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Fáilte!

American literary critic George Steiner once said that when a language dies, a way of understanding and looking at the world dies with it. So long as a language is still being spoken it cannot become extinct.

The Celtic languages have all gone through periods of decline. However, in the mid-19th century the work of a few dedicated linguists played an important role in establishing Celtic Studies as a legitimate academic pursuit.

Celtic Studies is a broad field of education that encompasses linguistics, literature, art, music, dance, folklore, history and more. Many universities in the Celtic world offer degrees and/or accreditation in Celtic Studies, with a particular emphasis on language.

It is well known that studying a new language enhances cultural sensitivity, and that linguistic diversity - and thus multiculturalism - brings different perspectives and greater peace to our lives. In this edition we speak with a number of former and current Celtic Studies students about how their schooling has impacted their lives.

In our last issue we featured summer Celtic Festivals that bring people of unique ethnic backgrounds together in cultural celebration. Included was a small feature on the Dayton Irish Fest, a 3-day gathering each July that showcases Celtic music, dance and more. Only a few days later we are mourning those lost in yet another mass shooting in the United States - this time in Dayton, just hours after a similar tragedy in El Paso, Texas. Our hearts and prayers go out to those affected by these senseless acts.

I recently visited The Hitler Bunker war museum in Berlin, where I took in an exhibit called "Hitler, could it happen again?" What struck me was the many similarities between that era and events happening in the world today; white supremacist movements that demonize cultural differences, promote hatred and anti-immigration, and discredit national institutions.

Why? Two thousand years ago we were taught to love our neighbour - given a "blueprint" on how to get along with one another. Why, after all this time, have we stopped listening?

In Scotland, where the talk of Independence continues to be fuelled by the Brexit situation, former U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May argued that remaining in the European Union had more than just economic advantages. She noted that the EU is a family of nations, a collage of peoples with common values that respect different identities and cultures, allowing for multiple layers of identity - Scottish/British, Irish/Italian, etc. Cultural interdependence is the thread that unites people of differing ethnicities.

Today we need more than thread to unite us. I worry about the world we are leaving for those who follow. As I look to the next generation, however, I am hopeful that young people today will learn from our mistakes of the past.

Enjoy and may God Bless!

Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher

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Evrah Rose

In the fifth instalment in a six-part series on prominent women in the Celtic community, we do lines with Welsh poet, performer and author Evrah Rose



Evrah Rose is changing the world - and herself - one pen, one mind and one vision at a time.

"I began writing poetry at the age of eight," shares the scribe via email from her home in Wrexham, North Wales. "As a child I was going through a lot and poetry became a form of therapy. It provided me with an avenue of expression and became a dear friend when the road got rough. I still write as therapy while also using my voice to raise awareness of serious issues that others may be facing. I find that by confronting my own terrible experiences and vocalizing them, I can help others. That is my ultimate aim when writing now."

Given her Celtic roots, lyricism might well be a part of her lineage.

"I come from a family of mixed heritage; my mother is Welsh, my father is Irish, and there is some Scottish in the bloodline too."

Those bold roots are reflected in her work.

"My style is unapologetically fearless. I don't pretend to be someone else. And I sure as hell won't stay silent about what matters."

In the marginalized world of art, having that kind of thick skin has its advantages.

"Many people simply assume you can give away your services for free and that exposure will pay your rent. Yes, exposure is fantastic, but I can't eat with that unfortunately. I think there needs to be a balance. Creative people need to be taken seriously as entrepreneurs. A lot of hard work and time goes into what we do; late nights, ridiculously early mornings, lack of sleep, blood, sweat and tears. You wouldn't ask a builder to build you a home for free."

While sometimes a struggle to make ends meet, the returns of Rose's vocation are many.

"Writing is rewarding on many levels. Not only is it my therapy and way of expressing myself, but it is a friend and companion when life becomes difficult. And I have met some incredible people along my creative journey and made some forever friendships."

"I take my influences from my various experiences in life and the people I meet every day. If you watch enough people you can create a storyboard in your mind and almost absorb their experiences without ever saying a word."

She often writes about more serious issues, including rape, domestic violence and mental health.

"I use a mix of my own experiences and that of others. If it is swept under the carpet, then best believe I am ripping that thing up. I want to inspire people; evoke change and raise awareness, and make them feel uncomfortable, pushing them to confront issues that most would simply shy away from."

"If you have a voice, use it for good - perhaps for those that have lost theirs."

A good poem, she notes, speaks volumes to everyday readers, evoking emotion and thought.

"There is an outdated ideology that poetry is elitist. It isn't elitist, but rather humble, forthcoming and honest, allowing audiences the time to absorb the message without any pretension. And everyone should have access to varying forms, especially spoken word as that tends to resonate on a different level altogether."

These days, younger audiences absorb poetry without even knowing it.

"When they listen to rap music, or music with any type of lyric, they are unwittingly consuming a form of poetry. I have worked with many young people, and most just roll their eyes when it comes to poetry, mainly because of their school experiences. Yet, when I make it accessible to them - teaching them in a fun and engaging way - they absolutely love it, and many have gone on to use it as a tool to express themselves."

In that regard, the internet has had a huge impact on the genre.

"There is now a plethora of literature online at your fingertips. And social media - especially Instagram and Facebook, that are absolute giant avenues in pushing content - has benefitted many writers who would never have had the opportunity to flourish otherwise."

"My advice to anyone is to practice your craft every day, push yourself even when it scares you, and always be tenacious in chasing opportunity."

"Poetry is still relevant because of its capacity to promote positive attitudes and change. One pen. One mind. One vision can change the world that we live in."

Evrah Rose's debut collection is scheduled for release this fall via Verve Poetry Press.

www.evrahrosepoetry.co.uk

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5



6

one

Gaelic Anne

A crowdfunding campaign by a Nova Scotia publisher has met its financial goal to commission, edit, and publish the first Scottish Gaelic translation of Anne of Green Gables. The Canadian classic by Lucy Maud Montgomery has been translated into more than 30 languages - but up to this point, Gaelic isn't one of them. Dr. Emily McEwan, the founder and president of Bradan Press, decided to change that. This upcoming version will be titled Anna Ruadh (Red-haired Anne) and is expected to be published in June of 2020.

two

Accidental YouTube Star

Ieuan Rees thought he was just showing off his craft, but a video of his work has grown into a viral sensation. Back in 2012, the veteran Welsh stone carver recorded a video on calligraphy and carving. He was shocked to recently discover the video now has more than 2.2 million views on YouTube. However, the views aren't from aspiring carvers - they're from ASMR fans. ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) videos have skyrocketed in popularity over the last couple years. Put simply: for some people, certain sounds elicit a pleasant or comforting "tingling" sensation from the brain.

three

Cornish Cocker Spaniels

Dog lovers rejoice: Cornwall's first-ever Cocker Spaniel Meet-Up took place in July. Cocker Spaniels, their owners and spaniel admirers alike were welcomed to Watergate Bay near Newquay for a special gathering fit for any canine enthusiast. The event was organized by Cornish Ramblings, a group of novice adventurers such as keen hikers, hill seekers, coastal lovers, woodland rambles and "walking addicts." The group's founder, Jody Woolcock, has a Cocker Spaniel of her own who can often be found accompanying her on walks.

four

Monstrous Tartan

A Scottish legend now has its very own tartan. Although she probably won't pop her head out of the water to appreciate it anytime soon, the Loch Ness Monster (AKA Nessie) inspired a tartan designed by Mairi MacLeod. The pattern was lodged with the official Scottish Register of Tartans in Edinburgh and has since gone into production. The tartan's colours include greys, greens and blues to represent the monster as well as the loch itself. For instance, dark blue represents the colour of Loch Ness while the grey lines "represent the ripples in the water the monster would make," MacLeod told the Scottish Sun.

five

Witchcraft and Wizardry

A magic-themed pub that has already taken London and New York by storm has since popped up in both Edinburgh, Scotland and Dublin, Ireland. The Cauldron Magical Experience landed in Dublin in July and will be sticking around for at least three months. According to The Cauldron's website, the Cauldron Magical Experience is a one-hour, 45-minute "immersive class where you wield a working magic wand and use molecular mixology to brew drinkable elixirs." Participants are given a robe and a magic wand, then guided on an interactive workstation where they can pour a drink - including beer, cocktails and mocktails - and create unique potable potions.

six

Fairy Buildings

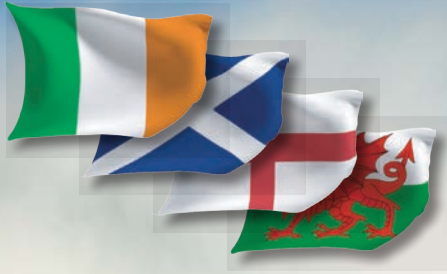
The Isle of Man is scattered with magical pieces of art. Near the end of 2018, the Manx government commissioned Swedish art collective Anonymouse MMX for a project. The collective left miniature "fairy" fortresses and palaces in glens, as well as on beaches and hillsides around the island. The lovingly designed pieces are a tribute to Manx fairy folklore. Earlier this year, the government announced that it would work with the artists to help maintain the fairy houses so locals and visitors can continue to enjoy them.

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



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Michelle Barker

A woman who has lived with depression all her life has set up Cornwall's first women-only support group. Michelle Barker, a 49-year-old from Camborne, launched the "She Said Cornwall" Facebook page back in March. The idea was to give women a safe space to talk about their struggles without having to worry about judgment. "We are not a professional body, nor are we in a position to offer crisis support or mental health advice," reads the page description. "Our page is simply here to connect people going through similar experiences with the hope of supporting each other." Since then, she said Cornwall has held meetings in Pool, Falmouth and Helston, discussing topics such as anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. Barker continues to run the group with her daughter, trying to fill a void in the Cornish mental healthcare system and encouraging more women to get involved. The group gets no funding, but meeting spaces are donated by local businesses. "We appreciate how hard it is for women to prioritize themselves when they often have careers, families and friendships to maintain," she told Cornwall Live recently. "But we hope we can encourage people to take those first steps in prioritizing their mental health."



Ciara Byrne

A US-based Irish woman caught the attention of the Obama Foundation thanks to her environmental project. Ciara Byrne, who is originally from Palmerstown, Co. Dublin, has lived in the United States for the last 25 years. Recently, she was one of 20 people selected for the 2019 Obama Fellowship program for her Green Our Planet schools garden project in Nevada. "I am honoured to be a part of the 2019 Obama Foundation Fellows class and am excited to join such a diverse and talented class of community-minded civic innovators," Byrne said on the Green Our Planet website. "With the support of the Obama Foundation, Green Our Planet will be able to continue to strengthen our work as a leader in the school garden movement in Nevada and across the country." Green Our Planet calls itself America's largest school garden program. It is a non-profit which aims to teach children the value of growing food, hydroponic growing systems, and establishing and running farmer's markets. The project recently hosted the largest student-run farmer's market in the U.S., with more than 500 pupils from 49 schools. Byrne hopes that one day that she can expand the program to reach schools in Ireland as well.



Glenys Old

After raising money for a children's hospice in Wales for 20 years, Glenys Old is finally "retiring" from fundraising. The 88-year-old woman has raised a total of £30,000 since starting her efforts back in 1999, when Ty Hafan (a paediatric palliative care charity based in the village of Sully) first opened its doors. After Old's husband passed away, she decided to find something worthwhile to do with her time. For two decades, she has been known as "the Ty Hafan lady" locally. "Every penny I have raised has come from my house. I put a stall out the front and people pass for a browse and that's when many a person will say I don't want anything, but leave a pound on the table anyway," Old recently told the Caerphilly Observer. "It is an enjoyable day from 8 a.m. because I get all the neighbours' tables and chairs to put out the front and everyone gets involved." Ty Hafan doesn't get any help from the national government, so it relies on people such as Old to volunteer their time and effort. The organization threw a party for her during the U.K.'s national Volunteers' Week for her service. Although she is hanging up her fundraising hat, she has no doubt made a lasting impact.

A man with a beard, wearing a grey t-shirt and a dark kilt, is in a crouched position on a grassy field, holding a large wooden caber with both hands. He is looking down at the caber. In the background, another person wearing a kilt and blue socks with 'BEAVER' written on them is partially visible.

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New Hampshire

Highland Games and Festival

September 20-22, Concord, New Hampshire

www.nhscot.org

Originally organized as a small Clan picnic by Scottish trio Capt. John D. Murray, Evelyn Murray and Tom Lenthall, the New Hampshire Highland Games and Festival has become one of the most recognized and renowned Scottish events in all of North America, welcoming thousands of visitors, competitors, vendors and performers to the Granite State's Loon Mountain Resort each year. In 2019, celebrations will start early each morning for competitors in Highland Dance, sheep herding, harp, fiddle and heavy athletics, where winning athletes from all over the world will contend with 11 events. In addition, the three-day gathering prides itself on being a unique cultural experience, hosting a variety of Scottish activities, including pipe and drum performances, Clan Gatherings, Scottish cooking demonstrations, sheepdog trials, and a series of "Try It" classes where participants can take a quick lesson in tenor drum flare, bagpipes, Mas wrestling, stone lifting, Scottish fiddle and harp. Each evening features special ticketed events that may include Scottish food & drink, musical performances by The Red Hot Chilli Pipers, Syr, Elias Alexander, and more.



Celtic Colours International Festival

October 11-19, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia

www.celtic-colours.com

One of Atlantic Canada's largest cultural extravaganzas, the Celtic Colours International Festival on Cape Breton Island celebrates music, dance, culture and more this October. For more than two decades, the Island-wide, multi-award-winning event has promoted and preserved the region's rich Celtic/Gaelic history and heritage, attracting thousands of visitors each year from all over the world. This fall, the nine-day gathering will welcome more than 150 performers - showcasing both local talent as well as international artists from Ireland, Scotland, across Canada, and beyond - to partake in more than 50 concerts at various venues, featuring the likes of singer-songwriter Buddy MacDonald, award-winning singer Heather Rankin, Scottish trio Talisk, renowned Gaelic singer Julie Fowlis, and dynamic homegrown group Beòlach, among others. Between shows, visitors can sample from over 300 cultural events taking place at a variety of locations around the Island. Alongside ticketed concerts, these events include open mic sessions, community breakfasts, engaging and entertaining educational exhibits, walking tours, all-ages workshops in square dancing, and much more.



Indianapolis Scottish

Highland Games and Festival

October 12, Indianapolis, Indiana

www.indyscotgamesandfest.com

Organized in 2009, the Indianapolis Scottish Highland Games and Festival is a day-long celebration of Scotland's rich and robust history and heritage that raises funds for the Scottish Foundation of Indianapolis McMath Scholarship for Scottish Gaelic Studies at IUPUI. Each year, thousands of guests and performers come together in the city's beautiful German Park for a series of musical performances and cultural demonstrations. This October, the gathering kicks-off its 10th anniversary with a rousing opening ceremony, followed by traditional Scottish music, a Calling of the Clans, and a speech from Mayor Joe Hogsett. Attendees will enjoy an array of amazing activities, including the traditional Highland Games - the Caber Toss, the Sheaf Toss and more - along with a Whisky Tasting, walking tours, cultural seminars and Scottish Country Dance demonstrations. Musical performances continue throughout the day, with massed Pipe and Drum bands performing from dawn until dusk, as well as a number of live musical performers - including the 'trad' Irish trio Alair - taking the stage during the evening. The wee ones will feel welcome too, with a Kid's Booth set up on the premises providing free face painting, prizes and more.



Seaside Highland Games

October 12-13, Ventura, California

www.seaside-games.com

From humbler beginnings, the Seaside Highland Games have evolved into one of California's premier Celtic events, welcoming thousands of visitors to the Ventura County Fairgrounds each October. This year, the celebrations get off to a rousing start on Friday night with the very popular Scottish Evening and Whisky Tasting, a perfect way to tee-up the rest of the weekend. The bulk of the gathering's festivities take place on Saturday and Sunday, opening early each morning with the annual Highland Games - athletic competitions where hundreds of competitors try their hand at one of five major heavy events - and continuing through the day with competitions in piping and drumming, fiddling and traditional Highland dance. The Seaside Highland Games also hosts a myriad of cultural activities, including clan tents, a Celtic vendor market, British car demonstrations, a delicious pie competition and wonderfully live entertainment. This year, an array of amazing performers will take the site's main stage, including 6-piece Celtic-Irish rockers Cockswain, Breton-Spanish fiddler Nerea and several others. As always, the gathering is a family-friendly affair, with lots to keep the wee ones engaged and entertained!



Stone Mountain

Highland Games and Scottish Festival

October 18-20, Stone Mountain, Georgia

www.smhg.org

Founded in 1973, the Stone Mountain Highland Games and Scottish Festival is one of the largest and most recognized Celtic celebrations in the Metro Atlanta area. Each fall, the three-day event welcomes thousands of guests to the beautiful Stone Mountain Park to celebrate the area's strong Scottish community through music, dance, athletics and more. This year, things kick into gear on Friday evening with an opening dance gala and reception. The following morning, the park becomes an all-inclusive festival grounds, hosting an array of Scottish-themed cultural exhibits, including fiddling workshops, a Tartan Forest, and sheepdog demonstrations. The traditional Clan Gathering - featuring over 100 clans - also returns this year, paying special tribute to New Orleans-native Wilkins Fisk Urquhart. Competitions take place early each morning, including the very popular Highland Heavies, as well as traditional Highland dance, the Scottish Harp and massed Pipe and Drum bands. This year, the gathering is happy to welcome the North Georgia Pipe and Drum band as the weekend's musical host. Entertainment will be front and center again in 2019, with a solid selection of live performers and traditional instrumentalists set to take the venue's stage each day.



Scottish International Storytelling Festival

October 18-31, Edinburgh, Scotland

www.sisf.org.uk

Organized by the Scottish Storytelling Centre, in partnership with Traditional Arts and Crafts Scotland (TRACS), the Scottish International Storytelling Festival (SISF) is a 13-day celebration of the country's oral tradition and cultural diversity. Returning this October for its 31st year - aptly named "Beyond Words" - the SISF shines a much-needed light on the importance of cultural identity. The event includes a powerful headlining show titled "Canada-Scotland: Coast to Coast" - a spotlight on Scotland's deep connections with Canada that showcases a swath of artists and storytellers from both countries. In addition, performances will be held to promote the United Nation's Year of Indigenous Languages, where a selection of First Nations men and women will share their personal stories with a special focus on the world's current cultural landscape and the general need to heal. Also on the agenda is both the Tour Scotland - where folks and performers from the host country share the stories, music and dance of their native land - as well as the Global Lab, featuring a keynote speaker, and where attendees can interact with presenters via discussions, workshops and feedback sessions. As per tradition, the festivities round out through the final days of October, leading to the customary Celtic holiday, the Feast of Samhuinn.



Re-Jigged Festival

October 25-27, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

www.rejiggedfestival.com

Atlantic Canada's Re-Jigged Festival returns to downtown Dartmouth this fall to celebrate its 10th anniversary. A passion project of the New Trad Society of Nova Scotia, the three-day annual gathering celebrates new directions in Celtic music and dance. Each year, the dedicated organizers and volunteers create an entertaining, engaging and educational event featuring live musical performances, cultural workshops and much more. This year, visitors will enjoy the opening Tune Makers concert - an intimate and unplugged evening featuring festival headliners and instructors - as well as Irish and Cape Breton step dance classes, a late-night ceilidh with callers and a series of music, song and language workshops - including a children's Gaelic program. Saturday night's Gala Concert showcases Cape Breton quartet Beòlach and renowned concertina virtuoso, Cormac Begley, from Ireland. The weekend's festivities wrap up on Sunday afternoon with the Pipes Concert, where guests can savour the sweet sounds of both the traditional and the modern pipes.



Charleston Scottish Games

November 1-4, Charleston, South Carolina

www.charlestonscottishgames.com

One of the oldest and most renowned Scottish festivals in the southeastern United States, the Charleston Scottish Games - a four-day celebration hosted by the Scottish Society of Charleston - is a must for anyone looking to explore their Celtic roots. Each year, thousands of guests travel to Boone Hall Plantation to partake in an array of Scottish-themed activities, including music, dance, history and heritage. This year, the festivities get underway on Friday evening with the annual Charleston Tartan Ball, a black-tie event featuring a fine selection of Scottish-inspired music and authentic fare. Saturday morning will see the official Opening Ceremonies, followed by hours of Heavy Athletics, where hundreds of contestants showcase their physical skills and strength. The weekend also highlights competitions in piping, drumming and Highland dance alongside a myriad of cultural activities, including sheepdog demonstrations, live musical performances and a small children's area, where the wee ones will enjoy face painting, storytelling, craft-making and more. Saturday also features the always-popular Scotch Whisky Tasting event, while the gathering comes to a close on Sunday with the annual Kirkin' o' the Tartan Ceremony at the First (Scots) Presbyterian Church.



Central Florida Scottish Highland Games

January 18-19, 2020, Orlando, Florida

www.flascot.com

Organized by the Scottish-American Society of Central Florida, the Central Florida Scottish Highland Games was created to promote and preserve the area's strong Celtic and Scottish heritage. Each January, the two-day gathering welcomes thousands of visitors to Central Winds Park in Winter Springs - just minutes north of Orlando - for a celebration of community and culture. In 2020, the festivities will begin on Friday evening with the annual whisky tasting, where visitors are welcome to sample from an array of expertly-curated spirits, presented by the Whisky Cabinet - a group of dedicated local connoisseurs who regularly tour the region to engage, educate and entertain whisky newbies. Things take off on Saturday with a slew of competitions in Highland dance, solo piping, and the traditional heavy events - including the Open Stone Put and the Caber Toss - as well as the popular Boulder Boogie event, where contestants vie for bragging rights of carrying a heavy rock the longest without dropping it. The weekend also hosts several cultural activities, including Border Collie demonstrations, a Clan Gathering, Shortbread contests, musical performances and much more. As always, the festival is a family friendly event with loads of activities to keep the wee ones busy!

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Riverdale Orchard

Alex and Anne Jamieson bring a slice of Scotland to Canada's east coast



While craft beers, spirits and wines have long dominated the liquor landscape in Atlantic Canada, craft cider - a crisp concoction composed of high-quality apples - is set to become the region's new go-to brew.

Alex and Anne Jamieson hope it is here to stay.

"We are originally from the U.K.," shares Anne via email. "Cider is a major player in the industry there, and we had a feeling that it would become very popular in Canada as well as an alternative alcoholic drink that pairs nicely with all food choices or can be enjoyed equally on its own."

Though the couple spent most of their lives in Scotland, they relocated to the east coast of Canada five years ago.

"Our initial idea was to retire in Scotland," recalls Anne, "but there was a slight change of plans. We left Glasgow and landed as immigrants in July of 2014 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on our way to Prince Edward Island, where we had decided to make our new home. We were looking for a new adventure and a change in lifestyle."

With a background in the Tourism and Hospitality sector, Anne wanted to break into PEI's strong tourism market. The decision to get into the cider business came from what she calls an "eureka" moment.

"I turned to Alex while we were sitting at a large networking meeting and listening to a keynote speaker who had mentioned orchards. I decided then that we would make cider. We had made very small batches of cider in the U.K. and opted to turn that hobby into a sustainable and evolving business. After a long journey - both metaphorically and literally - we sold our first bottle of cider."

By the summer of 2018, the duo had launched their fledgling business - Riverdale Orchard - and began to bottle their signature creation, 2 Scots 3 Apples.

The process, Anne explains, was not an easy one.

"After meeting with PEILCC (Prince Edward Island Liquor Control Commission) over 4 years ago - when we had first decided to make cider - we discovered that we had to have a minimum of a 3-acre orchard adjacent to the production facility.

"Undeterred, we bought 45 acres of farmland in Riverdale a few months later and prepared a 4-acre field for the planting of our first orchard. While it was growing, we completed a NACM (National Association of Cider Makers) at Cornell University in the United States, before returning to the U.K. to further develop our knowledge and skills by working with award-winning cider makers there.

"We are now quality craft cider makers, using only traditional artisan methods in the making of our product."

"We decided that we would stick to our U.K. roots and make a crisp, dry, slightly

carbonated cider, containing no added sulphites" continues Anne. "2 Scots 3 Apples - named so because we are two Scots, using three apples - is made using only the juice of three varieties of apples and nothing else. Our cider takes between 4 and 5 months to make, as opposed to 6 to 8 weeks with different methods and additives. We use cold fermentation and rely on the wild yeasts which are naturally present in apples. Once fermentation has stopped, we rack off our cider and let the flavour develop until it reaches the profile that we are looking for, hence the slow process. You cannot hurry nature."

Since its debut, Riverdale Orchard has won numerous accolades and acclaim; the Atlantic Canadian Beer Awards presented them with Gold Cider of The Year, Gold Standard Cider and Perry, Gold Cider House of The Year and Gold New Cider House of The Year honours.

The biggest reward, however, has been appreciation.

"Seeing the smile on our customers' faces and hearing their fantastic compliments when they have their first sample of 2 Scots 3 Apples Cider in The Tasting Room at Riverdale Orchard is more than we could ask for."

In addition to adding more choices to their current cider menu, the pair also hope to grow their business by hosting more events throughout the year and exporting their products further afield.

"At the end of the day we want to be able to take consumers on a journey - from the orchard right through to our end product, our cider."

www.riverdaleorchard.com



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Chef Gary MacLean

*Scotland's national
Chef Gary MacLean
savours his humble
beginnings*



“My inspiration to become a chef came from my sheer love of cooking,” shares Chef Gary MacLean via email from his home in Scotland.

“I wasn’t great at school, and I found home economics classes to be very easy - it was something I was good at. When I became a chef, it certainly was not the popular profession that it is today and, truthfully, it was probably not a great career choice. However, I was very lucky to get a job in a good hotel; I was only 15, and the chef was embracing new styles of cuisine. Today, over three decades later, I still love what I do, and I am very proud to be a chef.”

MacLean was born in Glasgow, and now resides in nearby Robroyston, best known as the historical location of William Wallace’s capture in 1305. He shares his slice of idyllic Scottish countryside with his wife Sharon, and their five children, who range in age from 5 to 23.

“The location is incredible; when I take the kids and the dog for a walk, I am totally surrounded in countryside within two minutes. On a clear day, I can see Ben Lomond from my bedroom window.”

Given the demands of his vocation, he cherishes every precious moment with his family and friends.

“My choices over the years have totally taken over; long hours, working six days and five nights a week. So, I have missed stuff on occasion - important stuff, like birthdays and anniversaries. A Saturday night out has been an impossibility for most of my career. But that was my choice. I went down that route, and I know it is not for everyone, but that is what I did.”

What keeps him going is the excitement of being creative behind the grill each day, ensuring that the job never feels like work. Over the years he has run over 100 restaurants, hobnobbed with the rich and famous, and travelled the world while slinging dishes.

“I sometimes have to pinch myself - just recently, I was at an event with Princess Anne in attendance at a top-secret nuclear submarine base.”

A career highlight was winning MasterChef: The Professionals in 2016.

“MasterChef is a wonderful platform; it is very unique in that you can show your friends, family, and 4 million other people what you do for a living every night of the week for 6 weeks.

“It totally changed my life - I have been non-stop since the win; travelling to India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Colombia, doing

pop ups in New York, and dinners in Los Angeles and Ottawa for the First Minister of Scotland. I also was asked to do a very special Burns Supper at Number 10 Downing Street.

“In addition, I have participated in food festivals from the Shetland Islands to London, been involved with raising money for charities, and I also have published my first book - Kitchen Essentials, The Joy of Home Cooking.”

Along with his current role as Chef Lecturer at the City of Glasgow College, MacLean is working on establishing partnerships with similar institutions in the USA and Canada. He is also currently in the process of putting together a television series for the BBC, which will be launching later this year.

His biggest honour to date, however, was being named Scotland’s first-ever national chef.

*“Being asked by my Government to represent
the industry I love has been both amazing
and humbling at the same time.”*

“Scotland is a world giant when it comes to food and drink; our chefs are now embracing the country’s wonderful natural local produce and celebrating all things Scottish. We are in the middle of a food revolution, where chefs are bringing their own regional flavours into the world of fine dining.”

Somehow, through all of this, he also finds time to teach up-and-coming chefs a thing or two in the kitchen, and has a few words of wisdom for those looking to launch a career in the world of cuisine.

“My advice to any person starting out in the industry is always the same: get qualified. As a young chef, qualifications might not seem important, but the older you get and the bigger your job becomes, paper qualifications are essential.

“Put your career in the hands of the very best. Surrounding yourself with exceptional people rubs off. Work with nice people. Do not chase cash. Invest in your future by working in the best places, not for the biggest pay cheque. And, perhaps most importantly, stay humble.”

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Rawlins Cross took their name from an intersection in St. John's, Newfoundland. The moniker is fitting, as the band is made up of an intersection of people from across Atlantic Canada.

If you have set foot in the Maritimes at anytime over the last three decades, then you have likely heard their music. The group's 1993 single, *Reel 'n' Roll*, is practically the unofficial Atlantic Canadian anthem.

"I was always looking for that magic riff," notes guitarist Dave Panting, who spoke with Celtic Life International over the phone from St. John's, joined on the line by fellow founding bandmate, Ian McKinnon, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

"*Reel 'n' Roll* was almost rock crossed with Irish folk," he continues. "Basically, I was just trying to write a fun song about having a good time. Without meaning to sound immodest or anything, I feel like I got that particular thing right."

Before their success, the sextet cut their teeth in local and area bars.

"We were originally more of a traditional cover band," says McKinnon. "Over time, we morphed into writing original music. Dave and Geoff (Panting, keyboards & accordion) have been the primary songwriters of the group since the very start."

"We tried out a whole lot of folk music," shares Panting. "Jambalaya, Bob Marley's *Stir It Up* with pipes. We were a little whimsical about it, but oddly enough, as soon as we started doing our own stuff, the interest really took off. I was as surprised as anyone."

"If you're going to make a career in music, you've really got to be creating original material."

The group currently consists of McKinnon and Brian Bourne from Halifax, the Panting brothers from Newfoundland, lead singer Joey Kitson from Charlottetown, and drummer Howie Southwood from Elora, Ontario. They have been active since 1988, though the members did take a break in 2001 to focus on other priorities.

"Dave, Joey, and myself had very young children at the time," McKinnon elaborates. "Touring full-time as recording musicians means a lot of hours on the road, as that is where you really generate your income and move your career forward. It was fun, but it was getting pretty tough for all of us."

"There was no commitment to getting back together at the time, so it was just, 'it's been a great run, guys - see ya' later,'" explains McKinnon, adding with a chuckle, "Fast forward to 2008, and what I call the 'Modern Era' of Rawlins Cross."

The Atlantic rep for Warner Music approached the group about making a compilation album, and that was enough to get the reels rolling again.

"We thought, if we are going to get together to do a compilation, what about getting back in the studio and recording a couple of brand-new pieces of music?" continues McKinnon. "We really enjoyed being

back together again, spending time with each other, creating, and realizing that we still had some things to say."

Eleven years later, and Rawlins Cross is still at it. And though they are not full-time these days, the band still manages to perform a few dozen shows across Canada each year.

Their fan base seems to be as strong as ever and now includes audiences of all ages.

"We are meeting a lot of people who have been introduced to our music over the years by maybe an uncle or an aunt or a father or mother," says McKinnon. "These younger people are coming to see the band for the first time and are enjoying the experience."

Panting interjects with a laugh, "We actually heard someone say, 'My nan loves your stuff.'"

In partnership with GroundSwell Music - a Halifax-based label that McKinnon shares with producer Jon Landry - Rawlins Cross is crossing Atlantic Canada for a 30th anniversary tour, starting in October.

"The band is playing better than ever," says Panting. "And we aren't just trotting out stuff that we have done forever - we are always evolving, and we always have new things to offer listeners."

"It will be a mix of our older hits and our new material," adds McKinnon. "And we have a huge amount of fun on stage - it's a pretty entertaining evening for all of us."

www.rawlinscross.com

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Kizzy Crawford

A Welsh speaker with Bajan and English heritage, Kizzy Crawford is a multi-talented singer-songwriter

Since breaking into the Welsh music scene as a teenager, Kizzy Crawford has picked up a variety of instruments and tapped into a fusion of folk, jazz and soul. With a new album set to release this fall, the bilingual songstress sat down with Celtic Life International via Skype to discuss her past, present and future.

Crawford was born in England, but her family moved to Wales when she was just three years old. That's when she first began learning the Welsh language.

"Welsh is really my second language, but because I was so young when I started speaking it, it feels like a first as well as English," she shares. "It's really great for me, because I have two languages to express myself in."

Currently living in Merthyr Tydfil, Crawford started writing songs at the age of 14 and hasn't stopped.

"We were going through some hard times with the family and I discovered song-writing as a way to process my feelings. It became a hobby and I was composing pretty much every day."

At the encouragement of her mother, Crawford decided to take the stage: by the time she was 15, she was showcasing her talents by performing at open mic sessions, where she started garnering interest. For many people in the area, it was a surprise to see a mixed-race person who was also able to speak Welsh.

"Growing up, I didn't have any examples of black or mixed-race musicians on the Welsh music scene," she says, adding that she "wanted to inspire other mixed-race girls in Wales."

Crawford hit her stride in 2012, when she won the Arts Connect Original Singer-Songwriter prize. Soon after, a manager came on board and the gigs started piling up.

"It has been really amazing - the amount of support that I have had and continue to get."

Over time, Crawford wanted to create a "fuller sound" onstage and began incorporating effects into her live performances, including a "loop" pedal - a device that records short segments of music and plays them back repeatedly. She bought one specifically for another competition and entered with an original song called "Caer o Feddyliau" (Fortress of Thoughts)

- an intoxicating tune filled with layered vocals, guitars and percussive sounds.

"I love the opportunity to add different sounds into the loops that I make," she notes. "For example, recently, I've just got a saxophone and it is a great way of adding more sound and production into my shows."

She also plays violin, bass and more.

"I try to add as much as I can to create that full band sound. It is a lot of fun onstage, as I am always doing something. The audience finds it really interesting as well."

Crawford's musical influences include Joni Mitchell, Fleetwood Mac, Massive Attack, Omar Lye-Fook and Steely Dan. She draws themes from Welsh poetry and history, with a particular penchant for writing songs about strong women. Her 2013 debut single - "The Starling" - tells the tale of the Welsh legend of Princess Branwen. After being mistreated by her husband, Branwen trains a starling to send a message to her brother, asking for rescue.

That interest in female empowerment is inspired, in part, by her mother.

"My mom is so strong and amazing, really. The fact that she has been able to bring up five kids on her own. There are a lot of places in the world that women are not recognized as strong figures, so I am really keen to bring that message to the forefront."

At 23, and though with plenty of accolades and experience already under her belt, Crawford believes that she is just getting started. She has been prepping for the fall release of her first full-length album, *The Way I Dream*, which will be followed by a tour.

"Another massive thing in my life is that I have just received an autism diagnosis. That is opening a lot of doors for me in terms of knowing myself better, and I am excited to explore that in my music."

"Music plays a huge role in inspiring people and my hope is to help make the world a better place through my songs."

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Two music enthusiasts from the Netherlands are making waves in Celtic radio

Although both Dutch - with hints of Nordic and Spanish heritage, respectively - Arjan de Groot and Alex Sealgaire were inspired by the music of the ancient Celts and Germans for their popular community radio show, CeltCast.

"Emotionally we both have always been more connected to the old, pre-Christian heritage - Celtic and Germanic - than we are to the cultures that were brought here by the Romans," shares Sealgaire via email. "Historically the Netherlands are at the crossroads of both Celtic and Germanic countries, and so these two cultures heavily influence the music that we play on our station. The Netherlands has also always been a sea-faring, trading nation, and has had contact with a whole range of other cultures which, combined, have grown our own. All of these influences spice up our radio stream."

It was in 2014, after the duo discovered a shared passion for music, culture and history, that CeltCast was first launched.

"We started the station for a couple of reasons," recalls de Groot. "The folk music scene brought us so much love and joy over the years, and we really wanted to give back to that community. Not being musicians ourselves, starting a band was out of the question. So we decided to start a radio station, though always with the intention to be more than just a channel for music; we wanted to give bands a platform to connect with people in the music scene, including other bands, festival organizers, graphic designers, folk enthusiasts and more."

Since the start, the volunteer-run organization has maintained its original mandate.

"Our goal has always been to strengthen and grow the folk music scene," continues de Groot. "We love to share this passion



with as many people as possible. At the same time, through the music and the stories, we come in contact with a very rich history and we feel that we can play a part in not only promoting this shared past, but also in preserving it. So while music is the thread that binds all aspects together, we are always expanding our mandate, and the means by which to achieve it all."

Originally, CeltCast operated solely as a radio station, relying on social media channels merely as a way to boost their audience. Today, however, those channels are a central component of the entire business model.

"A lot of our business now happens on social media," shares Sealgaire. "We have been using it more and more, helping us towards our goals of growing and strengthening the folk scene. We are active on all main platforms, and we try to reach as many people as possible. Part of how we do this is by cooperating with bands and events. As we share their music, they share our station, and so together we can grow. We can attract a larger audience through the big names supporting us."

The two admit the project does not come without its issues.

"We are growing so fast, we need to attract the right volunteers," continues Sealgaire. "It is always good to have people around as a sounding board, accompanied by some nice coffee or tea, but there needs to be an underlying passion and the ability to invest enough time. It is amazing to have already found 15 of these incredible volunteers, but we can always use more. There is a lot of work, and only so many hours in a day."

Still, they say, the rewards far outweigh those challenges.

"We receive so much amazing and beautiful music from all over the world," notes de Groot. "And we have been able to play a part in quite a number of awesome new connections, leading to new projects, new music, new events. The ultimate reward is being that we are able to do our part in making people's lives, and thereby the world, more enjoyable."

This year marks CeltCast's fifth anniversary and the pair have several things lined up in celebration. In addition to numerous festival appearances - including visits to England's Fantasy Forest Festival and Germany's Festival Mediaeval - they are looking to create a CeltCast Foundation to further preserve the music and culture.

"There is something about acoustic music that touches people's souls," says de Groot. "When shared with others at a festival, it creates a connectivity between people. It is simply amazing to be able to play a part in that and to keep the spirit alive."

www.celticast.com

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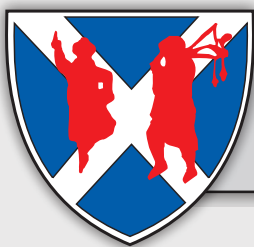
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Liam McIlvanney

Scottish author Liam McIlvanney goes dark with Celtic Noir

Liam McIlvanney has been at the forefront of Celtic crime fiction for several years. With a number of acclaimed books to his name, his best-known work - *Where the Dead Men Go* - won the 2014 Ngaio Marsh Award for Best New Crime Novel. After years of writing, as well as plying his trade as a Professor of Irish and Scottish Studies (CISS) at the University of Otago in New Zealand, the 50-something scribe - who was born and bred in Scotland - wanted to push both his passion and his profession to new places.

The result is *Celtic Noir*, an Irish and Scottish Crime Fiction Festival set to take place this October.

As McIlvanney explains, the two-day gathering is a way to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the University's CISS program, while fostering a growing commitment to the study.

"Given that the acclaimed Scottish crime writer Val McDermid is a Visiting Professor of Scottish Studies and Crime Fiction at CISS, and that I myself write crime novels, we thought it might make sense to mark our Centre's tenth anniversary with a festival of Irish and Scottish crime writing," he explains via email.

"As well, public engagement is an important element of our remit at CISS, and *Celtic Noir* cements our Centre's relationship with the local community. We are fortunate to be partnering with the good people at the Dunedin Writers and Readers Festival to deliver this event."

McIlvanney believes the gathering is important for a number of reasons.

"Events like *Celtic Noir* give the com-

munity a chance to celebrate the city's Celtic heritage. It is also a great way to experience some of the finest crime writers that Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand have to offer."

Although still a relatively novel concept, *Celtic Noir* will include a variety of activities for visitors of all types.

"The festival features readings, author interviews and panel discussions involving a number of local and visiting crime writers. There are also workshops and several masterclasses for aspiring crime writers."

Along with McIlvanney, the weekend will host five of the genre's finest writers, including Irish authors Liz Nugent and Adrian McKinty, Scotland's "Queen of Crime" Val McDermid, and New Zealand's own Dame Fiona Kidman and Vanda Symon.

His position requires him to wear many hats, but McIlvanney says none of this would have been possible without a little aid from his colleagues.

"I have received invaluable help on logistical matters from both Laura Hewson at the Dunedin Writers and Readers Festival and from my own Research Assistant, Kate Tilson."

Overall, he continues, the festival has come together quite smoothly, with only a few minor setbacks.

"Given the increasing importance of book tours and promotional events, it's always tricky getting a group of crime writers in one place for an event like this."

"Fortunately, we finally managed to hit on a weekend that suited everyone."

The payoff, he believes, will most likely be worth all the time and effort.

"The biggest reward will be giving our local community the chance to see a number of world-class crime writers in Dunedin."

As a Scotsman living in New Zealand, McIlvanney is happy to see the area's strong commitment to its Celtic heritage.

"Dunedin was founded by Scots settlers in 1848, so Celtic culture has always been a strong element in the city's cultural make-up. There is a vibrant pipe band scene, and Irish and Highland dancing remain popular. The city is also home to several Clan Societies, the Caledonian Society of Otago and the Dunedin Burns Club. Our Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies runs a yearly program of public lectures and academic symposia, and we also host visiting Scottish writers through our University of Otago Scottish Writers Fellowship.

"Personally, I would like to see more focus on the revival of the Gaelic language in Dunedin," he adds. "At CISS, we have periodically offered summer school courses in Scottish Gaelic, but it would be good to have the capacity to offer such courses year-round."

As it stands, McIlvanney notes that *Celtic Noir* is likely to be a one-off event.

"Who really knows at this point?" he asks. "I mean, if it goes very well then we may consider making it a permanent fixture on Dunedin's Celtic events calendar."

www.otago.ac.nz/ciss



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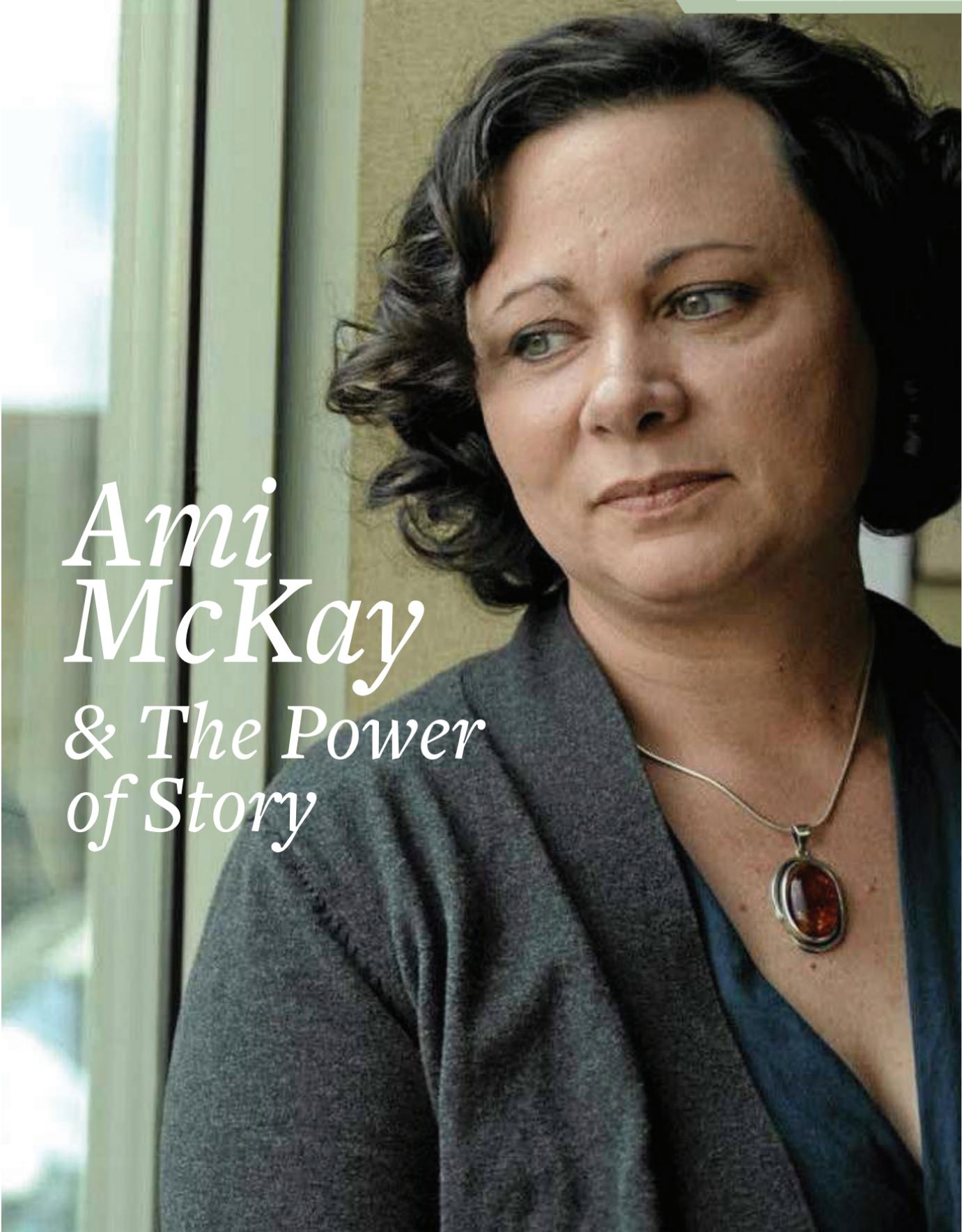
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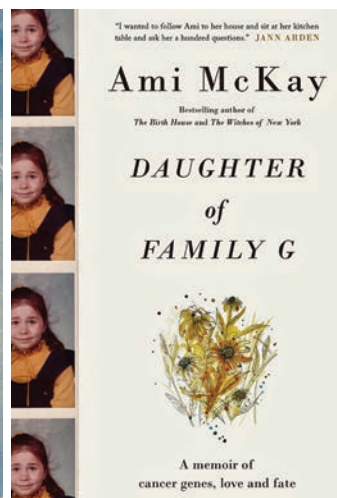
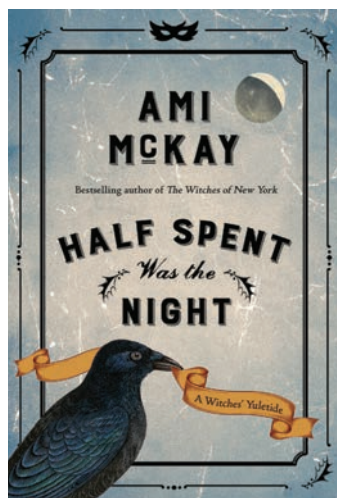
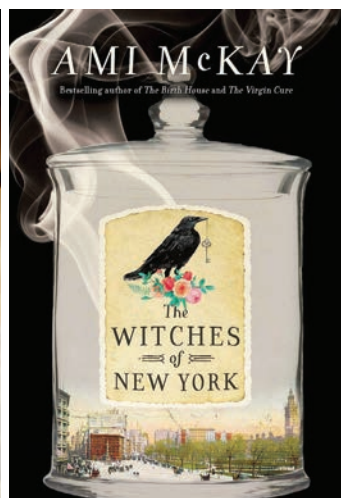
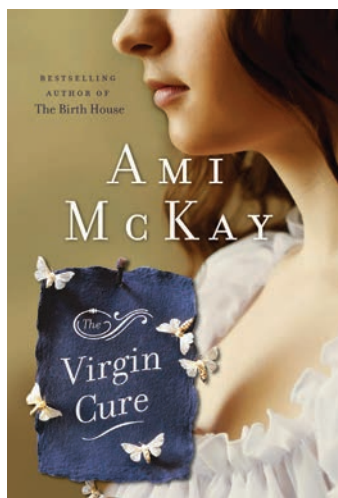
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A portrait of Ami McKay, a woman with dark, curly hair, looking slightly to the left. She is wearing a dark grey cardigan over a dark blue top and a necklace with a large, oval, reddish-brown pendant. The background is a blurred indoor setting with vertical lines, possibly a window or door frame.

*Ami
McKay
& The Power
of Story*



Canadian author Ami McKay has been at the forefront of Atlantic Canada's literary scene for well over a decade. Her novels - inspiring tales of strong women through history - have empowered readers to own their stories, and to celebrate the subtle moments of magic that life has to offer - "They are there," she promises, "you just need to look for them." Recently, McKay sat down with Celtic Life International Senior Writer Caitlyn Mearns to discuss her journey into storytelling, the television adaptation of her debut novel *The Birth House*, and the upcoming release of her genetic memoir, *The Daughter of Family G*.

What is your heritage?

I grew up in Indiana. Both of my parents were born in the United States. My mom is a mix of German and Scottish, which is my Celtic connection. Her father was Scottish, her maiden name was Mackintosh, spelled M-A-C-K - just to make that clear! Although he has passed, my grandfather would never forgive me if I didn't emphasize that subtle difference. My father's family were from Germany.

Tell us about your move to Nova Scotia.

I moved to Canada in 2000, and I am now a Canadian. My husband and I met in Toronto, but he went to school at Acadia. When we started to date, and I saw Nova Scotia for the first time, I knew that this was the place we wanted to be. This was home. A big part of it was the people. People say that Nova Scotians are friendly, and it's true! People look out for each other here, and they care for each other. They are never too busy to sit at the kitchen table for a cup of tea and share stories. That was a very important thing for me as I moved forward in my life. Something I knew I wanted to share with my children, when I had children. We have since made a family here.

There is an incredible mosaic of storytellers here on the East Coast.

Absolutely! I mean, Alistair MacLeod alone. Wow! I was very fortunate to meet him early on, right after *The Birth House* was published.

He had been teaching in Windsor, Ontario, but then spending the summers in Cape Breton. He was just so lovely to me, and so kind.

What first inspired you to become a storyteller?

As a kid my two passions were music and writing. For me, writing was kind of a secret. I was very active with musical theatre and orchestras - which eventually led to me majoring in music in university - but the writing was always my outlet on the side, just to do for myself. Even after I got married and we had moved out to Scot's Bay, I was still doing a lot of writing for myself. Ian, my husband, who is an English major, would read them. He was very encouraging and told me I should consider submitting them somewhere. But I said no, absolutely not. Along the way, though, a few stories did get published, simply because he gave me a nudge.

When did *The Birth House* first come about?

The real breakthrough moment for me in writing was when I attended a CBC workshop about writing a documentary for radio. At the time, a producer there named Dick Miller - he has since retired - was looking for freelancers and was willing to train people on the ins and outs of radio work. These were long-form radio pieces, anywhere from 15 minutes to 45 minutes in length. It was really interesting, and I ended up teaming up with him on numerous occasions. One of those occasions dealt with the history of my own house - after moving in I had discovered that it had been the local midwives house. So, even before I started writing the novel, *The Birth House*, I did a radio documentary on it. I went around and interviewed women in the community who could remember a sibling who had been born there or who perhaps remembered the midwives that had lived here. It was amazing to collect these histories - not just of the house, but the entire community - and to have all these women's voices captured in time. I then paired that with a present-day midwife who was practicing in Nova Scotia at the time.

You must be thrilled to see the novel being adapted for TV.

I am so lucky to have people who are interested in what I do and who are willing to see where something like this can go. It hasn't

been an overnight success; The Birth House is now 13 years old – that’s adolescent in book years! There have been other times that it has been optioned, but nothing ever came of those opportunities – it just wasn’t the right time. Then, last year, I was approached by Elizabeth Scofield, a wonderful series producer from Omnifilm out in British Columbia. We spent an hour on the phone the first time we spoke. She told me she had loved the book for so long and that she was trying to find a way to make a TV adaptation happen. Her vision, and the team she has pulled together, are wonderful. The co-writing team is Sherry White, who was the screenplay for the film Maudie, and Cary MacDonald, who is a writer from Newfoundland and has written for a number of shows including Frontier and Republic of Doyle. In fact, the entire team is made up of women, which is amazing. It just feels like the right time to share this story about strong women in Nova Scotia who are trying to make a difference, all the while honoring the traditions of their past. I have been collaborating with them every step of the way. Recently they came out to visit, and we did a three-day, intensive retreat at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, and also here at the Birth House. We sat around the table, had many cups of tea, and discussed which stories are important and what parts of the Birth House still resonate today. It felt like being amongst old friends. I am very excited about it.

Tell us about the new book, *Daughter of Family G: A Memoir of Cancer Genes, Love and Fate*.

The book is in three threads: the past or before I was born, my memories growing up, and then real time, during the year I wrote it. I figured if I wanted to write this story, I wanted to take the readers with me on a journey. The threads are alternating chapters instead of chronological. Funnily enough, the memoir also came from a documentary I worked on with Dick Miller. It was about my journey getting genetic tests done for Lynch Syndrome. I originally hadn’t been interested in writing non-fiction, a memoir. I didn’t know if I had it in me to write about myself. It felt like a very vulnerable place. With fiction, while it is still a lot of hard work, you aren’t exposing yourself quite as much.

What gave you the nudge?

I spoke with my editor, Anne Collins, about the idea a few years ago after giving a reading at a big cancer fundraising event in Toronto called Read for the Cure. I told her the story about my great, great aunt Pauline, who was a dressmaker in Michigan in 1895. She had confessed to a pathologist that she knew she was going to die young and she knew how she was going to die. She explained that many people in her family had died from cancer. Cancer was a very taboo word at that point, so he was shocked that she had not only made this confession to him, but also spoke about all this illness in her family. As he was very interested in this sort of thing he decided that he wanted to work with her. The research that happened on that day would actually alter the course of medicine into the 21st century. When I told the story that night, I was simply talking about the power of story. How something someone once said in a single moment could lead to one of the biggest genetic breakthroughs in history. That story has also been charted over time by many big scientific papers and medical journals, except that she is only referred to as “The Seamstress” in those. Anne – who has been so incredibly supportive through all of this – said that I might consider publishing it, though

initially I said no. As I mentioned, I just felt like that was part of my life that I didn’t want to explore. But then I turned 49, and I realized that I was going to be 50 soon. A lot of those people in my family history – and a lot of people that I am very close to – had experienced cancer by the time they were 50. So, I figured it was time to move on it. Between 49 and 50 – I gave myself one year – I was going to write the thing. My editor kept reminding me how important it was. Lynch Syndrome is just as prevalent as the BRCA-1 and BRCA-2, which a lot of people know about in association with breast cancer. One out of every 279 people have Lynch Syndrome, but only 5 per cent know it. From that point of view, my fear of sharing my personal stuff went out the window.

What was the most challenging part of the project, going from fiction to nonfiction?

I have a historical fiction voice when writing. It is not my own voice, the voice I use when I am talking to you on the phone or speaking with a loved one. I had to find a voice that could be my voice in this specific text, which was a bit challenging. However it was also very liberating. I hadn’t expected that. I figured I would need to cover things in a very scientific way, trying to dot all “T’s” and cross all the “T’s”, but then I finally realized that it was me telling someone a story, one on one – me and the reader. I realized that a voice of honesty and openness was the voice that I wanted. I do hope that that comes across for the reader.

What was your favorite part of the process?

Because I have lost many people I love to cancer, I got to meet them again on the page and be with them again for a little while as I was working on the memoir. That was really special. It was sort of unexpected that it would happen that way. I also have two sons, and I felt that this was something I wrote for them, about their heritage and about their ancestors.

What has the reception been like so far?

I have had a handful of people who I really admire agree to read early versions. Beth Powning, who is a wonderful writer from New Brunswick and who has written both historical fiction and a memoir, said some really beautiful things about the book. Jann Arden also really wanted to read it and she wrote this wonderful blurb for it and has been very gracious and supportive.

What’s next on your agenda?

I have a couple of novels that I am supposed to write. I started working on one, but it is very early in the process, so I can’t really say much about it. I am excited to return to fiction and see where that takes me. I have also written a few plays in the past for Two Planks and a Passion Theatre out in Ross Creek, so there is something in the works with them.

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Linda-Mae & Carol

I was born in Dublin and I have lived in Dublin all my life. Both my parents and my grandparents were born in Dublin as well.

My mother Carol took over the shop in 1995, and I have been a part of it ever since, working during the school holidays and through college. I fell in love with the products and their Celtic roots.

We were attracted to Irish-made products, their makers and stories. It is a constant journey discovering new items around Ireland. We also adore the beauty of Donegal – especially its people and scenery. That is how the Donegal

Shop came to be owned by Dubliners!

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#wearingirish movement created by Margaret Molloy - an Irish-American woman based in New York City - has done more for the industry in the last few years than anything else I have seen before.

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The Theatre in the Hills

As our award-winning photojournalist Tom Langlands tells us, Scotland's Pitlochry Festival Theatre has found firm footing...



Elizabeth Newman



The Shoochy Bridge - so called because of its propensity to bounce and sway in use - is the name given by locals to the suspension footbridge that links the town of Pitlochry on the north side of the River Tummel with Pitlochry Festival Theatre by the old ferry port of Port-na-Craig on the waterway's south bank. I crossed the bridge several times this summer. On each occasion I paused mid-span to let the oscillations subside and to watch the salmon in the water below head upstream to negotiate the salmon ladder at Pitlochry Dam before heading into Loch Faskally and beyond. I feel a real affinity with this part of Scotland, having spent many years fishing its rivers and photographing its wildlife. It engenders a sense of escapism, and it may be for that reason that I return most years to see productions at what has become known as the Theatre in the Hills.

Pitlochry Festival Theatre attracts visitors from all over the world, though few appreciate that its origins are as shoochy as the bridge they cross to get to it.

During the 1930s John Stewart was a member of The Curtain Theatre that operated from the drawing room of a large townhouse at Woodside Terrace, Glasgow. Sadly, it closed its doors in 1939 when WWII broke out. Stewart, who was a director of the well-known Skerry's commercial colleges - with premises throughout the U.K. and Ireland - was not prepared to put his passion for theatre on hold when, in the darkest of hours, lighter moments were desperately needed. In 1940, the year before Luftwaffe bombers unleashed the Clydebank blitz, he launched The Park Theatre in the building next door to the former Curtain Theatre. Known as Glasgow's First Little Theatre, it hosted a string of plays and events throughout the war years and beyond. In 1946, Stewart appointed his friend Kenneth Ireland as General Manager and together they saw the small theatre through to its final performance in 1949. Stewart, who was harbouring

a vision for a "festival of theatre" in Scotland, wanted a larger venue in Glasgow. However, back then such dreams were considered a distraction and a frivolous use of much-needed building materials. Frustrated by what he regarded as the machinations of bureaucracy, Stewart, in his closing speech at The Park Theatre, prophetically announced, "Glasgow's loss will be Scotland's gain."

Stewart knew Pitlochry and the pull that it had as a quaint Victorian spa town and a gateway to the Highlands. In 1944 he visited Pitlochry with Ireland and an eye towards the future. In fact, sometime during the latter years of the war he hid a piece of paper by a marker on the banks of the River Tummel. On VE day - 8 May 1945 - he is reputed to have recovered the note on which he had written,

"When peace is declared I shall return to this spot to give thanks to God and to establish my Festival."

In the same year, Knockendarroch - a large Victorian mansion in Pitlochry with over four acres of grounds - caught Stewart's attention. He purchased the property and founded the Pitlochry Theatre Company. His dreams of building a theatre were quickly thwarted, however, when the Ministry of Works declined to grant a licence for the project on the basis that construction materials were scarce, and the works were not essential. Undaunted, Stewart visited tent structures at both Regents Park in London and the Arena Theatre in Birmingham, soon embracing the concept of a theatre in a marquee. On this basis, the Ministry of Works capitulated, a licence was granted, and Pitlochry Festival Theatre held its inaugural performance on May 19, 1951 in a tent on the grounds of Knockendarroch House; the British première of Maxwell Anderson's *Mary of Scotland*. At the launch, Tom Johnston, chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board, spoke

of Stewart's determination, "This theatre is a monument to one man's courage, one man's persistence and one man's great faith."

Already bearing heavy financial losses, disaster struck towards the end of the theatre's second year when a storm ripped the tent apart. Faced with possible bankruptcy, a non-profit society was formed and Stewart signed over his house, land, ancillary buildings and the damaged tent. In exchange he was permitted to remain in his home. He was appointed Festival Director and Ireland was appointed Company Secretary. Despite the setbacks, Pitlochry Festival Theatre had already established itself as an important player in the local arts scene and as a tourist attraction. Following a profitable third season and successful funding appeals to public and private donors, enough money was raised to enlarge the theatre, combining semi-permanent additions with the original tent structure. The result was a five-hundred-person capacity theatre that would last almost three decades.

By the early 1970s the theatre had outgrown its premises. It was attracting large numbers of visitors, but its quirky appeal was falling behind modern expectations of a theatre experience. After considering many options, a site at Port-na-Craig was chosen for a permanent theatre and, in 1981, Pitlochry Festival Theatre opened the doors of its new, purpose-built home. Sadly, Stewart never saw the new building, but he did live long enough to see his dream of a Festival Theatre established in Pitlochry before he passed away in 1957. Ireland however, succeeded Stewart as Festival Director and continued to shape the theatre until 1983. Today, Stewart's vision and the tenacity of the dynamic duo in realizing that dream continues apace. Additional offices and workshops have been constructed and, at the turn of the century, a major program of renovation and redevelopment was instigated. Last year, a commitment from the Scottish Government of £10m to part-fund a further £25m expansion plan will enable the theatre to enter another phase under the guidance of its new artistic director, Elizabeth Newman.

And while Pitlochry continues to attract visitors from across Scotland and further afield, the challenge is to engage the Theatre in the Hills with people beyond the confines of picturesque Perthshire.

To that end, Newman's plans include taking productions to venues across the Highlands and Islands, and in spring 2020 Pitlochry will team up with the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh to co-produce Neil Simon's Barefoot in the Park. Other ideas involve youth work, writers' workshops and accessibility to all aspects of theatre for everyone.

Stewart's dream was to enable patrons to see "six plays in six days" and Newman uses that as a mantra for broader ambitions that will underscore Stewart's vision of a "festival of theatre."

Theatre, says Newman, is needed now more than ever.

"The world faces great struggle at the moment, so each of this year's dramas has been selected to investigate our world, challenge the status quo in some way and, we hope, bring great joy and offer much-needed hope," she notes.

I saw three plays at the theatre this year, each by a different director. They were all enjoyable. However, it was Newman's outstanding production of The Crucible - Arthur Miller's allegory on McCarthyism told through the events of the Salem Witch Trials - that made me contemplate where Pitlochry Festival Theatre finds itself today. In a wonderful piece of theatrical design, a replicated section of the Shoogly Bridge hung in tension over the stage. It connected the play with the present time and place, served as a device to enable characters to arrive and leave, and provided a locale around which events unfolded. But, as with the real bridge over the River Tummel, it could both link and divide people and communities. The next day I stopped again on the Shoogly Bridge and looked at the whole scene; the theatre, the river, the dam and the bridge itself. I saw in that picture an allegory for the oscillating fortunes of a man and his dream: the waters that have to be crossed, the people and places that have to be connected, the suspended reality that is theatre and the often shoogly path to success.

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Coffin Ship Disaster

In the first installment of a three-part series on Ireland, author Ken McGoogan sails into the past with replica ships...



Last June, scientists confirmed the identification of the human remains found on the beach at Cap des Rosiers, Quebec. They had come from the 1847 shipwreck of the Carricks of Whitehaven, a famine ship that had sailed from Sligo on the west coast of Ireland. Bound for Quebec City, the two-masted vessel had been approaching the mouth of the St. Lawrence on April 28 when a fierce storm came up, drove the wooden ship onto a shoal, and smashed her to pieces.

Now, more than 200 years later, Parks Canada anthropologists confirmed that the remains - bones and skeletons uncovered by storms mostly in 2011 and 2016 - were indeed those of Irish men, women and children who had sailed on the Carricks during the worst year of the Great Famine.

As I tracked the story from my home in Toronto, I could imagine the terrible demise of those last survivors all too vividly. Less than one month before the story surfaced, I had gone aboard two replica famine ships in Ireland - the Jeanie Johnston in Dublin and the Dunbrody in New Ross, County Wexford. And in 2018 I had explored the replica of the Hector in Pictou, Nova Scotia, which famously sailed from Scotland in 1773 - decades before the term "coffin ship" was coined. In size and weight, the 200-ton Hec-

tor was closest to the 242-ton Carricks.

At 301 tons or more, the three-masted Jeanie Johnston was significantly larger. On deck, the JJ was 123 feet long and 26 feet wide, with a draught or pass-over depth of 15 feet. The original ship, built in Quebec in 1847, had two diesel engines in addition to sails. But according to tour guide Sean Gilmore, the vessel was dead slow, "Once, in a race with 65 other ships, it placed 60th."

Between 1848 and 1855, the Jeanie Johnston made 16 voyages to North America, carrying an average of 198 passengers and as many as 254 passengers. Was it crowded? Put it this way: the replica ship is licensed to carry 40 people, including crew. The vessel's great distinction, Gilmore explained, was that, "On the Jeanie Johnston, nobody ever died." This he attributed to the skill of the doctor on board.

The two main killers on these voyages were cholera and typhus.

Cholera was transmitted by fecal matter in the water, "If you got it, you were dead within 48 hours." Typhus brought a slower and more miserable death, carried by lice-infected rats.

The Jeanie Johnston went down in October 1858 when, crossing the Atlantic with

a cargo of timber, she became waterlogged. The crew climbed into the rigging and hung on as the ship slowly sank. On the ninth day, as things grew desperate and with no fresh water, a Dutch ship happened by and rescued all hands. "Why were they saved?" Gilmore asked rhetorically. "Because no one ever died on the Jeanie Johnston."

The same cannot be said of the Dunbrody, the largest of the three replica ships I visited. Built in Quebec as a cargo vessel in 1845, it was 176 feet long, 28 feet wide, and weighed 500 tons - more than twice the Carricks. Sailing out of New Ross during the famine years, the Dunbrody carried an average of 200 passengers, though in March 1847, it sailed to Manhattan with 313.

Steamers operating out of Liverpool could reach North America in two weeks. However, these famine vessels usually required six to eight weeks, during which passengers survived on oatmeal, rice, ship biscuits or hard tacks. Two small cabins on the Dunbrody gave first-class voyagers some privacy, but most passengers were crammed into 40 bunk beds that were six feet square and made to accommodate four to eight people each.

Designated individuals were allowed on deck thirty minutes a day to cook. The dozen or so crew members ate better than the passengers - salted pork, beef, lime juice, eggs from caged chickens - as they constituted the living engine that drove the ship, working





four hours on and four hours off. One of the highlights of visiting the Dunbrody comes below decks, when two women actors take on the characters of historical personages and tell their stories.

That of the widow Mrs. Anne White, who cradles a newborn baby in her arms, is especially moving. With her husband and their five children, the family walked 60 miles to New Ross, then spent more than seven weeks in below-decks misery. Her husband died, but she made it to Montreal where the Grey Nuns took some of her progeny and placed them with French families. Those children were the lucky ones. The Dunbrody ran aground in the 1870s and broke up, but the bell on the replica is from the original ship.

The vessel nearest in size to the Carricks of Whitehaven was the older ship Hector, best known for its 1773 voyage from Scotland to Pictou, Nova Scotia, where today a replica is moored at Heritage Quay. The original was already in rough shape when she collected passengers at Loch Broom, and those who went aboard found they could scrape slivers from her rotting hull with their fingernails. The Hector had three masts but was just 85 feet long and 22 feet wide. She weighed 200 tons and sailed with 189 passengers - 23 families and 25 single men. To say that the ship was overflowing is a gross understatement.

In 2018, while visiting the replica, I descended the ladder into the hold and stepped to the middle of the ship where, at just over six feet in height, I could at least stand upright. I could hardly believe my

eyes. What with the captain, the two mates, the sail maker, the carpenter, the cook, several seamen and three soldiers, 200 people were crowded onto the vessel. Most of them spent the voyage confined here below decks, jammed tight. Men, women, and children - 30 of them under two years of age - slept on rough pine boards with twenty-four inches between each rack. Eighteen people died during the 1773 crossing, most of them children.

Passengers received insufficient food and water and death rates would often reach 30 per cent. Sharks would follow the ships because so many bodies were thrown overboard. Britain would not enact legislation to protect emigrant passengers until 1803, and for decades unscrupulous ship owners continued to provide too many people with too little to eat. Hunger was far from the worst of it, however.

Imagine being crammed with almost 200 people into the squalid darkness below decks.

No portholes, no toilets, just honey buckets or pails. No privacy, just a constant stink of urine, vomit, and excrement. Try to ignore the countless rats. As the ship emerges into the open Atlantic it begins to heave and roll. More and more passengers become seasick. People are groaning with dysentery, vomiting and defecating in the darkness. Children are wailing. And always there is the stench - already intolerable, ever-worsening. Now

comes cholera, typhus, and smallpox - the last an epidemic which brings fever, thirst, aching limbs, and more dysentery. Children start dying and parents weep as they consign dead babies to the deep.

Such were the coffin ships that sailed even 74 years after the famous voyage of the Hector, when in 1847 the two-masted Carricks, already 35 years old, sailed out of Sligo. The 176 passengers who departed late in March were among 2,000 starving people driven onto ships during the Great Famine by Henry John Temple - aka Lord Palmerston - whose Irish estates encompassed 20,000 acres and 14,000 tenants. Palmerston, then British foreign secretary and later a two-term Prime Minister, insisted that "any great improvement in the social system of Ireland must be founded upon...a long continued and systematic ejectment of Small holders and of Squatting Cottiers."

On April 28, a blinding snowstorm drove the Carricks onto a shoal and smashed her to smithereens just four miles off Cape des Rosiers. Captain R. Thompson later reported that nine passengers had already died during the voyage. Another 119 died as a result of the wreck - most of them drowning, trapped in the hold - leaving 48 survivors. Of the 13 crew, all but one cabin boy survived by clinging to masts and spars in the storm-tossed sea. In total, 60 survivors stumbled onto the beach where farmers rushed to assist them.

In 2011, 164 years after the disaster, locals walking the beach found the remains of three Irish children, one as young as seven. Three years later, forensic scientists determined that the partial skeletons were "probably victims of the wreck of the Carricks." More remains turned up on the beach in 2016. They were in better condition and, earlier this year, Parks Canada confirmed that the bones from 21 skeletons came from the Carricks. Analysts determined that the dead had eaten a diet typical of the rural Irish - lots of potatoes - and many had suffered from disease and malnutrition as a result of the famine. In July 2019, Canadian and Irish officials held a ceremony and reburied the remains.

During the Great Famine (1845 to 1852), more than one million Irish died in their native country, some of starvation but most of diseases to which "the great hunger" gave rise. Another million at least boarded the famine ships. Today, almost five million Canadians claim Irish heritage, while in the United States, that number is more than 35 million.

Ken McGoogan has just published his fifteenth book ~ *Flight of the Highlanders: The Making of Canada*.

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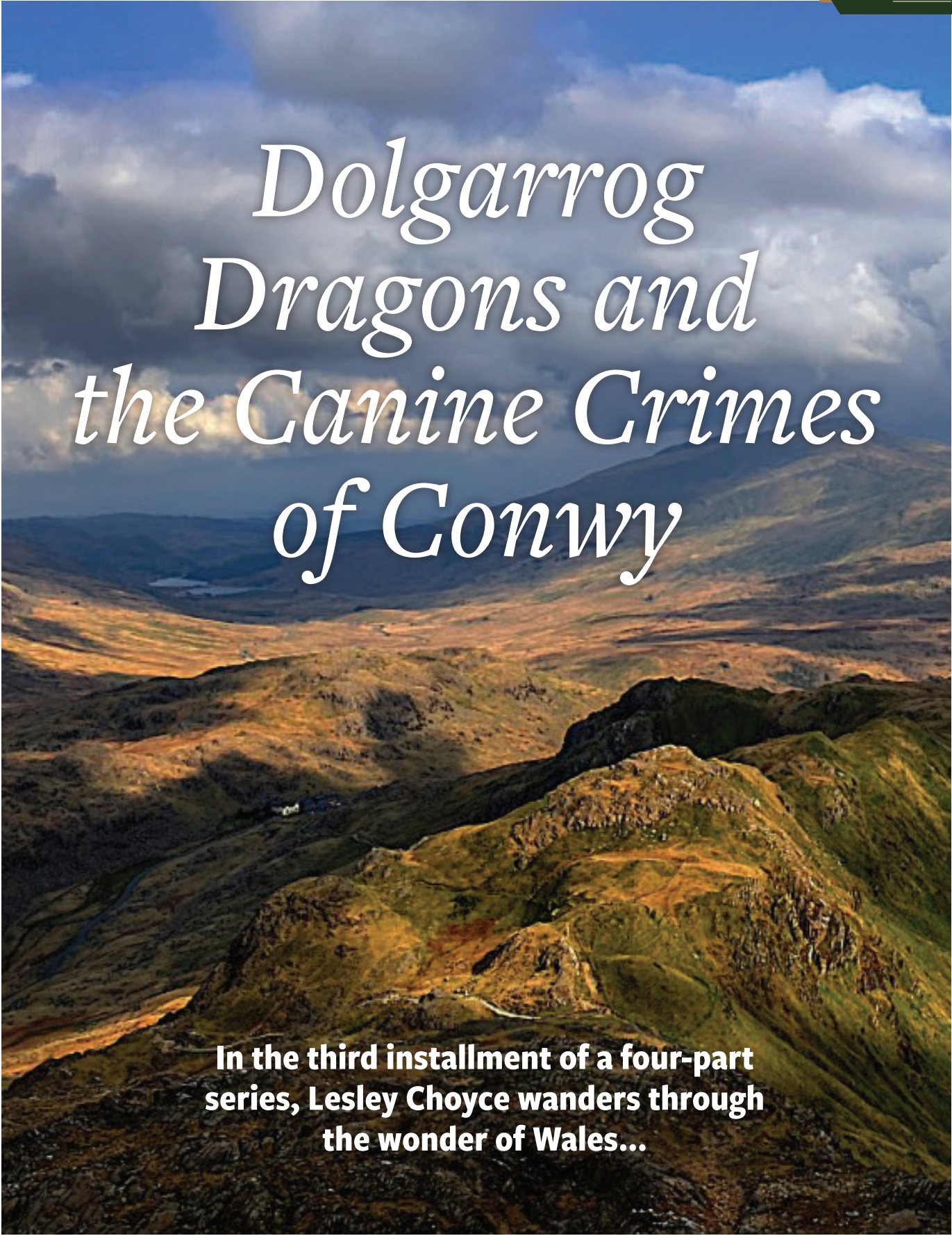
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Dolgarrog Dragons and the Canine Crimes of Conwy

In the third installment of a four-part series, Lesley Choyce wanders through the wonder of Wales...



Dolgarrog is a small village, a bit overtaken by Surf Snowdonia with its artificial lake, its endless surf lessons, its glamping and the swarms of sunburnt surf wannabees who shell out big bucks for a chance to ride a wave. Dolgarrog is a very old town, however. Long ago, it is said that the dragon Carrog was killing and eating local livestock. That really pissed off Dolgarrogians who hoisted their pitchforks and set out a dead sheep as bait. When the dragon showed up on cue, they attacked it and killed it, but not before it bit off the leg of one of the farmers who nonetheless survived and became a town hero.

Jimmy Buffet once sat at my kitchen table with his guitar and a glass of French wine and, after I had expressed my own fears over surfing some really big and gnarly waves, gave me a small Jimmy Buffet-style lecture about all of us having to confront our own dragons. This was after our communal surf session on a warm summer night in Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia. And now here I was in the land of dragons - real, imagined and symbolic. I guess I had slayed a few of my own dragons in my day - I had surfed big waves in Hawaii, poorly but heroically perhaps. I somewhat overcame my fear of dying several times in near-death, hold-down situations in large winter Atlantic waves while the north winds were roaring, the seas were thrashing, and the air temperature froze the saltwater on the rocks ashore.

I envisioned those old Welsh farmers wielding their pitchforks together, bravely attacking Carrog. Standing in my board shorts on the perimeter of the man-made lake, I looked at the breaking wave and it didn't make much sense to me. It just didn't look like any wave I had ever ridden. The mechanics looked all wrong. In fact, everything looked wrong about it for someone used to understanding what is going on with the hydrodynamics at my home break of Lawrencetown Point - a point break, yes, where waves line up in an orderly fashion and break left to right from the headland and out into the deeper waters to the east. I just wasn't sure I would be able to make sense of Snowdonia waves, to catch them or to ride them. I would likely wipe out, be in the way, or get run over by other surfers who knew what they were doing here. I would be trashed, humiliated, discouraged, and leave with a major bruise to my ego that would take weeks to heal.

Did I really want to pay good money for such a privilege? Oh yeah.

Yet, this monster of a wave was something I definitely did not like. And it was somewhat ugly, to be honest. Let me try to explain.

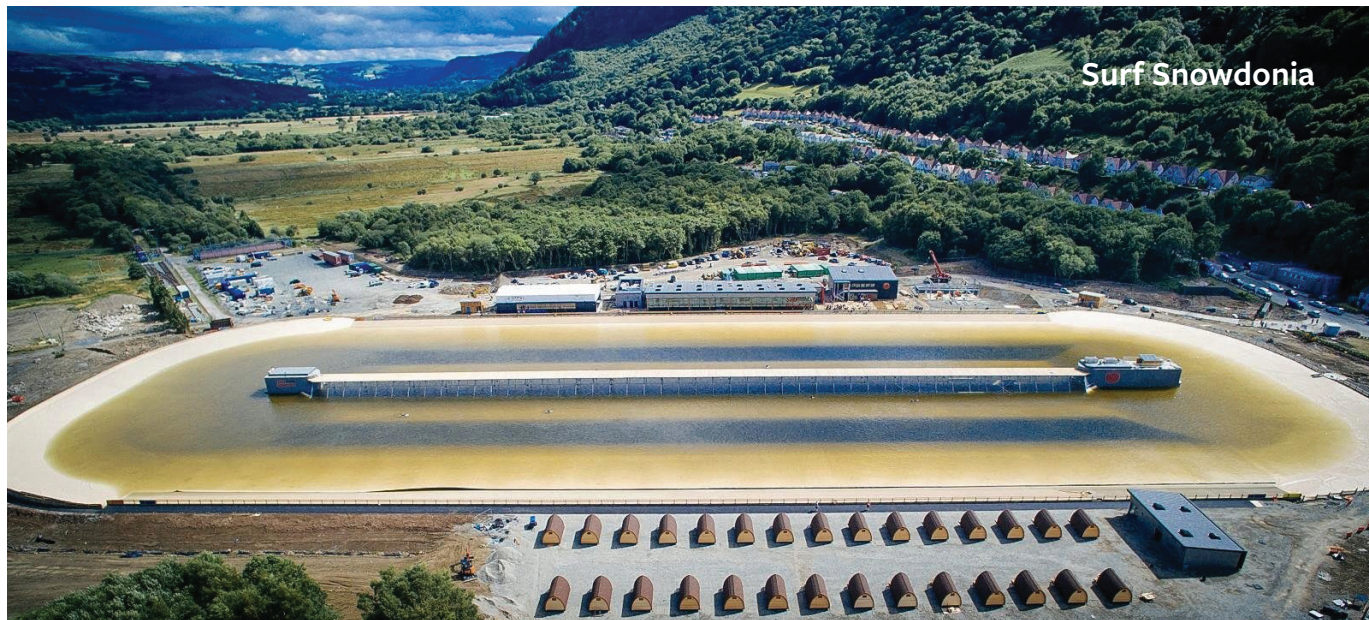
Running the length of this artificial lake is a pier down the middle. Something like a giant wedged snow-plow races down the middle of the lake on either side of the pier gaining speed as it goes, first one way and then the other. You take off near the mesh fencing by that pier on a six-foot wall of water that just suddenly pops up, grabs you by the ankles and begins to break top to bottom before turning into a mushy frothing four-foot gusher of white water that then carries you to the artificial edge of the lake where you need to fall off backwards before you slam into the somewhat-padded, but grotesquely slippery shoreline. At this point you need to grab onto your board and try to throw you and your board over a walloping bit of backwash and then get out of the way before a surfer who maybe knows what he is doing comes charging back at you from the other direction - the opposite direction where the snow-plow is now proceeding from.

If you are confused by my explanation, well, so am I.

So, the dragons that needed slaying here were my own fears and doubts that I would be able to surf this damned artificial wave. But then it was those very fears and doubts that led me here...if that makes any sense to those of you not fully familiar with the male ego.

As such, from now on all such confrontations would be referred to as "yet another Dolgarrog." However, for now, it was time to pay my £75 and put on a heavy 5/4 wetsuit, the only type available there for rent. That was way too much neoprene for a hot Welsh day like this. Nonetheless, I watched the silly five-minute video explaining the rules of the pool and then it was time to get wet.

Our Westie dog, Kelty, was not allowed near the lake itself, but Linda could sit with him in the outdoor café area where they both might watch my heroic efforts and/or abysmal failure. Sitting on the edge of the artificial lake myself, I first watched those in the water



struggling to catch the waves and then wiping out over and over. That would be me in a few minutes.

And then the time came. I knee-paddled to my position near the fencing of the pier that ran down the middle. My wave would come from behind and I would be moving west to east. I sat and waited, feeling very, very strange. Here it comes. You hear it before you see it and, since you need to sit facing forward, you really don't have time to turn around and watch it coming.

It sounded like a freight train heading straight towards me.

Paddle, paddle, paddle. The wave arrives, jacks up from flat water to about six feet - a near vertical wall of it. And I miss it. The wave doesn't care, the bastard. It just keeps on going.

Paddle to the shoreline, get whumped by the head-high backwash, take a deep breath, regroup, watch your counterpart wipe out as he attempts to surf the wave back east to west. Then paddle back into position, line up your dragons, wait for the wave to come at you again. Dig hard, harder and then, aha, at long last, I felt myself dropping down the face. I had never been on such a floaty, bouncy board like this before, so I made it to the bottom of the trough, slipped a bit to the right into the foamy white water and then lost grip of my board, did a nifty drop to my chin on the board and got tossed around by what was left of the mechanical wave. I flopped and floundered in a manner most appropriate for a beach gremmie who didn't know the first iota about surfing. As I surfaced, opened my jaw for oxygen and tried to get my bearings, the backwash thoroughly rinsed out my mouth and drove chlorinated water effectively up both nostrils before I regained my board and paddled to shore.

The third wave was a nearly perfect imitation of the second wave and the fourth wave reinforced my conclusion that I was not good at figuring out the dynamics of this activity. By the time I wallowed up on the shoreline again, I was hot, tired, frustrated and discouraged. If that cocktail is to your liking, then you'd admit that here was £75 well spent at Surf So-down-on-ya.

But as I paddled out again, I was reminded of the skinny thirteen-year-old lad I once was. I could see him in my mind's eye, trying hard

to simply stay on top of his brand new 9' 6" Greg Noll slot-bottom surfboard just off Long Beach Island at the New Jersey Shore. Learning to surf was one of the most difficult things I had ever done in my life. But the mantra of surfing, the soundtrack of promised euphoria had been driven into my skull by Jan and Dean ("Two girls for every boy!") and the Beach Boys ("Catch a wave and you're sittin' on top of the world!") And at that instant as I sidled up to the mesh fence by the pier and awaited the watery freight train that had my number, the skinny boy inside me coached the sixty-seven-year old geezer to take charge and tame that monster.

Alas, I gritted my teeth, paddled like a son of a bitch, pitched forward and down, rose awkwardly to my feet, pulled off a bottom turn and drove right, ducking the offending white water as the wave collapsed around me. And, lucky me, I made the wave. The ride was short but sweet as they say. Linda saw me. She waved. Kelty barked his approval. I took some deep breaths and scrambled into the shallows waiting to prepare for my paddle back.

After that, I surfed a handful of waves successfully, grew tired, wiped out a goodly number of times more just to reminisce about what it felt like to learn to surf for the first time. I ended my session with a reasonable percentage of satisfaction but was quite happy to slip out of my heavy O'Neill neoprene skin and feel the warm Welsh air on my heaving pale chest.

The surfing world was changing, I well knew. Australia had a few wave parks and, in the U.S., Kelly Slater had masterminded the creation of a wave park with a wave machine that manufactured the most perfect tubes of rolling green water that could be imagined. With artificial waves like that, surfing would soon be part of the Olympics. As an arrogant young surfer, I despised any form of surfing competition.

Surfing is an art - it is not a sport.

Oddly enough, in 1995 the Canadian National Surfing Championship, sanctioned by the International Surfing Association, was held in Nova Scotia - just a stone's throw from my doorstep. At forty-four I was at the top of my game and I had a new rule for myself: if you have a rule that you live by, you should break it and see what happens. So, I broke my rule of never competing in a surf competition. And I won.



Conwy Castle

I had one good move which in those days was called a floater. Take off, bottom turn, kick to the top of the wave, let it collapse in front of you, lift, go up and then float down over the white water. It was my break - my move. And I got lucky. And I pretty much walked away from competition after that.

And now here in Wales I had surfed my one and only artificial wave and would walk out of Surf Snowdonia with my hair still wet, my dragons tamed - if not slain - and with drier adventures to come with my sun-stricken loving wife and faithful white dog.

My hair was still wet from surfing by the time we reached Conwy. There was a grave here with a curious metal cage-like frame above it that supposedly inspired William Wordsworth to write a rhyming poem called "We Are Seven" about seven children, some

who had died and were buried here. His poem begins with an encounter with a little girl:

*A Simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?*

Although it is not a great poem, and somewhat confusing as to which children are dead and which are alive and why there are seven spires on the metal frame, it has a great Wordsworth line or two. A child "feels its life in every limb" - it's true, and so did I that day as we sat at a stoplight in Conwy waiting for our chance to drive through the

single lane in what appeared to be a castle wall. Good exercise, surfing included, does indeed make you feel your life in all four of your limbs if you are lucky enough to have them.

Old Bill Wordsworth really did get around and I was more than a little surprised to turn up in yet another location with notes about "Wordsworth was here." In 1798, the year of the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, he visited his chum Sir George Beaumont at Benarth Hall near here. Perhaps he was out promoting his book like a good author should but, as always, the poetry just kept pouring out of him.

It turns out that what I thought was a castle wall impeding traffic flow was just that, the extended wall of Conwy Castle. The tourist guides suggest that if you can only visit a few castles in Wales, this should be one of them because of the cool suspension bridge and the fact that it looks like a classic sandcastle. Of course, your kids would love that. Although the builders hadn't the forethought to accommodate automobiles that would one day have to get around it, its 700-year-old walls were handy for keeping out enemies. Oddly enough, these very walls are mentioned in Max Brooks' post-apocalyptic novel, *World War Z*, as being effective at keeping zombies out, so perhaps those builders of yore had some foresight that went well beyond the automobile.

I was hoping to find what is supposed to be the smallest house in Britain located





William Wordsworth

here in Conwy. It is reported to be bright red and would have been easy enough to find if we had just gotten out and walked along the quay. I had already missed finding the Nutshell - "Britain's smallest pub" - while walking Kelty around Bury St. Edmunds and getting royally distracted by the folksingers and the affable drunks, so I guess I'm just not good at finding small things. But I have made a pact with myself to work up a list of small-

est things for future trips. After all, in North America, we seem to turn largest things into tourist attractions. In Nova Scotia, we have the world's largest blueberry, I think, and a strawberry as well, although they are both made of concrete. We also have the largest fiddle and bow in Sydney, on Cape Breton Island. Somewhere there is the world's largest ball of string, peanut, motorcycle, rocking chair and I can't forget the Sudbury Nickel which I personally hugged on a book tour of Northern Ontario. The Guinness folks, after centuries of making and drinking dark stout, keep track of more transient edible large things like the world's largest meatball, pizza, hamburger and French fry.

And exactly who are the creators of the smallest or largest things that want to make their mark in the world by such a quirky challenge?

I couldn't find the name of the man who lived in his tiny Conwy house, but it turns out he was himself six foot three inches tall. I guess he was tired of everyone thinking he was overly tall, so he decided to live in something alarmingly small. But I would hope he had other reasons.

Had I known more about recent Conwy history, I may not have even stopped at that little green park near the water to walk Kelty and stretch the tightening muscles in

my legs. According to the The Daily Post, "People who walk their dogs off leads in Conwy were hit with a whopping 1300 per cent more fines than in any other authority in Wales in 2015-2016." Conwy has a reputation, I learned, as having the worst dog owners in all of the U.K. Certainly not much to be proud of. In 2015, 512 fines were handed out. A "dog fouling" offence will cost you £100 and a "dog control breach" will cost you £75.

I don't know if they offer a "two-fer discount" or if the fine is enhanced if your dog is both unleashed and unleashing his business.

The Daily Post turned out to be a treasure trove of important and trivial information and they obviously remained on top of the doggone news, reporting recently about a full-on ban of dogs on North Wales beaches from May to September. While the story seemed reasonable enough to me, it raised the ire of many readers. Someone named Movvi, for example, commented that he was more offended by parents burying "baby poo" on beaches and he resented that dogs were not allowed - even though, he noted, that his own dog was dead. Munroemike thought the whole damn newspaper was simply "stupid" for running such a banal story that made him "winge." I really had no idea that dogs in Wales could be so controversial.

Kelty was actually leashed while we were in town and I did clean up after him in the park which is pretty easy in Kelty's case. Still, I may have been under the watchful eye of what town councillors call "pooper snoopers," stalwart citizens who report dog crimes like this to the authorities. I wonder if there is some kind of financial compensation or honorary reward for neighbours who turn their neighbours in for such crimes.

And it is probably best that we didn't linger too long in Conwy with its big castle and tiny house and obsessive doggy laws. Back in December of 2017, Bernadette Clutton and her friend Ed were trying to have a Sunday dinner at the Village Inn pub and wanted to dine in the carvery area with their assistance dog when they were told they couldn't sit there because of the canine. The pub owners said they were just "trying to balance hygiene with equality," when they attempted to move them to the bar area. This action didn't sit well at all with the diners who soon thereafter sued the establishment for discrimination and received £2,000 in damages.

Clearly, Conwy is a most dog-sensitive town, yet I daresay it is still a rather pretty place to visit and a good place to run to once the zombie invasion begins.





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Driven

**Sir Jackie Stewart is
driven to make a difference.**

Story by Stephen Patrick Clare



It is a little more than halfway through the 2019 Formula One racing season and U.K. driver Lewis Hamilton is poised to win a 6th world championship - his third in a row. The 34-year-old enjoys a significant lead in the driver standings, and his team - Mercedes-AMG Petronas Motorsport - has set the pace to take yet another Constructors title.

Racing enthusiasts bemoan the sport's predictability at times; the same drivers and teams consistently lead the field year after year - most notably Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull - while the rest settle for scraps of places and points. Many believe it is a mere matter of money; those with the most can afford more research, innovation and manpower - all of which lead to better on-course performance and results. Others point to solid management - both on and off the track - and the sheer skill of individual drivers.

Each side is correct, of course. At the end of race day, however, there is still plenty of high-speed excitement and drama - so much so that the sport continues to draw record audiences on-site, online and on television. Merchandise sales have never been higher, as hard-core fans throw their team hats into the collective racing ring.

"It's big business," says Sir Jackie Stewart over the phone from his U.K. office. "Make no mistake; there is a lot at stake at each race, and in each season, for everyone involved.

"Mercedes looks like the team to beat again this year," he continues. "They have those cars running very well, they have a strong crew, and they have two excellent drivers in Hamilton and (Valtteri) Bottas.

"I am not sure what has happened with Ferrari. They looked like the favourites in pre-season testing, but it just hasn't come together for them. Leclerc (Charles) has been quite consistent, however; he is a good young driver with a strong future ahead of him."

Stewart, now 80, nods to another rising star; Max Verstappen of Red Bull Racing.

"Max is fast, and he is only going to get faster. He is aggressive out there, and he isn't afraid to take the car right to the very edge of its capabilities. Because of that, he has had a few incidents - and some bad luck - but as he matures, he will likely be a world champion sooner than later."

Winning, after all, is the name of the game.

"Yes, but it is more than that," explains Stewart. "When you get right down to it, these are men, alone, in high-powered vehicles, making split-second decisions that will have a large impact on the lives of many people."

SECOND GEAR

Stewart knows something about having an impact. His racing resume alone is adorned with so many accolades and awards - including three F1 championships (1969, 1971, 1973) - that it would take several Wikipedia pages to document all of the details.

"I didn't start out with a racing career in mind," he admits. "Actually, I was a pretty good clay shooter as a young man growing up in Milton (15 miles west of Glasgow). I won a competition at the age of 13 and was invited to join the Scottish shooting team. I did fairly well with it."

By the age of 16, Stewart had left school, due in large part to his then-undiagnosed dyslexia.

"It was a very difficult and unpleasant time. I was picked on and bullied quite a bit because of my condition. I remember feeling ashamed and guilty, though I had no idea why, nor what the problem was. I just assumed that I was stupid and unlucky."

As fortune would have it, a chance encounter put his racing wheels in motion soon after.

"I was working on cars at my father's garage," he recalls. "He owned a dealership, and both he and my brother were involved in motorsports. The owner of one of the cars I had been working on offered me the opportunity to test, and later race, one of his vehicles. I finished 2nd in my first race, and in my second race I finished 1st."



The rest, as they say, is racing history; the "Flying Scot" - as he would come to be called - worked his way up the grid of junior racing until landing a Formula Three ride with Tyrrell in 1964. A year later he made his F1 debut in South Africa, finishing 6th. That rookie season was highlighted by his first F1 victory at Monza, Italy.

From 1965 until his retirement in 1973, Stewart competed in 99 F1 races, winning 27. During that same period, he also took part in the Le Mans 24 Hours, the European Touring Car Championship, the Can-Am Series and the Indianapolis 500.

He was scheduled to complete his 100th F1 Grand Prix at Watkins Glen in 1973 - the final race of the season, and of his career - when his teammate François Cevert was killed during practice sessions. Out of respect for their fallen comrade, the Tyrrell Team withdrew from the race.

"It was horrific," recalls Stewart. "I was the last of the drivers to pull up to the scene of the accident and I walked over to his vehicle. They had left him in the car, because he was so clearly dead."

While great in its glories, the high-speed sport has not been without its share of tragedies; since 1952, dozens of F1 drivers have died behind the wheel. In Stewart's nine years, he lost a handful of his closest friends to the perils of the profession.

"After François' death, I realized that it was only a matter of time before I would be killed as well."

"These accidents - these terrible tragedies - were senseless and violent and, as far as I was concerned, completely avoidable."

After his own horrendous crash at the 1966 Belgian Grand Prix - Stewart was trapped in his fuel-leaking car - he began exploring ways to make the sport safer.

Over the next decade, and despite much opposition, he lobbied his fellow drivers to pressure the sport's governing bodies, owners, track officials and others, to implement new safety measures, including modernizing circuits, the fitting of barriers and run-off, improved medical facilities, as well as better trained and better equipped on-track marshals.

"It just kind of took off after that," he notes. "The sport really shifted its focus to improving safety conditions - for the drivers, the crews, the fans - and we have only had a few fatalities since then."

"You see, we had the money and the technology and the resources - all we needed was the will and the consensus to make changes."

THIRD GEAR

Stewart's passion for motorsports is perhaps only eclipsed by his adoration for his beloved wife Helen. The childhood sweethearts married in 1962, later raising two sons, Mark and Paul.

Helen (née McGregor) has been at Stewart's side throughout his career; first during his tenure as a driver, and later as he plied his trade as an F1 team-owner, as a sports commentator for various television networks, and as a celebrity spokesman for a number of public and private initiatives.

"She is as much a part of my story as I am," he says. "Without her, I wouldn't be the man I am today. She is both the love of my life and my best friend."

In 2014, Helen - now 78 - rolled her Smart car near the family home in Ellesborough, England.

"Physically, she was fine," shares Stewart. "A few scrapes and bruises and what not, but no major injuries. What was baffling, however, was that she showed absolutely no recollection of the accident. It was as if, in her mind, it never happened."



Upon the advice of medical professionals, the couple visited the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota later that year. It was there that Helen was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD) - a cluster of progressive disorders that affect cells in the brain's temporal and frontal lobes. The condition usually strikes people in their middle years but can afflict anyone of any age at anytime, impacting mental skills for communication, reasoning, social awareness and memory. The changes in personality and judgment eventually leave the person feeling confused and helpless.

"Honestly, I knew very little about dementia at the time," confides Stewart. "I remember asking the doctor, 'Ok, so what is the cure?' and he told me there wasn't one. I was simply stunned. 'What do you mean there is no cure?'"

After the initial shock, Stewart suited up and put the pedal to the metal. Helen was relocated to the couple's specially equipped apartment on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland - just down the road from a private hospital - where she continues to receive round-the-

clock care from some of the world's finest doctors and nurses. He then began researching the disorder, meeting and networking with neuro specialists and other professionals around the globe.

“What struck me the most was how little attention dementia was receiving in comparison to other major illnesses.”

“The amount of funding and public awareness for cancer is astounding. And look at what we were able to do with AIDS; at one time, not very long ago, this disease was at the forefront of public attention and seen as a death sentence. And while there is still no cure for AIDS per se, through huge funding for research and treatment the illness has become much more manageable and people afflicted with HIV are now living longer and healthier lives. Surely we can do the same thing with dementia.”

The numbers on dementia are indeed staggering; it is estimated that 50 million people around the world are currently afflicted with the disease, and one in three people born today will develop the condition in their lifetime - meaning a new diagnosis every three seconds.

Driven by a desire to make a difference, and the lifelong love for his wife, Stewart formally launched Race Against Dementia (RAD) in 2018.

“It took a couple of years to get all of the pieces in place,” he explains. “If we were going to do this, we were going to do it right. It is a culture shift - a change in paradigm and the way we view the disease - so it will take time.”

According to the organization's website, “Race Against Dementia raises and allocates funds to accelerate global research and development in the race to find a prevention or treatment for dementia.”

The not-for-profit group identifies four key areas to fulfill its ambitious mandate: New Talent - identifying and financially backing the most talented early-career researchers; Innovation - providing catalyst funding, enabling researchers to pursue higher risk, innovative ideas that might not get funded by the mainstream; Speed - aiming to instil a ‘Formula 1 attitude’ in attention to detail and urgency, to accelerate the pace of solutions development; and Global - forming strong alliances with research centres of excellence on a global basis.

RAD has already partnered with both Alzheimer's Research UK and the Mayo Clinic to drive the initiative. A Board of Directors is in place, and Stewart has drawn upon his lifelong friendships with the likes of past and present F1 drivers Emerson Fittipaldi, George Russell and Lando Norris to help raise awareness.

“Much of our philosophy comes from what I witnessed in my years with Formula One.”

“The dedication to research, the use of leading-edge technology, the commitment to innovation, and the importance of mentoring. We actually have PhD graduates working alongside people at McLaren and Red Bull to share best practices and better understand processes.”

Like F1, funding is key.

“Our initial goal was to raise \$2.5 million. We have already far surpassed that amount, and the contributions continue to grow significantly each week. The pace has really picked up.

“Like it was with the safety issues in Formula One all of those years ago, we have the money and the technology and the resources - all we need is the will and the consensus to make changes.”

FOURTH GEAR

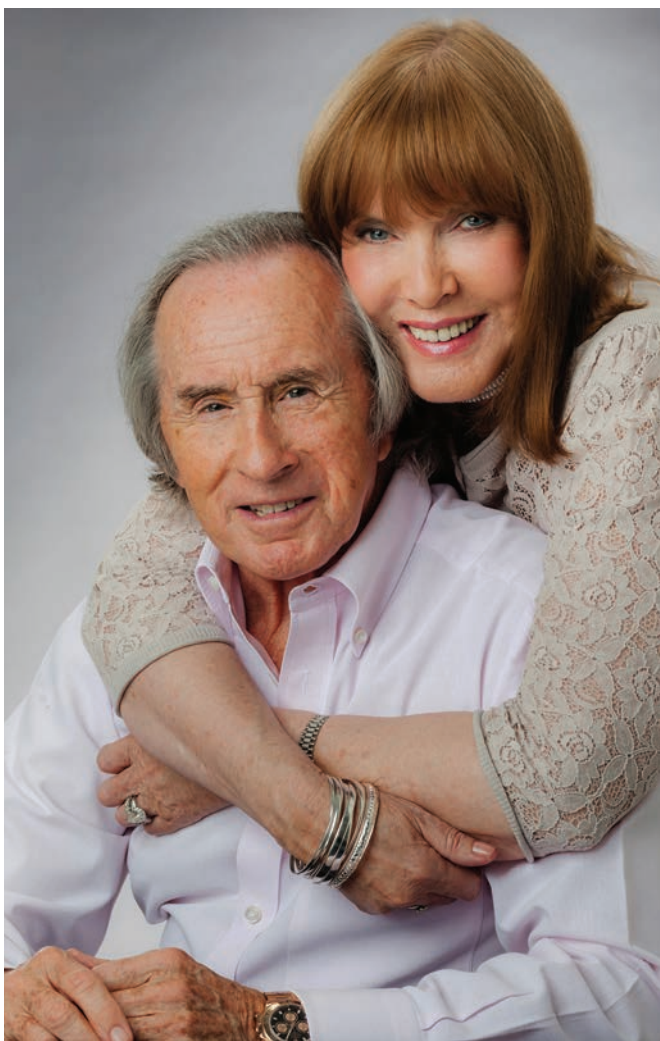
Though he continues to travel the globe for RAD and other commitments, Stewart is in constant contact with his wife.

“When I am not at home, I speak with Helen three or four times a day by phone. It isn't easy; while her long-term memory is quite strong, her short-term memory is declining. So, even though we may have spoken in the morning, she might not remember our discussion when I call again later in the day.”

He is comforted in knowing that, even in his absence, she is well-cared for.

“Along with all of the medical help, Helen is surrounded by family members and friends. There is no shortage of company or love. And, when I am home, we try to get out to dinner and events with people a couple of times each week.”

Stewart is not unaware of the challenges faced by families of those afflicted.



“It takes quite a toll; emotionally, mentally, physically and, of course, financially. We are in a very fortunate position in that we can afford to have a team of professionals on-site every day. Helen has 24-hour-a-day attention from a total of seven nurses, with two working at a time. The average family today simply can't afford that kind of care.”



He notes that what they can do is educate themselves on the disease, access local and regional resources, attend or create support groups, and contribute more time and money to the cause.

"And it is vital that we keep the conversation going with our family members, friends and others who are going through the same experience."

"Most importantly, though, we must show our love and support for the people in our lives who are living with this terrible disorder."

"What Helen needs most are lots of hugs and kisses and reassurance. I hold her hand as often as I can. I talk to her. I tell her jokes. We laugh and cry. She needs to understand that, no matter what, I am by her side and that everything is going to be alright."

It is said that great leaders make others better by their sheer presence. And it was another great man, Martin Luther King Jr., who noted

that a "genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus."

"We need as many people involved with this project as possible," says Stewart. "The only way we are going to take the chequered flag on this is if everyone is clear on what the goals are and how we are going to achieve them."

The similarities between his work in F1 safety and RAD are obvious, and Stewart has been as driven in his approach to each as he once drove the world's greatest circuits - with purpose, passion, precision, performance and persistence.

"People," he adds with a long pause. "This is a race against time. Not just for Helen, but for millions of people around the world, today and in the years to come. It is a race that we can and must win."

www.raceagainstdementia.com

Read: Jackie Stewart; Winning Isn't Everything ~ The Autobiography

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Celtic Studies

As Celtic Life International Senior Writer Chris Muise explains, there is a long list of reasons to learn about Celtic culture...



Emma Grigor

University, for those of us who elect to attend, is often a period of profound self-discovery. Some of us determine what we are meant to do with our lives. Others realize who we are as people - who we love, who our friends are, what gets us out of the bed in the morning. And, for a select few, we learn just how skilled we are at playing beer pong.

For 27-year-old University of Ottawa graduate Emma Grigor, the discovery was one of Celtic identity.

"I didn't really know what the word 'Celtic' even meant, to be honest," admits Grigor over the phone.

Grigor's ancestry is rooted in Inverness, Scotland. Growing up, however, she wasn't really connected to that part of her heritage. "I guess I never really felt like I had an identity with my culture. We grew up in Leonard County (Ontario), where there are some Scottish people but, as a little girl, my only exposure to that culture had been listening to my dad play the chanter and the bagpipes with the local marching band."

That disconnect from her Scottish ancestry carried into her first days on campus, where she had a minor crisis of confidence.

"I found the transition to university life in general very difficult," she explains. "In particular, both the workload and living away from home. My first Celtic Studies course was in the Fall of my second year. I remember, I wasn't completely defeated - I had still gotten pretty high grades for the same amount of work - but now, I was getting lower grades for the same amount of work. However, I got my first A in university when I took that first Celtic Studies class."

"It was, in large part, because I was doing something that was speaking to a deeper part of me - a part that was rooted in my identity."

"Doing well and excelling in that class because I had a passion for my own background and heritage - and using the more creative side of my brain - was largely why my spirits just shot up from that point on."

Grigor's spirits weren't the only things to elevate - so did her performance in school. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry,

and a 1-year Biomedical undergraduate from uOttawa. Along with those, she earned a minor in Celtic Studies, which has made her university experience more multifaceted and her post-graduate skills more nuanced.

"I learned how to have a bit more balance. I say this in a very genuine way; I wouldn't have been able to do as well on my Masters thesis - or, with writing in general - if I hadn't had that exposure to writing essays. That is a seriously undervalued skill today. I take great pride in the fact that I gained that from my Celtic Studies minor."

Grigor is about to go into her second year of med school at the University of Ottawa and credits her experience with Celtic Studies as being a large part of what helped her get this far. But hers is just one experience in studying the history, literature, and languages of the Celtic peoples. When it comes to this curriculum, no two experiences are exactly the same.



Oscar Mou

One of Grigor's fellow Celtic Studies Minor grads at university is Oscar Mou, 25. While they would have crossed paths and shared similar teachers and courses, Mou's interest was less about the tales and more about the tongues of the Celtic people.

"It's a bit nebulous," shares Mou by phone. "No one specific thing really made me get into Celtic studies - I was always intrigued by Celtic language and culture. A lot of Celtic Studies programs are very medieval-focused. There was a strong cultural focus in Ottawa - a much more modern perspective. For example, many of the courses dealt with language quality in the 21st century, looking at where the language is now, and how it exists on the Internet and on television."

Unlike Grigor, Mou is not continuing his studies at the moment, opting to enter the workforce instead, working for Elections Canada as a translator.

Mou has become something of a fixture in the Ottawa Irish community; he has taught Gaelic to elementary students on a volunteer basis for the Ottawa Catholic School Board's Saturday School international language program, and is also the public relations officer for the city branch of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann.

All the more surprising, perhaps, given that he does not come from a Celtic background.

"I guess people learn languages like Spanish or German more out of fun, or on Duolingo.

"It is really not that big a leap for someone with no Celtic heritage to want to learn Irish."

That is one of two things Mou shares with David Mandić, 42, a student of the University of Glasgow; Mandić is originally from the town of Pula, in Croatia.

PHOTO CREDIT JULIE HUGGAN



Isabelle Flower

"I moved to Scotland about 7 years ago, and I have been living here since then, in Bishopton, just a couple of miles west of Glasgow," he notes via email.

The other thing he shares with Mou is an interest in languages.

"I have always been interested in languages and linguistics, including historical linguistics - the origins and development of various languages - and had a career related to that before I moved to Scotland. I think most people in Croatia don't really know there are any other 'indigenous' languages in Britain and Ireland apart from English. I still remember my own surprise, when I read in an old book I found in our basement, that one of the languages spoken in Ireland was Irish, and that it was a Celtic language. I had believed until then that Celtic languages had all become extinct ages ago, during the Roman period."

Mandić taught himself Scots Gaelic on his own time, until he moved to Scotland and decided to study it academically to broaden his career horizons.



Bill Abbott

"Currently, I've got a wee job related with Gaelic as well, at the University, helping to edit word lists for the Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic. I would definitely like to make a career based on Celtic studies or Gaelic. One of the things I'd like to do in future is teach Gaelic - I enjoy teaching and teaching a language would be amazing."

Isabelle Flower - also of the University of Glasgow - studies Gaelic both for her personal career and to help revive the language.

"My Gaelic studies have led to almost everything I do now, she explains via email. "I have just finished working at the Festival Interceltique de Lorient. Through my time at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, I also work part-time as a long-distance Gaelic language teacher, and I also worked as a Gaelic Ambassador at Fèis Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu this year.

"Education is a hugely important part of our efforts to revitalize language, and we should encourage as many people as possible to pursue these studies."

Of course, not everyone enters into Celtic Studies for career purposes. In fact, according to Bill Abbott - Associate Professor of History, and Co-Director of the Irish Studies program at Fairfield University in Connecticut - career planning is one reason why fewer students are taking his course now than they did 20 years ago.

"It is my most popular course," says Abbott, who teaches Ireland from The Middle Ages to Present. "I think it is because they are interested in Irish history. Back in 1999, when I first taught the course, I had about 30 students. A lot of juniors and seniors, as they had never studied Irish history before. We actually created an Irish Studies minor.

"Over the last 20 years, fewer and fewer students have been interested in Irish studies or Irish history, for its own sake. The classes have gotten smaller and smaller, and I am not quite sure why."

Abbott has a few guesses; around campus he is known as a harsh grader, and he also admits that, as an older teacher, he is maybe out of touch with younger people. However, he believes that the biggest reason is a larger emphasis on career planning.



Chris Catherine

"It may be simply that, at Fairfield - as at most American universities - the focus on career training is so intense. Over the last 20 years or so - especially since the crash of 2008 - we have seen more students concerned about what kind of career they will have. The students are still good - they are as good as I have ever had - but their parents are pressuring them to get career training, and to get good grades."

That sentiment is similar in Canada.

"A lot of people say it's a dead end, or it can't help you - 'What are you going to do after you graduate?'" mimics Mou.

Thinking that Celtic Studies either furthers your career, or it doesn't, is a slippery slope. It might be wiser and healthier to consider the discipline as something that brings greater experience to one's education, and thus one's overall development as a person.

By way of example, take Scottish zoologist Chris Catherine, whose study of the Pictish people helped him perform a population survey of grass snakes in Scotland.

Catherine spent most of his life in bogs catching frogs, bugs, and reptiles. As a child he was enamoured with Scottish folklore, and even taught himself Scots Gaelic at a time when the language was discouraged in schools.

Though passionate about both subjects, he favoured science and biology for his education. After founding his ecological survey firm, however, he found himself with an opportunity to bring his two passions together.

"Open any natural history book that includes reptiles for the U.K. before 2010, and the distribution of grass snakes stops at the border with England," Catherine explains via email. "Apparently grass snakes

did not occur in Scotland. Then, in 2010 while doing surveys for great crested newts in Dumfries & Galloway, I flushed a grass snake. I was so surprised that I almost fell into the pond! This spurred me on to look in to records of grass snakes in Scotland."

Catherine found archival evidence of grass snakes occurring in the country as far back as a century ago and theorized that the ancient carvings of the Pictish people might suggest an even older lineage. This led to him presenting his work to the Symposium on Conserving Scotland's Amphibians and Reptiles in 2014. Ultimately, his research was unable to prove that the Pictish Scots had seen anything more than adders, but the absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence.

"This doesn't necessarily mean grass snakes weren't present in Pictish Scotland. Grass snakes are currently the rarest reptile species in Scotland, and they may have been present in low densities historically. Natural history books are increasingly being updated to include parts of Scotland within the range of grass snakes.

"Studying our past is more important than just pure history academia. History tells us where we have come from and allows us to better understand the relationship between our ancestors and the natural world."

"There are many other examples that show the relationships between wildlife and our ancestors. That is magical and almost spiritual - I feel that I have a direct connection with people long dead, via snakes."



Most who take Celtic Studies shouldn't wait for something as niche as this to come up and bite them like, well, an adder in the grass. It could happen, but there's no guarantee. So, short of becoming a historian or a translator, is there any concrete reason to study Celtic history?

Sure - for your own benefit.

"One of the things that I have learned is that history has to be about personal relationships," says Abbott. "It has to be about important things in our lives. I market the course as, 'a fascinating study of a place where just about everything that has happened to human beings throughout human history has happened at some point in Ireland.' War, famine, conquest, death, great literary output, art, etc. For such a tiny place, Ireland really runs the gamut of the human experience."

While fewer students are studying Irish history for their own sake, Abbott says the ones that do find it greatly fulfilling.

"Every single time I teach this class, I get some students that really love it. They eat it up, and they're having a good time with it," Abbott explains, adding that one of the best things that current and future students can do is to read a novel based on Irish history - outside of the classroom.

Grigor's minor in Celtic Studies didn't just help her reach med school. It also helped her reach Fortrose, Scotland, where she is uncovering her roots.

"My ancestors are from Inverness and the Highlands, although I am not yet exactly sure where. It is kind of surreal."

She is excited to visit historic battlefields like Culloden, as well as places where her Scottish grandparents grew up.

"I would like to see what it might have been like while they were living there."

Her favourite experiences in Celtic Studies were the personal connections she made with friends, the community, and her family.

"Being able to go to ceilidhs and things like that with my classmates - I really got a feel for the local Celtic culture. And the friendships I have made - having those relationships was directly facilitated through the Celtic Studies program."

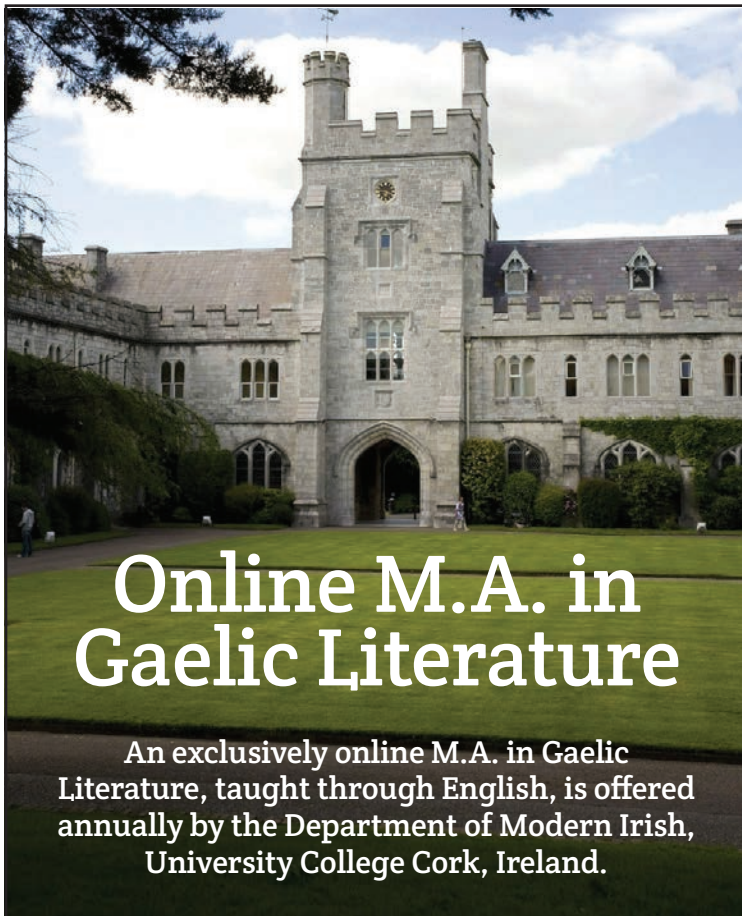
Mou, too, speaks of how the Irish community has embraced him.

"I definitely feel welcome. I don't know if there's a lot of people without Irish heritage, but a lot of people don't necessarily think about Ireland everyday, who are interested or involved in some aspect of Irish culture. If this interests you, then go for it. Take the leap of faith."

"My main piece of advice would be to embrace the community that comes along with it," adds Flower. "It is through making connections with other Gaelic speakers that I have been able to make speaking Gaelic a daily occurrence in my life, and this makes it a useful and an enjoyable thing to study."

"Even if you don't have a Celtic background, you can find so much opportunity to become a more well-rounded and skilled person, just by exposing yourself to a different culture and learning a new language," adds Grigor. "It's going to continue to be a part of my life."





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Not able to get into a classroom? No problem. University College Cork in Ireland offers a comprehensive Online MA program on Gaelic Literature. Organized by the Department of Modern Irish, the two-year program focuses on enriching students with a deep understanding of Gaelic literature, introducing them to some of the most important themes and topics in Gaelic culture over the past 1200 years. Offered on both a part-time and full-time basis, the MA is entirely in English - students are not required to have any prior knowledge of the Gaelic language - and is divided into interdependent modules. The first two modules - The Transmission and Interpretation of Gaelic Literature and The Social and Cultural History of the Irish Language - are compulsory, while the remaining four are taken from a choice of electives followed by a minor dissertation of 12,000 to 15,000 words. Elective modules include Gaelic Ireland: 1600-2000, Fionn mac Cumhaill in Gaelic Tradition and Women's Poetry in Gaelic Society, among others. A feature of the course is the small class sizes which provide a truly unique and dedicated experience to each individual student. Course workload includes regular dialogue and interaction via a discussion board, group participations, as well as weekly readings and personal essays.



Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Isle of Skye, Scotland
www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

Nestled in the Highland peninsula of Sleat on the Isle of Skye sits Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the National Center for Gaelic Language and Culture. From humble beginnings - the facility once operated out of an old farmstead in Ostaig (today referred to as the "Old College") - Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has evolved into a fully functional college that continues to cultivate a growing commitment to Gaelic culture and language. Today, nearly 50 years later, it has expanded to include 3 additional campus locations: Àrainn Chaluim Chille, Fàs, and its most recent addition, the Ionad Iain Nobail building. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig provides Undergraduate and Graduate programs, distance learning courses and 5 day Short Courses which run every Easter and Summer. The institution provides students with a fresh and comprehensive study of the Gaelic language and Scottish culture, using a variety of modern-day resources. Program majors include both educational and media studies, as well as courses on cultural development and Scottish history. In addition to education and research, the college is also a pillar within Scotland's Gaelic community, assisting on an array of projects, including Tobar an Dualchais, the Gaelic dictionary, and the bilingual creative agency Cànan.



Celtic Scottish Studies, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LLC)

University of Edinburgh, Scotland
www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/celtic-scottish-studies

Scotland's longest established centre for the study of Celtic (est. 1882), Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh is home to a variety of programs at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Included in the roster is the unique undergraduate degree in Scottish Ethnology - which explores folklore and folklife in a Scottish and international context - as well as four-year MA (Hons) programs in Celtic, Scottish Studies and Primary Education with Gaelic. Postgraduate programs include the MSc Celtic and Scottish Studies, with pathways in Traditional Arts and Culture, Medieval and Early Modern Celtic and Gaelic Development and Policy, and, new for this coming year, the MSc Traditional Arts Performance - for those who practice or facilitate one of Scotland's traditional art forms. Over the years, Celtic and Scottish Studies at Edinburgh has also been highlighted for its research and cultural involvement. In addition to being the home of the School of Scottish Studies Archives - which includes 33,000 sound, video, film and photographic resources relating to Scottish folklore and traditions - the department works alongside government and cultural organizations to preserve the Gaelic language and Scotland's traditions. It even has a Traditional Artist in Residence. The University of Edinburgh is ranked 18th in the QS World University Rankings 2019, and first in Scotland.



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I recall the first time I toured Glen Scotia Distillery; I was shocked - the place was ramshackle and seemed on the verge of tumbling down. Paint was peeling from the walls and the copper pot still had the look and texture of a rusty nail. Most concerning were the cast iron wash-backs (where the fermentation takes place); never before, in the more than 50 distilleries I had previously visited, had I ever seen anything other than wood (Oregon pine) or stainless-steel wash-backs employed.

Fermentation can be a vigorous, violent process and, as the wash churned, huge chunks of rust peeled off the sides of the vessel - dragged into the boiling mass.

Glen Scotia Distillery is crammed into an old stone, Dickensque building in the historic whisky town of Campbeltown. Campbeltown is built around a picturesque harbour that, at one time, sheltered as many as 600 fishing boats and 35 distilleries, including the surrounding areas of the Kintyre Peninsula. It was, at the height of the British Empire, one of the wealthiest and most prominent places in the U.K. per capita. While its heyday as a major fishing port and "Whisky Capital of the World" has come and gone, vestiges of this prosperous past can be still be seen in the repurposed distillery building and whisky baron mansions which dot the town.

Glen Scotia was built in 1832 by Stuart Galbraith & Co. on the north shore of Campbeltown Loch. The firm operated the business until 1895, though it remained in the Galbraith family until 1919 when it was sold to West Highland Malt Distillers. The latter

went bankrupt in 1924, but the distillery carried on from owner to owner until the waning years of the 20th century. By 1934 there were but two distilleries left in Campbeltown; Glen Scotia and Springbank. Glen Scotia survived as a work horse, distilling malt destined for blends. It closed several times over the following 65 years, but somehow managed to dodge death each time. In 1994, Loch Lomond Distillers took over and the road to recovery and revival began.

When I visited the facility for the first time in 2005, Glen Scotia was in a sorry state.

I was curious, however, having had more than a few lovely, old independent bottlings of its spirit. For the entirety of my time in the industry, Glen Scotia has always taken a back seat to the better-known Springbank. Yet, it has always had its fans, especially of its older bottlings. I have long marvelled at how such a neglected and dilapidated facility could produce such beautiful and elegant spirits, almost despite itself.

Over the years I have learned that beautiful things can come from some unexpected places.

In 2012, with the single malt boom at full stride, Glen Scotia was given a paint job and a bit of refurbishment. They also released a range of single malts, shifting some of the distillery's focus away from blends. Although the whiskies were good, esthetically the range was a flop. Under new ownership, a more successful range was rebranded and relaunched

in 2015. The new owners also opened a small, but beautiful new visitor center in response to the dramatic rise in whisky tourism.

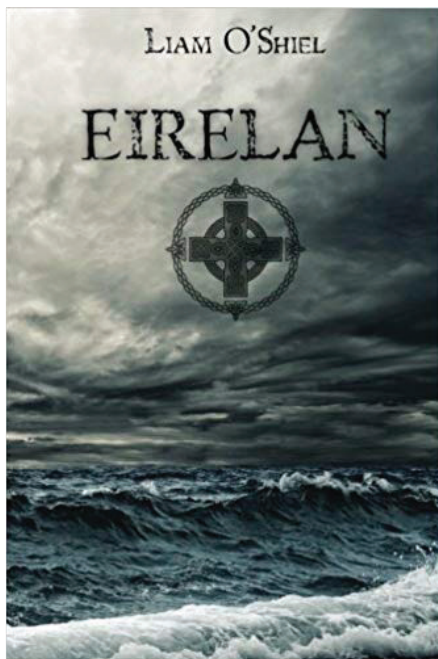
While Glen Scotia has long lived in the shadow of its more popular neighbour, it has a lot of potential. As the distillery was a work-horse for blends, they produce a number of distinct spirit styles, with many flavourful options. On a recent visit to the distillery I was more than impressed with several whiskies in the warehouse - and not just the older vintages, but some of the peaty young ones also. Although Glen Scotia distils spirit with three distinct peating levels, the result is usually quite fruity and nutty with engine oil notes.

The Glen Scotia 15 Year (\$110) is creamy and fruity with muddy peat and soft smoke. New this year are the Glen Scotia 18 (\$180) and 25 Year (\$700) olds. I haven't tried the 25 yet, but the 18 is very elegant. We have also just bottled a cask for our shop, the Glen Scotia 1999 KWM Cask No. 359. It is sherried and fruity with rich smoke and dirty engine oil...classic Glen Scotia!

Campbeltown is a beautiful 4-hour drive from Glasgow, but can also be reached by ferry from Ayr. A visit to the town is not complete without visiting its three distilleries, Springbank, Glengyle and Glen Scotia. Glen Scotia is open for tours Monday to Saturday.

www.glenscotia.com

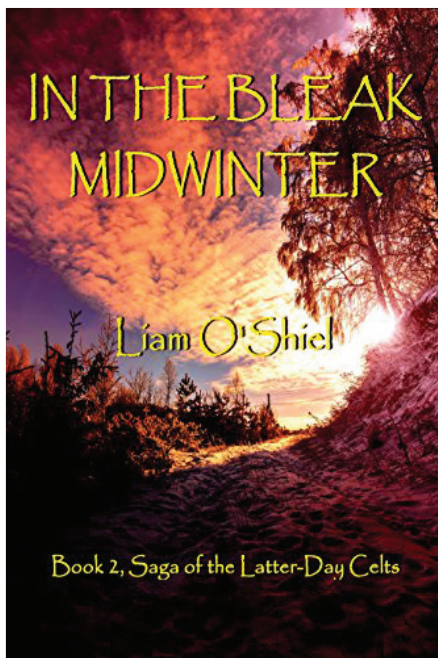
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by Liam O'Shiel

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Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



Barmbrack



November 1 was traditionally known as Samhain - pronounced sow-een - which literally translates as the “end of summer” and marks the end of the Celtic year and the start of winter. Halloween originated with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, an annual celebration to remember the dead. People would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. To outsmart these ghostly beings, people would put on masks when they left their homes after dark so that the ghosts would think they were kindred spirits.

Allow me to share one of my favourite Halloween stories.

Sean and Wayne were walking home after a Halloween party and decided to take a shortcut through the cemetery. When the pair were right in the middle of the cemetery they were startled by a tap-tap-tapping noise coming from the misty shadows. Catching their breath and trembling with fear,

they found an old man with a hammer and chisel, chipping away at one of the headstones.

“Good God, Mister,” said Sean, his voice quivering. “You scared us half to death. We thought you were a ghost! What on earth are you doing working here so late at night?”

“Those fools,” grumbled the old man, “they’ve misspelled my name. And I had to wait until Halloween before I could crawl out and fix it.”

One of the most popular foods served with this festival is Barmbrack, a fruit-studded bread that is baked with tiny objects inside to help predict the upcoming year. A ring inside signified finding true love and marrying, while a thimble meant you would never tie the knot, and a coin denoted future wealth. And be sure to pour a little whiskey over the loaf after baking!

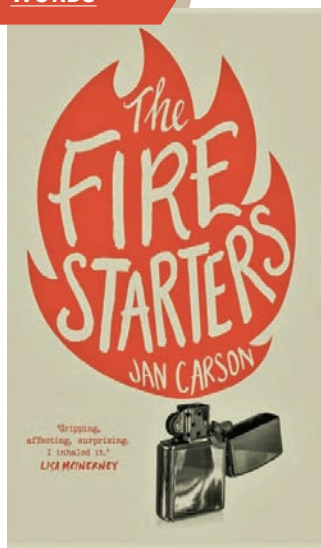
Ingredients

2 ½ cups chopped mixed fruit
1 ½ cups hot brewed tea
2 ½ cups flour
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp nutmeg
½ tsp baking soda
1 egg
1 ½ cups sugar
¼ cup orange marmalade
1 tsp grated orange zest

Instructions

Soak the dried fruit in the hot tea for 2 hours, then drain and gently squeeze out excess tea. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a 9-inch Bundt pan. Stir together the flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, and baking soda; set aside. Beat the egg, sugar, marmalade, orange zest, and tea-soaked fruit until well combined. Gently fold in the flour until just combined, then pour into the prepared Bundt pan. Bake in preheated oven for 1 hour or until the top of the cake springs back when lightly pressed. Allow to cool in the pan for 2 hours before removing. Continue to cool to room temperature on a wire rack. Press the objects of choice into the cake through the bottom before serving.

Ith do shàth! Cabrini



The Fire Starters

By Jan Carson
Doubleday
304pp / \$19.95

Given the threat of renewed violence in Northern Ireland with the advent of Brexit, the timing could not be better for this captivating work of magical realism. Set 16 years after "the Troubles" amidst the political and spiritual vacuum of Loyalist East Belfast, *The Fire Starters* tells twin tales - one of a man's difficult relationship with his activist son, and the other of a father's bizarre back-and-forth with his newborn daughter. Surreal in scope and scale, the narrative does well to explore the ideas of both personal and community identity - as parents and as members of a time-honoured tribe. Like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carson challenges readers' perspectives, enticing us into a brave new world with a compositional style that is both bold and unique.

~ SPC

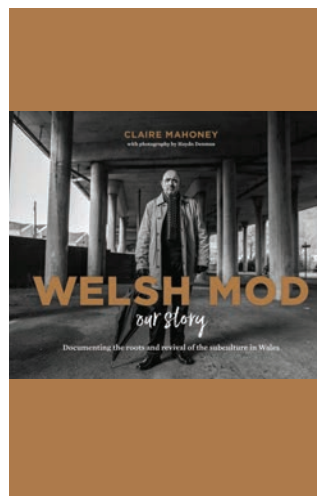
Scottish Island Bagging

By Helen & Paul Webster
Vertebrate Publishing
256pp / £17.99

While the title alone is worth the price of admission, *Scottish Island Bagging* is a must read for anyone with an interest in exploring both the best known and least travelled of Scotland's many gorgeous islets. Husband and wife team Paul and Helen Webster share their passion for perusing the picturesque with this terrific tome of travel, trails and tales.

Detailing regional history and topography, with tidbits on flora and fauna and trivia on local characters and cuisine, and generously peppered with stunning images and colour illustrations, the work takes readers along for a wild ride, reminding us that there is far more to "ye old country" than the urbanity of Edinburgh or Glasgow. An inspired read that will be sure to inspire future visitors.

~ SPC



Welsh Mod

By Claire Mahoney
& Haydn Denman
Dovetail Communication
152pp / £25

Perhaps the finest work to detail the Mod movement of the 1960s since *The Who's* masterful *Quadrophenia*, *Welsh Mod* is more than a mere retrospective indulgence. Subtitled "Documenting the Roots and Revival of the Subculture in Wales," this table-top tome is a powerful, profound and poignant portrait of a people and place in transition. Author Claire Mahoney and photographer Haydn Denman have succeeded in capturing a culture at a crossroads as this Celtic nation came of age in the mid-20th century - a clash of identity that opened the door on the reinvention of a nation. As it is in neighbouring England, Ireland and Scotland, those reverberations are still being felt today. As such, *Mod* is living proof that style is never out of fashion.

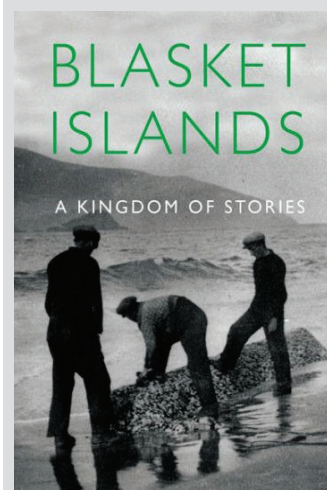
~ SPC

Blasket Islands

By Joan & Ray Stagles
O'Brien Press
240pp / £17.99

On a rare clear day, you can see the beautiful Blasket Islands off the plush southwest coast of Ireland. The view is both spectacular and surreal, inspiring the imagination to soar with lore of yore. Authors Joan and Ray Stagles have gone further, detailing the history and culture of a people that once inhabited the long-abandoned locale. Well written, with accompanying images and illustrations, the work brings to mind the fragility of community, and that - as Great Blasket Island did in 1952 - homesteads and histories can be dropped and left for dead anytime. Thankfully, as is the case here, those memories can be kept alive for future generations. An important work, and an essential read for those with a passion for Eire's past.

~ SPC





Haley Richardson and Quinn Bachand

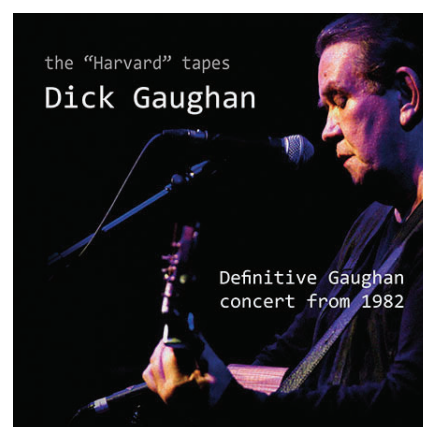
When the Wind Blows High and Clear

Kudos to Haley Richardson and Quinn Bachand for collaborating on this Celtic collection of creative compositions. Bachand, though still quite young, might be the genre's finest six-stringer in his native Canada. Richardson, only 17, is the principal fiddler for Riverdance, a multiple All-Ireland champion, and has shared both stage and studio with the likes of The Chieftains and Altan. The dynamic duo play to their strengths on their debut release, showcasing their respective talents on both traditional arrangements and original tunes. Along with producing the album, Bachand plays guitar, piano, bass, drums, banjo, mandolin, bouzouki, and sings. Richardson's vocal melodies are as sweet and sure as her fiddle lines. If this recording is any sign, then the future of Celtic music is in good hands. ~ SPC

Dick Gaughan

The "Harvard" Tapes

After suffering a stroke in 2016, Scottish guitarist, singer, songwriter, actor, musical director, arranger, producer, and engineer Dick Gaughan has been recouping at home. And, after more than 50 years of writing, recording and performing, the multi award-winning artist may well deserve some much-needed time off. In lieu of new material, Greentrax is digging through the vaults to satisfy older and newer audiences. This live recording is from a 1982 concert at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church near Harvard University and features 13 classic tracks, including Erin Go Bragh, Glenlogie, Sliabh na mBan and a number of traditional jigs and reels. The result is both a treat for long-time fans and a great way for newbies to discover the work of a master musical craftsman. ~ SPC



Celtic Serenity

Graham Henderson

Admittedly, I have never been a big listener of "new-age" Celtic music. In truth, most of my exposure to the genre has been on my (infrequent) visits to the man-spa. However, I did sit down and listen to this three-disc set (Lifesongs, Journey, Reflections) one Sunday morning and was swept away by the gentle melodies. Inspired, I began researching Irish travel packages online, looking at self-drive options through Eire's south and west. That led to pulling out my family genealogy files. I was then stirred to restart my long-dormant yoga routine before the most bizarre thing occurred; I found myself aching for a massage, a pedicure, a manicure, and an old-school, hot-towel shave. Alas, I booked a man-spa appointment for that afternoon. Thank you Mr. Henderson. ~ SPC

Debra Lyn

Blue Sun Rises

Nashville-based songstress Debra Lyn returns to her Celtic roots on *Blue Sun Rises*, her third full-length release for Palette Records. Drawing inspiration from Tennessee's rich and robust Irish and Scottish heritage, these 11 terrific tracks showcase both Lyn's penchant for penning a good piece as well as her creative takes on traditional tunes. Highlights here include the title track, *The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond*, *Wayfaring Stranger*, and a stirring version of the classic Eire send-off ballad *The Parting Glass*. Award-winning producer Jeff Silverman - who has worked with the likes of Rick Springfield, The Allman Brothers, Roger Miller and many other notable names - brings out the best in Lyn, laying a steady and solid sonic foundation for the singer's sweet and shimmering vocals. ~ SPC



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Brighde Chaimbeul

*Scottish piper
Brighde Chaimbeul
looks back to look
forward*



It is no surprise that Brighde Chaimbeul developed a passion for piping.

"While my mother was pregnant with me, she was working on a sculpture based on the Ceol Mor Lament for the Children," she recalls via email from her home on the Isle of Sky. "Dr. Angus MacDonald was playing the tune as she worked on it, and it was likely the very first time I heard the pipes!"

By the age of seven, Chaimbeul had picked up a set of her own.

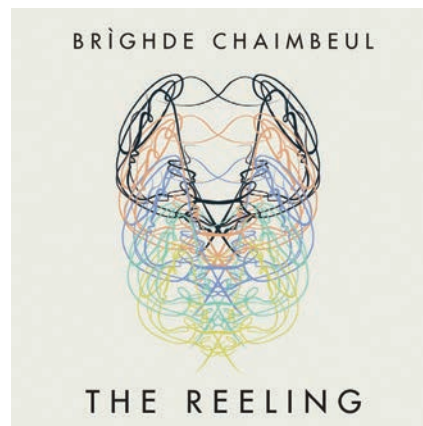
"I was inspired by the legendary Rona Lightfoot from South Uist, who I heard play in Dublin when I was very young and, almost amazingly, she continues to be an inspiration to this very day. It was my neighbour, however - who had taught himself the pipes - that gave me my first ever chanter lessons."

Currently, Chaimbeul wields a set of Scottish small pipes - fashioned by Perthshire pipe maker Fin Moore - and describes her musical style as "traditional."

"My music revolves around the traditional make up or drone sound of the small pipes. I love playing and finding old traditional tunes, because they fit so well with this type of sound. My listening taste is quite traditional as well, and I love basic or solo set ups which simply lets the melody and rhythm of the tune make its music."

"One of the techniques I often use is changing the key of the chanter by covering some holes with electrical tape. This allows me to play a slightly bigger range of tunes. Many of the older songs are in minor keys, and using the tape gives me an opportunity to work with these pieces."

Chaimbeul has enjoyed many career highlights over the years; in 2016 she won the Young Folk Award from Radio 2, and in 2018 she performed at the Cambridge Folk



Festival. Most recently, she released her debut recording *The Reeling*.

"I had the chance to work with some legendary musicians on the new album, including Rona Lightfoot, Aidan O'Rourke and Radie Peat. To record it live amidst the amazing and beautiful setting of Cromarty East Church was beyond memorable."

Equally rewarding, she adds, is touring.

"It is all about the people I meet and play with, and also the experience I get from traveling to different places to play music."

"I love hearing different styles and having the opportunity to perform tunes with different people - it is never mundane, and not one gig is the same."

The vocation, she admits, is not without its challenges.

"Because of all the travel and scheduling involved, I sometimes feel a little less

grounded and settled in terms of my routine and day-to-day activities."

Still, she cherishes the chance to work with younger pipers.

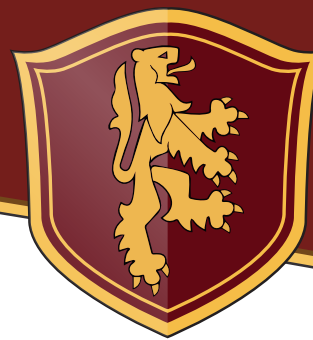
"As someone who plays and spends time with many musicians, I would say younger people are still very interested in the pipes. In the world of folk music piping is loved and respected. But, even for those who have never played the pipes, or might not be that familiar with their sound, there is something very earthy about the instrument that can be quite appealing."

"That said, we still need to reach a wider range of people. Piping should not necessarily be constricted to any particular genre - like, for example, 'folk music' - so that we can better reach audiences who might not normally listen to piping or traditional music."

In addition to both a European tour and a follow-up recording, Chaimbeul plans to focus her attention on the preservation of Gaelic language and culture over the coming while.

"My first language is Gaelic. There are some fantastic groups and individuals who are promoting the music and language around the world, and there is a rich archive of traditional songs, music, poems, literature, and artwork here in Scotland that is being collected and preserved. It is vital, however, that we promote Gaelic culture in everyday life, especially with regard to young people. One of the ways that we can best do that is by sharing this wonderful music that has been passed down through many generations."

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Charlie Grey

Scottish fiddler Charlie Grey takes his music to the edge

Growing up along the shores of Loch Ness in the village of Fort Augustus, you might think that Charlie Grey would have developed a keen interest in Nessie and other hidden cryptids.

However, it was traditional fiddle music - rather than sea monsters - that captured his imagination.

"My father's side of the family are from Glengarry and Lochailort and my mother's side are from Lochinver and the Isle of Lewis," shares Grey via email. "So, my background is rich in Highland people.

"My father plays the fiddle, so there was always one lying around the house. I wonder if, perhaps subconsciously, this was what first got me into it. It has been in my life longer than I can remember, so it is hard to say what inspired me to start playing."

By his own recollection, Grey has been fiddling since the age of five or six. His grandmother, Ishbel Macaskill, was a traditional Scottish Gaelic singer, so harmonies and melodies are likely hard-coded into his DNA.

"Being a full-time musician always came extremely naturally to me."

Grey currently resides in Glasgow, which has an especially strong tradition of Scottish folk music. From there, he navigates his career, sporting one heck of a hand-me-down.

"My fiddle was passed on to me when my great uncle Norman passed away. It is a brilliant instrument from Ottawa, Canada, and was made by a man called Robert Gofton in 1874.

"I am now having another instrument being made for me

in Norway - a ten-string fiddle called a hardanger d'amore, made by Salve Hakedal. I first tried this in West Cork in the south of Ireland, when learning from the fantastic Caoimhin O'Raghallaigh. When he gave me his fiddle to try, I was not expecting what happened next. I knew instantly that this was the sound that I had been craving to create my entire life - the instrument just exploded into life, and I knew right then and there that this was what I needed and wanted to create music with from now on."

Grey's most recent project sent him and collaborator Joseph Peach to the Scottish islands of St. Kilda.

"The new album is based around a voyage we took aboard a Dutch tall ship, the Wylde Swan. We wrote a piece of music for each of the islands and made a film about it. The whole project is called Air Iomall, which translates from Gaelic as 'on the edge.' It was a truly amazing experience to visit Kilda, perform there, and take traditional music back to this island,

which was evacuated 88 years ago to the day that we were there."

Equally challenging to hauling sound and film gear around the islands was balancing their modern style with the sonic history of the region.

"Something both myself and Joseph were very conscious of was writing the music in a tasteful way. We tried to bring in the more modern elements of our music without being disrespectful to the tradition and the music that would have originated from these places. In this, I think we succeeded, and that in itself is extremely rewarding."

Grey is both proud and pleased with the way the project turned out and feels that the duo has been able to contribute to Scottish culture in their own way. He is cautiously optimistic that other young artists will take inspiration from their ancestral home.

"I would like to say there are lots of young people interested in folk and traditional Scottish fiddle music, but to be honest, I may only feel this because I am completely surrounded by young musicians and folk music enthusiasts.

"Things can always be improved," he continues. "These days, the biggest challenge for the acoustic music scene is to attract a bigger audience. There are so many incredible acts who are simply not getting the recognition they deserve because the scene is so saturated, and the audiences too small."

With his new band, Westward the Light - made up of himself, Peach, Owen Sinclair, and Sally Simpson - Grey will be touring Air Iomall across the U.K. through the autumn.

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Molly Kujawa

Irish-Hungarian dancer Molly Kujawa dresses for success

It was the sleek stylings of Irish dance outfits that first caught the curious eye of Molly Kujawa.

"I was eight years old at the time," recalls the dancer via email. "My mom took my twin sister and me to an Irish-American festival in our hometown of Toledo (Ohio). I immediately just fell head-over-heels in love with the pretty dresses - I was hooked!"

Soon after, Kujawa - who is of both Irish and Hungarian descent - enrolled in her first Irish dance class with local instructor Tim O'Hare.

Fast forward a few years and today she is both a celebrated performer as well as the owner, director and primary instructor at Molly's Irish Dancers in Toledo. The school offers Irish dance instruction at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

"I received my Irish dance teaching certificate in 2004. It came in the mail just a few days before my oldest daughter was born. Shortly after, I began teaching dance. I started Molly's Irish Dancers because it is such a unique art form. Now, my dancers attend both in-person workshops and online workshops and also compete in various Irish dance competitions."

In addition to opening the studio, Kujawa has enjoyed a fruitful and rewarding career.

"Some of my favorite memories are from when I was with Sheila Butler's school in Tampa, where we danced at Epcot Center. It was interesting to see what went on behind the scenes of a bigger production - and we got to dance at Disney! We have also danced in commercials and on the news."

"I absolutely love performing for people who can't get out to see shows. They are always so happy when we come dance for them."

"I tell people all the time that I must be the luckiest person in the world. I get to do what I love for a living! I get to be creative in choreographing steps and routines, and I get to watch that 'aha' moment when the dancers get their steps. On top of it all is that I get to pass along Irish culture while watching friendships blossom."

She notes that, although rewarding, the vocation has its fair share of challenges.

"We have to perform at the high level of a sprinter, or a hurdler, but also look beautiful and graceful and do intricate footwork at the same time. Recruiting new dancers is always an issue, especially boys. However, I offer a 'Little Leprechauns' class for preschool children and that has been a great way to introduce young ones to the joy of Irish dancing."

Kujawa believes that Irish culture - and the Irish dance community in particular - is in a very strong place these days.



"Since Riverdance, awareness has just skyrocketed. Without the passion of that production, I don't think it would be as popular as it is today. The Toledo area hosts several ethnic and international festivals throughout the year, and we enjoy performing at these events - not only to promote Irish dance and culture - but also because it gives the children the opportunity to experience both the similarities and the differences amongst global cultures."

She says that there is still much work to be done, however.

"Irish dance lessons should be available to people of all income levels. I would also like to see Gaelic language classes offered at local organizations or schools. It is a difficult language and best learned with the guidance of an instructor."

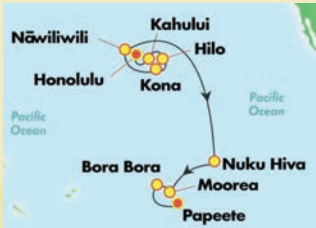
Although her love for Irish dance fashion has remained steadfast over the years, her reasons for performing and teaching have evolved.

"I still love the dresses, absolutely! But I also wanted to share my Irish heritage with my own girls in honor of my mom who passed away when I was a teenager. My two daughters, Chianna and Sanibel, have been Irish dancing since they started walking. It makes me proud to share something so special with them, and I hope they continue the tradition and become Irish dance teachers in their own time."

"Dancing is as important to me as water or air - it is a part of who I am, and I hope to be teaching for many more years."

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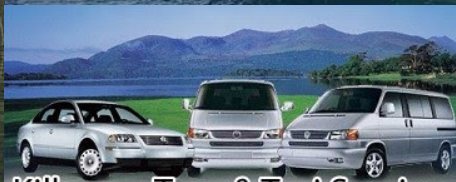
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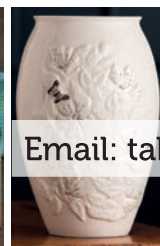
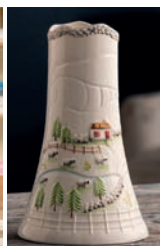
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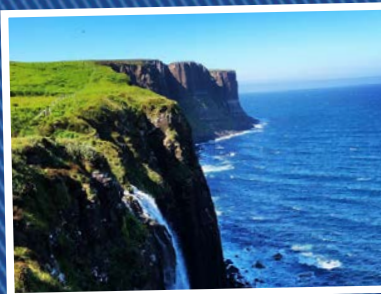
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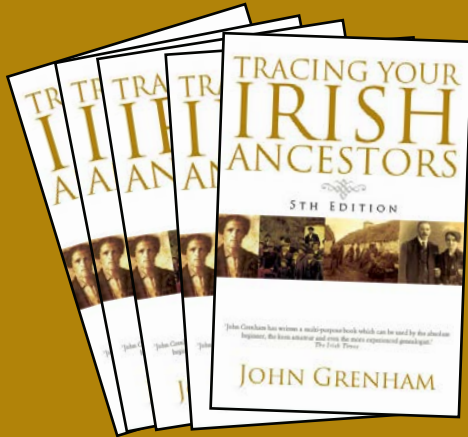


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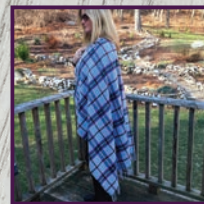


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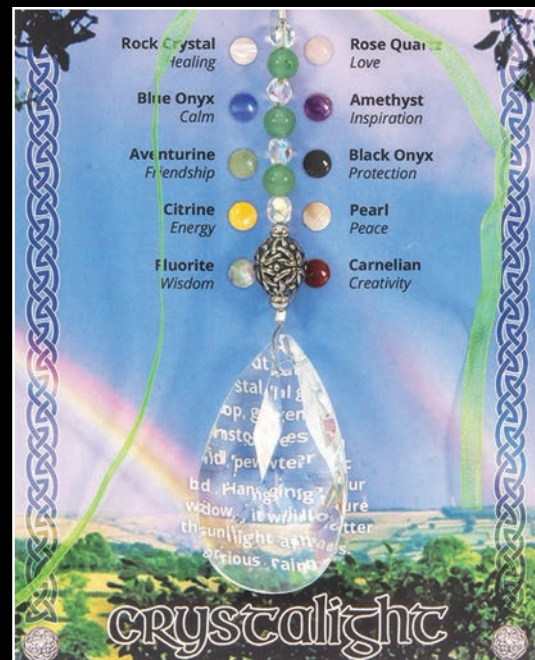
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Brendan Grace:

1952-2019

After being diagnosed with lung cancer just 10 days prior, actor and comedian Brendan Grace passed away on July 11 at the age of 68.

As Jack Beresford wrote for the Irish Post, “He was not your average Irish comedian.”

Growing up in the Liberties area of Dublin, Grace abandoned school as a youngster and began working as a local messenger boy by the age of 13. He broke into showbiz five years later, in part thanks to his folk band The Gingermen. During a gig one night, the then-teenager settled a restless crowd with jokes and stories, realizing a career in comedy might be his calling.

As it turned out, he was right; Grace went on to become one of the Emerald Isle’s most popular live comedians, tickling the country’s funny bone for more than 40 years.

Perhaps it was destiny - he was born on April Fool’s Day, as he pointed out regularly to audiences. He never completely left music behind, however, and his version of the novelty song “The Combine Harvester” became a number-one hit in Ireland in 1975.

According to The Independent, Grace met Eileen Doyle during one of his shows in Wexford. The pair hit it off and were married in 1973. Together, they had four children: Bradley, Melanie, Brendan Patrick and Amanda. Following in his father’s musical footsteps, Bradley plays bass guitar in Miami-based metalcore band Poison The Well.

Although the family relocated to Florida in 1993, the comedian continued to tour Ireland whenever he could.

Grace might be best known for his schoolboy caricature “Bottler” in addition to his roles as Murphy in Moondance (1995) and as Father Fintan Stack in the sitcom Father Ted (1996). He performed for the likes of Frank Sinatra and shared the stage with John Denver. He also worked with a charity choir called the Forget Me Nots, supporting those afflicted with dementia. In true Irish fashion, he once owned a pub in Killaloe, County Clare.

He said goodbye to the bar, however, after deciding that - when it came to alcohol - he preferred to be a “consumer rather than a provider.”

Unlike his tavern, Grace’s comedy endured. The film Funny Man, which documented his career, was released last October.

“In some respects, Grace bridged the gap between the old Paddy-the-eejit comics like Hal Roach, Noel V Ginnity and Jimmy Cricket, and the new breed of observational Irish stand-ups of the 1990s,” read a memorial piece in the Irish Times. “He was never as urbane or analytical as the slightly earlier Dave Allen, for example, but Grace was no fool. And he was clearly the kind of man who could easily deal with anyone who thought him one.”

Grace’s final years were rife with health issues, including a stroke and complications from diabetes. In June, he was diagnosed

with pneumonia before his cancer was discovered the following month.

His long-time manager Tom Kelly called Grace’s death a “great shock” and a “huge loss.”

“He was very weak, he didn’t wish to have chemo or anything like that, and the inevitable happened,” Kelly said. “He was one of the greats in modern entertaining.”

Since his passing, fans across Ireland have been honouring the comedian. In his hometown, hundreds turned up to a memorial service at the Church of St. Nicholas of Myra, including musicians Dickie Rock and Daniel O’Donnell, Fianna Fail leader Micheál Martin, and former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern. The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Paul McAuliffe, opened a book of condolence so residents could pay their respects, and Dublin-based artist Fink.art memorialized Grace with a mural, depicting him in his natural milieu - performing stand-up - with a simple “Thank you” painted in yellow letters.

Brian Reddin, the director of Funny Man, is expected to complete a new documentary this fall. Brendan Grace: Thanks For The Memories will include the comedian’s final interview as well as footage from his funeral.

“I got to say goodbye to him, and we have all his last moments on tape,” said Reddin. “I don’t know if anybody else in the entertainment business or in the world would allow you to do that but it was very important for him.”



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