detectors in hand. They proceeded to meticulously screen around every chair and above each ceiling tile for nefarious devices. Like all the police we encountered in Cardiff that week, these were a friendly, yet professional bunch, hailing from all parts of Britain. "There are ten thousand of us here," one officer from Herefordshire mentioned proudly. I asked who was minding their hometowns while they were here. "Other officers are called upon to step up," he replied matter-of-factly.

Later we walked down by the Cardiff waterfront, which the Welsh have developed into a bustling centre for tourist activity. The modern Millennium Centre and slate-covered National Assembly Building stood out next to classical structures, like the red brick Pierhead building that reflected Wales' maritime past.

Lori spotted an attractive pin in a tiny gift shop nearby that she had to have. We

sensed excitement in the sales clerk's voice as we talked with her.

"The warships are starting to come in. Have you seen them by the dock?" She pointed toward the left side of the harbour, behind a historic Norwegian church built for sailors a couple of centuries ago. "President Obama will be spending his nights on one of the ships during the NATO Summit." She was looking forward to having a great vantage point watching for him, since her apartment is on the top floor of a building overlooking the harbour. She also alerted us to various security measures, such as street closings and a complete planned shutdown and rebooting of all area computer networks just before the Summit.

When we got to the dock, 100 people crowded the fence in front of the first British warship to arrive, while a reporter and cameraman broadcast the news. We observed added security measures. Small boats laden with police dotted the harbour. Along with foot and motorcycle police patrols, now pairs of military types with assault weapons watched vigilantly.

"Cardiff must be the safest place to be this week," I mentioned to Lori as we returned to our hotel. Stepping out of the elevator at our floor, yet another policeman, seated by the door keeping watch, greeted us as we walked by.

"Since the Summit starts tomorrow, we had better leave early to avoid the expected traffic delays," Lori suggested. I agreed as I consulted the map. Our planned driving route, on the M4 motorway up toward Tintern Abbey, passed close to nearby Newport, the site of the Summit meetings at the Celtic Manor Resort.

We held our breath the next morning, but managed to avoid street closures and the protestors anticipated by the castle. Even so, we knew our presence was observed along the motorway. On every overpass between Cardiff and Newport, police closely eyed all vehicles moving by.

Turning at last onto the local road that led to the Wye River Valley, we breathed a sigh of relief. The peaceful, bucolic charm of this scenic rural corner of Wales proved a welcome contrast to the armed camp atmosphere in Cardiff.

Set amongst rolling green hills, the extensive 12th century Abbey ruins exuded a silent strength even now. A walk through the remaining gothic structures, their past grandeur described on aptly placed plaques, helped us grasp the extent of the sophisticated community that flourished here so long ago.

We continued along the Wye River to the sumptuous Llangloed Hall country house hotel, our home for the next two nights. Once owned by the husband of Laura Ashley, the hotel is richly furnished with fabrics from her collection. Well attended to by watchful servants, we could now relax in the serene countryside of Wales.

But one last reminder of the NATO Summit remained. We noticed that several of the parking spots in front of the hotel were reserved for the UAE. Upon querying the staff, we were told that the United Arab Emirates representatives to the Summit were staying at Llangloed Hall.

The following day after a walk by the Wye River behind the hotel, we turned on the TV in time to see President Obama speaking as he readied to depart.

"I want to thank the people of Newport and Cardiff and the people of Wales for welcoming me and my delegation so warmly. It's a great honour to be the first sitting U.S. President to visit Wales...Thank you very much, people of Wales. I've had a wonderful time."

We were pleased for our new found friends, the Welsh people. They had done themselves proud and shown the world and us genuine hospitality.





NO DEVOTION

Welsh rockers start from scratch as dark pop synth stars No Devotion.

At the end of 2012, the Welsh band Lostprophets saw their 15-year career fall apart. The rock band, who formed in 1997 as teenage friends from Pontypridd, had previously been superstars of the alternative rock scene, selling over 3.5 million albums worldwide, touring the globe and building up a devoted fanbase.

Nearly two years on, and Lee Gaze, Mike Lewis, Stuart Richardson, Jamie Oliver and Luke Johnson have left the Lostprophets saga firmly behind them, forming new band No Devotion with vocalist Geoff Rickly, who is formerly of the New Jersey screamo outfit Thursday. No Devotion announced their arrival with the premiere of *Stay*, an '80s-style slice of dark synth pop overlaid with Rickly's poetic lyricism, a band promo shot and an image of the single artwork, which is a man's arm tattooed with co-ordinates. Those geo-

graphical markers signify a point exactly halfway between Pontypridd and New Jersey, which "symbolises a meeting point for the whole band," according to Gaze. "We will keep on using co-ordinates in our artwork or on posters, if we are going to do a secret gig, we will use them to reveal the location," he explains.

This nod to their roots is a logical move for No Devotion; for five-sixths of the new band, their Welsh upbringing played a crucial role in helping them ride out the storm two years ago.

"The fact that we grew up in a super working-class, super-humble town, was a massive part of how we were strong enough to do this," says Gaze. "Don't get me wrong, there were people who experienced things far worse than we did, but it was completely destroying, and I think lesser people would have scurried away

and hidden under rocks. Instead, we came back with our fists up. It was a case of... 'we are not running away.' That attitude is definitely something to do with our origin, for sure."

While all members of No Devotion now live outside their home country, they remain tapped into Welsh culture, especially the flourishing music scene. Rickly is a big fan of new Cardiff talent Samoans, whose particular brand of heavy rock is receiving critical acclaim.

"There's a bunch of great Welsh bands," Gaze concurs. "The Vestals, they are really good: they sound like The Cure. The scene is changing, too. There's some more indie stuff coming through, which is really interesting to me, as well as heavier bands."

Although they are just starting their new chapter in the music industry, No De-

votion now hope that their own story of triumph over adversity might motivate some of the young creative people now living in rural Wales.

"If we can deal with what we had to deal with and still come out with a new band, that's got to be an inspiration to people," says Gaze, thinking back to his teenage life in Pontypridd, where music provided him a much needed escape. It eventually took him, as part of Lostprophets, to Vans Warped Tour in the USA, which is where the band first met Rickly in 2012.

Having forged a friendship with the Welshmen just prior to their troubles, Rickly was initially of the opinion "that there was no coming back from that for the other Lostprophets boys." He's a long-time friend of their manager, Karen, who told him that they had been unhappy "for a while." When Karen broke the news that the ex-Lostprophets were working on new music and looking for a frontman, Rickly was reluctant to get involved.

"I know how the British press can be," he says, "and I was feeling pretty vulnerable. I didn't want to be attacked – I didn't think I was strong enough." But when he heard the music that Gaze and company were producing in bassist Richardson's studio, he was inspired to contribute, even during a time of illness. "I was recovering from some treatments, so I just sang some demos from my bed," he recalls. "The next thing I knew, Karen was getting me on a flight to meet them."

Now a killer combination of experienced musicians, No Devotion has developed a collaborative, creative relationship.

"We respect each other," says Rickly. "I don't try to bring them guitar parts, they leave the lyrics to me. There's no tension, no ego."

Their previous understanding of the music industry means they avoid the obvious pitfalls that frequently trip up rookie bands.

"Although we are in our infancy, we are playing our first shows and we aren't making any money, we have all been here before," says Lee. "So if we make any mistakes this time around, we deserve a kick in the ass!"

Their friends and contemporaries in the rock scene have helped by welcoming No Devotion with open arms. Musicians like Biffy Clyro, Neon Trees and former My Chemical Romance frontman Gerard Way have all publically offered their support, while Radio 1 DJs Daniel P. Carter, Huw Stephens and Bethan Elfyn have all given their music a boost.

"When Dan played Stay twice in a row on the radio, that was a real moment for us," says Gaze. "Huw, I have so much respect for him – he's like a modern day John Peel in that he plays what he likes. He played the single B-side Eyeshadow on Zane Lowe's show, and we had no idea that was happening until people started calling us afterwards."

Despite all their previous success, Rickly and Gaze are humble and deeply appreciative.

"To have all this support so early on is just brilliant," says Rickly. "Also, the specific kind of support: people aren't just playing our songs, they are really fighting for us. They don't have to do that."

Things seem to be looking good for No Devotion, who added risk on top of risk by returning to music with a completely new musical direction, unlike either Lostprophets or Thursday – instead focusing on their personal music tastes and tapping into a love of New Order, The Cure, and The Jesus and Mary Chain.

"We feel comfortable about where to put our influences, what serves the song and adds to the identity of the band – there is a clear consistent vision," says Rickly.

This new sound is driving the New Devotion live show. They have just performed a short run of gigs around the UK – a weird situation, given that they have only released two songs.

"Most new bands play to a group of 30 people, mostly their friends, in a pub," notes Lee, "whereas we are in sold-out venues with a 350-500 capacity, playing a set that no-one has heard before."

Instead of going for the traditional all-guns-blazing approach, No Devotion start each gig with a slow building, six-and-a-half minute song that they describe as "like the opening credits of a movie. It's a statement; that song is right in the centre of what we are about," Gaze explains. "We want to push it to the extreme of what we do, right from the start."

"At the moment we are still in a transition period where a lot of fans of the old band are coming to the gigs, which is great, and the ones who like it are totally welcome on board with us," he continues.

"But all we ask is that they give us a chance, listen and not judge the music on our previous bands or our past."

The decision to make No Devotion's live debut in Cardiff wasn't something the band took lightly.

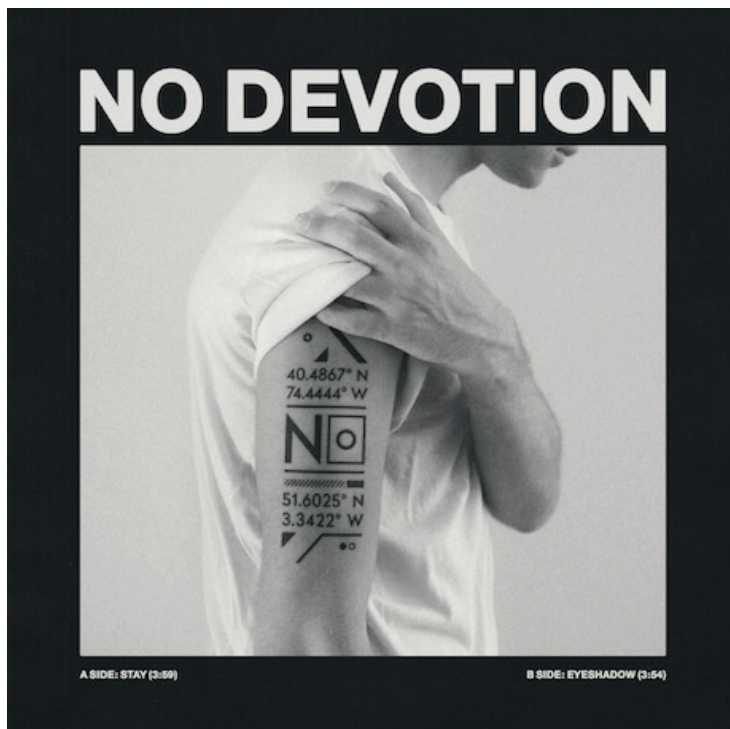
"We discussed whether or not to, for a second," says Rickly. "Then after we decided to, it became obviously the right thing to do."

Gaze is emphatic about why they had to come home to Cardiff in order to begin again properly.

"We are not an entirely Welsh band, but Wales means a lot to us. So when welcoming someone new into our family, it was a great place to start."

Rickly, the American outsider to No Devotion's Welsh contingent, smiles warmly at his bandmate.

"Being there definitely changed everything for me, when I realised what a family I was part of. Now I carry that with me."





*the*Meadows

Pardon the pun, but these Meadows could become leaders in their field. But the Meadows in question aren't a long stretch of grass, but rather four young, classically trained musicians from Wales. The three sisters and brother regularly perform together and cover a wide range of genres, including classical, Celtic, Tudor and contemporary music. The siblings began playing seriously together roughly four years ago.

"It seemed to form so naturally as there has always been music playing in our noisy household," shares their father, James Meadows, in an interview with Celtic Life International.

He says as the children grew up, they became increasingly involved with music and simply couldn't get enough of it.

"If they weren't playing music, they were listening to albums by Clannard and other musicians who have helped inspire them on their musical journey," he notes.

While the quartet plays in a variety of styles, they gravitated toward Celtic music because they enjoy experimenting.

"There has been a strong leaning towards Celtic music in the family as there is so much variety of colour, expression and room for improvisation that is so much fun in traditional music," Meadows explains. "We just love coming up with fresh arrangements of traditional music for our concerts."

The group consists of Melody, who plays both piano and violin and then began flute later. As well, she is proficient with the guitar, recorder and Irish whistle. Her sister Fantasia plays piano and Irish whistle. Harvey has mastered piano, guitar and the bodhran, while Tatiana is taking piano and violin lessons.

The more the quartet plays together, the greater the confidence they gain.

"I remember the first performance we did together," Fantasia recalls. "We were all pretty terrified, although we enjoyed it. Now confidence has grown. We feel more excited than scared before a concert. To connect with an audience and see them enjoying

themselves only gives us more enthusiasm and we love every moment."

The quartet has written several of their own pieces. One, which Fantasia authored, is titled *An Evening Stroll Through Aberglasney*, which drew inspiration from the gardens of the same name in Carmarthenshire, Wales. The piece incorporates piano, flute and violin and fuses together Celtic and classical music. Another original is a Celtic-styled song titled *May Mountains How*, which Tatiana composed.

According to Meadows, the quartet requires a lot of hard work both individually and as a group.

"As they play quite a variety of different instruments, it takes many hours to practice each day," he points out. "It feels so worthwhile when they come together and learn new music, so they can just bounce off of each other. They have also done some recording, which has sharpened them, and look forward to doing more in the future."

Asked what makes a good song, Melody replies that it is one the performer not only has a connection with, but that touches the listener's emotions and imagination.

"It's fantastic to play and sing something that creates a certain atmosphere, whether it be an emotional song or something lively and humorous, which the audience can join in on as well."

Meadows asserts that just keeping up with Celtic music traditions is a great way to preserve the culture and keep it alive.

"It can touch people from all ages and backgrounds and it is good to see a new generation being energized by Celtic music, which is worth building upon. We would like to see more events to bring emerging bands to the public attention as Celtic music is not just something that harkens back to the past, but is as current and relevant as ever."

www.facebook.com/TheMeadowsMusic





When you are the only game in town, the temptation to sit back on your heels must be great. That's certainly not the case with Penderyn Whisky of Wales. Recently we spoke with the company's Commercial Director Sian Whitelock about how they continue to innovate and invest in their single malt.

Penderyn Whisky

What are your own roots?

I was born and raised in Port Talbot, South Wales, and I still live here, very close to Aberavon Beach, which holds many fond memories for me of my childhood with my family.

When and why did you get involved with Penderyn?

I joined Penderyn in 2005. The owner of the Industrial Services company that I previously worked for sold their business and invested in a number of other businesses, and Penderyn was one of them. Whilst I stayed at the old company for a little while, I was soon to be offered a Director's position at Penderyn and was delighted to be part of the team.

What are the challenges of the job?

Whisky is a matured product, so what's distilled today isn't ready for sale for a number of years. We have been growing steadily year on year, but also have to manage limited whisky stock availability. Having built additional stills and production capability over the past year means that we will have plenty more room for growth in about four to five years. In the meantime, we have to manage supply and stocks very carefully.

What are the rewards?

Seeing the company grow steadily to the respected position we are in today is very satisfying. Day to day, meeting new customers and discussing and tasting Penderyn is always rewarding.

What is the company's history and mandate?

The company is privately owned and was set up in 1998. It evolved from an initial discussion between a group of friends talking in the local pub about how there wasn't a Welsh whisky. The rest, as they say, is history.

How is Penderyn unique in the marketplace?

As the only distillery in Wales, Penderyn is unique in its revival of whisky making in the country. We also use a very modern still configuration, which delivers a new-make spirit that is very unique, flavourful and fruity.

What's next on the company's agenda?

Penderyn has invested heavily this year in additional stills and mashing facilities that will allow us to grow our sales three to four times that of current sales levels. This will require much planning and preparation for these increases and the development of new markets.

What are your thoughts on the state of Wales' whisky industry?

At present, Penderyn is the only player in the Welsh whisky industry. However, that may change in the future, and if it does, I think it will be a positive change. Wales could develop its own whisky category to sit alongside scotch and world whiskies. Penderyn is currently selling all that can be produced, so for us, business is good.

What can be done to grow the industry?

At present, we are slightly constrained by stock, but when our stock from increased production is available, then we will be targeting growth with existing markets and also new export markets not yet explored.

www.welsh-whisky.co.uk





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CelticTravelGuide

Good times, Great memories



“One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.” ~ Henry Miller



For most travelers, the journey is the destination; the thrill of being in motion, the savouring of unique sights and sounds, the delight in experiencing different cuisine and culture, and the joy of making new friends in new places.

For many, especially older generations who now enjoy extra time and income, it is the chance to fulfill lifelong dreams, and perhaps check off another item on the “bucket list.”

Judy Lowstuter of Celtic Journeys provides escorted tours to Scotland and Ireland. She says that her business is booming, thanks in large part to Baby Boomers.

“The majority of our clients are between the ages of 45 and 80, and are from the USA, Canada and Australia. Almost all of them want to experience the heritage, history, natural beauty, culture and people of the Celtic countries. Because our tours are limited to 16 guests, we are strong on customer service, accommodating special requests to make a tour a personal experience for each. That means a high level of personal care, attention to detail, lots of extras, four-star accommodations, good food, and a strong focus on history and heritage. We must be doing something right, because we enjoy a repeat clientele rate of about 65 per cent, and receive high praise and five-star ratings from guests year after year.”

Like Lowstuter, Stewart Bennett of Stewart Caledonia Tours in Port Perry, Ontario, says that putting together travel experiences is a labour of love.

“I immigrated to Canada in 1957 with my parents. I own a Scottish Shop - The Wee Tartan Shop - and it has been on the main street here for 17 years now. I have become the person in the area to discuss all things Scottish – they call me “The Highlander.” After so many people asked me to help them decide where to go

on their holidays in Scotland, I decided that I might be able to take them on a coach tour. So I started Stewart Caledonia Tours and we have been taking travelers to the UK for the last 10 years. I love showing them “My Scotland” and Scotland has never let me down. Some of my friends have now travelled with me, at least once every year, which challenges me to find new adventures and places to visit. We make our coach tours exciting but fun and

often stray from the published itineraries to take in something really unique and special. Getting off the motorways is my main goal. The coach tours are really fun with singing and dancing wherever we can. We have danced on the Royal Yacht Britannia, at the gates of Balmoral Castle, in the ruins of Duntulm Castle and in the parking lot at Roslyn Chapel.”

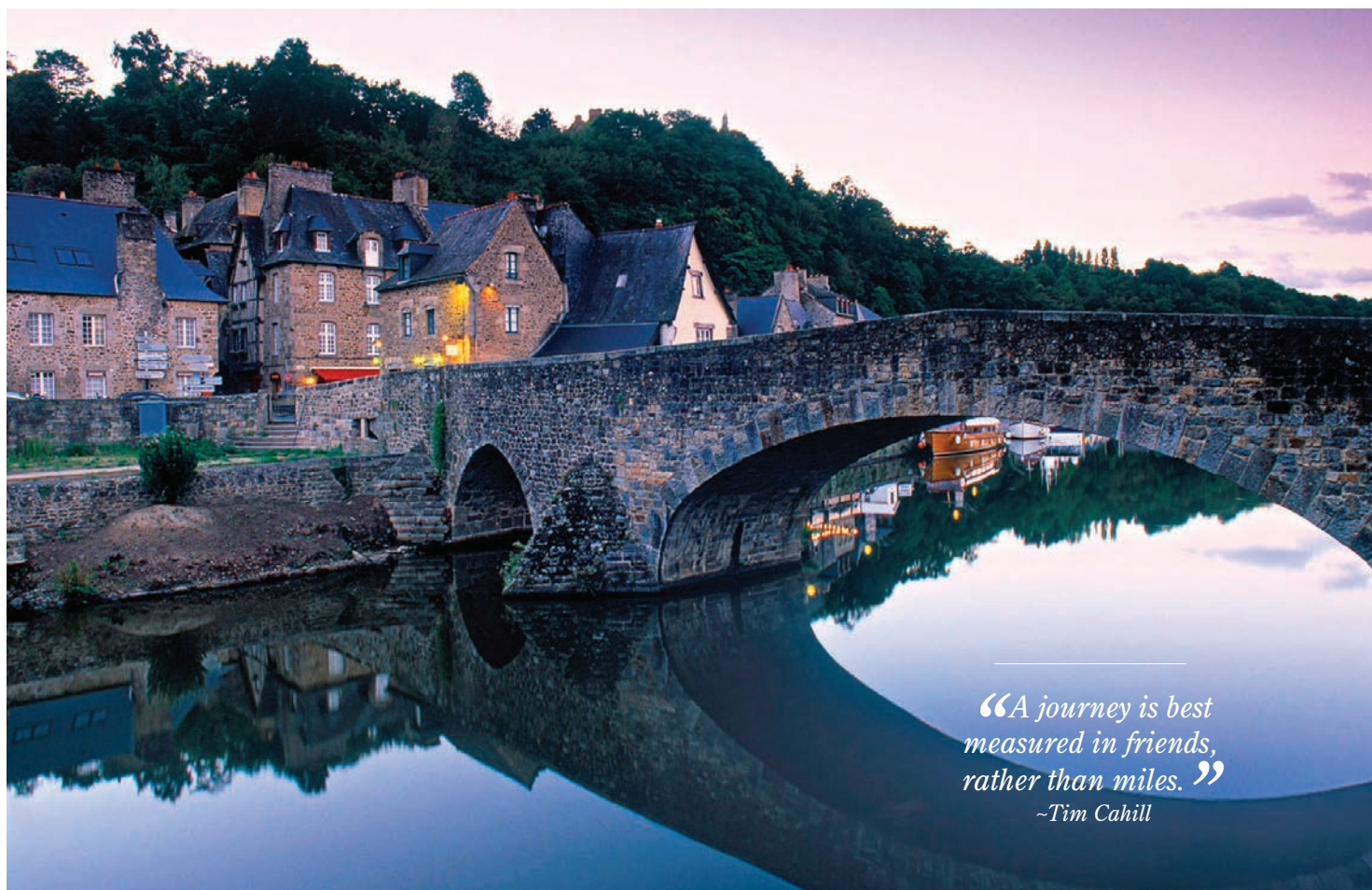
Ivor Heinrichsen, owner and operator of Vorscott Tours, agrees that Scotland makes an ideal travel destination.

“Scotland, especially when the weather is kind, has everything to offer; glorious scenery, magic culture and heritage, whisky, unique castles, our Highlands and lochs, friendly hosts, easy travelling with a variety of scenery on offer within relatively short distances, good lodgings, and, of course, fascinating folklore, myths and legends, including landscapes from prehistoric sites, standing stones and circles, the kilt and Highland dancing,

Hogmanay at new year, as well as many other internationally celebrated festivals. Scotland is indeed a ‘Land for All Seasons.’ Even our ‘Brigadoon’ weather has its own delight with the low mist covering the mountain peaks, giving a sense of mystery. We are also fortunate in having so many more folks abroad of Scottish ancestry – who can be more ‘Scottish’ than us at home – keen to visit the old motherland.”

**Judy Lowstuter
& Stewart Bennett**





*“A journey is best
measured in friends,
rather than miles.”*

~Tim Cahill

Kathy Writer of Craig Travel shares that the Emerald Isle offers visitors a similar experience for both people of Irish ancestry and those just looking for a relaxed holiday.

“Ireland is historic, scenic, magical and welcoming. The Irish people are simply amazing. You can find a great story, a warm meal and a smile just about everywhere. It is a relatively easy destination to get to, English speaking, affordable and offers so much for the traveler. One can find religion, music, family, culture, food and of course lots of laughter. One is generally sad when leaving and they surely are making plans to return again... whether it's the stories of leprechauns and fairies, or historic battles and castles, the intrigue and mystery of Ireland is a big draw for people. That, and the Guinness!”

Gary and Cherrill Smith of Ontario have enjoyed exploring their Celtic heritage through Craig Travel.

“We both trace our roots back to England, Scotland, and Ireland,” says Gary. “Cherrill’s paternal ancestors emigrated from Stirling, Scotland, to the United States

before moving on to the Eastern Townships of Quebec in the 1800s. Some of my ancestors came from Scotland in 1832, and founded the family farm near Merlin, Ontario.

“In Scotland, Cherrill enjoyed the Military Tattoo and the Festival in Edinburgh and walking the bleak hill country. I was intrigued by the sense of stepping back in time in the Outer Hebrides, smelling the peat fires, and hearing Gaelic spoken. In Ireland, we discovered a country that is magical with mysticism, wonderful people, music, delicious food, and fabulous accommodation in farmhouses, small country house hotels, and castles.”

Since 1995, the Smiths have gone on 25 group trips.

“As we get older we have found that it is very enjoyable to travel with a group of compatible, like-minded people. We also appreciate that the cost is all-inclusive, the accommodations are the best available, and the group is escorted by a well-travelled leader and experienced local guides. We have also organized two trips for a group of six friends and then had Craig

Travel make the final arrangements with their in-country provider. These trips were half-way between independent and group travel experiences because they were well-organized with a driver/guide and mostly prepaid, but flexible enough to allow for spontaneity.”

As with the Smiths, these experiences can lead to life-long friendships for tour operators also.

“After tours I always follow up and remain in contact with former clients,” says Ivor Henrichsen, “most of who are friends even before we meet as a result of our email or phone contacts prior to the tour. I am pleased to say that I have had wonderful responses back from my fellow-travelers and good recommendations with repeat business by customers or their families and friends. I would estimate that more than 90 per cent of my clients have become our friends with invitations to visit them back at their homes. Normally they have met with my wife Betty at our home or been out with us for a meal during their tour. So I feel very blessed.”



Off the Beaten Track

You won't find these spots on any list of "top 10 attractions," but these lesser-known hidden gems should be on your agenda as you journey through the Seven Celtic Nations.



Rathlin Island (Northern Ireland)

About eight kilometres from Ballycastle, off the Causeway Coastal Route, is Northern Ireland's only island inhabited by humans. Rathlin Island, home to about 100 people and Ulster's largest seasonal colony of seabirds, offers an intriguing experience with its dramatic land and seascapes, historic ruins and pillars and welcoming "Island family." While summer tourism to the island continues to flourish—the island now boasts a number of accommodations, activities and places to eat and drink—Rathlin still offers that ultimate sense of retreat Robert the Bruce found nearly 700 years ago. Ferry service from Ballycastle is offered year round.

www.rathlincommunity.org



Mhúscraí Gaeltacht (County Cork, Ireland)

In Ireland, Gaeltacht refers to a region where Irish is, or was until recently, the main language spoken. County Cork's Irish speaking region is Mhúscraí Gaeltacht, an area characterized by a rich literary, mytholog-

ical, art, dance and music—including Sean-nós singing—tradition. The region boasts more than 220 archaeological sites dating as far back as 4,000BC, states the Visitor Guide to Gaeltacht Mhúscraí. "The valleys of the Gaeltacht are surrounded by the Sheehy Mountains and the Cahahoe Mountains to the west and is often compared to the Lake District in England," adds Coiste Sli Gaeltacht Mhúscraí. Another highlight is the sixth century St. Finbarr's Oratory, also known as "Small Church out in the Lake on the little island all on its own" inside Gougane Barra Forest Park.

www.slugaeltachtmuscraei.com
<http://homepage.eircom.net/~meithealmhuscraei/guide/>



Montgomery (Powys, Wales)

A small historic market town in Wales, Montgomery is located close to the English-Welsh border. Peter Long, author of *The Hidden Places of Wales*, described the north Powys region in which the town is located as having "some of the best preserved sections of Offa's Dyke," as quoted by Sally Williams of WalesOnline. Montgomery itself entices visitors to explore and engage in fun or cultural activities—for example, they had their first town crier competition in the summer of 2014. From the 13th century St. Nicholas Church with Lord Richard Herbert's elaborate tomb to Montgomery Castle, the County War Memorial overlooking the town, summer theatre and scenic cycling

routes, there is plenty to keep a visitor's attention.

www.montgomery-wales.co.uk



Castell-y-Bere (Snowdonia National Park, Wales)

You've probably heard of Snowdonia National Park, but you may not know Castell-y-Bere. Wales is known for its density of castles but the impressive ruins of this one are sometimes forgotten. Castell-y-Bere, located close to Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, was built by Prince Llywelyn the Great circa 1221. Numerous parts of the castle are still intact, including its D-shaped towers; visitors can walk "room-to-room" letting their imaginations run wild.

www.eryri-npa.gov.uk/a-sense-of-place/history-of-snowdonia/castles-of-snowdonia/castell-y-bere



Clava Cairns (near Inverness, Scotland)

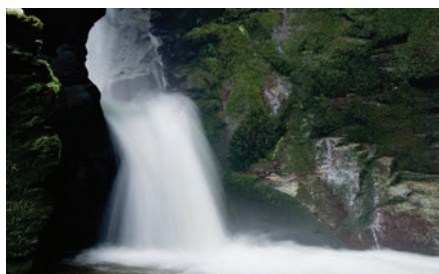
Less than three kilometres from the Culloden Battlefield lies the lesser known Clava Cairns, also known as Balnuaran of Clava. The three

remaining cairns set inside a picturesque wood are examples of Scotland's best preserved burial chambers from the Bronze Age, and especially magical to visit at sunrise or sunset. You can manoeuvre through the passageways of two of the cairns. Prehistoric cup and ring marked stones are also featured. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyresults/propertydetail.htm?PropID=PL_067



Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre (Glasgow, Scotland)

While Glasgow is not off the beaten track, its Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre is far from conventional. Russian sculptor Eduard Bersudsky, who moved to Scotland in the early '90s, is the mastermind behind the Gothic-esque workshop of hundreds of mechanical contraptions. Together the sculpted characters, lights and sounds tell Russian and Scottish folk stories that delight and stir thought among audiences of all ages. The Herald's Mary Brennan described the experience: "It's grotesque, it's stunning, it's spiritual, it's dark, it's mystical and it's very, very human." www.sharmanka.com



Saint Nectan's Glen (Cornwall)

For some, it is a sacred site; for others it's magical. Saint Nectan's Glen in Trethevy, Cornwall, rumoured to be within King Arthur territory, is classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest

due to the rarity of some of its plant species, and is home to not only wild life, but also apparently piskies (pixies) and fairies. The site allows for an enchanting wooded walk along the river to the 60-foot waterfall—said to have healing properties—and the hermitage, which has a café serving up characteristic Cornish fare, a gallery and a meditation room. www.st-nectansglen.co.uk



Bécherel (Brittany)

Brittany's small town of Bécherel has been compared to Hay-on-Wye, the Welsh town for bibliophiles. France Today's Ellen Karel described the French equivalent: "Bienvenue à Bécherel, Brittany's booktown, with 750 residents, one bakery and 15 booksellers. Some say magic transformed this rural Breton village into France's premier booktown." In addition to Bécherel's bookshops, annual Fête du Livre and old world charm, the town and environs has impressive historic buildings like Château de Caradeuc, and ample choices for walking, cycling and horseback riding. www.brittanytourism.com/discover-brittany/hidden-gems/becherel



Adventures Around the Isle of Man

Walking and driving are just fine to see the island Finn MacCooill "threw into place." But if you want to intimately explore the Isle of Man, why not try something completely differ-

ent? The island offers a number of adventurous opportunities to do just that, from horseback riding throughout the countryside to gorge scrambling and sea kayaking. You can also take a Segway Safari tour on the beach or in a forest. Or go coast-eering—scaling, jumping off and swimming along the coastal shores. One company leads such tours near Maughold, a village named after a Celtic saint; and the Kirk Maughold parish church has quite a selection of Celtic and Viking crosses.

www.visitisleofman.com/thingstosee-anddo



Ribeiro (Galicia)

Ribeiro is a comarca or district in Galicia's province of Ourense. The hills and vineyards—the area has been winemaking for centuries—the monasteries, the hórreos—traditional stone structures for storing grain—and walking paths alongside the Avia and Miño rivers, make for an enticing area to explore. Ribadavia, the Kingdom of Galicia's ancient capital, is now commonly known as Ribeiro's capital. With a medieval quarter - named an Artistic-Historical site in 1947 - old churches and a castle, a Jewish quarter, festivals, museums, and a chance to relax and socialize in the Plaza Mayor while enjoying some local wine, there is plenty to experience in Ribadavia without feeling like a tourist.

www.turgalicia.es/descricion-da-ruta-turistica-do-ribeiro



My First visit to Dublin

By Veronica Breen Hogle

I'm wide awake watching white, puffy clouds tumbling past the bedroom window, followed by flocks of noisy jackdaws flying low over fields that were amber with wheat in the summer. I turn and watch my widowed grandmother dress her slight frame in layers of black clothes over her red flannel petticoat. She says the red flannel keeps her old bones less painful. She walks to the window and her head nods up and down as she looks through the rippled windowpane. She studies the mist and the colours of the heather and wild flowers on Mount Leinster. She looks down at the Barrow River to gauge how strong the wind is and how warm the weather will become as the day goes on.

"No rain. No rain at all for a few days," she announces and her grey eyes are soft and happy. "A fairly strong wind is coming in from the Atlantic Ocean. It will be about 50 degrees F. A crisp, dry November day, thank God." Gran stands at my bed and clasps her hands.

"This morning, we're going to get on the bus an' go up to Dublin to visit my daughter, who is your Aunt Greta." I've never been to Dublin so my heart starts to beat like a drum with excitement. Last night, in preparation, I polished my shoes and hung my new clothes on the end of my white iron bed in the bedroom I share with my grandmother.

Gran pins a rose-pink satin scarf around her neck with a cameo brooch. She laces her black leather shoes. I hold her black wool coat while she slides her arms into the sleeves. Then she pulls on her Napoleon-style black hat. We walk down the incline from the house and get into the car that takes us down to the bus with its engine running, parked outside Shea's Shop in the Market Place. We live so far down in the country the bus won't go any further. Its last stop every night is Grauguenamanagh.

The big engine of the bus throbs and the bus climbs onto the stone bridge and we're off to Dublin. It stops often to let passengers on and off. Johnny walks up and down the bus taking the fares and ringing

up the passenger tickets. He puts the money he collects into a black leather pouch that is strapped across his chest. Women and children wave from cottages and farmers in fields tip their caps to us as we speed along the narrow road. Every now and then, overgrown hedge branches slap the windows. Everyone talks about crops and weather. Some of the passengers work in Dublin, others are going to visit sick rela-



tives in hospitals, a few are going to shop. Everyone talks in happy tones about Ireland becoming a republic. A man wearing a soft hat says, "If anyone asks me, 800 years of British rule was more than enough." Johnny Hickey says people will always remember 1949. It's also the year I'm nine years old.

The bus stops at the Bagenalstown



railway station. I look over at the goods department where the man I call Daddy Jim works. A wave of sadness comes over me, remembering he and his wife, my Aunt Christina, are still in hospital. Because they have to stay there for a long time, I was suddenly taken to live with my grandmother, who lives in a small village at the end of the world. I'm going to go to school there when my birth certificate and my school marks come in the post.

When we arrive in Dublin, we get a taxi to Aunt Greta's house. The driver zig-zags fast in and out of the heavy traffic. "Jaysus! God A-mighty! Jaysus! Eejits!" he says often while we smile and sway in the back seat. When he turns a corner, we knock and bump into each other and it makes us laugh. Battalions of people ride bicycles, some in front of the kelly-green double-decker buses with screeching brakes that belch strong fumes into the air. More armies of men and women are walking shoulder-to-shoulder up and down the wide sidewalks. There are huge signs with blinking lights on the tall buildings advertising Guinness, Powers Whiskey, Bovril, Donnelly's Sausages and Cheese. As we cross O'Connell Bridge and the Liffey River, Gran points back to a giant-sized statue of a man. Seagulls perch on his head, his shoulders and arms.

"That's Daniel O'Connell, this bridge was named after him. He was a great orator," Gran says.

"What's an orator?"

"A person who's a good speaker. A person who can inform, persuade, convince. He was a lawyer. He believed in non-violence. He was a Catholic. He was the first Catholic to have a seat in the House of Commons. He brought about Catholic emancipation for Irish people."

What's emancipation?"

"Freedom."

We go up Grafton Street and the scent of perfume tells me everything is expensive. An old woman is sitting on the sidewalk playing a harp, nearby another woman is selling flowers. Gran asks the taxi driver to stop at Bewley's dessert and

coffee shop. When we enter, the aroma of coffee, vanilla and all kinds of desserts float up to the ceiling. She buys a Swiss jam-roll and we get back in the taxi. Soon we are outside Aunt Greta's big old Victorian house on Harrington Street, before the South Circular Road, on the corner of the street where George Bernard Shaw was born. Aunt Greta runs a boarding house and has eight children. When we enter her house, Gran gives her the jam-roll. Aunt Greta sends the oldest son, Louis, across the street to get fish and chips. He brings them back wrapped in newspaper. My aunt opens them up and sprinkles malt vinegar on them.

While we gorge ourselves, the aroma of the brown crispy chips and the batter-coated fish rushes into every corner of the kitchen. I had heard of the fish and chips, but I had never eaten them until today. They are so delicious, I will love them forever. Aunt Greta holds up a big bottle of milk that has inches of cream at the top and says, "Baine?" which is the Irish word for milk. All the children put up their hands and she fills their cups with milk. After lunch, Gran tells me to go and play with the children who are too young to be in school. We run up and down the many flights of stairs playing hide-and-go-seek.

Sometimes, when I come back close to the kitchen, I hear Gran telling Aunt Greta the Fitzpatrick's won't be out of hospital for a long time. When the children go back to school, Aunt Greta says she's going to Moore Street to get some meat and vegetables.

"Would you like to come with me, Vonnie?" she asks me.

"Oh, yes! I say and run to get my coat.

"While you're there, could you get me three lamb chops?" Gran asks and gives her some money. "I'll stay here an' take care of the little ones," she says.

Aunt Greta takes two shopping bags from the back of the kitchen door and we get on a double-decker bus back to O'Connell Street. I sit on the top level of the bus so I can see all of Dublin, but Aunt Greta prefers to sit downstairs. I go down and sit with her so I'm not left on the bus and can't find my way home. Moore Street is right in the center of Dublin. The street is crowded with women selling vegetables, fruits and flowers out of baby prams. They hold up bunches of bananas.

"Get yer bananas here! Five for a shillin' the bananas!" a chubby lady shouts.

"Four for a shillin' the oranges.," sings another woman who is holding a baby. "All the way from sunny Seville, the oranges! Get yer oranges here!" There are all kinds of beautiful fresh roses, gladiolas, dahlias, and other flowers I don't know the names of.

"Here luv, buy yerself a bunch a red roses! No need ta wait fer himself ta bring ya roses. Ye can git a bunch a twelve just for a half-crown, missus! That's just two an' a half pence a piece," shouts a woman with carrot-red hair to Aunt Greta. She laughs and shouts back.

"Ah...now, after eight children, I'm beyond roses, if ya know what I mean."

We go to another vendor and buy potatoes, onions, parsnips and carrots. On both sides of the street, there are shops for butchers, bakers and fish mongers. We stop outside a butcher's shop

that has pigs' heads, pigs' feet, liver, kidneys, brown hen eggs and long links of sausages displayed in the window. We go inside and like all butcher shops, it has sawdust on the floor. There is beef, lamb and pork hanging on big hooks. My aunt orders the lamb chops. The butcher lifts down half a lamb from a hook and puts it in front of her.

"Would you like 'em cut from here missus?" he asks. My aunt says yes and tells him to give her three and then six more in a separate package for herself. We then follow the smell of bread baking into a bakery. Aunt Greta buys scones, bread and an apple tart.

When we are back in O'Connell Street, I see young boys selling newspapers.

"Ireland soon ta be free! Read all about it!" shouts a skinny boy selling *The Evening Herald*.

"Ireland ta kiss the Commonwealth goodbye! Read about it in *The Press*!" shouts another boy.

We ride the double-decker back to the house and we have more tea, scones and the apple tart. The rest of the children come home from school and the whole house is noisy and happy.

Around four in the afternoon, my aunt, who is the only one in the family to have a phone, rings for a taxi to take Gran and me back to the bus station. On the way back, Gran and I eat our sandwiches. I think about the great day I had going to Dublin for the first time, riding in double-decker buses, eating fish and chips, going to Moore Street, and being driven around Dublin in a taxi. I had children to play with and I learned two new words. "Orator" and "emancipation." But when the bus stops in Bagenalstown, it's dark outside. I have a huge urge to get out and run to the Fitzpatrick's house, to go home. I don't want Gran to see my sad face and think I'm ungrateful. So she doesn't see the tears that have welled up in my eyes,

I turn and stare out the window.

Soon, we cross over the Tinnahinch Bridge and the bus bumps down into the market place in the little town of Graigue-namanagh. Uncle Eric is waiting for us at the bus. He has arranged for a man to drive Gran and me to our house. When we enter the house, Gran says she's tired and goes up to bed right away. Uncle Eric says he's going up to the Healy's farmhouse to play cards. I sit in Gran's chair and poke the fire, and it jumps into a lively blaze. I hear Gran's leather shoe drop onto the wood floor in our bedroom. The only other sounds are the ticking of the clock and the sap spitting out of the wood blazing in the fire place. I hear her second shoe hit the floor. I lean back in her chair and read the comic books again. After awhile my eyelids feel heavy. I take the clock and go up the stairs. I miss Gran's prayer ritual and being sprinkled with holy water. After such a great day in Dublin, this is the happiest I've been since I came to live with her.

I sink into the hollow of my feather bed and look out at the full moon shining in through the window. I close my eyes and dream that Gran and I are bumping into each other in the taxi, while we zig-zag around Dublin.



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with Andrew Ferguson

In 2004, according to the tale his son Alistair tells, Billy Walker went to the pub with some executives from Pernod Ricard. He returned home as the new owner of the BenRiach Distillery. Over the objections of his wife he has since made two additional trips to the pub, once in 2008 to purchase Glendronach (also from Pernod), and again in 2013 to purchase Glenglassaugh. At the head of a group of South African investors Billy Walker took the little known and neglected BenRiach distillery and turned it into one of the Speyside's rising stars.

BenRiach has always had a turbulent past. It was founded in 1897 just as the Scotch whisky industry was nearing the peak of its first major bubble. When the industry came crashing down a few years later BenRiach was not far behind. Its doors were shuttered in 1903, after just a couple of years of production; they would not reopen until 1965. The distillery has been closed more years since its founding than it has been open. The fact it survived at all is owed to its proximity to another distillery just south of Elgin; Longmorn. The Longmorn Distillery is only a few hundred feet away and so made use of the distillery's warehouses, and even more crucially, its malting floor. For most of the 20th century BenRiach was not given its due, and was referred to as Longmorn #2.

The purchase of the distillery by Billy Walker and his group in 2004 signaled the beginning of a new era for BenRiach. Its whisky, until this time the almost exclusive preserve of Blenders, would now be showcased primarily as a single malt. The distillery, which had sat closed for the previous three years, was bought in April. It began bottling single malt by August and recommenced distilling in September. The vision for the future was clear.

When the team opened the warehouse doors for the first time, they discovered a use of a wide variety of casks. While

most of BenRiach's production since 1965 had been a typically unpeated Speyside malt, the distillery had also produced a considerable volume of peated single malt since 1972. The distillery was a part of the Chivas Brothers group, which lacked a distillery on Islay, home to most of Scotland's peated whiskies. The firm was in need of peated malt for their Chivas Regal blend. Not wanting to build a new



distillery on Islay or purchase peated spirit from a rival firm, they chose to distill it at BenRiach.

This was far from the only surprise in store. It seems the distillery had been used to conduct a variety of experiments including triple distillation and the use of wide variety of cask types for maturation. In 2010 the new owners released 32-year-old whisky matured in a Firkin, or nine-gallon beer barrel.

Over the last decade the distillery has produced a core range with two distinct branches, both peated and unpeated single

malts, with the former distinguished by Latin names. The distillery has also released annual batches of single cask vintage expressions to highlight its diverse portfolio of whiskies. The relaunch of BenRiach was such a huge success that it served as a model for the reintroduction of Glendronach in 2008, and the work they are now doing with Glenglassaugh. The future looks bright for BenRiach and its sister distilleries, but there is no word as to whether Billy's wife will let him go to the pub for a fourth time.

BenRiach 12 Year Sherry Matured

A real curiosity, the whisky is actually 16-17 years of age owing to the period of closure. This is very fruity and rich but retains BenRiach's soft profile. **\$74.99**

BenRiach 16 Year

This is the malt you should try to understand the whisky; it is soft with lots of honey, vanilla and floral tones over some fruity top notes. **\$81.99**

BenRiach 20 Year

Subtly spicy and nutty, this whisky highlights BenRiach at a more mature age with more layers and well developed tropical fruits. **\$109.99**

BenRiach Curiositas 10 Year

Most fans of peated whisky would be hard-pressed to distinguish this malt from an Islay whisky. It is intensely smoky with honey, white fruits and spices. **\$59.99**

BenRiach 17 Year Septendicem

Still honeyed like the Curiositas the 17-year's peat is a little tamer, showing as clean smoke and ash. Darker fruits and soft leather also abound. **\$94.99**

BenRiach Authenticus 25 Year

A stunning older peated malt, the smoke is clean, subtle and faded with rich tropical fruits, honey, cream and layers of rich spice. **\$224.99**





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The Grove

Narberth, Pembrokeshire, Wales
www.thegrove-narberth.co.uk

Billed as “The Restaurant with Rooms,” it’s hard to imagine a more pristine rural setting than The Grove in the Pembrokeshire countryside. Originally built in the 1680s, this luxury locale has been lovingly restored over the centuries, and today combines both classic and contemporary décor and cuisine into an exceptional and exquisite visitor experience. Chef Duncan Barham’s award-



winning kitchen serves up the finest and freshest local and regional fare, including a savoury home smoked salmon, a tangy goat’s curd, and a lovely salt cod. Those will whet your whistle while you wait for your main courses; a perfectly prepared Preseli Bluestone Lamb, complimented by asparagus, broad beans, and wild garlic. Or, tantalize the taste buds with the super-succulent wild rabbit, the tasty and tender welsh beef, and the out-of-this-world quail. the spiced monkfish, with lentil dahl, spinach, mango & cucumber, is a culinary adventure also. Afterwards, relax with rich coffee and the finest cheesecake and crème caramel in the U.K. Of course, the wine list is second to none, and the small, but fully stocked bar offers up a solid and satisfying selection of local and imported spirits and ales to enjoy by the fireplace or out in the courtyard.

The Hardwick

Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, Wales
www.thehardwick.co.uk

Though The Hardwick sat in disarray for generations, Chef Stephen Terry has breathed new life into the ages-old inn. And while the set lunch and dinner menus continue to receive rave reviews since the restaurant’s restoration less than a decade ago – the likes of spiced roast lamb shoulder, Severn and Wye Smokery smoked salmon with shaved fennel, duck hash & fried local duck



egg, roast middle white pork loin, and pan fried pedigree pork rotolo are wildly popular amongst new and older patrons – it is the eatery’s spectacular wine and spirits lists that have made it a must-stop on any jaunt through Wales. Along with an excellent selection of reds, whites and rosés, casks of champagne, sherry, sparkling and sweet wines, and domestic and imported ports means that there is something special available to enhance every meal. Of course the bar offers other options as well, including a myriad of both blended and single-malt whiskies and scotches, as well as beers and ales of all sorts. As such, the venue succeeds at providing visitors with two unique experiences; by day (and early evening) the restaurant is alive with fine diners; later, the tavern transitions to an old-style pub atmosphere.

Manorhaus Llangollen, Wales www.manorhausllangollen.com

Building upon their success in nearby Ruthin, owners Christopher Frost and Gavin Harris bring an informal elegance to their newest boutique hotel in the hilly town of Llangollen, near the River Dee in northeast Wales. While patrons will certainly enjoy the tasteful modern décor and ambiance of the rooms, lounge and bar, the Manorhaus is making a name for itself as the go-to spot for fine dining in the region. For starters, try the roast butternut squash and thyme soup, gently seasoned with watercress oil, creme fraiche, and croutons. Also exceptional is the goat’s cheese frittata, with beetroot carpaccio, beetroot mousse, dill creme fraiche and



dressed salad. later, dive right into the roast new season grouse, accompanied by fondant potato, wilted spinach, sugar snap peas, port and blackberry jus. Also highly recommended is the roast Gressingham duck breast, lovingly touched with balsamic roast fig, potato rosti, carrots, carrot purée, balsamic fig, and red wine jus. The spinach and mushroom pithivier, with crushed new potatoes, warm pea, mange tout and bean salad, and covered in Welsh cheddar cheese sauce, is both masterful and mouthwatering. The port and blue cheese platter will tee up an after-dinner walk through this warm and welcoming town.

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Cabrini's Kitchen



Saint Valentine's Irish Connection

Each year on February 14, we celebrate St. Valentine's Day. Doves, chocolates, Cupids, cards and flowers have all become symbols of romantic love, affection and devotion. But who was St. Valentine?

Saint Valentine was a humble Christian martyr who lived in Roman times under the rule of Emperor Claudius II.

Claudius, a war monger, had enacted an edict prohibiting marriage based on the idea that unmarried soldiers fought better than married soldiers because those who were wed were afraid of what might happen to their wives and families should they die in battle.

Valentine encouraged marriage within the Christian Church and he secretly conducted the ceremony. He was eventu-

ally found out, imprisoned and sentenced to decapitation on February 14, 269 A.D. According to legend, during his imprisonment, he healed the daughter of his jailer, Asterius, from blindness. An embellishment to the legend states that before his execution he wrote her a letter signed "Your Valentine" as a farewell.

Asterius planted an almond tree at Valentine's graveside in honour of their friendship. His remains rest in the Church of Praxes in Rome.

While there's no definitive written account of St. Valentine and his life in the third century, his Irish connection is more recent - and documented. In the year 1836, Pope Gregory XVI sent a gift to the Carmelite Church on Whitefriar Street, Dublin, in recognition of the work of the

church's former prior, Father John Spratt, who was widely recognized as a very holy man.

The gift was a relic of a Christian martyr: a small gold-bound casket containing the earthly remains of St. Valentine. The relic had been exhumed from the cemetery of St. Hyppolytus on the Tiburtine Way in Rome, placed in a golden casket and brought to Dublin where it was enshrined in the little church with great ceremony. Each year, on February 14th, the casket containing the Saint's mortal remains is carried to the high altar of the Carmelite Church for a special Mass dedicated to young people and those in love.

This recipe is made from dark chocolate, almonds and cranberries. It is guaranteed to make everyone love you!

INGREDIENTS

12 oz. Dark (at least 70% cocoa) chocolate

1 cup dried cranberries

1 cup almond slices

1 tsp. orange zest

INSTRUCTIONS

Cover baking sheet with parchment paper.

Melt chocolate in double boiler and stir until smooth. Let sit for five minutes. Add dried cranberries, orange zest and chopped almonds. Spread on cookie sheet. Refrigerate until cool. Break apart and enjoy!

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





The Kelpies

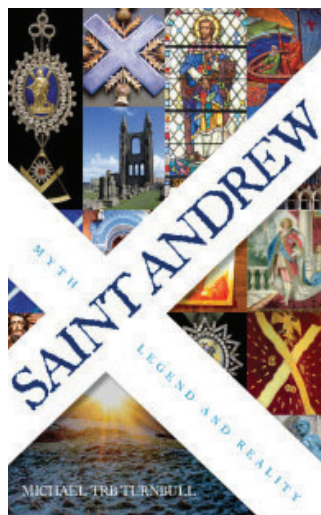
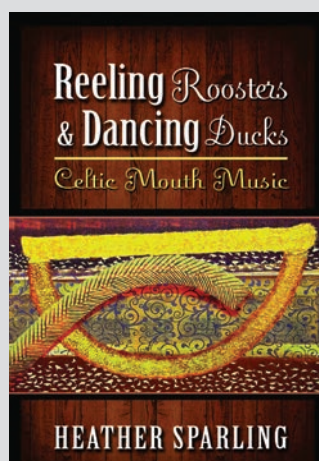
By Andy Scott
Freight Books
224 pp / €25.00

The world took notice last year when Scottish sculptor Andy Scott unveiled his two 30-meter, 300-tonne steel horses in Falkirk. For those who have yet to visit Europe's newest, and largest outdoor art installation, Freight Books gives you the full tour with this terrific table-top tome. With contributions from a number of reputed writers, and generously garnished with a strong, and often surreal selection of both colour and black and white images, the hardcover takes readers behind the sculptural scenes, exploring both the mind and matter of the artist, and placing the work within a larger cultural context. While it's almost impossible to capture and convey the glory and grandeur of the massive monuments, the work does well to examine the undertaking from all angles. ~ SPC

Reeling Roosters and Dancing Ducks

By Heather Sparling
CBU Press
357 pp / \$19.95

I love that this book was launched at a small fire hall in the remote Nova Scotia community of Christmas Island. After all, where is one more likely to hear Puirt-a-beul - Scottish Gaelic mouth music? And kudos to author Sparling for coming up with a title that is as catchy and quirky as its subject; the toe-tapping, tongue-twisting genre of Gaelic song is as unique a cultural experience as you will find both in "New Scotland" and back home in the Scottish motherland. Years of research, an array of historical references and interviews with Gaelic singers around the world result in a work that is engaging, entertaining, and educational, and one that will be enjoyed by those with a passion for revisiting their roots. ~ SPC



Saint Andrew; Myth, Legend and Reality

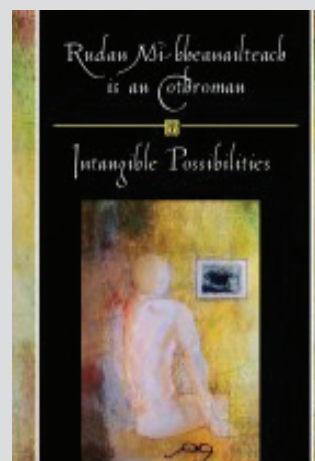
By Michael Trb Turnbull
Neil Wilson Press
186 pp / \$16.95

A lot has happened in Scotland since this book was first published in 1997. In this updated edition, educational consultant Michael Trb Turnbull offers up fresh opinions and perspectives on the country's Patron Saint. From Andrew's time fishing the Sea of Galilee to modern-day celebrations in his name, the work traces the life of both man and myth, detailing the cultural icon's impact both at home in Scotland and across the Diaspora. Arguing that both the Saint and Saltire are the country's most recognizable symbols, the author makes the case that each can be further used as "brand ambassadors" to drive Scotland's social and economic growth. It might sound heady and academic, but the book is well written and researched, and verily accessible to all. ~ SPC

Intangible Possibilities

By Lewis MacKinnon
CBU Press
120 pp / \$14.95

Long a champion of Gaelic history and heritage both in his home province and beyond its shores, author, scholar, musician - and Executive Director of both Nova Scotia's Gaelic College and its Department of Gaelic Affairs - Lewis MacKinnon brings the language to life with his latest collection of poems. Accompanied by English translations, the 40-plus works are equal measure rhyme, rhythm and romance, inviting readers into a culture that is both classic and contemporary at once. Particularly moving are his tender tribute to Irish scribe Seumas Heaney, a kindred homage to Rodney King, and the stirring three-part "Soul Trilogy." More than a collage of colourful Gaelic vignettes, however, Intangible Possibilities is a thoughtful and deeply personal exploration of the spirit of a modern Gael. ~ SPC





Red Hot Chilli Pipers

Live At The Lake

Very few musical artists can pull off a twin CD/DVD release - let alone a Celt-Rock bagpipe band - but Scotland's favourite crossover act nails it with this 23-track live recording from last year's Milwaukee Irish Festival. Yes, all of the hits are here; Thunderstruck, We Will Rock You, Don't Stop Believin', Low Rider and the like, but the band saves its best moments for Amazing Grace, Rory's Baravan and Wake Me Up. Once listeners get past the shtick and schmaltz (imagine The Edinburgh Military Tattoo meets KISS), what remains are some seriously talented musicians, who might consider closing this chapter of their storybook career with this big, boisterous performance. It will be interesting to see where RHCP can take their musical gifts from here. ~ SPC

Wendy MacIsaac

Off The Floor

It's back to basics for one of Nova Scotia's finest fiddlers, and Creignish's Wendy MacIsaac has never sounded better. Dear Christy sets the tone from the start; a rousing round of reels sure to get hands clappin', feet tappin' and thighs slappin'. Accompanied by guitar and piano, the pace picks up with Bidy From Sligo, before settling into the soulful and stirring Magificent 7. The upbeat medleys of Uist Lasses and Holy Strathspeys Pat give way to the last four tracks, all jigs and reels, and all recorded - literally - live off the floor. While the split studio/live format makes for uneven production, the raw energy and pure joy of the performances more than make up for it. Cape Breton at its very best. ~ SPC



Finnegan's Hell

Drunk, Sick and Blue

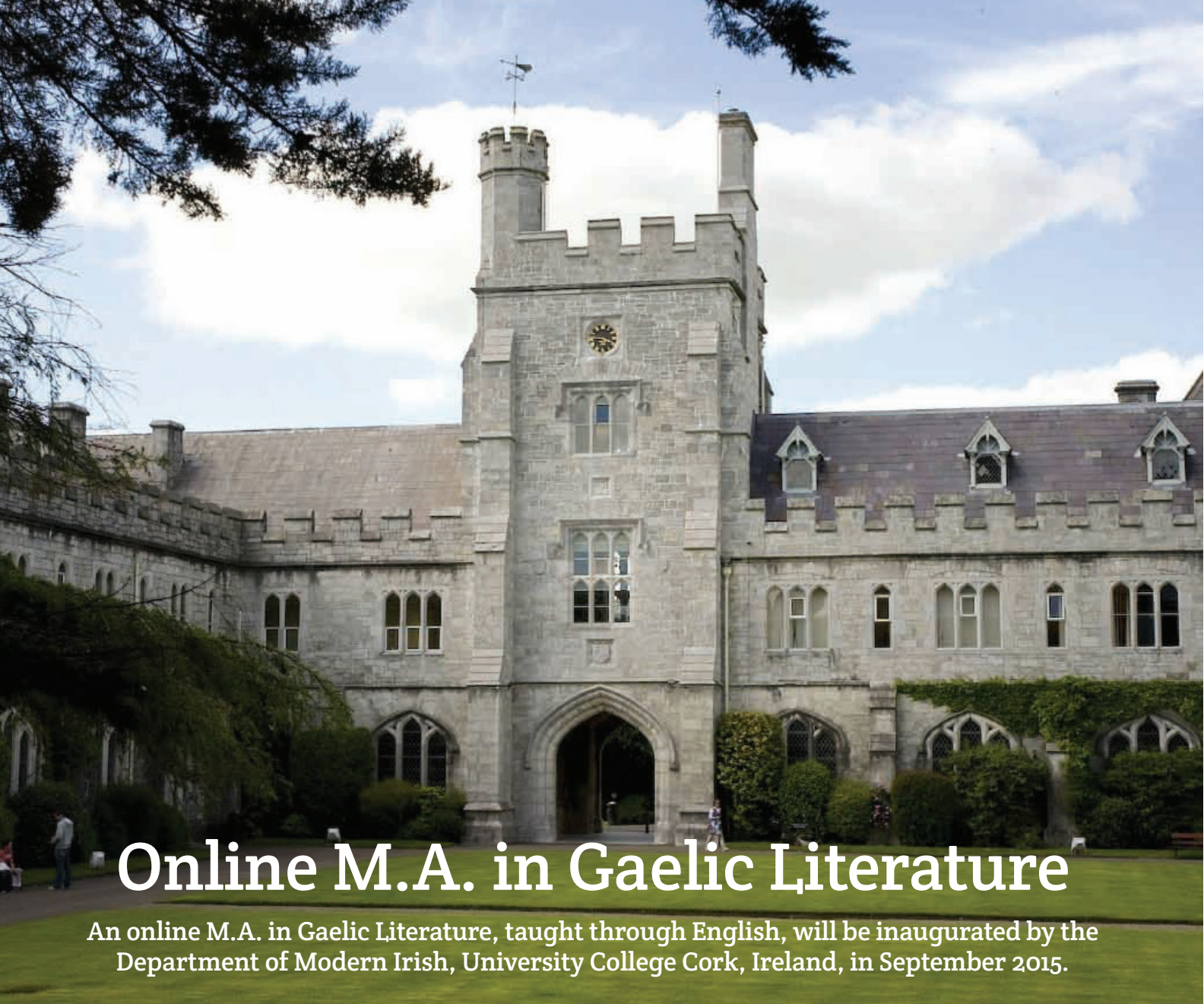
This rockin' five-piece, Celt-Punk band from Scandinavia lists its influences as the Pogues, the Dubliners, the Ramones, Nirvana, Motörhead, Dropkick Murphys, Pissed Jeans, and Flogging Molly. And - sure enough - that is exactly what their latest effort Drunk, Sick and Blue sounds like. And which, by the way, is why this recording kicks Celtic ass from the opening notes of the title track to the closing chorus of Drunken Christmas (check out the video!) Highlights here are many, but both Galway Races and The Molly Maguires stand tall for their sheer raw punk power. A towering and terrific tour-de-force, Finnegan's Hell will likely be blowing concert halls and clubs down over the coming year - be sure not to miss them when on tour. ~ SPC

The Blackout

Wolves

Sadly, this stunning five-tune EP will likely be the swan-song for the "little hard-rock band that could" from the blue-collar, mining town of Merthyr Tydfil, Wales. The supersonic sextet, who have been around since 2003, have decided to call it quits after their current tour wraps in early 2015. And that's a shame, really, as the group has never sounded tighter or more together than it does with this crowd-funded recording. Grinding guitars, booming bottom-end bass, and drop-dead driving drums are mixed and mastered with finesse on each track, laying a rock-solid foundation for the melodic, screamo-pop co-vocals of Gavin Butler and Sean Smith. Call it nu-metal, call it post-metal, The Blackout can now take their rightful place alongside Lostprophets on the Welsh rock mantle. ~ SPC



A photograph of the main building of University College Cork, a large stone structure with a central tower and multiple windows, set against a blue sky with clouds. The building is surrounded by green lawns and trees.

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Jan Bolhuis

When it comes to bagpiping, Jan Bolhuis's repertoire includes some of the classics – the rock classics; AC/DC, Elvis and Iron Maiden. Clearly, Bolhuis isn't your average Highland piper. In fact, the Dutch piper played with some of Holland's top rock bands, such as The City of Amsterdam, before forming his own group called Excalibur.

Excalibur was together from 1991 to 1998, during which time the group played a mix of traditional and non-traditional music, including what Bolhuis describes as “fast-paced tunes on the pipes with timpanis,” for example. These days he's expanded to incorporate trance and dance styles.

“I am trying to get to a more professional level, so, for example, DJs can incorporate my sounds in their mixes. I would love to create some mixes of my own,” Bolhuis says.

At the age of 15, Bolhuis became a pipe sergeant, the result of his love for Scottish music and from practicing four hours a day. He first encountered pipes at folk music festivals and immediately took to them. Later, he heard records of Scottish pipe bands and was awe-struck by the powerful sound and the unison of pipers all playing as one.

“A few years later I met a real pipe band and was in next Monday for practice. It was great to be able to play the music I loved,” Bolhuis comments.

Influences for Bolhuis as a teenager included the Battlefield Band, Gordon Duncan and John Burgess.

“They opened up a world that was bigger than playing marches and simple strathspeys and reels,” he comments. “It meant I started to look at music differently and it was a great example of how to play more popular music. In the 1990s, I got some lessons from Duncan Johnstone and that was also very inspiring. Again, it was looking at music differently, which broadened my view and gave a better understanding of the music.”

He still loves the sound of the bagpipes today and says that he loves to spread “happiness and joy” with his music.

“And as getting better is in my DNA, I want to achieve perfection,” Bolhuis vows. “I also want to re-start the band Excalibur, and play good and cool music at a high level.”



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Alfonso Franco

While places like Ireland and Scotland have had a tradition of Celtic music for hundreds of years, the form all but vanished in Spain during the 40 years of the Francisco Franco regime. But following the dictator's death, Galicia began to once again assert itself to show that it had different traditions from Spanish flamenco, matadors and running of the bulls, according to Galician fiddle player, Alfonso Franco.

"The Celtic music was one of the best ways to be special and different than the rest of the peninsula," Franco asserts. "At the time, the most famous Galician folk group, Milladorio, recorded their first LP called A Galicia de Maeloc. The album was a shock for all of us. They played Galician music mixed with Irish, Scottish and Brittany music. Since then thousands of Galicians have decided to become Celts! It was a new day for Galician folk music."

One of those who became enamoured with the new style of music was Franco. He began as a guitar player in his teens, but

picked up fiddle in high school. When a violinist left a friend's folk group, he had to learn his chops quickly to fill the empty space.

"At the beginning I didn't think I could become a professional," Franco comments. "There weren't any professional fiddlers then in Galicia, so I didn't have any mentor to follow."

When he first began playing, Franco describes himself as an "eclectic player," who loved Celtic music, but also blues and rock. A grant to join the Galician youth orchestra changed his direction though, and he studied classical music almost exclusively for two years.

"As I began learning by myself, my technique was catastrophic and soon I had to stop playing for a year because my poor technique was injuring me. After this year, I decided just to play traditional and Celtic music."

Today, Franco has a degree in the violin and doctoral studies in Traditional Galician Music from the University of Santiago de Compostela. He teaches fiddle at the Folk Music Conservatory in Vig e-Trad and is responsible for the string section of the folk orchestra, Sondeseu. He is also the director of the Galicia Fiddle Association and the San Simon Fiddle Camp.

Currently, Franco is working on his first solo album and he also hopes to create some workshops in Galicia with fiddle masters from around the world. Beyond that, he's writing a tutorial on Galician fiddling and arranging for the next fiddle camp for kids, San Simon Fiddle 2015.

When it comes to youth, Franco says that in Galicia the fiddle is quickly becoming one of the most important instruments among young people.

"It's an amazing change because less than five years ago there were no kids playing fiddle," he enthuses. "Nowadays, about 100 kids are playing traditional tunes regularly and there are already a dozen kids who are going to be great players in a few years."

That this has happened is a tribute to Franco's Galician Fiddle Association, whose mission is to turn the fiddle into a popular instrument in the region.

"We want to share with the world the Galician fiddle style and our music in general," he says.

Even so, because of Spain's current economic circumstances, little money exists for any kind of cultural product and Franco says music is experiencing a difficult decade. Regardless, he remains optimistic.

"So, sadly, this is a bad moment for Celtic music right now but there are thousands of pipers, tambourine players and even fiddlers, so our heritage is very strong and we are hopeful."



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Sophie Stephenson may be a traditional step dancer, but there's nothing old-fashioned about the way she spreads her love of the art. The Scottish dancer is adept at using social media to get the word out about step dancing. She runs a web site, Sophabulous Steps (get it – “so fabulous?”) on which she promotes the form, and as well she blogs and feeds out the news through Facebook and Twitter.

“I set up Sophabulous Steps to promote and share this accumulated percussive vocabulary with others through performances and workshops,” Stephenson comments. “I hope to impart the importance of not only passing on the tradition, but of allowing the tradition to take the natural course of growth and regeneration.”

While Scottish – she grew up in the Highlands where traditional music and ceilidh dances formed a regular part of community life – her style of step dance is closer to what one might see in Cape Breton.

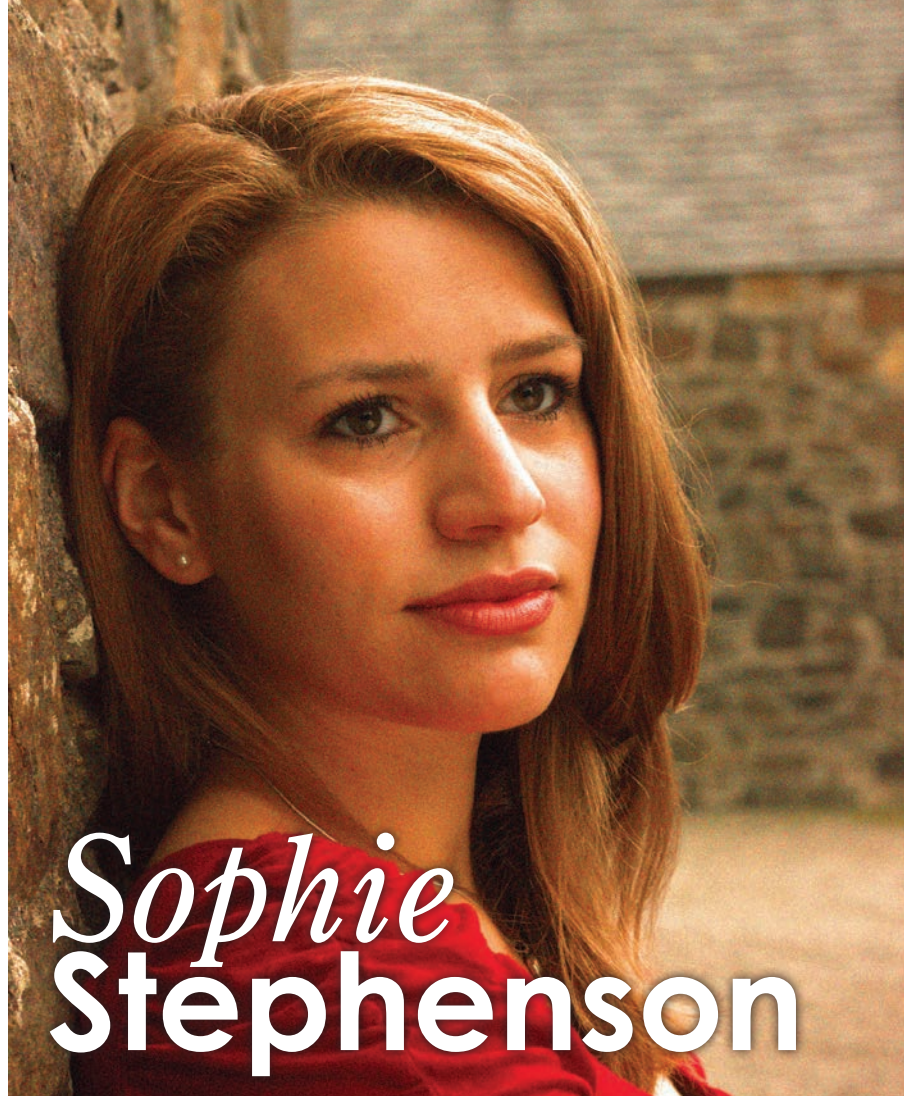
“I mostly picked up my steps from Cape Bretoners and their close to the floor style with neat steps and little upper body movement continues to be a major influence on my technique.”

Stephenson's surname comes from her grandfather on her father's side, who hailed from County Wicklow, Ireland. On her mother's side, the family comes from the MacLellans and the Gillies of Morar on the west coast of Scotland.

“Although I didn't grow up with Gaelic, my great-grandfather was a native speaker, as was common for the west Highland Gaels at the time,” Stephenson notes.

“I now have good proficiency in the language after undertaking a one-year Gaelic immersion program at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye. I feel language is the basis for culture and an important part of our life and identity.”

Stephenson began dancing at a young age, first at social ceilidhs and then through lessons in Highland, ballet and tap dance. When she discovered step dancing, it was at about the same time she started to play music. Attending local traditional music tuition festivals known as fèisean, Stephenson learned waltzes, jigs, reels, marches and strathspeys – essentially dance tunes.



Sophie Stephenson

“But the dance performance styles of ballet, tap and Highland didn't fit with the traditional music I was learning and it was step dance which made sense to perform at concerts or jam sessions,” Stephenson says.

She went on to pursue her passion for traditional music and dance in academic study. Stephenson researched the performance contexts and the traditions of the Taigh Ceilidh in Scotland and Canada as part of her honours degree in Scottish literature and ethnology from the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. In 2013, she received the Lisa Ullmann Dance Scholarship, allowing her to travel to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia to meet with dancers and explore Cape Breton and Acadian dance traditions.

One of her career highlights came in 2014 when she led a group of dancers from Scotland to Norway to participate in an international dance exchange in the Arctic. The exchange brought together Russian and Norwegian folk dance with Swedish hip hop, ballet, Highland and step.

“I found this coming together of people from different countries to share and exchange their culture an extremely inspiring and enriching experience,” Stephenson says.

Most recently, her interests have expanded to exploring different percussive dance styles and discovering how varying traditional musical genres imply contrasting rhythmical emphasis or prompt distinctive styles of dance, such as Appalachian flat footing or Irish dance.

“As I encounter new cultures and meet with dancers and musicians, this continues to fascinate me.”

Stephenson is also working with a small group of musicians and dancers to put together material focusing on the links between Gaelic mouth music and step dance.

“We also hope to collaborate with other artists from East Coast Canada and Donegal to explore the rich linguistic and cultural connections between Ireland, Scotland and their diaspora.”

www.sophabulous.co.uk





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Temple Bar TradFest

January 28-February 1, 2015, Dublin, Ireland



The Irish Temple Bar TradFest “has built its reputation as offering a chink of musical light in the dying days of January,” according to The Irish Times. Ireland’s top traditional music festival is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. TradFest attracts thousands of attendees with its extensive line-up of folk, Celtic, nu-folk and rock acts from at home and abroad. This year, the festival boasts a massive amount of concerts and gigs, with talent ranging from legendary British rocker Donovan and iconic uilleann piper Liam O’Flynn, to the adventurously trad Beoga & Big Band and the stunning voices of Coda. Several days during the festival also feature free “front row sessions” at pubs and bars around the cultural quarter. Not only is the musical line-up eclectic—so are the festival’s venues, which include the House of Lords, City Hall, St. Patrick’s Cathedral and the Button Factory among others. To commemorate the festival’s 10 years, a gala concert at Dublin Castle takes place on the final night featuring some of the Irish capital’s best musical talent, including The Dubliners’ John Sheahan. www.templebartrad.com

Savannah Irish Festival

February 13-15, 2015, Savannah, Georgia, USA

Savannah, Georgia has attracted several American presidents, including Truman and Carter, to their Saint Patrick’s Day celebrations. Festivities like the world-renowned, three-hour March 17th parade reflect the city’s significant Irish heritage. According to the International Business

Times, the annual event attracts some 750,000 spectators, or more than five times the city’s population. The “Irish season” kicks off a month before with something equally as exciting: the Savannah Irish Festival. Founded in 1993, it is the largest event of its kind in the entire South. The family friendly weekend in the heart of historic Savannah features “traditional Irish music + laughter + dance.” Highlights include an interactive ceili where attendees are taught to Irish folk dance, four stages providing continuous entertainment including Celtic and Irish music, dance, storytelling and comedy, a kid’s zone with oodles of fun-filled activities, vendors offering up Irish crafts and fare, historical talks and more. In a Do Savannah article from last year the festival’s entertainment coordinator Jimmy Buttmer says, “The festival began as a way to bring in musical groups and entertainment from Ireland that locals had never seen before...We focus on culture of Ireland ...and we bring in people who talk about the history of Ireland and the huge migration from Ireland to America.” www.savannahirish.org



Cwlwm Celtaidd

Wales’ Interceltic Festival, February 27-March 1, 2015, Porthcawl, Wales

In the gorgeous seaside resort town of Porthcawl, Wales, Celtic nations converge for Cwlwm Celtaidd. The festival—its name is the Welsh for Celtic knot—represents the music, dance and other cultural expressions from Cymru as well as Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and even Brittany, Asturias and Galicia. This year’s Wales’ Interceltic Festival includes more than 300 performers showcased in shows happening on two stages in The Grand Pavilion as well as the elaborate “Parade of the Celts” through Porthcawl’s Town Centre. Some of this year’s headliners include Northern Ireland’s Padraig Lalor, Scotland’s Shooogenifty, the Manx dance troupe Perree Bane and the Galician-Welsh fusion band Maeiog. Additionally, the three jam-packed days of activities for all ages include street displays, singing, instrument and dance workshops, music sessions that tend to turn into



late nights at The Ancient Briton Pub, and a ceilidh on the beach. The final day of the Celtic knot festival coincides with Wales’ national Saint David’s Day. www.cwlwmceltaidd.org



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Clan Cochrane

If you're looking for fierce Scots, look no further than the Clan Cochrane. Legend holds that the clan's origins date back to the 900s, to a Viking warrior who settled in the west of Scotland. According to Thomas Cochran, the clan's outgoing president and commissioner to the chief, Cochranes go back in the records to the 1200s in Scotland.

The name, Cochrane, originates from the "five-merk" lands of Coueran, Cochrane, near Paisley in Renfrewshire, according to an article that Cochran quotes from ElectricScotland.com. The first recorded Cochrane in Scotland was one Waldeve de Coveran, who witnessed a charter in favour of the fifth Earl of Menteith in 1262.

In 1456, Robert Cochrane of Cochrane (who is reputed to be the architect of the Great Hall at Stirling Castle) resigned the lands of Cochrane to his successor, Allan, who received a charter for them from James II. The most famous Cochrane, perhaps, is Thomas, the 10th Earl (1775-1860), who is known as Lord Cochrane.

Lord Cochrane joined the navy at age 18 and while in

command of a brig captured a Spanish frigate, whose crew outnumbered his six to one, says Cochrane, still quoting from the article on ElectricScotland.com. Prosecuted wrongly for fraud while still on the Admiralty, he commanded the Chilean navy and helped that country secure independence and later helped the Brazilians and Turks against the Greeks. Reinstated in 1854, he was made Rear Admiral.

Michael Cochran of Maryland established the clan in North America in 1986 and acted as president until 2009 and commissioner to the chief until 2010. Today the clan has roughly 100 members across the U.S. and 12 state commissioners. A Facebook page has over 250 members.

Clan members have participated in various festivals, including a Cochrane Homecoming in Glasgow, Oban and Stirling in 2014 as part of Scotland Homecoming.

www.clancochrane.org



Clan Hall

John Hall Jr., president of the Clan Hall Society, jokes that the clan has a "sometimes notorious history." Hall is referring perhaps to the fact that the clan is often overlooked by others. Indeed, the name Hall doesn't even sound Scottish; Hall himself says like many with the Hall surname he never thought of the Halls as having a Scottish connection.

It was because of his paternal grandmother, born in Glasgow in 1902, that Hall felt a strong connection to his Scottish heritage, but it wasn't until a friend showed him an ad for the Clan Hall Society in a Scottish publication that Hall joined.

Hall says most Scottish clans have history that goes back centuries, but that's not the case with the Clan Hall Society. Atlas Dean Hall, members of his family and several close family friends founded the society in 1993. They had been active with the Clan Skene, whose territory is near the Highlands just west of Aberdeen. Hall is listed as a sept of Skene.

One of the first things that Atlas did after founding the

society is design and register the official Hall tartan, which features both ancient and modern hues.

"One of the challenges faced by Clan Hall Society is the fact that we do not have an official chieftain," Hall remarks. "For this reason Scottish purists do not see us or Scottish Halls in general as a true clan. Continued research by members of our society has not found any indication of there ever being a Hall chieftain or headman."

Hall says only a few charter members are active and notes that it is a small society. The clan has commissioners in seven states representing Clan Hall at Highland games and Celtic festivals. The next big event for the society will be their annual general meeting at the Glasgow Highland Games in Glasgow, Kentucky in May 2015.

www.clanhallsociety.org





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Jack Bruce

Jack Bruce's rumbling bass lines underpinned some of rock music's greatest songs

The Glaswegian bassist's work most famously lives on with his former bandmates, guitarist Eric Clapton and drummer Ginger Baker, in the 1960s super-group, Cream, where Bruce laid down lines for such imminently memorable songs as *Sunshine of Your Love*, *White Room* and *Crossroads*. He also co-wrote a number of the band's songs, including *Spoonful*, and sang on virtually the group's entire catalogue.

But as highly regarded as he was as a member of Cream, Bruce also forged a successful solo career for himself after that band, playing with top rock and jazz musicians such as guitarists Mick Taylor, Chris Spedding, Steve Hunter, Clem Clempson, drummer Billy Cobham and keyboardists such as Carla Bley and David Sancious.

The bass player, singer and songwriter died at his home in Suffolk, aged 71, in late October. News reports said the musician had been suffering from liver disease. His family released the following statement on Bruce's website: "It is with great sadness that we, Jack's family, announce the passing of our beloved Jack: husband, father, granddad and all around legend. The world of music will be a poorer place without him, but he lives on in his music and forever in our hearts."

According to the *New York Times*, Pink Floyd's bassist, Roger Waters, called Bruce "the most musically gifted bass

player who's ever been." Cream sold over 35-million records in two years, in the process gaining the first platinum record ever. As a member of Cream, Bruce was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993. In 2005, along with bassist Ron Carter, Bruce received a Bass Player Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2006 accepted a Recording Academy Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of Cream at the Grammy Awards.

Bruce was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1943. He completed his formal education at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, where he won a scholarship for cello and composition. At the age of 16, discouraged over the lack of interest from his professors in his ideas, he left school and travelled to England and Italy, where he played double bass in dance and jazz bands. In 1962, he joined his first important band, Alexis Korner's Blues Inc., whom later alumni would include the Rolling Stones' drummer, Charlie Watts.

The next year Bruce joined the Graham Bond Organization, a seminal blues band, which Bruce left after drummer Ginger Baker called his playing "too busy." Stints with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and Manfred Mann followed before, ironically, Baker invited Bruce to join him and Clapton in Cream. In 1968, at the height of the band's popularity, Cream split, with Bruce feeling hampered in the band and

wanting to explore more in his music.

What followed was a long successful solo career with 14 albums, appearances on many more and concerts on top of that. Bruce mixed rock, jazz and classical together, often drawing on other musical influences as well. He played for a period with important jazz drummer Tony Williams in his Lifetime band, but remained true to his rock roots with the formation of West Bruce and Laing, which included Leslie West of the very heavy rock band, Mountain.

Bruce picked and chose the sessions he wanted to work on, playing on Lou Reed's *Berlin* and Frank Zappa's *Apostrophe* albums. In the late '90s, he toured with Ringo Starr's All Star Band, joining pop stars Todd Rundgren, Dave Edmunds and Peter Frampton. In the middle of his prodigious creativity, he reunited with Clapton and Baker for a Cream concert tour in 2005.

In the years before his death, Bruce continued at a fever pitch: he was awarded two doctorates, played with musical luminaries ranging from Robin Trower and Vernon Reid to Martin Medeski on projects of his own creation and wrote his biography. Writing in the *Telegraph*, Neil McCormick said that Bruce was "widely revered as the best there was on four strings..." and that he "unleashed the potential" of the bass.





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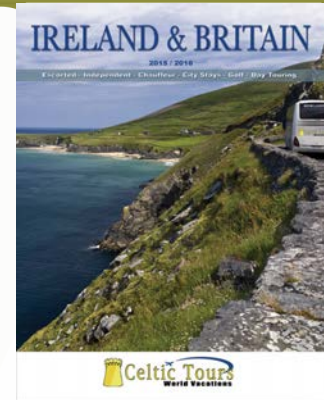
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