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CelticLife

INTERNATIONAL

Celtic Cuisine

INSIDE!

*Saoirse Ronan, Celtic Woman, Spring Fashion
Celtic Wheels, Cape Breton, Celts For Cancer*



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LAND SINCE AT LEAST THE EARLY
1700S. (AND, PERHAPS, EARLIER.
MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS, GAVE A
CROWNED HEART BROOCH FEATURING
THE INITIAL M TO ONE OF HER FOL-
LOWERS SOMETIME IN THE 1540S.)

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and on the shoulders of thou-
sands of scottish women, and
acquired their name. Lucken-
booths took their name from the
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Scots dialect-- of Edinburgh. By the
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SUN

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29

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Fáilte!

In the early 1790s, European settlers moved eastward along the northern coast of Nova Scotia from Pictou. From 1789 - 1790, John Ban Gillis cleared land and built a log cabin in a yet-to-be-named community in the region, before returning to Scotland to collect his wife, Flora MacEachern, and their young child.

Pioneer John was the first permanent European settler in the new Nova Scotia community of Arisaig, which he named after a small district in the West Highlands of Scotland. The land had been populated by native Mi'kmaq peoples, who were among the original inhabitants of Atlantic Canada.

One afternoon - as the story has been told in my family for many generations - while Flora was home preparing meals, the cabin door swung open without warning and in walked three Mi'kmaq women. Flora was startled and concerned for both her own safety and that of her child. Having just taken freshly-baked bannock from her place of cooking, she broke open the still-hot flatbread and shared it with the women in a spirit of friendship and peace. The ladies took the bannock, tasted it, smiled at her, and left - never to be seen again.

Bannock was a staple food brought to the New World by the early Scottish settlers. It wasn't long before fur traders with the Hudson Bay Company introduced it to the West, where it is believed that bannock became a traditional food of the First Nations. For the Scots of Nova Scotia, it was an essential part of everyday life, and I can still recall bannock in my school lunch pail, and arriving home after classes to a hot pan of it, which - with a heaping of fresh butter - I devoured with delight.

For thousands of years the staple diet of Celts was grain based. The arrival of the Vikings to Celtic settlements across Western Europe in the 8th century brought new cooking and preservation techniques; salting and smoking helped to preserve foods and add new depths of flavour to fish and meats. Prior to the 1900s, however, no one paid much attention to Celtic cuisine. That is certainly no longer the case.

Our cover story in this issue explores nouveau Celtic cuisine, and our senior writer Caitlyn Mearns serves up several great articles on the incredible food and spirits of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Isle of Man, Bretagne, and Galicia.

Subscribers will receive the much-anticipated 2018 edition of Cabrini's Celtic Kitchen Cookbook, which includes an array of delicious recipes from the seven Celtic nations, as well as tasty treats from our home of Nova Scotia.

As you will see, eating has become much more than an essential element of survival; today, the culinary arts are a key component of our Celtic cultural identity, and food is a wonderful (and delectable) way to bring families and friends together at the table.

Enjoy and may God Bless!

Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher

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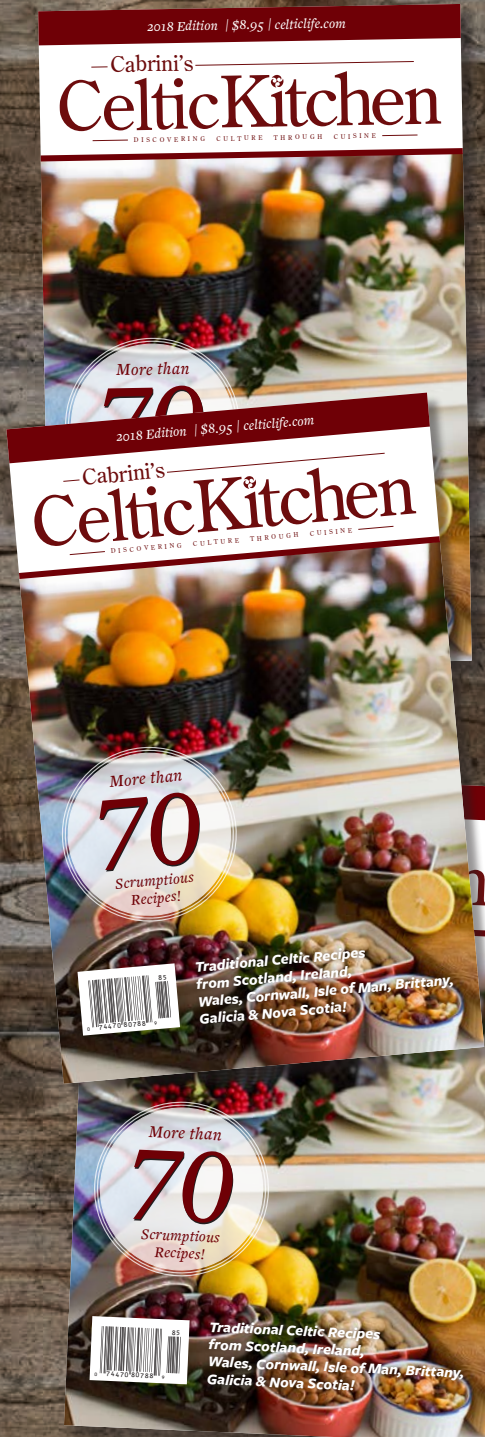
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This year, Celtic Life International will be raising funds and awareness for cancer research, prevention, treatment and services. See our website for details on how you can get involved!

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In the second installment of a six part series to raise funding and awareness for cancer research, prevention, treatment and services, Celtic Life International shines the spotlight on the Irish Cancer Society

Donal Buggy knows the numbers. “Each year in Ireland there are around 40,000 new cases of cancer, and we are moving closer to the time where 1 in 2 of us will get a cancer diagnosis in our lifetime,” says the Head of Services and Advocacy for the Irish Cancer Society.

“As the number of people diagnosed with cancer increases, so does the need for services that provide information and support for both patients and their families.”

The Irish Cancer Society leads the movement for improvements in health policy, services, and support for cancer patients. Working in collaboration with the government, health professionals, communities and others, the organization - with 172 full and part-time staff - strives to make the experience of cancer less forbidding for those diagnosed with the disease, and ultimately to eradicate it entirely.

“We have four key goals in our strategic plans,” explains Buggy, “reduce the risk of cancer; improve lives; lead collaborative cancer research; and inform and influence public policy.”

“Our work is done right through the cancer continuum, from prevention to end of life, and we aim to make a difference in the lives of everybody in Ireland as everybody is affected in some way by cancer.”

The Irish Cancer Society provides a full range of support services for people affected by the illness.

Along with information booklets and online resources, a Cancer Nurseline Freephone offers confidential advice, support, and helpful data. Daffodil Centres are located in thirteen hospitals nationwide, staffed by nurses and trained volunteers. A Survivor Support Program offers peer council from those that have been through a cancer diagnosis. Trained volunteers are available to provide emotional and practical support to anyone going through, or finished

with, their treatment. The society also works with cancer support groups nationwide to ensure that patients have access to confidential support and counseling.

In addition, the organization also provides practical and financial aid for patients in need via the Travel2Care, Paediatric Financial Support, and Volunteer Driver Programs.

“Our Night Nursing service provides end-of-life care for cancer patients in their own home. This allows patients to remain at home for the last days of their lives, surrounded by their families and loved ones.”

Buggy notes that 4 out of 10 cancer cases are preventable, and that people can reduce their likelihood of getting cancer by adopting certain lifestyle changes.

“By educating people, and supporting them to make positive changes, we can help to reduce the number of new cancer cases each year.”

“Our National public awareness campaigns focus on early detection, signs and symptoms, and how lifestyle influences risk. We also provide a range of community-based programs aimed at increasing awareness of how that risk can be reduced.”

He, himself, has his hands full.

“I oversee the delivery of practical patient support services, including the Volunteer Driver Service, which takes 1,100 patients on over 11,500 journeys annually for chemotherapy treatments. I also manage the nationwide Night Nursing service, the only night time palliative care service in Ireland, which cares for over 1,900 patients annually. And I am involved with Nurseline, and the hospital-based cancer information and support Daffodil

Centres, facilitating 42,000 enquiries a year. These services and programs, and more, are free to patients and available nationwide. I also oversee the essential work of the Cancer Prevention Department.

“Advocating on behalf of cancer patients forms an integral part of the Society’s work, and the Advocacy team ensures that public policy is influenced in this regard.”

As cancer rates increase, raising funds is the biggest current challenge facing the organization. As such, public support is crucial.

“Only 2 per cent of our funding comes from the government, so we rely heavily on donations from members of the public and companies. People can also get involved by volunteering in our charity shops, with our Driver Service, and in our Daffodil Centres.”

The annual Daffodil Day fundraiser, which takes place on March 23 this year, is the society’s flagship fundraising event, responsible for bringing about €4m - one fifth of the organization’s financial target for 2018 - into the organization’s coffers.

“It is a hugely critical event which provides care and support when and where it is needed most. Individuals and groups can host their own fundraising events on Daffodil Day by volunteering to collect funds, or by simply buying a daffodil on the day.”

Despite the difficult numbers, Buggy believes the future looks bright.

“Fortunately, treatments are getting better and more people are living their lives with cancer or beyond it. There are now 150,000 cancer survivors in Ireland who can attest to the advancements in diagnostic and treatment services and support. However, much more remains to be done.”

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I've heard that Tartan Day originated in Canada.

Is that true?

~ Meaghan MacLeod, Rochester, New York

Meaghan, congratulations, you are absolutely correct! Jean Watson of Halifax, Nova Scotia, first brought the idea of Tartan Day to the province's Federation of Scots in 1986. She initially envisioned it as day devoted to preserving and promoting Scottish heritage by simply sporting a kilt in public places where it might not normally be worn. She then lobbied members of her province's Legislative Assembly, and Nova Scotia proclaimed its first Tartan Day on April 6, 1987, coinciding with the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. Watson then pushed to have Tartan Day observed in every province, urging several regional and national Scottish associations to follow her lead. By the early 1990s, every province in Canada began recognizing Tartan Day, with the U.S. following in 1997. Tartan Day is now celebrated all over the world. Watson continues her crusade, even to this day, determined to get calendar companies to acknowledge Tartan Day. Over the years she helped found the Pipes and Drums of Clan Farquharson, the Clan Lamont Society, the Clan Watson Society of Canada and the Stewart-Stuart Association of Nova Scotia, serving as president of each. She has also been president of the Federation of Scottish Clans twice. ~ SPC

What is the best way to keep young people interested and involved in Celtic culture?

~ Jim Montgomery, Ottawa, Ontario

Jim, thanks for the note. Let me tell you a story; a few years back I was invited to speak at a Celtic conference in Chicago. After displaying images of young Scots from around the world on the big screen behind me, I asked the audience to tell me what these kids all had in common. Up came the hands; "the tartan," "heritage," "ye' ould country," and so forth were a few of the responses. I then held up my iPhone and replied, "This, ladies and gentlemen, is what all of these young people have in common." The reality is that young Celts are no different from their non-Celt peers; they spend a good part of their day glued



to a screen. So why not connect with them on their own turf? While a good number of Celtic Life's print subscribers are under the age of 25, our online reach in that demographic is through the roof; both our website and our social media channels are growing exponentially, mostly due to young people's passion to connect with their roots on their own terms. Thankfully, many Celtic societies are now tailoring their medium to better carry their message to younger audiences. ~ SPC

How do you decide which books and CDs to review each issue?

~ Matthew Sheldon, Athens, Georgia

Hi Matt. Thanks for the query. We receive 30-40 books for review over the 60-day span between each edition, and roughly the same amount of musical recordings. There are two core criteria for consideration; that these works are Celtic-related in some capacity, and that they are recent releases. Everything gets a fair shake; if a book hasn't grabbed me by 50 pages then I put it down (and pass it on). CDs (mostly digital files



Jean Watson

these days) travel with me on my phone, and every album gets at least a dozen-or-so spins. In each case, I make notes on my observations. While, expectedly, there are some duds, most of what I read or listen to is very good, with a few selections being exceptional, and those become my focus for a review. I have been reviewing for almost 30 years, and have always tried to remain positive. Many critics make a good living picking things apart, some even with a sense of cruel glee. However, as my mother used to remind me (and still does!), if you can't say anything nice, then don't say anything at all. And really, who wants to read about a bad book or album anyway? ~ SPC

Got a question for Celtic Life? Drop us a note at info@celticlife.com



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one

Walking again

Derry-based gymnast Jennifer Smyth sustained serious injuries when she fell from a vault in 2013. The accident left her with a broken neck, and doctors told her she would never walk again. Since then, Smyth has proven them wrong. Landmarc Solutions - the company where her late father once worked - raised funds for a ReWalk 6.0 bionic suit: a robotic exoskeleton that enables people with spinal cord injuries to stand, walk and climb thanks to powered hip and knee motion. The suit is controlled by a smart watch. Smyth is now learning to use the equipment with help from her mother and her trainer.

two

Galician seabed discoveries

The rich communities of animal life that exist on the seabed continental shelf and slope are relatively unknown because it's difficult for scientists to collect samples at such depths. However, a team from the A Graña Marine Biology Station in Galicia took part in four research expeditions from 2002 to 2009. These expeditions have led to the discovery of several new species, including two types of crustaceans on the Galician seabed. These researchers recently made their findings public, naming the tiny, eyeless creatures *Photis guerrai* and *Pareurystheus vituoi*.

three

Running of the pasties

Running a marathon is difficult to begin with. Imagine doing it in a bulky costume! That's exactly what Janna Eyre did last fall, donning a giant pasty costume as she took on the Cornish Marathon. Eyre had run this particular marathon before, so she knew what she'd be in for: a 26.2-mile course around Bodmin Moor. She managed to complete the run at a time of 5.20.26. Her personal best (without the pasty) is 3.31.56. Eyre's costumed run wasn't just about having a laugh - she was raising money for Prostate Cancer UK, as her father had recently been diagnosed with the illness.

four

The Stones roll to Ireland

The Rolling Stones may be painting the Emerald Isle black come summertime. In January, rumours began circulating that the English band was set to make an announcement of a United Kingdom summer tour. If it turns out to be true, it would be only logical that a show in Ireland would be on schedule. This would be a big deal for Irish fans, as the Stones haven't played there for more than a decade. Their last visit to Eire was in 2007, when they headlined a concert at Slane Castle.

five

Royal gold

The Welsh mine that produced gold for the wedding bands belonging to the Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Margaret, Princess Anne and Princess Diana has been closed for 20 years. Mining at the Clogau St. David's mine stopped in 1998, as the amount of gold being found was decreasing. A review by Alba Mineral Resources, however, suggests there is still gold to be had in the un-worked veins of the mine. This is good news for consumers: Welsh gold has been used in royal weddings for generations and demand has skyrocketed after Prince Harry and Meghan Markle announced their plans to marry.

six

Baby bear

The Highland Wildlife Park in Kincairdie, Scotland is now home to the first polar bear cub to be born in the United Kingdom in 25 years. The cub was born on December 18, with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland staff confirming news of its birth in January. During the first weeks of life, zookeepers kept minimal contact with the mother and cub - who were living in a private den - so as not to disturb the animals. The first three months of life are the most dangerous for the cub, but if it pulls through, its presence will likely bring an influx of visitors.

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

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Louisa Thomson

Louisa Thomson won last year's Miss Stirling pageant in Scotland, going on to be a finalist for the title of Miss Great Britain (along with her twin sister Christina, AKA Miss Dundee). But the 27-year-old has done much more than that. Louisa works for the Mental Health Crisis Team in Fife by day, and she is using the publicity she's received to raise awareness about mental illness. "As a mental health nurse, I know anyone can suffer from mental illness and, sadly, there is still a stigma attached to mental health that doesn't exist for other illnesses," Louisa told the Scotsman in December, when she helped launch the mental health tartan with Support in Mind Scotland (SiMS). The organization has been independent since 1984, "working to increase understanding of mental illness and to support not only people living with mental health issues but their families and carers too." They help an estimated 2,000 people every year by providing services around the country. The tartan - which is reportedly the first mental health charity tartan in the world - was commissioned by SiMS and designed by Ingles Buchan to be woven exclusively in Scotland. Both Louisa and Christina fundraised for SiMS throughout 2017.



Vickie Paxton

The ancestry of the Welsh pony goes back to Wales even before the country was conquered by the Roman Empire, and Vickie Paxton is one of the people keeping their legacy alive. Paxton is one of just two certified Welsh pony breeders in Colorado (with fewer than 40 breeders in all the U.S.). Paxton started Weehaven Welsh Ponies in Cortez several years ago. Before that, her life was dedicated to animals in other ways: she worked as both a veterinary technician and as an Arabian horse breeder. She switched from Arabians to Welsh mountain ponies as they were easier to care for and had a gentler disposition. The ponies raised on this haven have gone on to homes elsewhere in Colorado and across the country. "They generally stay with families," Paxton told the Journal in December. "I know the local people that I have sold a few to intend to keep them for their kids and grandkids. They are long-lived, they are hardy, and they are healthy." Paxton has no plans to give up the business - which she says is her "life" - but recently she put her farm up for sale. She hopes to move the operation so she can live closer to her daughter and grandchildren in Cahone, about 30 minutes away.



Caoimhe Anglin

By sharing her own experience, computer engineer Caoimhe Anglin hopes to help change the eighth amendment - the law which grants a fetus Irish citizenship. In 2016, Anglin was forced to leave home in order to have an abortion. She never anticipated getting involved in any kind of movement, but things changed when she was at the Dublin airport waiting to travel to Manchester with her boyfriend. "I saw a much younger girl than me, on her own and in obvious distress, whom I later saw again on the plane to Manchester. I guessed that she was doing the same as me, although she had no one with her," Anglin told the Guardian in December. "How many girls and women like her have to go through all this almost entirely on their own? It started to dawn on me that I would have to take a stand." The eighth amendment was backed by 67 percent of voters back in 1983, and the existing punishment for an illegal abortion in Ireland is up to 14 years in prison. Ireland's abortion referendum is expected to take place in May or June this year, just weeks before Pope Francis is expected to visit.

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St. Augustine Celtic Music & Heritage Festival

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www.celticstaugustine.com

This March, the St. Augustine Celtic Music & Heritage Festival returns for its eighth year, celebrating America's oldest Celtic city. The two-day event - winner of both the Jacksonville Bold City Best and the Best of St. Augustine award for two years running - kicks off with a whisky tasting - a perfect way to prime yourself for a weekend of fun and festivities. Great music is the focus all weekend, with scheduled performances from 9 of the top Celtic music acts in the world, including Albannach, Emmet Cahill, and The Dublin City Ramblers. For those keen on testing their athletic ability, the gathering will host its Highland Games, featuring the Caber Toss, the Stone Put, the Scottish Hammer Throw, and more. On Saturday, the popular St. Patrick's Day Parade - now recognized as the oldest in the world (1601!) - will fill the streets with floats, marching bands and revellers of all ages. The parade will be marshalled by St. Augustine native and retired archeologist, Carl Halbert. Special honours will be given to the Clan Donnachaidh Society. The weekend rounds out with a variety of vendors, offering up a fine selection of traditional Celtic food and merchandise.



Dunedin Highland Games and Festival

April 6-7, Dunedin, Florida

www.dunedinhighlandgames.com

The Dunedin Highland Games and Festival will return to its namesake city this spring for its 52nd year. The annual celebration is the perfect place to test your strength, with both a Highland 5K run and a Scottish Athletics competition on the schedule. For others, check out some of the great Celtic musical performances, or take in the 4th annual Pipe March Band, and be sure to salute the 2018 Bonnie Lass and Bonnie Lad. Stuart Liddell, Pipe Major of the Inverary & District Pipe Band who won the Grade 1 Championship in Glasgow in 2017, will lead a piping recital on Friday afternoon, where visitors can get an earful of the world's best pipes, or put on your dancing shoes for the Ceilidh in the Park. Weekend musical acts include the Brayzenheads, and Off Kilter. Wet your whistle with one of the many domestic and imported beers on hand, and cruise vendor tents for the latest in Celtic jewelry, pottery, textiles and more. And, of course, your wee ones won't be left out, with a host of fun and festive activities to keep them busy.



Australian Celtic Festival

May 3-6, Glen Innes, Australia

www.australiancelticfestival.com

Bretagne, Galicia and Asturias will be feted at this year's Australian Celtic Festival, a four-day gathering in Glen Innes at Australian Standing Stones, a group of ancient granite monoliths. Visitors will receive a warm welcome at the Ceud Mile Failte Concert, a 'sampler' show with sneak-peeks of some of the festival's main performers. This year's musical acts include Black Bear Duo, Ella Roberts, FolkTrain, String Family, and more. Those interested in more traditional performances will enjoy a number of pipe bands and dances, including the renowned Glen Innes Pipe Band. The festival will also host community events, re-enactments, seminars, and workshops. Don't miss the one-day symposium "The Celts - Warriors, Poets and Craftsmen" - an in-depth discussion on the Celts, past, present and future. For a better understanding of Bretagne, Galicia and the Asturias - and the role each play in the Celtic Diaspora - be sure to check out An Introduction to the Asturias, taste the Galician-inspired Queimada 'fire-drink,' and take in a Breton Dance Workshop. Finish off each day with one of the festival's community dinners - always a great opportunity to meet fellow Celts.

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New Scotland Brewing Company

Brothers in business Kevin and Scott Saccary are brewing up something new in Nova Scotia - literally

The co-owners of New Scotland Clothing Company in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, are gearing up to launch New Scotland Brewing Company.

While craft beer has been something of a trend on Canada's east coast in recent years, co-founder Kevin Saccary emphasizes that he and his brother Scott are not simply following the herd. The idea to get into the beer business has been percolating for some time – the duo even trademarked the New Scotland Brewing Co. brand about nine months after they started their popular clothing company in 2014.

“We had always envisioned it on top of a tap at a bar,” says Kevin, referring to the company logo which features the Lion Rampant of Scotland. “We wanted to create a product with the same characteristics that we used for creating our clothing. Our ultimate aim with this endeavour is to craft a high-end beer that is made with as much local ingredients as we can, and produce it right here in Nova Scotia.”

The Saccarys began their initial venture with a test run of 50 hoodies and shirts. When that was successful, they started a mobile set-up and began selling their gear - most of which is adorned with the Lion Rampant - at area markets and festivals.

In 2016, the pair opened a storefront in a 250 square foot shop in downtown Dartmouth, followed by a shop on the Halifax waterfront and a kiosk at the city's airport. More recently, New Scotland Clothing landed a three-month contract with Halifax Shopping Centre. “Every year we are doubling in revenue and in size with our employee base and everything,” says Kevin. To keep up with that growth they have expanded to a larger store not far from their first shop. The new place will serve as their flagship location.

As for the beer side of things, Kevin and Scott were still looking for a brewing and taproom location. But Kevin's hopes and goals for New Scotland Brewing are well mapped out. “We've been working on a plan for two-and-a-half years now.”

The brothers have hired a friend to be the brew-master, but he is remaining anonymous until the location is finalized. The trio are equal partners in the upcoming business.

“He has product, and we have a brand and an idea, so essentially we came together and created New Scotland Brewing Company.”

“I have done a little bit of home brewing, but he takes it to another level,” Kevin says of his brew-master buddy. “He has his own yeast strains and stuff that he has produced from Nova Scotia wineries, as well as other products from across the province that he is growing himself in his house.”

The brewery will begin with five or six signature beers. “Obviously, you need to have an IPA. You need to have some of these beers that are traditionally popular,” explains Kevin. They also plan to produce traditional Scottish styles of beer. For non-beer drinkers, cider will also be available, as well as mead - an ancient alcoholic beverage made by fermenting honey and water. “Not a lot of people are doing that right now around here, so we want to give that a go as well.”

Kevin describes the trio's vision for the brewery as a “very community-oriented tasting room.” In other words, it will be a live music venue in addition to being a taproom - appropriate, given that all three business partners are musicians. “We want to have great local artists come in and play original tunes.”

The hope is that the brewery will be a hotspot for tourists and locals alike. They want visitors “to experience what local Nova Scotia music is like, and to experience Nova Scotia the way we think it is.” As all three owners are from the province, they agree that there is something special about their home. “Not to sound too corny, but we love Nova Scotia.”

Thankfully, they are finding the local beer scene to be generally welcoming, with most brewing companies sharing a “the more, the merrier” attitude.

“We are in that mindset too,” notes Kevin. “It creates a really cool atmosphere and a cool community - especially here in Dartmouth, which had a very vibrant downtown core 20 or 30 years ago. It is great to see it coming back around again.”

www.facebook.com/newscotlandbrewing



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Kirsty Logan

*Scottish author Kirsty Logan dives deep in her latest narrative **The Gloaming***

Born in Cheshire, England, to Scottish parents, author Kirsty Logan was inspired by storytelling and myth as a youngster.

"I have always been a writer," smiles the scribe. "It is who I am at my very core. I have written stories since I was a child, and I wrote plenty of angst-y poetry through my adolescence. It wasn't until I finished my undergraduate degree in English Lit, and was accepted into a Master's program in Creative Writing, that I started to take my career seriously. Now I think I have to keep being a writer because all my qualifications and experience are so entrenched in words. I wouldn't know how to do anything else."

Today, Logan lives in Glasgow with her wife, Annie, and their rescue dog, Rosie.

"Scotland has been a huge influence on my work," she explains. "So much of Scottish culture is water-based. Glasgow isn't by the sea, but it has a strong history of shipbuilding - the U.S. still buys old ships that were built on the Clyde River by Glasgow's shipbuilders, because they are so good. I love Scottish mythology and folktales, and many of those stories - selkies, kelpies, mermaids - are based on the sea."

Fairy tales and folklore played a pivotal part of Logan's childhood, as family members would often share tales from Africa, Greece, Egypt, India, and beyond.

"When I got older, I discovered a wealth of writers who retold those old tales, and that broke my brain open again and showed me the possibility of storytelling. Angela Carter was a huge influence on me, as she really upended the stories, rather than just updating a few flimsy details. As she so aptly stated, 'I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the bottles explode.' That is what I want to do with my stories too."

"Fairytale are still told for a reason - there is truth and darkness in them, as well as magic and beauty."

Logan has an impressive list of publications to her name already, including her 2015 debut novel *The Gracekeepers*. Her newest book, *The Gloaming*, follows Mara, a young girl living on a magical island

where inhabitants turn to stone. It is set for release this spring.

"*The Gloaming* has been such a long time in the writing that, unlike my other books, it is tricky to trace its beginnings. It was the first novel I ever wrote, aged 22, while I was in my final year of my undergraduate degree. Of course, it was terrible, as I had no idea what I was doing. Over the next decade I rewrote that book from scratch four times, while writing other novels and many short stories, poems, articles, essays, etc. I can't even explain it - something about the idea of a girl and her family on a tiny, darkly magical Scottish island kept haunting me, and I couldn't let it go."

"It is part of a loose trilogy," she continues. "*The Gracekeepers* is set in the future, *The Gloaming* is in the present, and the novel I plan to write next, *The Gramarye*, is set in the past. They don't have overlapping characters or specific settings, but they examine the same themes from a new angle - water myths of selkies and mermaids, the relationship between sea and land, queer love and identity, mother-daughter conflicts, the ambivalent desires for the security of here, and the adventure of away."

Logan is passionate about the representation of the LGBTQ+ community within her work.

"I try to present a whole spectrum of different sexual and gender identities," she notes, "from healthy to unhealthy, from hetero to homo, with plenty in between. There is no correct way to be. It is just how I see the world. I don't think it is as simple as one or the other. It is false to portray every relationship as happy, but then it is false to portray every relationship as unhappy as well. Love, identity, family - these things are complex, and I want to explore those complexities."

Early response to *The Gloaming* has been very positive. Regardless of the reception, however, Logan aspires to simply hone her craft and be true to herself.

"I often wonder why I write - is it for a connection, as catharsis, to be heard? All I can settle on is that it is who I am. I think I will always be a writer, no matter what. If you could break me apart like a stick of rock, the word 'storyteller' would be right through me."

www.kirstylogan.com



An aerial photograph of the Rose Manor Inn, a large, multi-story building with a complex roofline and multiple gables. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a well-maintained lawn. A paved driveway leads to the building, and a small outdoor seating area with a table and chairs is visible in the foreground. The ocean is visible in the background.

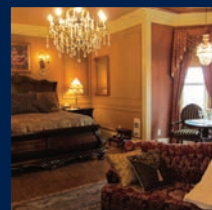
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Anna Ludlow

It took Celtic fiddler Anna Ludlow all of five seconds to jump on board the smash Broadway show Come From Away as it returns to Canada



“It has been the most incredible journey,” says fiddler Anna Ludlow from Winnipeg, where *Come From Away* premiered before settling into the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto.

The multi-award-winning musical, created by Canadians Irene Sankoff and David Hein, is based on the hospitality of two Newfoundland communities to 7,000 air travelers grounded during the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Residents of Gander and nearby Lewisporte opened both their homes and hearts to the stranded passengers and flight crews.

“In Atlantic Canada it is no cliché to say that the door is always open,” Ludlow points out. She describes the show, which played to rave reviews on Broadway and won a Tony Award, as being rich and rewarding with emotion.

“It focuses on love, forgiveness and friendship. Ultimately, love conquers hate, and I feel that sentiment in each show that I play. The audiences laugh and cry and come away with certain joy.”

Bob Hallett, formerly of popular Newfoundland band Great Big Sea, was commissioned to oversee the show’s musical direction. After discussions with Dawn Beaton, artistic director of Cape Breton’s Celtic Colours festival, he approached Ludlow to audition.

“A few weeks later I had the gig, the only problem being that I live in Ottawa and the show is based in Toronto.”

Ludlow, who has a two-year-old daughter with her husband, knew the break was just too good to pass on in spite of the many hours she or her family will spend travelling.

“The writers, the producers, the directors, the stage crew, the music directors, the actors, and the incredible musicians that I share the stage with are wonderful. It is the opportunity of a lifetime for me.”

In addition to performing in the pit, Ludlow joins the cast on stage during the pub scenes.

Before Hallett contacted her, she was fine-tuning a second album. She released her first, *Reel To Reel*, in 2010. As such, she has had to take what she terms “a wee break.”

“Right now, it is looking like the right time to release it may be late fall. My focus at this point is on *Come From Away*, and I’m enjoying every moment of it.”

Ludlow is no stranger to performing for large audiences, hav-

ing spent over a decade touring North America and Europe as principal fiddler with the Halifax-based, Juno-nominated stage production *DRUM*.

“We played Dollywood, the Vancouver Olympics, Trafalgar Square for Canada Day and even for Queen Elizabeth II.”

Musical talent aside, she believes the strong sense of family and community she was raised with makes her a natural fit for *Come From Away*.

“My maternal ancestors immigrated (to mainland Nova Scotia) from the rugged highland district of Moidart in Scotland during the clearances. On my paternal side, my ancestors came from southwest England and southwest Ireland who came to Newfoundland as labourers in the fishery.”

Strongly influenced by a Celtic music tradition that flows through her mother’s family, Ludlow says there was no shortage of fiddle or bagpipe music while she grew up in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

“My parents held kitchen parties and local fiddlers would often come to play. Scottish and Irish fiddle and folk songs were commonplace in my youth.”

She took her first lessons from award-winning fiddler Kendra MacGillivray, and was exposed to Cape Breton’s best-known players. She particularly recalls hours spent listening to the music of fiddler Natalie MacMaster.

“I listened to all of her albums and back then - I had many of her cassette tapes and I would rewind and fast-forward over and over until I perfected her sets.”

Ludlow loves a good jig with plenty of drive, and that approach perfectly complements *Come From Away*.

“I am not a believer in ‘music for music’s sake,’ and want people to enjoy my sound. It’s a hard world out there, and if I can give people a few minutes of pleasure and even some distraction, then it is worth it.”

In *Come From Away* Ludlow plays her favourite fiddle, a nearly century-old Czech model that she picked up in Boston 15 years ago.

“I am not sure that the Czech violin maker would have believed that his creation would spend this amount of time producing Celtic music. I think he would enjoy watching and hearing his instrument play the music in *Come From Away*.”

www.annaludlow.com



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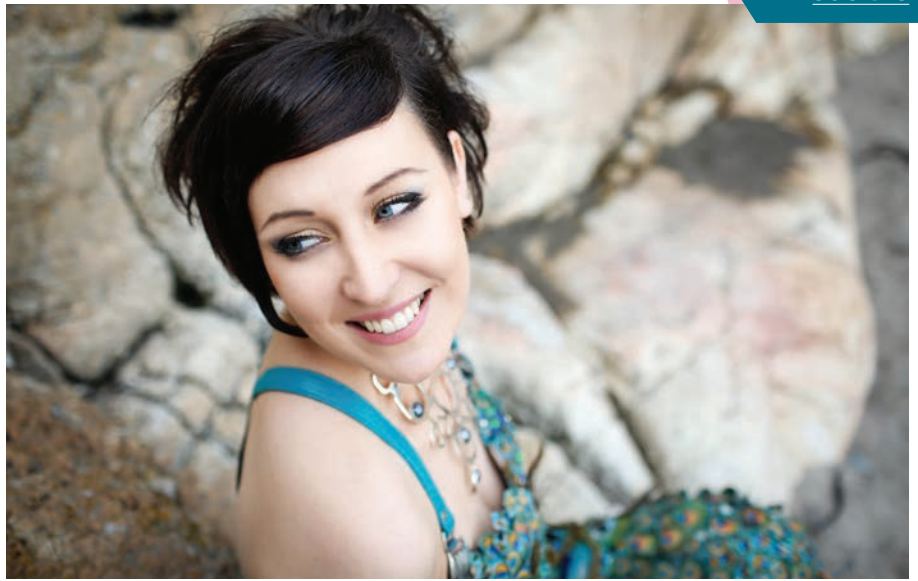
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Helena Byrne

On her latest recording, Irish singer-songwriter Helena Byrne explores Irish emigration



Titled *Tóraíocht Shonais*, (Pursuit of Happiness) - Helena Byrne's third album delves into the Irish experience of emigrating to the U.S. and Canada over the past two hundred years. It is an emotional look at immigrant hopes, dreams and aspirations.

The album includes eight songs and stories along a lengthy timeline - from migration from the Great Famine, to emigration on the Titanic, and throughout the Wild West of the New World.

"Political developments over the past two years have seen a very negative spin on immigration, and on people who are in very similar shoes to those Irish who had to leave their homeland to seek a better life or even safety," the singer told Celtic Life International.

"By learning more about our past and the story of Irish emigration, I hope I can inspire people to consider today's immigrants' experience. Our past mistakes don't have to be repeated."

To Byrne's relief, listeners are connecting to her new release.

"It's always nerve-wracking when you put new material out to the world," she shares.

"In recent years I've gained a lot more confidence in my work, like just recently plucking up the courage to step away from Irish folk songs and record songs I'd written myself. It took about ten years for me to get to that point."

A good tune, she notes, has a strong melody and needs to be truthful.

"If you write from an honest place, others will relate and connect to it."

The way she presents a song depends on the story she is telling.

"The sound of my music has to reflect the stories they accompany," she explains, adding that her new recording incorporates a mish-mash of folk, bluegrass, blues and traditional styles.

Her passion for singing began at a young age.

"I can't really remember a time when I didn't love singing."

"It didn't make me very popular as a child. While other children wanted to be outside playing games, particularly camogie (a traditional stick and ball game, similar to hurling), I'd be content sitting in my bedroom listening to songs and learning lyrics the entire day.

"When I started performing at public events and saw audience reactions, I began to realise it was what I was meant to do, which was a saving grace because camogie certainly wasn't my talent."

Byrne still loves performing, and is always looking for ways to improve. However, she admits that life as a modern musician isn't easy.

"One of the main challenges is reaching your audience and getting paid for your work; while it is far easier to get your music out to the world now, with social media and streaming sites, that also poses the problem of oversaturation. People rarely choose to pay for an album nowadays when there is so much free music available at the click of a button."

Creating music requires discipline and hard work, but inspiration is key.

"Before anything else happens, you've

got to have the inspirational moments to drive you forward. There's no point walking into a recording studio without a vision. But the perspirational moments inevitably come too; it's still a job and often there is still a deadline to meet, so even on the days when there isn't an ounce of inspiration in sight, you have to have the work ethic to power through."

Opening a festival in her home town of Kilkenny several years ago in the company of James Taylor and Bob Geldof was a career highlight.

"I would say though, that the most enjoyable moments were performances in small, intimate spaces with equally small, but attentive audiences. There's a little bit of magic in the air in settings like that."

She finds the current Celtic music scene vibrant.

"There are so many societies and groups I've come across when touring that truly adore and appreciate Celtic music. I'm very fortunate to be making my living from my music and stories, but I know there are so many talented people who aren't.

"I would just encourage people to reward the music they love; consider buying an album rather than playing it for free online, and go to gigs and support local musicians. It is only by doing this can we keep the Celtic music scene alive."

www.helenabyrne.com

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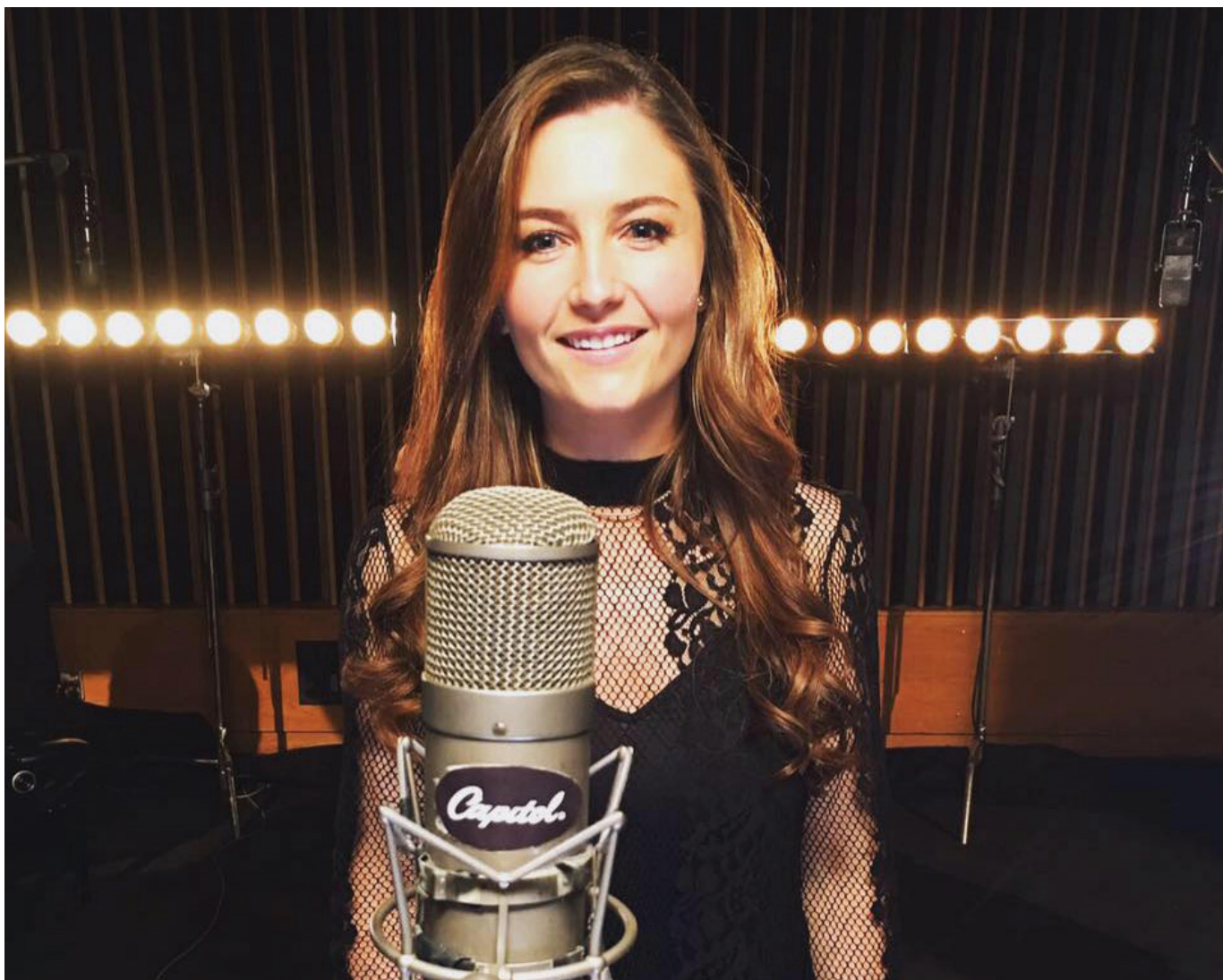
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Éabha McMahon

With their new album, *Homecoming*, rocketing up the charts, Celtic Woman returns to the road



The last time Celtic Life International spoke with Éabha McMahon, she was the new kid on the block with Celtic Woman, having only just joined the Irish supergroup.

Catching up with her today, McMahon is no longer the newest member - that honour currently belongs to violinist and harpist Tara McNeill - and she is definitely more at home in the troupe. As she tells it, however, she didn't feel like the odd one out for very long when she first connected with her current musical partners just a couple of years ago.

"When I first joined Celtic Woman, it could not have been a nicer environment," she says over the phone from the Emerald Isle's capital city, where the famed quartet and crew are prepping to hit the road. "You know normally, when you get a new job, or enter a new workplace, you feel a bit awkward as the newbie? I was never made to feel

like that. The girls just welcomed me with open arms from the very beginning."

The 27-year-old Dublin native describes the vibe of Celtic Woman as being like an extended family - one which includes musicians, managers, sound technicians, stage crew, and - of course - the other Celtic women who sing alongside her in performance each night.

"They feel like my sisters, which is amazing, as I never had sisters growing up. It may feel new, but now, after two years, I definitely feel at home, like it was meant to be."

To hear her tell the story of her first encounter with Celtic Woman, it is easy to believe in destiny.

"You know how they have the recom-

mended videos on YouTube? One came up for Celtic Woman. I clicked on it and heard them singing the first line of an Irish song. I remember running to get my mum and saying 'Look at this! These girls are singing in Irish!'"

Until Celtic Woman, McMahon - who grew up with Irish as her first language - had only heard the ancient language sung at a local community centre.

"You wouldn't see it on the top of the pop charts. Seeing Celtic Woman sing what I loved to sing gave me the motivation to continue following my dream, which was to perform in the Irish language."

Since joining the group, McMahon has travelled the globe, playing before sold out audiences on several continents. Their most recent homecoming gig in Dublin was particularly special.

"It was probably the most exciting single project that I have ever been associated with.



After a whole year of touring around the world, we came home to 3Arena, which is Ireland's biggest national arena – it is one of those places you have on your bucket list when you are a child. To actually perform there was just like nothing else in the world."

That particular performance was also the basis of Celtic Woman's most recent album, *Homecoming*, so named as the group celebrated their return after a year abroad. McMahon lauds the album - her third with the group - for boasting a truly unique sound, made up of the different musical backgrounds of each member (McMahon, McNeill, Mairéad Carlin, and Susan McFadden) blending together after countless hours of practicing and performing together.

"To be able to come home and sing to an Irish audience was just incredible - it was definitely a very proud moment."

Homecoming is something new for McMahon and the group; every note on the recording, and every image on the DVD, was recorded that night at the 3Arena in Dublin. McMahon notes that the difference in venue has a profound effect on the performance.

"It is my favourite album, because you can absolutely feel the energy off it. With a studio album, you can do your performance and if you feel like it wasn't your best take, you can go again. Being in studio is a great thing, but I sometimes have to pretend that I am on stage in order to get a good take. Recording a live show is like...you have one shot to get it right. There is a little extra pressure to it as well, with so many family members and friends in attendance, but I think that brings another element of magic to it. I remember going on that night

and my whole body was just pumping full of adrenaline. I can actually hear that in the album."

With *Homecoming* now behind them, Celtic Woman is gearing up for their next tour, one which brings them to venues across North America over the coming months.

"We are really excited. This is our biggest tour of the year, and we are currently learning and rehearsing new songs and choreography to make it our best show yet."

The last year with Celtic Woman has been a 365-day-long career highlight, McMahon explains, and she hopes that energy will keep its pace well into 2018.

"We ticked so many things off our bucket list over the last 12 months; we went to the Grammy awards, as we were nominated for the first time. We picked up the Album of the Year award on the World Billboard music charts. We had one of those years where you are like, oh my goodness, we just want to keep going!"

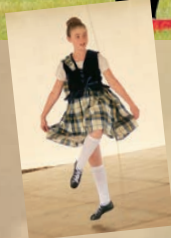
McMahon still has a few 'must-do' items to tick off with the group, including performing at Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan. For now, however, she is simply happy and grateful to follow Celtic Woman wherever it takes her.

"All my life, I trained and learned songs, and when I joined Celtic Woman, I immediately felt like it all made sense. There was a reason I was doing it for all of those years. I have no want to do anything else, because I am so fulfilled in what is happening at the moment. I definitely believe this is a long-term situation for me - I just feel so at home."

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A portrait of actress Saoirse Ronan. She has long, wavy, light brown hair and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a deep red velvet dress with a V-neckline. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Saoirse Ronan

With 5 Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay, Lady Bird is likely to take home a few Oscars in 2018. Recently we caught up with the film's leading lady, Irish actress Saoirse Ronan.



Saoirse Ronan had a welcome epiphany while watching her latest movie, *Lady Bird*, for the first time. "I've never liked watching myself. It gives me palpitations. I don't know why, it's just not good. I get the sweats. Usually I can't let go of myself, of watching myself, and all I can see is myself and it makes me cringe."

"But with *Lady Bird*, I was in the audience with everyone else. I removed myself from that critical, panicky, anxious position I have always been in, and just watched it, and it was really nice."

It is difficult to imagine the 23 year-old Irish star anything but pleased with her body of work. A three-time Oscar nominee, Ronan has been hailed by critics and fans alike after her breakthrough performance in the 2007 film *Atonement*.

Since bidding adieu to the teen roles that dominated her early career, she has successfully transitioned into a leading actor with feature parts in *Brooklyn* and upcoming turns in *The Seagull*, *On Chesil Beach* and *Mary Queen of Scots*. Ironically, it is her performance as teen schoolgirl *Lady Bird* in Greta Gerwig's directorial debut which has earned Ronan her largest plaudits yet, including a win for Best Actress at the Golden Globes. In the film, Ronan is the epitome of adolescent angst and hormones as a young woman trying to find her place in life while battling her mother along the way.



CL: You have been nominated again for an Oscar - what does that mean to you? And what's the whole experience like?

SR: I think my favorite part is the community aspect - going through this circuit and always seeing the same people, having the same experiences. You grow closer and bond. It is a very unique experience, and it is that closeness which excites me. You are rooting for each other. My favourite example of that was the whole *Moonlight* / *La La Land* upset last year; there was no rivalry or animosity over that, they held each other up and championed each other and you couldn't help but admire and respect that. I thought it was so honourable of everyone involved.

CL: How did you react when you saw it?

SR: I mean, I couldn't believe it when I was watching - this cannot be happening.

CL: How would you feel if it happened it you?

SR: Ehh, I don't think it would be the ideal scenario. However, you would certainly never forget it. Well, it is not like you are going to forget winning an Oscar, but you definitely would not forget winning that one.

CL: Margot Robbie has been nominated for Best Actress also for her role in *I, Tonya*, and you have just worked together on *Mary Queen of Scots*...

SR: She is my buddy. We genuinely had such a laugh on the set and when you know you are going to some event, you might be a bit wrecked or whatever, but then I will find out Margot is going and I think "Yes, it is going to be a good night."

CL: Will you be vying with each other?

SR: Of course not, we will just be too busy star-spotting.

CL: You have been to the Oscars twice, how did each time differ from the other?

SR: This first time, because the Oscars were basically my favourite annual TV show, I religiously sat down and watched the whole thing. To be there when I was 12, that was about myself, in this surreal moment, not really being able to take in what was happening around me, but fully aware how special it was. The second time, for *Brooklyn*, it felt like it was an honour for the story, and for the people who had gone through similar emotions, and for Ireland, and it was a very Irish movie, a love letter to the Irish so I felt like I was there on their behalf.

CL: What do you think this third time will be like?

SR: Probably again, just delighted for the film to get that recognition, for all the people who worked on it together; it is about all of us, and that time we came together and created something very unique and special. And it is also about honouring the relationship between mothers and daughters.

CL: How similar is your own relationship like with your mother in comparison to *Lady Bird*'s relationship with hers?

SR: I am really close to my parents. I have different relationships with them, but we are still really tight. I am an only child, so we were this little unit growing up. My relationship with my mother, I believe, is



the more important one. I am certainly not diminishing what I have with my dad, but maybe because we are two women we understand each other. She travelled with me when I first started working, and was always my protector and shielded me from the effects of the industry. She is my best friend and always will be.

CL: Surely you have had similar blow-outs?

SR: Again, we have a pretty smooth, solid dialogue, and there has never been any animosity between us. However, it was really interesting to investigate the ramifications of a mother-daughter dynamic that is up and down like the one between Lady Bird and her mom; it affects both of them, and it will affect both of them in the future. The relationship with your mom is the most important one you are ever going to have in your life, especially during one's formative years. I mean, your mom is your mom, right?

CL: Were you a teen rebel?

SR: I skipped the rebellious phase. So it is coming - look out mom and dad! 24 year-old rebel! I think that typical kind of rebellion can be born from a feeling of being trapped, and I never had that while I was in my teenage years because I was very much free and out in the world, working on all these different movies, having these liberating experiences, and meeting really wonderful people. It would have been strange to feel hemmed in while doing all that. And I am a big rule follower, I am. Never break the rules, couldn't do that!

CL: Making Lady Bird, did it make you pine for those teen things like graduating, like college that you never got to experience? Was there that feeling?

SR: Yes, there was. I wouldn't go back and change anything if I could, but when I watched Lady Bird move into her dorm, there is a romance to that that made me think 'that would have been nice.' Maybe I have seen it created in movies, and the reality is very different from the fantasy. Doing those scenes gave me a little insight into what it might be like, which is one of the advantages of being an actor - getting a slice of life you might not ordinarily experience.

CL: Were you planning on college at any point?

SR: I did want to go but then life got in the way and I didn't. Maybe I will in the future.

CL: You have talked of periods in your career where there was a lull that worried you. You are long past that now, but how do you look back at that stage?

SR: Yes, there was a period before Brooklyn where I thought, 'I need something to take off,' because I hadn't been in anything for a while that had been a hit and it does affect your career. It does affect your marketability, for want of a better way of saying it. It's not a nice reality, but it is the reality of the business. Plus, I was 20 or 21 at the time, going through that period where it was a transition from the teen years to being a young adult, and it is tricky and unknown, and you start second guessing yourself and the decisions you have made; maybe I should have done this or that instead, etc. It is the

nature of the job. But no, Brooklyn was that sort of transitioning to adult world role for me, and it is amazing how one role - because that's all it takes - can change everything.

CL: So Brooklyn did that for you?

SR: It changed the trajectory of my career, yes. I wouldn't have gotten the opportunity to do some of the more recent work that I am doing now without it, for sure.

CL: Much has been made of Greta Gerwig's inclusion in the awards circuit category for directing because she is a woman? Does it make you mad to think this is still a topic?

SR: I have never really seen it like, 'Oh now I'm being directed by a woman, this is going to be a very different, unique experience'. I am non-gender specific like that - they are either a good director or a bad director to me. And, actually, my first movie ever was with a women director so it has never been something that I have sort of sought out. I have worked with lots of female directors. Perhaps that is a naïve approach, because clearly, there's been an imbalance to say the least. But all anyone can be is a good director, a good filmmaker, and try their best to ignore what is going on around them.

CL: Would you like to direct someday?

SR: I am terrified of the prospect. But watching Greta, the idea is a lot more appealing...scary, but appealing. And this was her first film, and she was so open and collaborative with the actors - it was a good lesson.

Story by Lily Lawson

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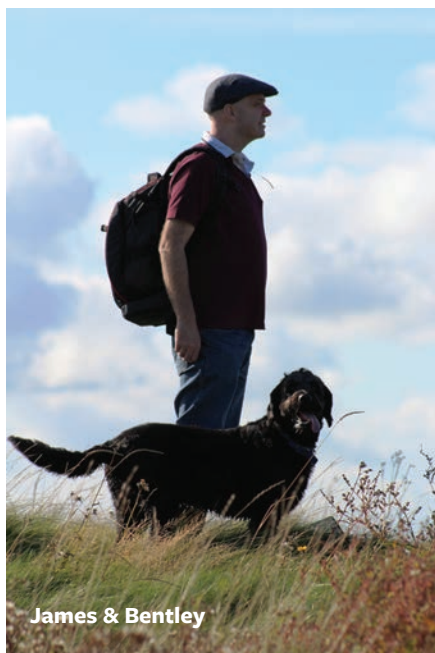
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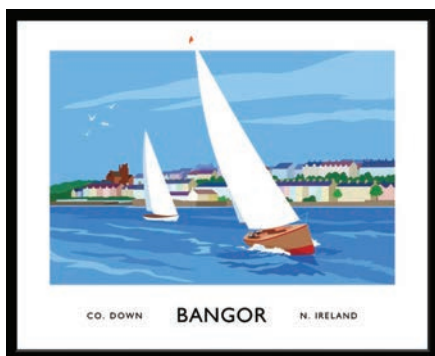


James Kelly

*Visual artist James Kelly brings
Northern Ireland's rich and colourful past
into the present*



I was born and raised in a small village on the Ards Peninsula, Co. Down, into a family of seven children. Dad owned his own petrol station and repair garage and Mum was a typical stay-at-home mother of the day.

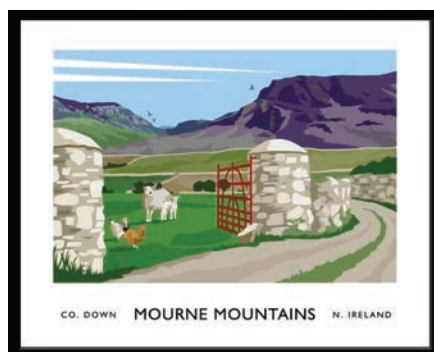


The shores of Strangford Lough - now regarded as an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - were at the bottom of the garden and a natural playground for an adventurous, nature-loving boy. In my early years I was often to be found roaming amongst the whin bushes, clambering over rocks or making rafts out of just about anything I

could find. As I got older into my teens I would be using our 18ft boat with an outboard fishing rod and a handful of doorstep sandwiches just in case! If I wasn't on the waters I was on the sports field, playing hurley at our local club or kicking football with my friends.

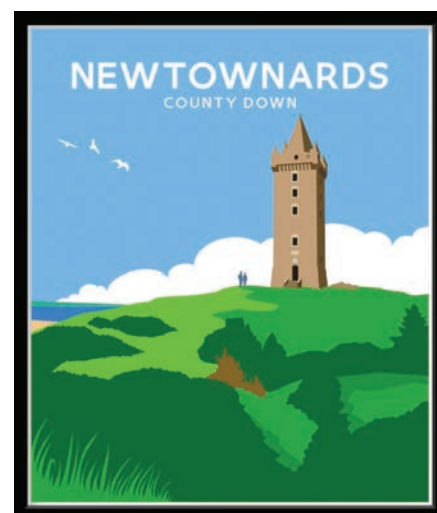


My mum used to joke that I was born with a pencil in my hand, and that I had an eye for detail and an inquisitive mind. My earliest memories include waiting eagerly for the grocery delivery just so I could get my hands on the cardboard boxes to make everything from ships to aeroplanes, and many a garage/aeroplane hanger was made from Kelloggs boxes, egg cartons and newspaper.

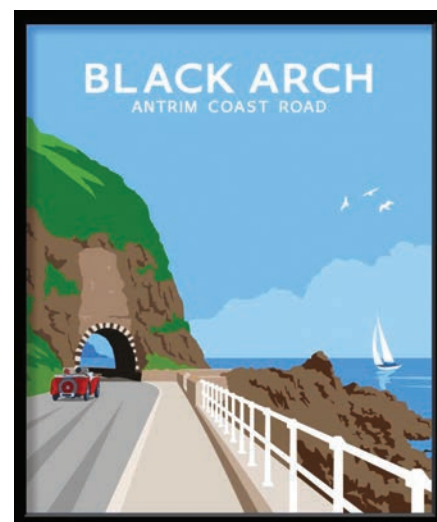


Whilst toys weren't in short supply, as far as I was concerned they could always be improved by creating a scene/diorama to act as

a backdrop to wherever my imagination was heading that day.



My elder sister Dymphna who was studying Textile Print was always encouraging me with gifts of paints and pens and even slipped me a few quid as a reward for doing well in my art exams in school. Her influence continued to play a part when she convinced me to take my art seriously and go to university where I studied Graphic Design.



My art has developed through a few different styles and mediums

mostly due to my study of Graphic Design. I've enjoyed learning and using airbrush techniques, water-colours, oils and acrylics. Working as a traditional sign writer since my early 20's, I developed a passion for lettering and some of the old techniques and methods used by the masters of this craft including working with gold leaf.



In the field of sign writing, I was exposed to a lot of the signage and advertising media of the early twentieth century. I was also fortunate enough to meet a few of the old characters of the trade whose love of this artform inspired me to look deeper and develop my own style. I have drawn inspiration for this collection from what I've seen and learnt of the advertising posters of a bygone era.



Everyone has their own opinion on what art is, some try to pigeon

hole what makes one piece better than another be it the level of fame achieved by the artist or simply the price they paid. In my opinion however, good art doesn't and shouldn't have to be expensive or exclusive. So what makes a good piece of art? I suppose it's something that speaks to the soul, something that transports the viewer or even just something that allows the viewer to escape from the hurly burly of the modern life if only for a few minutes.



I have never set boundaries or goals for my creativity. Life isn't linear, it has corners and who knows which corner I'll take next, or even what's going to be round the other side. Every day is a new day.



The biggest reward by far is that I'm able to earn a living from doing what I love. It also enables me to work around family life and gives me an excuse if one were needed to look again at the beauty of Northern Ireland.



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and Jean Darling Sutherland



Pipe Major Donald Sutherland (BZJR)



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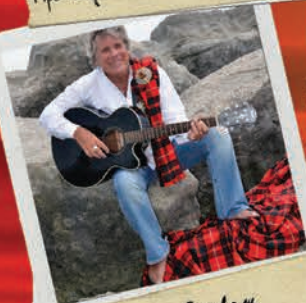
What started out as a one-day event to honour the legacy of Producer and Beacher Sandy Graham's family has turned into a popular yearly event that is held over two days nestled in the Beach at Kew Gardens, Toronto's very own Brigadoon.

Every Year dancers, pipers, vendors, singers, songwriters, dogs, kids, families all converge in this park to celebrate the diaspora of the Irish, Scottish and Welsh immigrants who make up the mosaic of Canada.

This year is the 15th Annual Beach Celtic Festival on Saturday 8 and Sunday September 9, 2018, 9 am - 7 pm daily. Admission is free!

Our entertainers donate their time and talent to make this event happen every year so support us by coming out to celebrate traditions of the Celtic Community.

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Don Graham



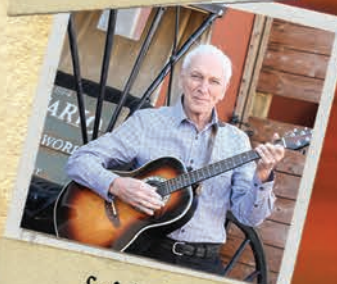
Old Man Flanagan's Ghost



Celtie



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Bole Steps Dancers

Niall Tyrell



I am originally from Galway in the west of Ireland, and I now live by the sea in Sandycove south of Dublin.

As a child I was always artistic, and it was a natural progression for me to be drawn to a creative career and go to art school. I always had a keen eye for style, but it was at art school that I decided to pursue a formal career in fashion design.

Over the years my work has evolved from the early days of experimentation to a modern, refined look with an emphasis on clean lines, texture and colour. My signature could be described as timeless elegance with a romantic twist.

It all begins with a single idea. The ultimate creative reward for me is having an inspired concept in my head

and watching it come to life through a sketch. That leads to the creation of a pattern, which takes me to the finished garment.

I sell directly from my downtown Dublin showroom where I offer bespoke and couture services with my seasonal collections. We also make all of our garments in Ireland, a fact that we are very proud of.

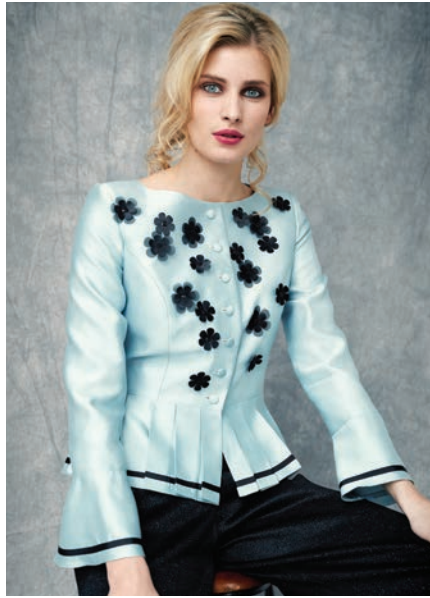
It is always a challenge to keep an eye on all aspects of running a business, but the reward has been to develop an excellent brand reputation in Ireland and beyond. Over the years I have designed dresses for Irish nominees for the Oscars, Golden Globes, and the Grammys, as well as for two female Irish Presidents, actresses, politicians, and film and television personalities.

A good item of clothing should al-

ways feel just perfect when you put it on; it should make you feel great, give you confidence and - above all - it should feel like a great friend that you can rely on. This, I believe, is the secret language of good clothes.

The Irish fashion scene is flourishing as there is a great desire to create here, with many diverse markets in the style sector. Established designers are doing well, however there can always be more state support for emerging designers. Specifically, greater government resources to develop incubation units for both manufacturing and sampling would help young creative types make their mark and get a stronger foothold in the marketplace.

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The Celtic Wheel

As Celtic Life International contributor Tim Wenzell explains, the Wheel symbol in Celtic cultures runs from human transport to human psyche

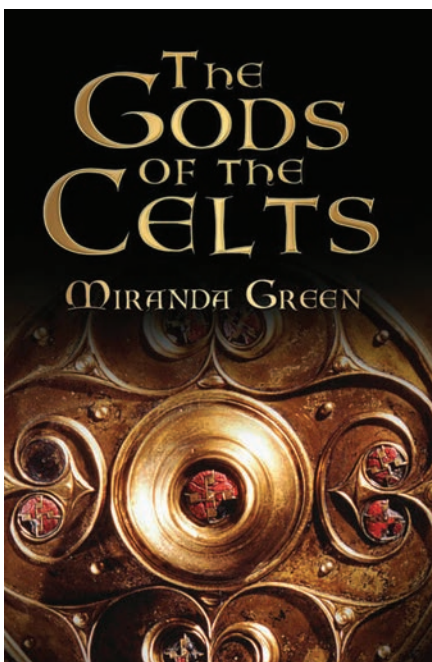


In many ways, the only clues that remain of the Celts who inhabited Europe thousands of years ago lay in the hands of archaeologists. That which is unearthed, dated, and studied provides the evidence to develop theories about the ways of life of these people, and to speculate on the values of the significance of these found objects. Indeed, to say that these conclusions are theories is accurate, for, like the theory of evolution or relativity or atomic theory or even electricity, the way of life of the Celts that is generally agreed upon by historians and archaeologists is an explanation that has been confirmed by inductive reasoning - that is, gathering bits of information over time and place and developing a solid analysis that comes to be accepted as accurate. Just as in other scientific theories, these conclusions are not dreamy and unreliable speculation, but an explanatory statement that fits the evidence.

Any object's importance in a culture is contingent upon the amount found, and geographic scope in which it is found. In Celtic culture, the wheel symbol has been found in various forms thousands of times across the European continent and the British Isles, and this wheel is unparalleled in number by any other symbol object.

Wagon burials, rock carvings, sculptures, etchings, and miniature spoked wheels in

the form of pendants and brooches, usually of bronze or lead, occur from Britain in the west to Czechoslovakia in the east. The wheel symbol appears prominently in settlement sites, graves, and shrines, indicating its importance as a symbol in Celtic society that transcends the wheel as a mere means of transport.



However, the wheel was, from the beginning of its function in the culture - and before its symbolic value became its chief reason for emulation - the means by which vehicles traveled. The importance for what the vehicle/wheel could accomplish cast it as a sacred object in its own right. The earliest wagons were not, as came to be the case in burials, ceremonial in nature, and instead were used for traveling short distances between farms, drawn by two oxen yoked to a pole. Eventually these wagons graduated into chariots drawn by horses for long distance travel. Though there is no direct proof for a road system, the fact that both the wagon and the chariot were in use among the Celts would seem to imply that their territories were in fact served by roads of some kind, no matter how crude.

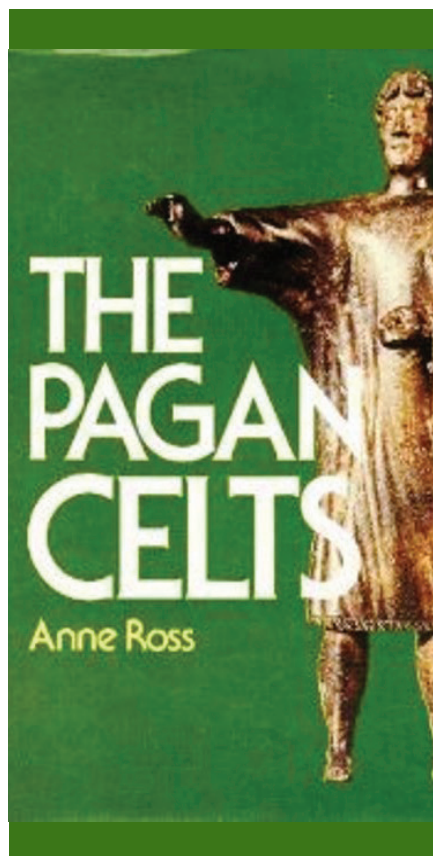
Though the prominence of the wheel began through its use for transport, this prominence had strong Indo-European roots. This is apparent with the discovery of solid-wheeled wagons and carts, probably pulled by oxen as well, in the steppe-wagon graves of the Yamna culture (3500-2500 BC). For the Yamna, the wheel allowed bulk transport for tents, food, and supplies that freed herders from dependence on river transport. The wheel permitted these herders to move deep into the steppes with their herds for the entire season. More importantly, the wagon as vehicle allowed for easier migration, which set into motion the spread of Indo-European culture and language into Celtic culture.

With the spread of Indo-European culture into the Celtic realm, the wheel attained importance as both transport and artifact. Though the wheel was initially lauded in both PIE and Celtic culture as a means of transport, the prominence of wheel images in art belies its heavier importance as a symbol. Despite the abundance of wheel images, Welsh archaeologist Anne Ross contends that "this reverence for the wheel and its mythological associations would imply that it was not altogether a commonplace everyday object" and that its importance as "a vital part of the vehicle would cause wonder and awe."

It is the immutable qualities of the wheel as representation that it has retained its value in Celtic culture.

From Indo-European roots, the celestial phenomena of sun, stars, and moon became the basis for religious belief, the worshipping of the natural elements as deities. In ancient India the wheel was one of the seven precious possessions of a great world ruler known as cakravatti: one who owns the wheel, symbolizes conquering progress and expanding sovereignty. For the Celts, in the examples of wagon grave burials in particular, the wheel may be a symbol of taking these qualities of progress and sovereignty into the afterlife. But it is apparent that the wheel also becomes religious artifact in a worship of the natural world. The sunrise and sunset each day and its movement across the sky, most importantly, became the primary focus of this nature worship, as evidenced by the massive number of wheel artifacts that still remain. As author Miranda Green notes in *The Gods of the Celts*, this day-by-day cycle of the sun moving across the sky “must have been seen as irrefutable evidence of the existence of supernatural power from the beginning of man’s existence as a sentient, self-conscious, and world-conscious being.” Especially for early farming communities and for when migrations away from rivers became practical, the sun in the sky represented life. So, in replicating the sun in artifacts of worship, the wheel came to represent two aspects of the solar deity: like a wheel, the sun moved across the sky. And like the spokes of the wheel, the sun provided warmth and light and life.

Despite the abundance of four-spoked wheels, the significance of these spokes becomes more complex with wheels containing six, eight, ten, or twelve spokes. While interpreting the meaning of these various spokes within the context of the wheel symbol, it is clear there is no evidence from Celtic culture as to their true significance, leaving archaeologists and historians to their best educated guesses. However, because the evidence of Indo-European influence on Celtic culture is so strong, it is important to examine the wheel spokes and their significance in this culture to establish any possible parallel in the Celtic world. For example, though Buddha’s influence on India began at his birth in 560 BC, the wheel became the simplest symbol to represent Buddhism. In this Buddhist context, the wheel came to have several meanings, as in the Celtic culture: as the wheel of a vehicle, it carries the Buddhist



teachings forward in time. It is also interesting to note the appearance of the eight-spoked wheel, distinct in its representation of the eight-fold noble path, part of the Buddha’s teaching. And while there was certainly no Buddha worship in the Celtic culture, the eight-spoked wheels, as well as other numbers, could certainly have their ties within various religious components.

Wheel as Thunder

While the importance of the wheel in Celtic culture is most notable in its sheer numbers as it appears in artifacts, it is interesting to note its appearance alongside representations of human form. One object that bears significance in this regard is the Gundestrup Cauldron, the large silver cult-bowl from Denmark, believed to be of Celtic origin from the second century BC. It is apparent, from the massive size and external gilding, that the object must have been an item of great religious significance in religious ceremonies. More interesting than the appearance of a sixteen-spoked wheel in this particular wheel representation is the appearance of human figures with the wheel itself.

Though the wheel represented the sun and served as artifacts of worship to its movement across the sky, the metal models of wheels and wheel-shaped brooches, as well as wheels drawn on pottery and appearing in sacred sites, may have more than one meaning.

As Anne Ross notes, “this rather vague and general significance may also link up with a specific relationship with the wheel-god himself, and indicate a very widespread worship of this deity in Celtic countries which other evidence would support.” In one example, Ross cites an early Irish text concerning Elatha, the divine suitor, who comes to woo Eriu, the goddess of Ireland. Elatha is described in this text as having five wheels of gold on his back. As in other early Irish tales, some warriors are described wearing wheel-shaped brooches, establishing a parallel to the actual artifacts found in archaeological sites.

The most notable connection between wheel and human in Celtic representation links the wheel to Taranis, the thunder god. Taranis, whose name comes from the Gaelic meaning ‘thunder,’ was one of three





pan-Celtic gods forming the great triad. With Esus and Teutatis, Taranis was worshiped especially by the continental Celts, although there is widespread evidence of his pan-Celtic worship. The great thunder lord shares attributes with other Northern European Sky gods - Thor, most notably - and several similarities with the Roman Jupiter. After the Roman incursion into Celtic lands, this great god was worshiped as Jupiter-Taranis. An interesting aspect of the worship of Taranis was his association with time. He was seen as the Lord of the Wheel of the seasons, which he controlled through his ritual mating with the feminine spirit of the sacred Duir, the oak tree. The Duir was the most sacred of trees held holy by the Celts. They worshiped in its groves, feed off of the acorns it produced and noticed the fondness of the Thunder Lord for striking it with his blasts of lightning. This act was itself the vehicle for the mating of the Sky Lord with the earth bound oak. Pieces of lightning blasted oak are still carried by modern Celts as an amulet of protection granted by Taranis.

Taranis, who came to represent the

wheel, was worshiped by the Celts from the Balkans to the British Isles. Remains of the worship of this wheel-god have been found throughout the Celtic tribes and the image of Taranis appears on coins, small wheel brooches, and votive images to life-sized statues. But if these images are representations of a god, then what exactly did this god represent? The only documentation of this god in the Celtic world comes from *Pharsalia*, an account by the Roman poet Lucan of



the civil war between Pompey and Caesar. Writing in the second century AD, Lucan notes three Celtic divinities that Caesar's army encountered in Gaul, one of which included Taranis. Most notable is Lucan's contention that Taranis was cruel and that he offered up human sacrifices. As Miranda Green points out in *The God of the Celts*, "Two later commentaries on the Lucan manuscript...each equate or link the name of Taranis with that of a Roman god, one with Dispaten (god of the dead), the other with Jupiter; the commentaries describe Taranis, moreover, as 'presider over warfare,' and inform us that human sacrifices were offered to him by being burnt alive in tree-trunks."

While the Roman interpretation of Taranis clearly draws from Lucan's text, it was no doubt reinforced by the various artifacts in Celtic depictions of this god. The classic representation of Taranis that embodies this depiction/interpretation is the bronze figurine found in Le Chatelet, France from the 1st to 2nd century BCE. It shows a patriarchal being holding a lightning bolt and a wheel, presumably to represent the sun. However, the



lightning rod, true to Lucan's observations, comes to represent fire, war, and terror, and in many ways solidifies the personification of the Celts as barbarous and prone to terror and violence.

Because of this paradox of representations - wheel as symbol of sun and life, wheel as symbol of war and terror - it is necessary to re-examine this wheel-god within the Celtic context of what the wheel as sun represents: a worship of elements out of the natural world. The fact that almost all of the Taranis images carries with it some form of a wheel bears this out. That this god would be holding an image that represented the movement across the sky is important, for Taranis then becomes, by virtue of default, a symbol tied to the natural world.

Linguistically, the root 'taran' means thunder in modern Welsh and Breton, in a very literal sense, and it is in this literal sense that both inscriptions and artistic representations should be interpreted. Seven dedicatory inscriptions survive on stone altars, and some of the writing on altars in Chester, Tours, and Orgon dedicate these stone altars to thunder, "as if the elemental force of thunder itself is being invoked in Celtic form" (Miranda Green). In other words, the act of lightning and thunder, as much a part of the natural world as the sun in the sky, was being deified in these representations. As Green puts it, "with Taranis we are defining a deity purely by the name 'thunderer,' which has functional implications. So the name 'Taranis' implies nothing more than a noisy lord of thunder, weather, and storms." Most importantly, however, the wheel itself comes to represent not just the movement of the sun across the sky, but the sound of thunder as it rolls, like a wheel, across the sky, and thus reinforces the Celtic worship of the natural as supernatural. This representation, though the subject of theory, is strengthened by the sun worship that is so prominent in

the wheeled brooches and other artifacts and through the influence of Indo-European wheel depictions of sun as god. The reverence and worship of lightning and thunder would naturally follow.

Wheel as Circle

The wheel, in all its representations of sun and thunder, in pendants and brooches, on altars, in graves, and carved on rocks, is a testament to its importance in Celtic life.

From its use as a means of transport and migration, the wheel was an important tool that allowed for the greater expanse of Celtic culture and developed farming and agriculture. Beyond that, however, the importance of the wheel in symbol can be valued on many other levels that in many ways transcend its functional application to Celtic society.

As the natural elements of sun, thunder and lightning are drawn together in the image of Taranis, so too are all wheels drawn together as various representations of the circle.

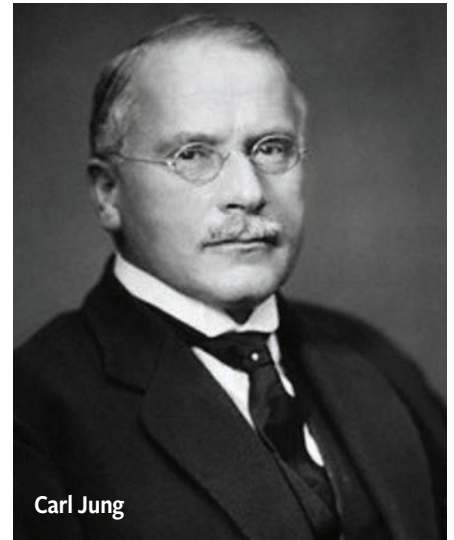
While most archaeologists and historians agree that the wheel represents both sun and thunder, it is interesting to note the more worldly implications of the circle symbol, as the wheel comes to also represent.

Reduced to the simple idea of the circle, the wheel acquires meaning beyond a worship of the natural world and its importance to sustaining life.

Instead, it speaks to the human psyche, which psychoanalyst Carl Jung points out:

"The circle is a symbol of the self. It expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature. Whether the symbol of the circle appears in primitive sun worship or modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the mandalas drawn by Tibetan monks, in the ground plans of cities, or in the spherical concepts of early astronomers, it always points to the single most vital aspect of life - its ultimate wholeness."

The spokes which accompany the wheel bear this out even more, for Jung points out that the divided circle represents the need



Carl Jung

for psychic orientation through four functions of consciousness: thought, feeling, intuition, and sensation. These four aspects of man's consciousness, like the spokes of the wheel, "equip man to deal with the impressions of the world he receives from within and without. It is by means of these functions that he comprehends and assimilates his experience; it is by means of them that he can respond." Jung cites the evidence of Indian and the Far Eastern art, where the four or eight-rayed circle (wheel) is the usual pattern of the religious images that serve as instruments of meditation. It is also interesting to note his interpretation of the eight-rayed circle in art (or in the case of the wheel, eight-spoked): "In art, the circle is often eight-rayed. This expresses a reciprocal overlapping of the four functions of consciousness, so that four further intermediate functions come about - for instance, thought colored by feeling or intuition or feeling tending toward sensation."

Jung's theories stem from general observations of images and art that appear in different cultures, and in this manner of connecting common motifs, the evidence can be applied to Celtic culture as well. With the absence of written records and their assimilation into Roman/Christian culture, little is known about the Celtic way of life outside of speculation and theory. But theories supported by strong evidence, like those applied to evolution and relativity and the atom, can develop a fairly accurate conclusion. Judging the sheer number of wheel images in jewelry, in rock carvings, on altars, in graves, and in gods, clearly indicates its importance as symbol. It also clearly concludes, as Jung would contend, that the power of this wheel symbol transcends not just the vehicle, but the society itself.

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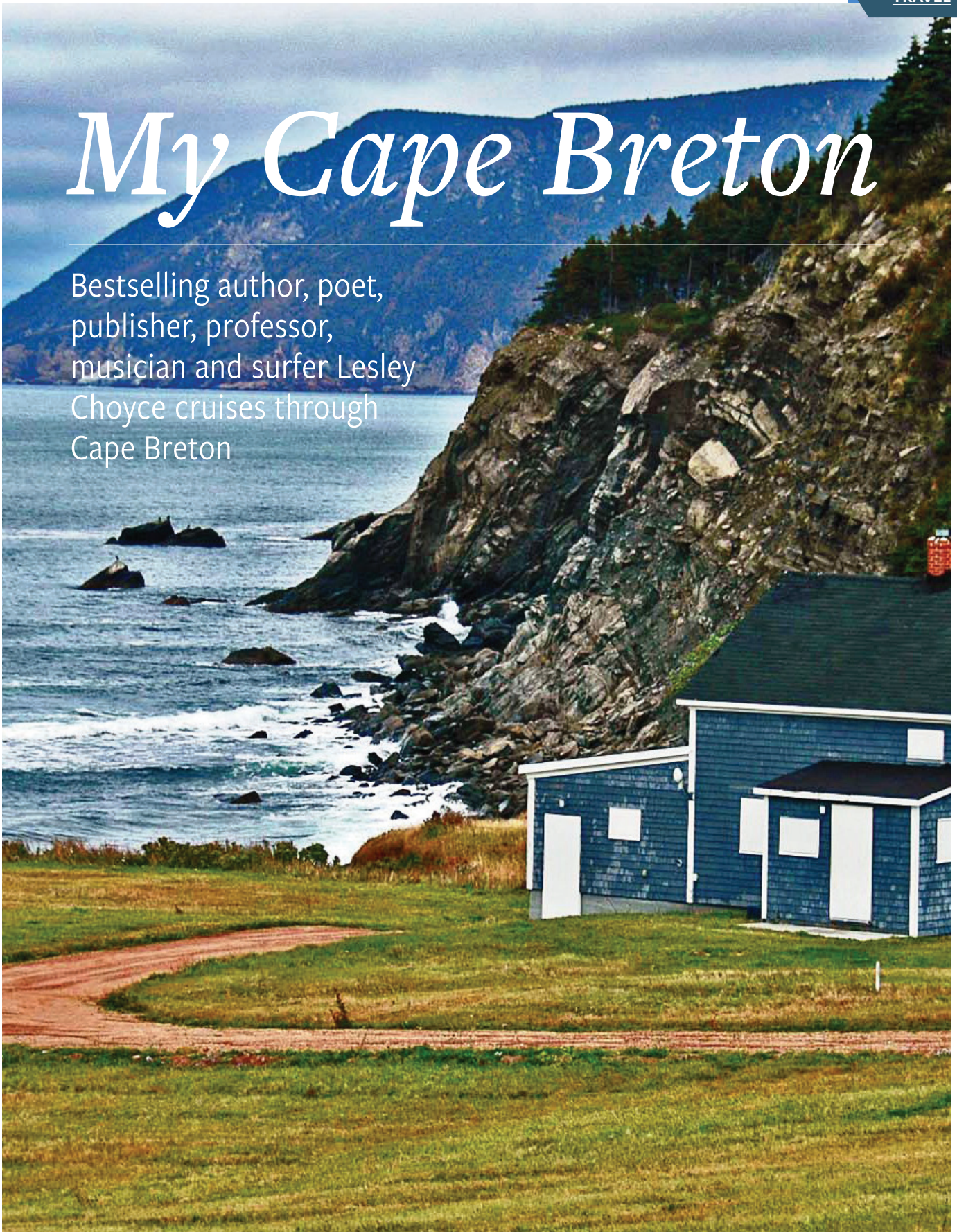


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My Cape Breton

Bestselling author, poet,
publisher, professor,
musician and surfer Lesley
Choyce cruises through
Cape Breton



My latest novel, *The Unlikely Redemption of John Alexander MacNeil*, is set in Cape Breton. I have used the island, on the eastern tip of Nova Scotia, as a fictional setting a number of times even though I don't live there.

Cape Breton looms large in my imagination and for a very good reason; it is a mystical place, a natural and cultural kind of paradise. No, wait, that can't be right. Cape Breton has problems - lots of problems; social, economic, environmental, and political. It is not the idyllic fictional world of my new narrative. I guess you could say it is an island paradox and, of the many times I have spent there, I have tried to figure the place out once and for all. I love the Cape Breton that resides in my memory and imagination but each time I return there, I discover something new and occasionally puzzling. But I will try to tell you what I know about the place, and you can decide what kind of island it really is.

A recent headline in the travel section of Nova Scotia's daily newspaper *The Chronicle Herald* read: "Canadians Recommend Cape Breton: Expedia Canada poll finds Cape Breton as the No. 1 tourist destination." I had to read that twice. It didn't make

any sense. Maybe another fiction writer had made this up. I had never thought of Cape Breton as a popular tourist destination. Even in the summer, there were no line ups of cars on the Trans Canada Highway with families trying to drive across the causeway. Most places I have gone to in Cape Breton were wonderfully bereft of tourists. Yet even *USA Today* had named Cape Breton as a top tourist destination.

Yes, it is a beautifully seductive site of land and sea, forest and field, music and memories. But the Cape Breton I know attracts folks like me who prefer to get away from the crowds, the ones who want to hike on remote lonely beaches of stone and sand. The ones who like difficult mountain trails and dingy taverns where your shoes stick to the beer spilled on the grey linoleum floor. Cape Breton: island of paradox. That's my Cape Breton.

I can't possibly squeeze all of the Cape Breton I know into one article but I will give you some snapshots to carry in your head if you will allow.

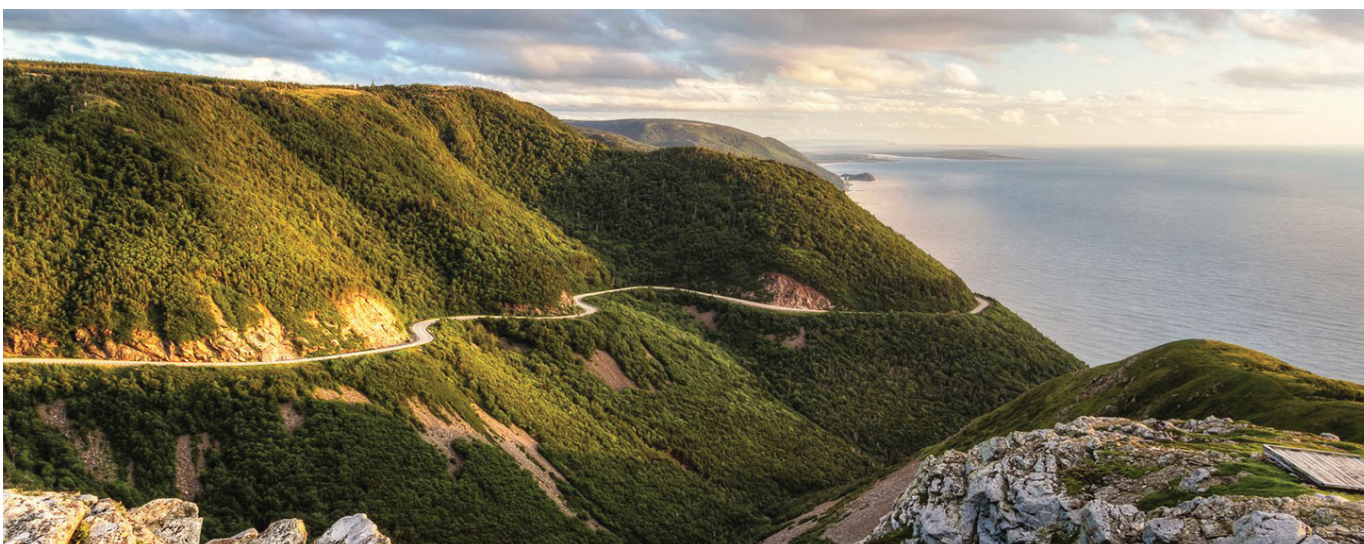
Let's start at the Chowder House in Neil's Harbour. It's a fine summer day in 2014. My wife Linda and I are here for a week to hike and boogie board and indulge in island fantasies. We have our ten-year-old West High-

land Terrier, Murdo, with us, and we have stopped at the Chowder House, a kind of indoor-outdoor restaurant serving fish and soup. It is a bit crowded and we can't seem to figure out how to actually order the food. Do you sit down and wait for service or go right up to the cook at the window and place an order? It is noisy and, alas, here are the tourists I have been trying to avoid. I stand at the counter but no one is interested in taking my order. I retreat and sit down at one of the indoor picnic tables as I now see a young woman delivering fish and chips to another table.

We have left Murdo in the car with two windows slightly down. It is maybe seventy degrees Fahrenheit, with a gusty sea breeze sweeping through the parking lot. We are hoping to score some take-out food and then we will eat outside by the harbour.

Unfortunately, an American woman comes in and announces in a loud voice, "There's a dog in a car out there barking his head off. Who in here left their dog in a car? Don't you know a dog could die like that?"

I know that Murdo was barking at the sea gulls swirling about the car, and I know he was not dying of heat stroke, but as we stand up to leave, all eyes are on us; cruel and insensitive dog owners who have left their lov-





ing mutt to die in a closed-up automobile while they sit inside greedily attempting to get some chowder.

We drove away and were too humiliated to show our faces again at the Chowder House.

We did, however, have a fine time that week riding waves at nearby Black Brook Cove and hiking wilderness trails in forests and along the coast. On one occasion, we came across a moose and were plenty glad we had left the dog back at the rental house. I knew better than to get too close to the big creature, but if you want to get a good look at this amazing and strange beast, then the Cape Breton Highlands is the place to go.

I first set foot on Cape Breton in the summer of 1974. I was then also looking for waves and wilderness. Someone had told me to drive to Inverness and look up a guy named Fulty MacPherson. Fulty helped me find a place to stay that summer - an abandoned farm house on a hill in nearby Deepdale.

It was a ramshackle place perfectly suited to a long-haired hippy like me looking to live off the land and off the radar as much as humanly possible.

What I remember that summer is a man playing bagpipes in the valley below at sunrise and sunset, buying fresh hake for 25 cents per pound on a wharf in Port Hood, and reading *Moby Dick* for the first time in an upstairs windowless room as a pair of bald eagles soared and then tumbled from above, their talons locked to each other. When some other long-haired freaks from a nearby commune of draft dodgers at Sight Point told me that Richard Nixon had resigned being U.S. President, I thought they were joking. But later, after I had returned to civilization, I learned it was true and began to think there was some hope for the world yet.

That summer, I bought fifty acres of forest for \$500 on a hillside

overlooking Wolf Island at Rear Dunvegan and thought I might homestead there in the not-too-distant future if the world once again headed towards hell in a handcart. But even though humanity did seem headed down that path, I never made that whimsical dream come true.

Yet, many years later, after immigrating to Canada from New Jersey - and planting my flag on the mainland in proximity to urban Halifax - I would still find myself dreaming of Cape Breton and mythologizing this most paradoxical and remarkable island.

Fulty MacPherson, now passed, was once a coal miner on the island. Back in the 1970s, he acted as friend, host and mentor to young hippies like me and anyone else who needed a hand or advice. Yet he held a grudge against his own brother that spanned decades. They never talked. There was poverty in Inverness back then (as there is today), but the Cape Bretoners I have run into, past and present, seem to me the most cheerful humans on the planet.

And that pristine wilderness and coast that so lured me? Well, Cape Breton was also home to some of the worst pollution in Canada. I am speaking of the Tar Ponds of Cape Breton that lingered long after the steel mills closed. And what of the treacherous coal mines that went many miles out under sea from Glace Bay and New Waterford? Many lives had been lost there over the years in accidents, and many lungs and lives destroyed by working in those shafts.

A dip into Cape Breton history suggests it also has a legacy of political unrest. In 1922, when coal company owners threatened to cut wages, organized coal miners were so riled they called for "the complete overthrow of the capitalist system." Five hundred troops were sent to quell the radicals along with a thousand police officers. There was even talk of bringing in a British warship just in case things got too far out of hand.

But let's return to the summer of my humiliation at the Chowder House. Linda, Murdo and I were bivouacked in a most comfortable cottage by the sea in Neil's Harbour. We hiked trails to Jigging Cove Lake, South Point, and around the shores of nearby New Haven. I recall one glorious day stopping at the end of the road in the community of White's Point and walking out to the tip of the peninsula there. If you are in North America, craving the ragged coastline of Scotland (I'm picturing the craggy cliffs near Dunnottar Castle) and you don't have the airfare, then drive out to White's Point on a clear day and you'll think you are in Celtic Aberdeenshire on the shores of the North Sea ...only without the crowds.

In fact, there really is a lot about Cape Breton that is still truly Celtic, and not just the scenery.

At the Gaelic College they teach courses in bagpipes, fiddle, bodhran, step-dancing and weaving. Scottish ancestral stories are still collected and published by the likes of Ron Caplan, publisher of Breton Books. Ron has recorded and transcribed a barn full of oral histories by the older generations who have kept tradition and storytelling alive.

On our ramblings around the island with dog in tow we visited Ron and his wife Sharon at their home in Wreck Cove. Breton Books is the largest publisher in Wreck Cove (surprise, surprise) and wannabe writers sometimes come looking for Ron in hopes of finding literary fame and fortune. But if you ask about Breton Books at the local general store, they will pretend they never heard of Ron or his press. Again, Cape Breton is that kind of place.

On some days, I was feeling that Neil's Harbour (population 300) was far too urban, so we would head off to Dingwall, Bay St. Lawrence, Capstick or, ultimately, Meat Cove. If you are anything like me, you have a hankering for places like White's Point, Black Head, or most

especially, Meat Cove. What I mean is you want to find a place that at least feels like the end of the earth. (Check out Pointe du Raz in France as well if you find yourself on the other side of the Atlantic.) There is a campground in Meat Cove now, and it provides a whiff of civilization, but the solitary gravel road to Meat Cove snaking along the cliffs above the startling blue sea still washes out during rain storms and the little community is occasionally cut off from the outside world. My kind of place.

When I first visited Meat Cove back in the 1970s, I stopped to ask directions to a hiking trail and found myself inside a one room cabin entirely lined with cases of quart bottles of Moosehead beer. When the bearded fellow who lived there saw my curious look he said, "It's a long way to the liquor store from here and it's a damn long winter." I could see his point.

You still can't buy beer in Meat Cove, but you can hike out onto the jutting promontories and gawk at the sea beneath the enormous swooping gulls as you fill your lungs with sweet salty air, all amounting to enough intoxication to get you high as a kite.

But I'm still not sure that I am doing Cape Breton justice here.

The Shambhala Buddhists have a monastery in Pleasant Bay named Gampo Abbey where you can go on a retreat and get your meditation mojo back if you have lost it. Cape Breton may seem like the most unlikely place for the followers of an Eastern spiritual practice to settle, but they seem to fit in just fine. On an ultrafine day in August, Linda and I sat beside a monument there with a number of Buddhist sayings etched in granite.

My favourite one had this advice to offer:

*"Don't wait in ambush.
Don't bring things to a painful point.
Don't transfer the ox's load to the cow.
Don't try to be the fastest."*





We were most agreeable to heed such sage wisdom.

Acadians share the island with the descendants of Highlanders as well. Cheticamp, also on the north side, is distinctly French - at least Acadian French. The place is famous for hooked rugs and the women who make them sometimes laughingly refer to themselves as some of the finest "hookers" in Canada. The docks there are lively with boats coming and going and fishing seems to be good. In the winter, the south east suetes winds come whipping down off the Highlands clocking speeds of up to 200 kilometers per hour.

On several pilgrimages to the island of my dreams, we visited my wilderness property down the shore from Cheticamp in Dunvegan, which is reached by an overgrown forest trail alongside the summer cottage of the famous music composer, Philip Glass. Again, each surprise fits nicely into the crazy mosaic of Cape Breton. Up in the pristine forest there, we came across a big chunk of hillside that had been clear-cut. Fallen trees are left scattered. The land is rutted and scarred. It is not a pretty sight. Somebody should do something to save the forests of Cape Breton, but forestry here means jobs and jobs mean tree-shattering machines run by a bunch of fellas running feller-bunchers. Island of beauty, island of despair.

Out in the very centre of the Cape Breton Highlands National Park is a place called Everlasting Barrens. It would be a long, arduous, soggy and possibly treacherous hike out there to this nowhere place, but I can envision it in my mind's eye. Just north of there is a mountain modestly named White Hill, the highest point in Nova Scotia at 535 meters. No roads or trails will take you there. For me, it is just a name on the map of a thoroughly unexploited mountain that, anywhere else in the world, would have a ritzy resort if not a theme park.

Danger lurks in the Highlands here, too; in 2009, a pack of coy-

otes killed a 19-year-old folksinger from Toronto who was hiking the Skyline Trail on her own. It was a rare and most tragic event, but it underscores just how wild parts of Cape Breton remain.

Clearly, my Cape Breton, the one that has lodged its real and mythological self in my head, is more asylum than anything else.

Back in our rental home by the sea in Neil's Harbour, I listened to a couple in another rental cottage next door arguing and my dog began to bark. Then things grew strangely quiet and I looked out the window to see the sun suddenly disappear from the sky as if a giant grey hand had swept through the heavens and taken it away. The fog had rolled in quickly and then the wind stopped. It was near supper time and we wondered if we were brave enough to show up at the Chowder House or if we had been put on some no-serve list of customers.

Murdo gave us a sad look as if to suggest we dare not chance it. Linda reminded me we had freshly caught haddock in the fridge and we decided to eat in, maybe put a log on the fire as it was turning cold and damp and wintery even here in August. It is weather shifts like that which may help save Cape Breton from those hordes of tourists mentioned in USA Today supposedly headed this way from mainland Nova Scotia.

As the fish fried, I traced a finger along the coastline on the map before me at the table. Halibut Head, Hatcher's Point, Scotch Cove, Money Point, Fox Den. Moose Cove, Little Burnt Head Cove; none of them not easy to get to - all of them, however, on my to-do list for this life time and the next.



WATERFORD CASTLE

The Island Resort



When it comes to making a grand entrance, nothing beats your arrival at Waterford Castle, an imposing stone structure at the heart of a 310-acre island on the King's Channel, an estuary of the River Suir.

The short ferry ride that takes you from the Waterford mainland to The Island is a magical journey, alone the grand drive you can catch a glimpse of some of the castle's resident deer grazing blissfully on the roadside.

The Island has always played a major role in the region's history from the days when it was a monastic settlement, a Viking fortification, and eventually the home of Maurice Fitzgerald the English Earl of Pembroke who was rewarded with ownership of The Island for his support of the Norman Invasion in 1170.

Today's castle, now a nineteen-room international renowned hotel remains the hub of social activities. As it did in the day's of Mary Frances Fitzgerald (Est. 1775-1855), a formidable lady who dominated the social world of the time. Once engaged to the Duke of Wellington - The Iron Duke, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo and later became British Prime Minister - she broke off the engagement and later married John Purcell.

Waterford Castle is a full-fledged resort with a Des Smith-designed, 18-hole championship golf course, a clubhouse that doubles as a casual eatery, and 45 contemporary self-catering, family friendly lodges perfect for golf groups or family getaways.

Waterford Castle's Munster Room Restaurant has been described as a hidden gem, holding numerous awards, the oak-panelled dining room with ornate ceiling and beautiful views is the perfect place to enjoy a five-course fine dining menu.

Under the direction of Head Chef Stan Cicon the award winning team use only the finest local and Island produce to create a fine dining experience that will satisfy every food lover's palate. Visit Waterford Castle and taste the best of traditional and contemporary Irish cuisine. And before you leave visit The Fitzgerald Room Bar to try the amazing whiskey or Castle Cocktails served by Ireland's 2017 National Cocktail Champion.

Waterford Castle leave your worries at the shore.....

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*As Celtic Life
International
Senior Writer
Caitlyn Elizabeth
Mearns explains,
contemporary
Celtic cuisine
returns to
its roots*

Celtic Cuisine ~ Back to the Future



For generations, Celtic cuisine was synonymous with corned beef, boiled cabbage and haggis. Once staples of the traditional diet in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Isle of Man, Bretagne, Galicia - and everywhere the Celts roamed - they are now pieces of a much grander platter that includes local, fresh, and seasonal ingredients - all used to create both classic and contemporary culinary delights.

Interestingly, for many, the future of the Celtic palate might mean going back to basics.

Growing up on a farm in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Cabrini Macquarrie maintained a diet similar to that of her Scottish and Irish ancestors; simple, no-nonsense dishes, prepared with family members mulling around the kitchen.

"Gardening was an important aspect to our livelihood," she remembers. "We stored vegetables and fruit all winter. The philosophy of 'farm to table' was in vogue back then, only we did not recognize it at the time."

Macquarrie - who contributes a bi-monthly recipe in Celtic Life International, and is the publisher of Cabrini's Celtic Kitchen cookbook - is a mother of four and a seasoned hostess. She has long admired the approach that Celts took to preparing and enjoying meals.

"I believe the Celtic people had an appreciation for eating well that had not been fully acknowledged until recently. Today, we have become accustomed to having all sorts of added sauces, dips, dressing and toppings on our food. However, this can too often disguise - rather than enhance - the true taste of what we are eating."

"The Celts, perhaps out of necessity, had less of everything at their disposal, and learned to relish the simplicity of food for its intrinsic value. Their diets were garnered from the sea and the land, and needed little enhancement."

"Today we are more cognizant of what we place in our bodies. As we become more aware of nutritional value in different foods, we can take advantage of fresh, seasonal, locally sourced food."

Brenda Anderson agrees.

"We have only now started to understand how very lucky we are here in Scotland," explains the director of Tasting Scotland, a food and travel company. "I mean, chefs from around the world literally clamber over each other for our delicious and nutritional produce."

Anderson, a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, began her career in the Hospitality and Tourism sector at the age of 17. Over the years she has witnessed the evolution of Scotland's culinary culture.

"Different generations continue to eat different types of food, but the differences are decreasing. Young people are eating traditional Scottish fare more than ever before, with street-food trucks at beer festivals and informal restaurants within craft breweries making it great to be feasting upon the food of our forebears. Recently, there has been a big resurgence in the consumption of oats, and something like savoury porridge - when paired with other ingredients - is now being enjoyed at lunch or dinner."

Authenticity, she believes, is the key ingredient.

"That goes all the way through to the service we receive when dining out. Eating Scottish produce is important, and so is value for money."

"It is absolutely worth paying as much as you can afford for quality produce that is both local and seasonal."

On the Emerald Isle, local ingredients are vital to Ireland's recent food revolution.

"Most good restaurants now even list the farmers, purveyors, cheese-makers, etc. on their menus," says Irish-American author Margaret Johnson.



Born in Massachusetts to an Irish-American family - her maternal grandparents are from Kerry and Cork, and her paternal great-grandparents are from Dublin and Cork - Johnson has become renowned in the culinary industry as 'the Irish Cook'.

In 1984, she took her first trip to Ireland, becoming "beyond smitten" with the country and its cuisine.

"After traveling there many times, and noting the country's new food trends, I combined both interests into my first cookbook, Ireland: Grand Places and Glorious Food."

Johnson has since published 11 follow-ups, including Favourite Flavours of Ireland, Tea & Crumpets, The Irish Pub Cookbook, and The New Irish Table.

With over 20 years of experience, she has become an expert in the field of Irish food.

"Prior to the early 1990s, no one was paying much attention to the country's cuisine. It was not until the island's chefs realized they had some of the best ingredients right in their own backyard that people started to take notice. They were among the first to promote the 'farm to table' philosophy, and have been championing it ever since.

"At the end of the day, it is pretty simple," she concludes. "Authentic Irish cuisine uses authentic Irish ingredients. Anything else just isn't the real meal deal."

The use of local ingredients is also now at the core of good cuisine in other Celtic nations, including Cornwall.

"Menu creation for me is all based on what I can get locally," explains Adam Vasey, chef and owner of Schooners Bar and Restaurant in St Agnes. "The idea with Schooners is to have fresh regional food in a relaxed environment."



Vasey recently reopened the beloved, seaside eatery, which was originally owned and operated by his parents.

"I actually started off working for my mum here at the restaurant, years ago. She is a totally self-taught chef - she loved seafood and learned as she went along. The smells that came out of that kitchen - and the sight of fishermen bringing lobsters straight off the boats - stuck with me, eventually informing my decision to become a chef.

"My business partners became really excited about the prospect of taking it on, and we assumed the lease last year. There is quite a lot of family history and heritage here."

Located by the beach overlooking the St. Agnes Heritage Coast, Schooners is an ideal locale to watch the sunset with small plates and a bottle of good wine.

"It is very important for me to fit the food with the surroundings. This is a casual part of the world, and our dining experience reflects that. Instead of formal, fine-dining, we do interesting seafood-centric dishes, including local white crab, avocado, and crispy St Ewe egg, or scallops on the plancha with crispy chicken wings."

As such, fresh produce is at the heart of the menu.

"One way that eating choices have changed is that everyone is so much more aware of provenance. It seems ridiculous to fly ingredients in when we have amazing stuff right on our door step. Seasonality is fundamental now. Years ago, it was about getting exotic and expensive ingredients from as far afield as possible.

"Today, the emphasis is on food that is good and close and made with love by enthusiastic people who care about the product."

"Good hospitality is also essential," he continues. "I have always believed that food is only part of the story when it comes to having an enjoyable dining experience; staffing plays a huge role in this, as does music, decor and surroundings - if the whole thing fits together,

customers will have a memorable experience."

Like Vasey, Scottish chef Craig Grozier believes that good food is close to home.

"Over the last ten years we have been regaining our passion and understanding of locality and seasonality," explains the owner-operator of Fallachan restaurant in Glasgow. "This is something that our European Celtic brothers and sisters never lost. The combination of the food and family life in these cultures is generally paramount and has managed to remain ingrained to this day."



Grozier follows nature's timetable when creating his unique menus.

"This means that during game season we use wild Scottish game, pick the different wild mushrooms, herbs, and seaweeds that grow each month, and we consistently use Scottish shellfish and seafood. The traditional grains of Scotland are also always on our menus somewhere. This really defines our culinary philosophy."

Established in 2012, Fallachan is described as a 'tailored dining experience.' Along with daily, in-house offerings to the public, Grozier and his team also offer their services privately - for events and as consultants - where they can branch out with new ideas.

"Creativity plays a huge part in menu development. We are using old and traditional ingredients and pairing them with new techniques."

"Even more importantly, some old techniques go hand-in-hand in defining the new style of Scottish cooking, all the while never forgetting the core ingredients this country has survived on for hundreds of years."

He notes that Celtic cuisine continues to influence other cultures, and vice versa.

"If we look at the historical Celtic map of Europe, countries such as Portugal - which has a strong Celtic influence - are renowned for Cod fishing and for introducing simple preserves such as salt cod, now a popular ingredient globally. Additionally, a place like Paris - with its Celtic heritage - has had a massive impact on the way food is prepared and presented around the world; every cosmopolitan city has some sort of Parisian style bistro or restaurant.

"Furthermore, I - and a handful of other chefs in Scotland - have found that we have similarities to other island cultures of the world, such as Japan. Ingredients used there are very similar to what we have available in Scotland; shellfish, seaweeds, and the like, have greatly inspired our style of cooking."



**Jude
Kereama**

Culinary cross-pollination is top-of-mind for Jude Kereama at his Asian-fusion restaurant Kota in Cornwall.

“Essentially, we use local seasonal produce but with a slight Asian twist,” he explains. “I personally think using ingredients from different cultures adds more diversity to the Cornish food scene. People’s tastes in food have grown, and palates are much more varied today.”

Kereama - who is of Maori, Chinese and Malay descent - became interested in Cornish cuisine as an adult.

“My wife’s family have lived in Cornwall for many years, and it was after my first visit that we decided we should open a restaurant here. I loved how Cornwall reminded me of New Zealand, and it felt like a home away from home.

“Cornwall also has some of the best ingredients in the U.K. right on our doorstep. I am inspired by all the produce available to us, both from our suppliers and from foraging.”

It took some time, but Kereama eventually found the perfect location to launch his fare.

“It was purely by chance that we stumbled upon the community of Porthleven. After renting a restaurant for a year, another site came up for sale, so we bought it and named it Kota - which, in Maori, means ‘very large Oyster’.”

Cornwall, he notes, has quickly become a popular food destination.

“What has changed most is the passion in which local and area chefs are cooking with regional ingredients. Tourism is booming in Cornwall, and the food scene has grown with it.

“When we first opened - about 14 years ago - we were told ‘nobody around here will like that kind of food’ - but I stuck to my guns, as I can only cook from the heart, and it paid off.

“I love introducing people to new flavours...”

“We serve up things like lamb and molasses with pecan crust, steak with Chimichurri and sweet potato dauphinoise, Bombay chicken pizzas, Duck Hoisin pizza, crab spring rolls, and various chillies and curries. We offer our patrons the opportunity to sample international food that they might not find elsewhere in the area, or that they would never cook at home.”



**Brenda
Anderson**

Brenda Anderson agrees that cultural influence plays a role in the changing of tastes.

“The French influence that is very much a part of Scotland’s legendary cuisine culture continues, but food is - of course - as fickle as fashion! The avant-garde techniques developed mainly in Spain, and the Scandinavian influences of simplicity and of being at one with nature’s bounty, are also evident here. Modern interpretations of classic Scottish dishes, and the greater use of local and seasonal ingredients, sums up what has been happening here for the past 10 - 15 years.”

The rise of the internet has also been a major factor.

“Blogs are really important to promoting both traditional local cuisine and also new and modern concepts,” says food blogger Lauren Aloise.





An American ex-pat now living in Spain, Aloise operates the popular food blog Spanish Sabores, sharing culinary travel tips and recipes from the region and beyond.

"When I moved here in 2009 I needed a creative outlet. I had studied hospitality and tourism management and worked in restaurants for many years, so I decided to document my discovery of Spanish cuisine and recipes. Soon enough I was blogging about all of my foodie trips and sharing recipes with my followers.

"My goal is to give readers a glimpse of what life is like for me in Spain, as well as the knowledge to eat well when visiting. I also hope to inspire people to cook delicious Spanish recipes at home."

After nine years online, Aloise has specific opinions about the

need for food blogging in smaller areas, like the Celtic nation of Galicia.

"They have replaced guidebooks in many ways," she explains. "As Galicia is still a rather unknown little corner of Spain, food blogs are crucial to getting the word out about the local food scene and inspiring people to visit.

"I personally love traditional Galician food and wine - some of my favourite wines in the world come from the Ribeira Sacra. Santiago de Compostela is home to one of the country's most beautiful food markets, and also boasts some delicious tapas bars. I especially love a place called A Moa, which serves traditional Galician dishes with a modern twist."

Whether the chef's focus is traditional recipes or modern mixes, the crux of Celtic cuisine is fresh ingredients, sourced locally. Food should be healthy and sustainable, and - hopefully - delicious.

With that in mind, and a stack of recipes books on her knee, Cabrini Macquarrie considers the future of food, both at home and beyond.

"As obesity, blood pressure, and diabetes levels all rise, people are going to be rethinking their lifestyles. More and more, folks want products that are grown free of pesticides, preservatives, steroids, and other chemicals. We are looking for fresh, seasonable, locally-sourced ingredients, prepared with simplicity and sustainability in mind. That 'farm to table' philosophy, and the idea that 'we are what we eat' - are both at the core of traditional Celtic cuisine; the food of our ancestors. Perhaps, for us and for the generations that will follow in our footsteps, a healthier future means going back to the basics."

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Seven Celtic Restaurants

The Celtic nations are home to some of the best restaurants in the world. Caitlyn Mearns shares some scrumptious sites.

The Celtic nations are often overlooked as culinary destinations - most travelers think of Italy or France first when it comes to good food. However, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Isle of Man, Galicia and Bretagne have all found a place at the table in recent years. Today, the Celtic nations serve up scrumptious seafood, duck, beef, chicken, and more - often paired with an assortment of local, seasonal vegetables and house wines.

Scotland - The Three Chimneys ~ \$\$\$

www.threechimneys.co.uk



Aptly named, and beautifully situated on the stunning seashore of Loch Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye, The Three Chimneys is a quaint, family-managed eatery that highlights traditional Scottish dining and hospitality. Founders and full-time directors, Eddie and Shirley Spear, began their business in 1984 as a seasonal, stand-alone restaurant. More than thirty years later, and after a number of awards - including The Good Food Guide's U.K. Restaurant of the Year 2018 - The Three Chimneys has evolved, refining their menu and adding a 5-star retreat, The House Over-By. Meals are inspired by Scotland's rich heritage, and also celebrate the country's ancient Nordic connections. Enjoy a cozy and candlelit dinner, and choose from a display of delectable dishes, including Skye Venison and Dunvegan Langoustine and Crab - all prepared by esteemed head chef, Scott Davies. Finish the night off in style with a wee tumbler of Three Chimneys Small Batch Gin.

Ireland - Eipic ~ \$\$\$

www.deaneseipic.com



To be an "Epicurean" is to be a "person devoted to sensual enjoyment, especially derived from food and drink." Recently voted Best Restaurant in Northern Ireland, Belfast's Eipic celebrates that culinary philosophy with a magnificent melange of fine dining and elegant design. Along with his talented team, head chef Alex Greene is the man behind the magic. Greene has an impressive resume; along with his time at the Michelin-starred eatery Deans, he has put in countless hours behind the grill at Gordon Ramsay's hotspots Petrus and Claridge. At Eipic, diners can choose from £30 and £65 main courses,

as well as a £65 vegetarian course, and include locally produced artisan breads, seasonal vegetables, and a choice of meat. At meal's end, satisfy your sweet tooth with an array of amazing desserts, including cheesecake, chocolate and fruit. For those looking to hone their wine pairing skills, in-house sommelier Didier Nyceront is happy to lend a helping hand.

Wales - Ynyshir ~\$\$\$

www.ynyshir.co.uk



Ynyshir, the award-winning, up-scale restaurant on the edge of Snowdonia National Park - a 6-minute walk from the RSPB Ynys-hir Nature Reserve - is an absolute must for those visiting Wales. Patron Chef Gareth Ward describes his food as "ingredient-led, flavour-driven, fat-fuelled, and meat-obsessed." Diners will enjoy a truly interactive experience at the revamped eatery, as the kitchens are open to the dining room, and the culinary team are eager to explain how the food is sourced and prepared. Menus are personalized for individual tastes, and average about £110 per person for dinner and £55 per person for lunch. Enjoy a variety of fresh, local and seasonal dishes - including Welsh lamb and Welsh Wagyu - and seal the meal with a healthy slice of Tiramisu. Complete the experience with a proper option from the ever-evolving wine list, which includes Chef Ward's own selections from around the world.

Cornwall - Alba ~ \$\$

www.alba-stives.co.uk



Alba first opened its doors in 2002 and has since become the go-to spot in Cornwall for affordable, 5-star dining. Head Chef and pro-

prietor Grant Nethercott has designed the menu himself, pulling inspiration from French and British cuisine, and creating a hybrid kitchen that he calls “modern British style.” With a focus on fresh and local produce, line-caught seafood, and seasonal ingredients, the diverse menu includes a succulent selection of eclectic, reasonably-priced meals. For those interested in a truly regional experience, be sure to sample the Cornish Grass-Fed Beef Fillet and the Wild Line-Caught Seabass, and pair your plate with the driest Martini around or glass of wine from Camel Valley Brut, Cornwall’s largest vineyard. Alba is a family-friendly space, with a specially crafted menu for the little ones, including pasta and fish dishes, and brownies and ice cream for dessert. While reservations are recommended, no bookings are needed for the cosmopolitan A Bar located downstairs, which serves up small plates, drinks and coffee.

Isle of Man - Little Fish Café ~ \$\$

www.littlefishcafe.com



Little Fish Café, a relaxed eatery in Douglas, might be less than four years old but it has already made a name for itself amongst both locals and visitors as a casual culinary hotspot on the Isle of Man. Just a short walk from the capital city’s center, and facing the scenic quayside harbour, Little Fish Café is an ideal and idyllic place to stop for a quick and cozy breakfast, brunch and lunch, or after a full day of sight-seeing and scouring the quaint Manx countryside. Fresh, locally sourced ingredients make for simple and delicious dishes, including Queenies, Curry, Local Crab, Ligurian Fish Stew and a spicy Vegetarian Jambalaya. For lighter fare, enjoy a sandwich and side plate, then wash it down with one (or several!) bespoke “house drinks” or a fine fair-trade coffee, before following up with a prime pudding or other delectable dessert options, including the mouth-watering Mars Bar Sundae!

Galicia - Asbastos 2.0 ~ \$\$\$

www.abastoscompostela.com



Menus don’t get much more seasonal and fresh than Abastos, a cozy Galician restaurant in Santiago de Compostela. The renowned restaurant works closely with local food vendors, as the eatery’s team of chefs travel to surrounding markets each morning and - depending what they find - design the day’s menu accordingly. Patrons will enjoy their experience in an up-scale, urban environment, with ample seating and superior service. Each meal includes an appetizer, fish, meat, and vegetable, and can be tailored for small or large groups, as the culinary crew caters to preferences in palate. Those new to the legendary locale, and to Galician cuisine, will want to sample the “dComer” (€50) - a multi-morsel platter which includes a little taste of everything that the region has to offer. With one of the most crowded terraces in the city, often busy with visitors making the spiritual pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago Trail, reservations are recommended.

Bretagne - L’Absinthe ~ \$\$\$

www.restaurant-absinthe.fr



Given its rich French culinary heritage, Bretagne might dish out the very best food throughout the Celtic nations, with L’Absinthe in St. Malo leading the way. Tastefully designed, and located in a recently-refurbished 17th-century building, the world-class eatery serves up chic and contemporary cuisine for both lunch and supper. Head Chef Stephane Brebel - whose resume includes lengthy stints at a number of notable restaurants, including several 3-star Michelin sites owned and operated by Les Maisons de Bricourt - shines the spotlight on local and seasonal ingredients. The venue’s core menu is made up of €29 and €38 plates, which include a variety of entrée, main and dessert options. Another popular choice is a €27 dish that has been designed especially for “locavores” - i.e: diners who only eat local food. Many excellent local and regional wines are available upon request. Both a la carte, and healthy selections for young eaters are available as well.

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Celtic Spirits

With an influx of new distilleries, whisky has never been more popular or profitable. Celtic Life International gets some spirited advice on the world of spirits



Whisky is quickly becoming the drink of choice throughout the Celtic nations. While its presence is nothing new, its level of popularity has grown exponentially in recent years. As new distilleries and shops open their doors, more people are developing a taste for uisge-beatha - the water of life.

Whisky - or whiskey - is a distilled alcoholic beverage made of a fermented grain mash. Grains can include corn, wheat, rye and barley, and are often malted. Once distilled, the grains are aged in a wooden cask, traditionally made of white oak.

In 2003, Ally Alpine opened up Celtic Whiskey Shop in Dublin, selling spirits from Ireland, Scotland, and beyond. Alpine - a seasoned whisky connoisseur with over 30 years of experience in the industry - offers daily tastings of in-house whiskies.

"I initially worked for Oddbins Wine Merchants," he explains, "and then I had a brief period working in a Long Island Liquor store, before moving to Ireland and opening Oddbins here. I then started the Celtic Whiskey Shop, and in 2016, I opened Celtic Whiskey Bar & Larder in Killarney."

A native of Glasgow, Alpine believes that whisky enjoys strong standing in the Celtic nations.

"I personally can't speak for Wales, Cornwall and the rest of the Celtic nations, as it seems that they are all very much at the fledgling stage," he admits. "For Scotland and Ireland, however, sales are booming and there is a lot of new investment happening."

"Confidence is high, and new distilleries are being built at an unprecedented rate. At the same time, demand for mature whisky has never been higher."

While both Wales and Cornwall's whisky industries remain in their infancies, they are already producing great product.

"In Wales, for example, Penderyn is quite a niche operation and is flying the flag there," says Alpine.

Launched in March of 2004, Penderyn is Wales' leading whisky, and is arguably one of the best within all the Celtic nations. A single-malt that is crafted in a specially commissioned still, the spirit is flavourful and powerful, and wed with fresh spring water that flows beneath the distillery.

"The palate is crisp and finely-rounded, with the sweetness to balance an appetizing dryness," said the late Dr. Jim Swan, known to many as the whisky Einstein. "The unique distillation process produces a single-malt whisky that is supremely smooth, light in character, softly gold in colour and does not require a chill filtering."

Jim Murray, author of the Whisky Bible, agrees.

"A ceaseless experience," he describes of Penderyn's Madeira finish. "A gentle massaging of the taste buds. The light cocoa infusion just tops it off perfectly; more charm than Tom Jones, hitting just as many pure notes...and just a fraction of his age."

Similarly, in 2000, Healey's Cornish Cyder Farm distilled their debut whisky. It was the first whisky to be crafted in Cornwall in over 300 years, produced right on Healey's Farm and then transported to nearby St. Austell's Brewery. The spirit was inspired by St. Austell's chief brewmaster Roger Ryman after a visit to Scotland.

Isle of Man and Brittany share a similar story.

Brittany is home to Warengem, the distillery responsible for Brittany's first whisky, Brittany Blended Whiskey. The spirit has been described as both fresh and woody, with a rich and robust finish.

On the Isle of Man, the Manx Distillery has created its own whisky



called Manx Spirit. Currently, the firm offers two formats; ManxRed, which has been distilled from blended whisky aged at five years, and ManxBlue, a beverage distilled from pure malt whisky. Intense in flavour, many are calling it “the spirit of the island.”

For Celtic Life International readers, Alpine has a few suggestions.

“If you like the classic light Irish-style then something like Teeling Small Batch or Writers Tears Copper Pot would be a great starting point. Richer, more complex styles like Redbreast from Ireland, or Springbank from Scotland, are very charming whiskies favoured by collectors. If you like your spirits with a bit of smokiness then Laphroaig, Kilchoman, and Ardbeg from Scotland, or Connemara from Ireland, are good examples of the style.

“In terms of some of my own favourites, Ireland’s Midleton Distillery still rules the roost, but there are a few that are catching up very quickly. Scotland has almost too many to choose from, but Springbank, Macallan, Isle of Arran and Glengoyne are currently making stunning single-malts.”

Alpine acknowledges that, though the sector is currently booming, there is a still room for more growth.

“The industry in Ireland has diversified a lot recently as distilleries learn and experiment with different methods and styles. Even a well-established producer like Midleton has been exploring new avenues with the Method and Madness range. Other distilleries are looking at single origin barley whiskies, as well as new and interesting wood finishes.

“There are always ways to improve. The challenge right now is that there is not enough mature whisky to cope with demand. Producers must look at ways to make young whisky taste better. The alternative is to restrict supply and wait for their maturing stock to age a little more.

The other side to that story is that the market could quite possibly be flooded with new whiskies once existing stock reaches legal maturity.

“Most people are cautiously optimistic,” he continues.

“There is a history of boom and bust in the sector, but hopefully lessons have been learned from previous experiences.”

“The difference now is that there is a truly global market for Irish and Scottish whiskies, and there is more emphasis on quality than before as drinkers move away from blended whiskies to single-malt and single-pot still styles.”

In the end, Alpine believes the most important thing is to know your own personal preferences.

“You need to find out what styles you like and seek out more whiskies with a similar flavour. A good whisky should not taste harsh, but should have good intensity of flavour and finish without seeming hot or astringent.

“Try to go to an organized tasting or visit a shop like ours where you can sample two or three whiskies before buying a bottle. Even people who claim to dislike whisky are likely to find at least one that they like. The trick is to figure what styles appeal to you personally.”

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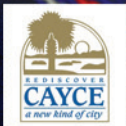
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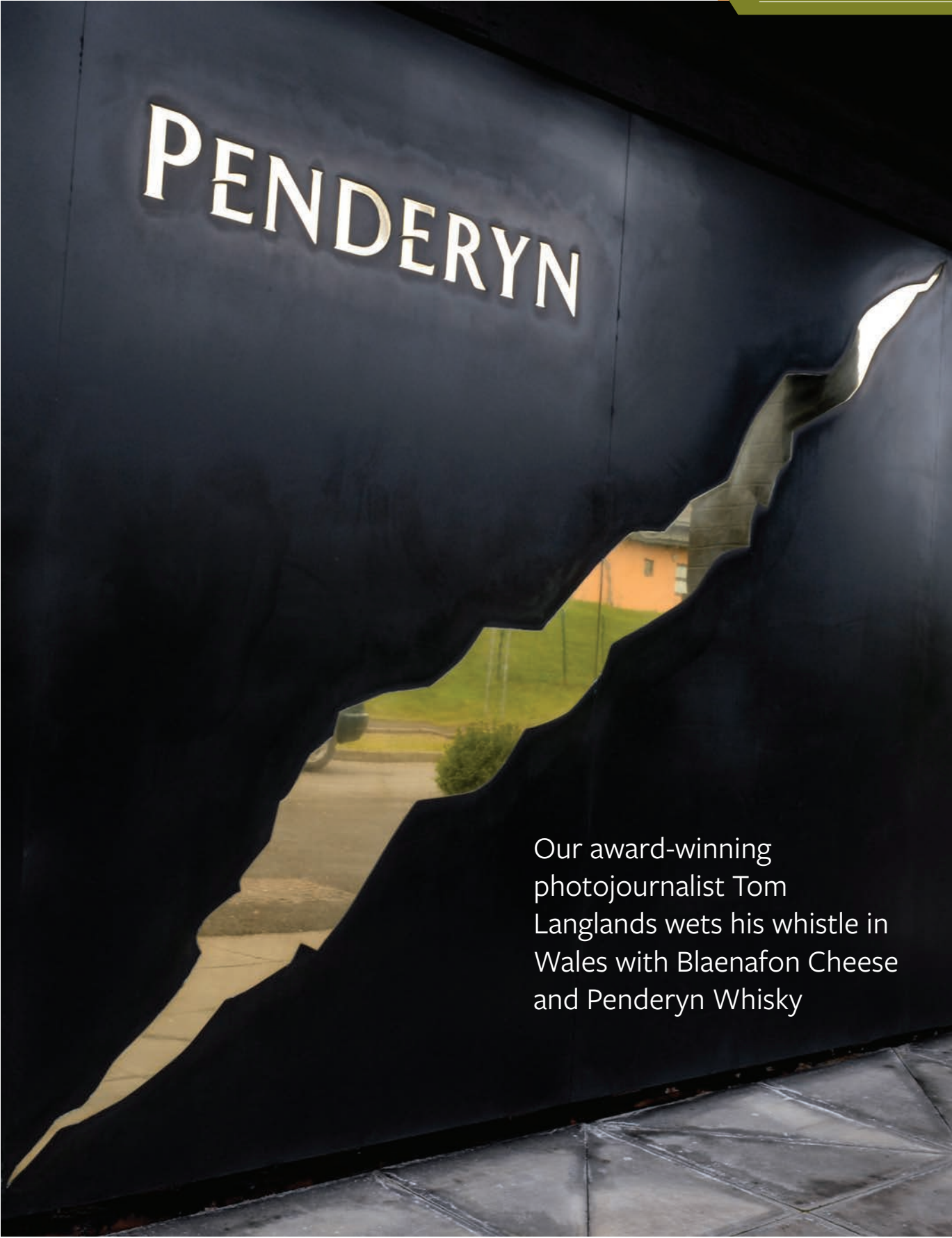


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PENDERYN

Our award-winning
photojournalist Tom
Langlands wets his whistle in
Wales with Blaenafon Cheese
and Penderyn Whisky



Wales, the Welsh language, Celtic myths and Arthurian legends were all influences on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. Perhaps for those reasons dragons and gold fascinated him also. In *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien penned 'All that is gold does not glitter', and in *The Hobbit* the great dragon Smaug protects its gold deep under the Lonely Mountain. With these thoughts in mind I set out to discover if there is indeed a gold that does not glitter in Wales - the land of the iconic red dragon.

Wales' industrial heritage is founded on iron and coal. The town of Blaenavon in southeast Wales grew up around an eighteenth century ironworks and associated coal-mining industry. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its coal-mining heritage is celebrated in the Big Pit National Coal Museum. During the Industrial Revolution coal was such a valuable commodity that it was known as 'black gold.'

Susan Fiander-Woodhouse and her husband Gerry Woodhouse are the owners and founders of Blaenafon Cheddar Company on Blaenavon's Broad Street. Fiander-Woodhouse was born in Walton on

Thames, London, to a Welsh mother and a Cornish father but has lived in Wales for over forty years. She worked in the cheese industry for twenty-three years, beginning as a development chef for a large company before starting her own family business in 2006. Blaenafon Cheddar Company specializes in making naturally-flavoured Welsh cheeses, including smoked cheeses and cheeses flavoured with mustard, ginger, leek, elderflower, white wine, and whisky. The company's list of awards includes True Taste of Wales 2007, 2009 and 2012; British Cheese Medals 2007 and 2010; Winners of the Monmouthshire Business Awards 'Excellence in Small Business Food and Drink Producers 2017', and two medals in the International Cheese Awards 2017.

Prior to the founding of Blaenafon Cheddar Company, Fiander-Woodhouse realized there was an opportunity for a cheese business to tap into the history of the area in a practical way. "At the bottom of the mineshaft 300ft (90m) below Big Pit's winding wheel the 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius) ambient temperature and the dark, humid conditions are perfect for maturing cheese." She got permission from

the National Museum of Wales to mature her products in Big Pit, noting that "we now have five products that are matured underground and all of them except the newest one are international medal winners. Once every two weeks we do a cheese swap when the miners bring the cheese to the surface and then take down the next batch."

The newest cheese may not yet have won any awards, but the first batch was only brought to the surface in January of this year and it may indeed be something to sing about - its creation was the result of a suggestion by local singer-songwriter - Ragsy.

In 2013 Ragsy (Gary Ryland) - mentored by fellow Welshman Tom Jones - reached the finals of *The Voice U.K.* He hails from nearby Aberdare and is passionate about all things Welsh. As a family friend, Fiander-Woodhouse would go to hear Ragsy anytime he performed locally. She recalls, "It was Ragsy who suggested that it would be good to produce a charcoal cheddar as one of the cheeses matured underground." As a proponent of heritage tourism, that suggestion got her thinking about how to produce a cheese that could reflect the heritage of an industry that was once the life-blood of a nation. The result



is Black Gold, a mature cheddar cheese that is further matured for two weeks in Big Pit. Once removed from the mine, natural charcoals derived from coconut husks are added to the cheese giving it a dark grey colour. The cheese is then handcrafted into coal-shaped lumps and finished with a thick, black wax coating. Each coal-shaped cheese is then presented in a small sack bag with a drawstring. Black Gold is dark and strong and its initial, slightly textured feel on the tongue gives way to a beautifully smooth sensation with hints of toasted flavours as it melts in the mouth.

Now, I have a penchant for single malt whisky to accompany good cheese, and being a Scot I am rather spoiled for choice.

But it was a gift of a bottle of Penderyn, Madeira-finish, single malt Welsh whisky that piqued my interest in an altogether different, but complementary, Welsh gold.

Twenty-five miles (40km) west of Blaenavon, and not far from Ragsy's hometown of Aberdare, is the village of Penderyn - its name synonymous with the Welsh miner and martyr Dic Penderyn who took part in the Merthyr Rising of 1831. That social protest saw a soldier of the Crown stabbed in the leg and Penderyn dubiously found guilty and hanged for the offence. Here, on the southern edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Welsh whisky industry is being reborn; an industry that was effectively wiped out in the late nineteenth century by the temperance movement.

Penderyn Distillery was created by a group of friends who wanted to produce a whisky to stand proud alongside the spirits produced by their fellow Celts in Scotland and Ireland. The Penderyn site was chosen on account of its access to natural spring rainwater run-off from the Brecon Beacons. The distillery has its own unusual style of single copper-pot still designed by Dr David Faraday, a descendent of the eminent Victorian chemist and physicist Michael Faraday. Unlike the curvaceous copper stills of Scotland's distilleries, the Penderyn still has a more utilitarian and industrial appearance. However, the process of heating the malted barley wash and collecting the resulting vapour on a series of metal plates within the still gives rise to a faster maturation process than the double or triple distillation processes of

Scottish or Irish distilleries.

By the time the vapour has passed through the still and condensed to arrive in the spirit safe, the result is an incredibly smooth spirit at a staggering 92% alcohol by volume. This whisky spirit is then married with the Brecon Beacons spring water drawn from below the distillery.

Penderyn's Media Manager, Jon Tregenna, explains how the diluted spirit is then matured in charred oak casks from the American bourbon industry.

"Our Welsh forefathers were the pioneers of the American bourbon industry. Evan Williams - from Dale in Pembrokeshire - was one, and his bourbon is still produced today. Currently, we utilise ex-bourbon casks to create the unique flavour and complex taste to our whisky." The house-style range of Penderyn malts is then finished in former Madeira wine casks to bring out the character that exemplifies this Welsh gold. The distillery now has two Faraday stills and recently added two lantern stills. The different stills permit experimentation with other tastes and flavours.

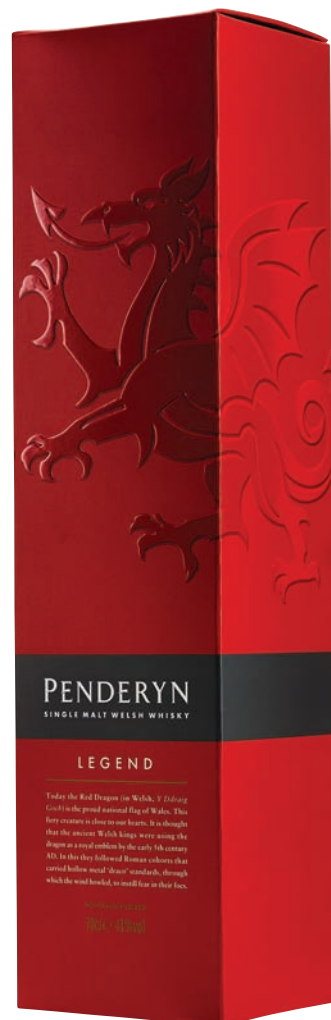
Penderyn distillery bottled its first 'gold' whisky in 2004 in the presence of Prince Charles. It has since expanded its range to include Portwood, Peated and Sherrywood finish whiskies and the Icons of Wales range - to date, five distinct malts including Dylan Thomas and Red Flag - the latter commemorating the raising of a red flag during the protest that resulted in the execution of Dic Penderyn.

As the whisky flowed, so have the awards. However, as a fellow Celt, it was the Dragon series that caught my attention. Comprised of Legend (2015 Global World Whisky Masters - Gold), Myth (2015 Global World Whisky Masters - Gold; 2017 Spirits Business World Whisky Masters - Gold) and Celt (2016 World Whisky Masters 'Europe Single Malt Premium Whiskies' - Gold; 2016 International Wines and Spirits Competition - Worldwide - Silver), the Dragon whiskies are all wonderfully smooth with a hint of sweetness and fruity aromas. Having sampled several excellent Penderyn whiskies, I poured a glass of Celt to accompany my Black Gold cheese. The smoky, peated flavour is evocative of Wales' mining heritage, and the accompanying hint of the sea reminds me of our shared Celtic ancestry.

Reckoning that Tolkien knew a thing or two about Wales I relaxed with my whisky and cheese to the sound of Ragsy's album Ouch. The lyrics from the track Feels Like Home rather summed up how I felt about both my new-found Welsh golds - "I'll keep on feeding off this land until my soul is satisfied..."

Both the Blaenafon Cheddar Company Limited and Penderyn Distillery distribute internationally.

www.chunkofcheese.co.uk
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Graeme Taylor

*Scottish food blogger
Graeme Taylor balances
creativity, work and
family life*



Independent blogs make up one of the largest groups of online platforms; audiences from all over the world enjoy their unique personalities, eye-catching design, and compelling - often quirky - content.

Graeme Taylor, a native of Paisley, near Glasgow, is the brainchild behind Scots Larder, a popular Scottish food blog.

"I always enjoyed cooking for people - experimenting with my own recipes, and sharing them with friends," he explains via email. "So putting them online, and writing about Scottish food in general, just seemed like a natural thing for me to do."

Since its inception in 2011, Taylor's blog has grown to over 3,000 subscribers.

"The reasons I do it have grown over time as well," he explains. "Of course, I still like to share my flavours and tell the story of Scottish food. However, I have met a lot of great people through blogging, both writers and producers, and it is partly this interaction that keeps me going today."

A Chartered Engineer by day, the scribe says that blogging makes for a great after-hours hobby.

"I work full-time so my commitment is somewhat limited. As a result, most of what I do with the blog is recipe development and then writing extra bits when I can. Thus, cooking is my main focus, and the blogging comes after. For some people it is a full-time endeavour. I guess it all depends on what you need from a career. Some people are able to make it a sustainable profession, but for me it is simply a pastime that I enjoy, and one which provides me with more opportunities.

"The joy of blogging is that it can involve whatever you want it to."

"I have always created my own recipes - for me, one of the great pleasures of food is to see amazing produce and instantly think up recipes to create with it. I wouldn't say that my photography is amazing - my Instagram feed certainly isn't the most widely followed - but then again, you can't photograph flavour. I would like to get better at that, and I would also like to improve my writing skills. It is really a matter of finding the time."

Taylor must be doing something right; in just a few short years, he has racked up an impressive list of accomplishments.

"One big highlight for me was that I had a five-day pullout in the Scottish Daily Mail newspaper last autumn with about 50 of my own recipes published. That brought me to a wider audience. I was also involved in making a TV show for a Canadian producer, which was a really great experience. Beyond that, the biggest highlights are the people that I have met, and the things I have learned from them."

While the rewards have been many, blogging is not without its challenges.

"As I mention, the biggest issue is time - between work, family, and my other passion for running, the hours are fairly limited. Also for 5 to 6 months of the year it is dark every evening when I get home, so photography without natural light is difficult. At times, motivation can be an issue as well. It really becomes a question of balancing priorities;

of doing what I want and what I can."

Taylor believes that blogging - and, of course, food blogging - is an important component of the contemporary cultural canon.

"It has certainly opened up a number of opportunities for people, such as myself. You can express interests, share different ideas, and perhaps in some areas, raise an awareness that was not necessarily there before. Has this widened the demographic of the audience to food matters due to younger people reading blogs? Possibly...but I would say that blogging is just one channel for communication.

"One advantage that bloggers have, however, is that there is no editorial control - generally speaking - other than yourself. Therefore, you don't need to pitch an idea successfully to get it published; you simply need to write it. In this regard, it is possible that many niche cuisines have been given a voice of varying degrees through the medium. I think blogging will continue to play a vital role that way. Time will tell what that role is exactly, and how it evolves alongside other media like video and visual platforms."

Whatever the case, the coming months will be busy for Taylor.

"I have some more media work lined up, and will continue to source great Scottish produce, develop recipes, and hopefully inspire more people to experiment with, and enjoy, the flavours of my homeland."

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Food as Medicine

A few years back, my husband Marcie and I built a cottage in Doctor's Brook, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia. As there were more than two other cottages on our lane, the province's department of highways requested a title for the road. After several inquiries, it came to our attention that this particular area was known for its elderberries. Our elders had picked these berries in the days of yore, and made elderberry tea to treat their rheumatism. Hence, our road was aptly christened Elderberry Lane. I did some research on elderberries and the ancient Celts and discovered that they were skillful botanists. They used herbs and plants for medicinal purposes and were true animists.

Animists believe that plants and natural phenomena have a soul. The branches of the elderberry, being hollow, made it a perfect conduit for their flutes, pipes and bellows. Celtic myth noted that the spirits of the forests dwelt in the hollow wood, and children who misbehaved were sent there (I am seriously considering sending my husband!) A diet rich in vegetables, fruits and grains offers natural chemicals that support and boost our immune system, and improves our mental state and strengthens our body. I believe that the Celtic diet had this in spades.



Ingredients

1 oz elderberries, dried
 ¼ oz elderberry flowers, dried
 ¼ cup brandy
 ½ cup honey
 1 tablespoon glycerin
 1 tablespoon cinnamon pieces
 1 tablespoon ginger root grated
 4 cups water

Instructions

Place the berries and flowers in a pot along with the 4 cups of water. Measure the depth with a chopstick or wooden spoon handle. This will help you know when you have simmered and reduced the infusion by half. Add the cinnamon pieces and ginger. Bring to a boil then reduce to a low simmer until reduced by half (about an hour). Remove pot from heat after it is reduced; place a piece of cheesecloth in a strainer and place strainer in a large glass measuring cup. Pour contents of pot into strainer. Wait until the infusion is cool enough to handle, then carefully fold the ends of the cheesecloth together and squeeze the herbs until the liquid is no longer being released. Discard herbs. There should be about 2 cups of liquid. At this point, you can add drops of Echinacea, or other herbal extracts depending on whether you want an immune boost, help with digestion or warming energy. Add brandy, honey and glycerin and stir well. Put into clean bottles and label. This will keep for about a year in the refrigerator, or about 10 days at room temperature. If it turns, you will be able to smell it.

Slàinte mhath! ~ Cabrini

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The line dividing Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands is both physical as well as emotional. The Antonine Wall was built near this boundary between 142 and 144 CE on the orders of Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius. It drew a rough line across what is now the Central Belt, from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Forth. The wall was built to protect the areas north of its more famous predecessor, Hadrian's Wall, which was built twenty years earlier. Hadrian's Wall was erected to protect the Roman province of Britannia from the savage Caledonians. Pressure from these Pictish people is believed to have compelled the Romans to seize the Scottish Lowlands and build another wall to provide them with a buffer zone. A classic case of Imperial overreach, the Antonine Wall was effectively abandoned within twenty years of its construction, and was only briefly reoccupied in 208CE. The wall crumbled with time, but the Highland Lowland boundary continued to play a pivotal role in shaping Scotland for the following two Millennia.

Located just north of Glasgow, the Glengoyne Distillery sits on the line which divides the Highland and Lowland whisky regions. While the still house is in the Highlands, the whisky matures in warehouses on the other side of the A81 in the Lowlands. It is nestled up against Dumgoyne Hill, a 427-meter volcanic plug, nestled in a tiny glen with an abundant supply of water. Although officially established in 1833 when George Connell acquired a license to distill at Glenguin of Burnfoot, he had been making whisky on the site since 1820. George is said

to have learned the art from his grandfather. Legend has it that the site had a long history of illicit distillation, to which it was well suited. Just up the hill from barley fields at Burnfoot Farm was a hidden waterfall in a miniature glen, conveniently out of sight of prying eyes. The treeless top of Dumgoyne Hill also provided an excellent vantage point from whence to spot a coming Exciseman.

The 1870s were a pivotal moment for the distillery, because it was then that Glenguin began maturing whisky in sherry casks. At the time it was a change made solely to save money on oak, but it would come to define the distillery's style for the next 100 years. Ever since the whisky's first bottling as a single malt in the 1990s, it has been renowned for its rich, sherried flavour. The distillery produces a spirit with a gentle, sweet and fruity character, but with enough weight to stand up to full term sherry maturation.

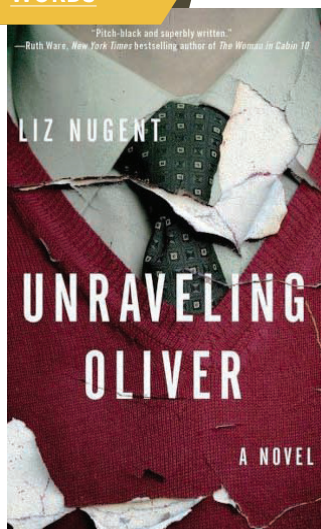
The name Glenguin translates to the Valley of the Wild Geese. In 1876 the distillery name was shortened to Glen Guinafter after a change of ownership, though it seems this was a clerical error. It was supposed to have been anglicized to Glengoyne, a change that would not occur until 1907. Glengoyne was acquired by Ian Macleod Distillers in 2003, from the Edrington Group (owners of Macallan) who have turned the distillery's focus to single malts. This is to the benefit of single malt whisky aficionados, as the distillery's production capacity of 1.1 million liters, puts it in the bottom third of Scottish distillers by size.

Independent bottlings of Glengoyne are few, but the official bottlings are excellent value and well put together.

Glengoyne is a classic example of 'you get what you pay for', but especially so with respect to their older expressions. Notable highlights from their large core range are the Cask Strength (\$81), 15 Year (\$90) and 21 Year (\$215). The Glengoyne 25 Year old is currently my favourite distillery bottled 25 year old whisky. Priced at \$410 and bottled at 48%, it is a rich and flavourful malt, and ¼ the price of the world's most iconic 25 year old Scotch!

Glengoyne can easily be visited from Glasgow on a day-trip, or as a first stop on your way deeper into the Highlands. There is even a modest nearby section of the Antonine wall you can visit if, like me, you are in to such things. The distillery is also mere miles from the iconic Loch Lomonds and the Trossachs National Park. If you are in the area you owe it to yourself to pop into this charming little distillery. While there pick up a bottle of the Teapot Dram, a whisky you can only buy at the distillery. Like the distillery itself, the whisky has a compelling story to tell!

www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Unraveling Oliver

By Liz Nugent
Simon & Schuster
273 pp / \$24.99

First published in the U.K. in 2013, and soon to be available across North America, *Unraveling Oliver* was awarded the Crime Novel of the Year at the Irish Book Awards in 2014, and was later long-listed for the 2016 International Dublin Literature Prize. It is a testament to the book's critical and popular acclaim that it is now scheduled to be developed into a six-part drama series for ITV, by the same group responsible for *Downton Abbey*. In short, the narrative opens with a gruesome killing, before traversing backwards chronologically to detail the events leading up to the grizzly act. En route, the author slowly unveils both the mental state and the motivation behind the murder. Readers will love going along for the dark ride.

~ SPC

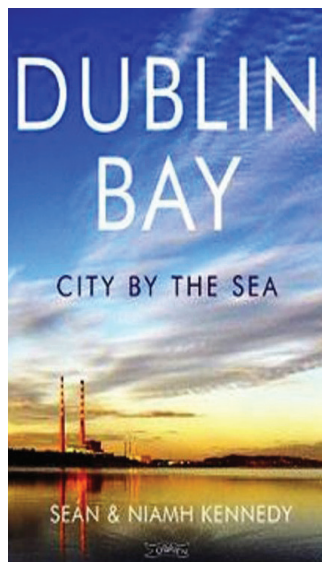
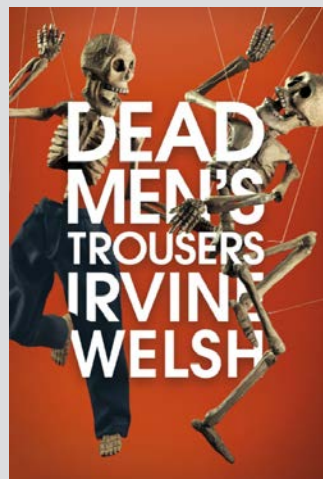
Dead Men's Trousers

By Irvine Welsh
Penguin Books
432 pp / £16.99

After the massive success of his first book, *Trainspotting*, Scottish novelist Irvine Welsh published over a dozen novels and short story collections, and dabbled in screenplays and theatre.

You would never know it, however, as that debut narrative overshadowed all that followed. Perhaps sensing that, the author returns to the scene of the original crimes with *Dead Men's Trousers*, resurrecting the core cast of characters, including Mark Renton, Simon "Sick Boy" Williamson, Daniel "Spud" Murphy, Francis "Franco" Begbie, and others. While I would be remiss to shout out a spoiler of any sort, I will tell you that - even a little older, if not a wee bit wiser - the slick style and swagger of our favourite Scottish street punks hasn't aged a day. ~

SPC



Dublin Bay: City By The Sea

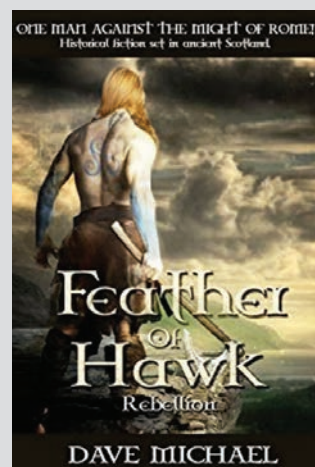
By Sean & Naimh Kennedy
O'Brien Press
160 pp / £24.99

I am assuming that the authors are a couple, as this terrific table-top book has clearly been a labour of love. Those familiar with the Irish capital city's core attractions - Temple Bar, Book of Kells, Christ Church Cathedral, etc - will want to veer off the beaten path on their next visit; Dublin's true beauty lay not in its history nor in its people, but rather in the spaces that are often hidden in plain sight. As such, the Kennedys do a masterful job, via stunning photographs and accompanying text, of reminding readers, and travelers, that the city's identity, and its aura, remains sharply shaped by water; both the sea that snuggles it to the east, and the Liffey River that runs through it. ~ SPC

Feather of Hawk Rebellion

By Dave Michael
Amazon / 173 pp / \$14.99

I am not usually one for historical Celtic fantasy/fiction, but that may change after reading David Michael's debut novel. Inspired by a road trip through rural Scotland, with stops at Hadrian's Wall and other significant ancient sites, the author takes readers back in time to the Golden Age of Roman conquest. There, the story's protagonist, Calach, unites the Celtic tribes to combat, and eventually ward-off, their oppressors. While the plotline might ring familiar, the rookie scribe creates enough dramatic tension that the narrative arc just takes off - and thus comes off - as strikingly original. More importantly, perhaps, is the strong detailing of setting, which will inspire readers of all ages to take a road trip of their own through the lush Scottish landscape. ~ SPC





Plantec

Live

Those with a passion for pan-Celtic, cross-Celtic, or nouveau-Celtic melodies will want to wrap their ears around Plantec's latest live release. Recorded in concert at the 2017 Festival Interceltique de Lorient - the largest annual Celtic gathering of its kind in the world - the 12-track CD/DVD package sees the brilliant Bretagne-based trio take traditional tunes to new and exciting places. As always, the multi-instrumental trio sounds greater than the sum of its parts, most notably on the standout songs Croissant de Letiez, Tennder, Hent Ar Vuhez, and Feulz, where the group takes full flight. And though this isn't the old-school, fiddle 'n' accordion music your grandparents grew up on, it's a welcome departure for a culture that looks to redefine itself for the future. ~ SPC

Finnegan's Hell

Life and Death

What do you get when you mix traditional Irish melodies, punk rock ferocities, folk sensibilities, and heavy metal intensities? You get awesome! Hailing from the dark Celtic heartland of Sweden (yeah, it's a thing), Finnegan's Hell rake listeners over the coals with this 13-track, all-out sonic assault on the senses. The song titles alone tell you all you need to know here; Shane MacGowan's Grave, Cursed, Rude Awakening, The Bastard Son, and Dance Upon Your Grave, just to name a few. The album's moniker is apt, also, as the band tears through these tracks like it is a matter of life and death. A natural musical and philosophical progression from their terrific 2014 debut, Drunk, Sick and Blue, the Swedish sextet's sophomore release doesn't disappoint. ~ SPC



Altan

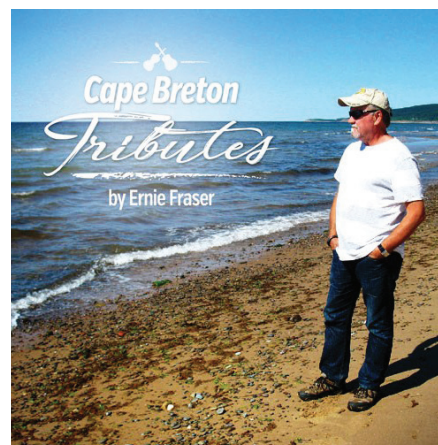
The Gap of Dreams

Ireland's plush, north-westernmost county of Donegal has produced the island's most beautiful music through the years; Clannad, Enya, and more traditional fiddlers than you can shake a bow at. After more than three decades of writing, recording, and touring, Altan has honed their skill and sound, carrying the sonic torch of both their predecessors and their peers. On their 13th studio album, The Gap of Dreams, the quintet tears through Seán sa Cheo / Tuar / Oíche Fheidhmiúil, The Tullaghan Lasses / The Cameronian / The Pigeon on the Gate, and The Templehouse Strathspey & Reel / John Mhosey McGinley's / The Mermaid of Mullaghmore, before bringing the tears on Dark Inishowen, Bacach Shíl Andaí, and Níon a' Bhaoigheallaigh. An absolutely masterful myriad of music. ~ SPC

Ernie Fraser

Cape Breton Tributes

Following in the footsteps of his famous grandfather - "Little" Simon Fraser from Meat Cove, Nova Scotia - guitarist-turned-fiddler Ernie Fraser turns back time on his diverse, debut 12-song CD. A solid selection of Cape Breton fiddle sets mixed with several Celtic guitar sets, and with a who's who of the region's finest players - including James Stephens, Phil Bova, Margie Beaton, Rheanna Neidinger, Calum MacKenzie, Marietta Fraser, John Mitchell, Ann Downey, Ross Davison, Graham Lindsey, and Beth MacGillivray - the album does well to capture and convey both the spirit and sound of Fraser's ancestral roots. The addition of a few original compositions is a terrific touch, and serves to remind listeners of the tremendous musical talent that exists within the Canadian Celtic community. ~ SPC



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Keith Mullen

Keith Mullen's love of pipe music first led him to play the instrument, and then to the intricacies of pipe-building



In 2006, Keith Mullen was drawn to what he calls the “expressiveness” of the uilleann pipes. Only a few short years later he picked up a set of Hamish Moore small pipes.

And while he continues to play off and on, most of his time is now spent in his shop, amidst the exotic woods, metal and leather, the staples of the pipe-making craft.

“Of course, I play pipes and troubleshoot them as I make them, but I don’t find myself playing for the simple sake of playing as much as I would like to. I have an interesting mix of skills and cultural awareness that makes pipe-making a natural fit for me.”

Like many Atlantic Canadians, Mullen is a mix of Scottish and Irish ancestry - his roots stretch back to Donegal, Tipperary and South Uist. That heritage is never far from his mind, having grown up in Tracadie Cross, Prince Edward Island, near the Glenaladale Estate where 200 MacDonald Clanranald pioneers established a settlement in 1772.

Today, the forty-something entrepreneur lives a few kilometers to the east of that landmark, in the community of Canavoy - an anglicization of the Irish ceann an bhá, meaning head of the bay - on the southernmost tip of Savage Harbour Bay.

Mullen first contemplated pipe-making by reasoning that no pipe-maker in history had as many tools and machinery at his disposal as does today’s average handyman. On

that basis, he did some research and got to work.

“Once I figured out what the end result had to be, and realized very little was written in stone, then I found my own path with the resources I had available to me.”

He isn’t suggesting that pipe-making is a casual art.

“In terms of specific challenges, the tolerances are fairly tight for a wood craft, and the reeds are challenging with measurements down to a thousandth of an inch. Three or four rubs on the sandpaper can be the difference between a great sounding reed and one that is heading for the scrap heap.”

After a 20-year-career as a graphic designer and illustrator, Mullen says his pipe-making business gave him a happy excuse to get his hands dirty.

“The blooper reel would be longer than the highlights reel at this point, but every mistake teaches me something so I don’t have any regrets. Every time I pull a set out of the oil bath it is like a birthing of sorts, and tuning the new pipes becomes my new best moment.”

Along with his pipe-making business, Mullen is the owner and operator of Silver Hand Creative, a small design studio serving the music industry. He also has a clothing brand, Trad Life Apparel, which is aimed at traditional musicians. Pipe-making is, in his view, a complementary business; another way to fuse culture, music, creativity and innovation.

“I make bellows-blown Scottish small pipes, primarily in A, but I am branching out to D and have a fair bit of interest in C pipes but haven’t had any luck finding a set

of measurements for the latter.”

To date, the only outside supplier of Mullen’s products is Brigh Music and Tea in Charlottetown. However, his products are generating a lot of interest in Ontario, considered a major marketplace.

“There are so many reasons why Highland pipers should or could be interested in small piping, but I’m amused to find the two worlds are divergent in many ways.”

He’d like to see the competitive piping world pay a little more attention to what he calls “piping in its natural form.”

“Make no mistake, up until the end of the Gaelic political systems in Scotland and Ireland, pipe bands did not exist as we know them today, and the real traditions predate them by centuries. The purpose of our shared vernacular traditional music is primarily for dance.”

He insists that there are opportunities outside pipe bands for pipers to have more fun with their music.

“There is a whole community out here that does not care if you play ornaments just right, or at all, as long as it’s got some rhythm and expression.”

The art of small pipe-making was nearly lost a generation ago, but today there are a number of skilled builders on both sides of the Atlantic and, as he points out, the caliber of emerging Celtic musicians is both staggering and humbling.

“Being immersed in the traditional music community of Prince Edward Island, I am not in any way concerned about the future of our musical customs.”

www.mullenpipes.com
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Gordon Stobbe

Gordon Stobbe says that his fiddle - a Handorff model that he bought in the 1970s from renowned Austrian-Canadian violin maker George Heigl - has been his ticket to traveling Canada from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

"I have toured the Yukon up to Old Crow, Nunavut up to Pond Inlet, the Northwest Territories from east to west, Newfoundland and Labrador, and remote towns like Bella Coola, British Columbia, and Churchill, Manitoba, to name but a few," he shares via email from the road.

En route, the Nova Scotia native has written and compiled 20 fiddle books - both instructional and collections of tunes.

Recently named to the Order of Canada, the 72-year-old, first generation Canadian appreciates the recognition for his decades of teaching and mentoring fiddle players of all ages. He has also been touted for co-creating, hosting - and musically directing - the popular television variety show *Up Home Tonight*, and for manning the microphone of his long-running Halifax-based radio show, *Bluegrass Express*.

Interestingly, despite his affinity for the fiddle, Stobbe doesn't have a Celtic bone in his body; he was born in Saskatchewan to Russian immigrants who came to Canada in the 1920s, a family with no musical tradition whatsoever.

"All my ancestors were Mennonites who left Russia during the Russian Revolution when they lost their farms to the Communists."

As a young man, Stobbe tried his hand at many instruments before discovering a used, dust-covered fiddle in the corner of a Toronto music store.

"I realized this was something different, and I began a serious attempt to learn to play. I bought an LP called *25 Canadian Fiddle Hits* and I started to study the tunes."

From the very get go, Stobbe was struck by the sociability of the instrument.

"Fiddlers can play together or alone. Repertoires are easily shared, and there is a lot of room for creativity. Musically, the fiddle defines many Canadian cultures, including First Nations and Metis players."

Learning to play in Ontario, friends introduced him to a number of American greats, including Ken-

Gordon Stobbe has been fiddling his way back and forth across Canada for almost half a century...

ny Baker and Clark Kessinger.

"I also remember hearing my first Scotty Fitzgerald recording and being amazed at the difference between him and other Canadian styles. Today, because I travel so much to the west and the north, I get to listen to players there in a live setting."

"There is joy in fiddle music in all of these places, and I have been blessed to be invited and included."

Over the years, Stobbe has mentored First Nations and Inuit children in Nunavut, Yukon, Northern Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories. Believing music "fills a sociological and cultural need for the youth in remote communities," he partnered with a variety of organizations to demonstrate and promote fiddling.

"Working with Inuit children in the north was a much more Canadian experience than climbing the CN Tower, for example. With the tundra landscape so different - and the children so funny, playful, and easy to engage - I loved every minute of it."

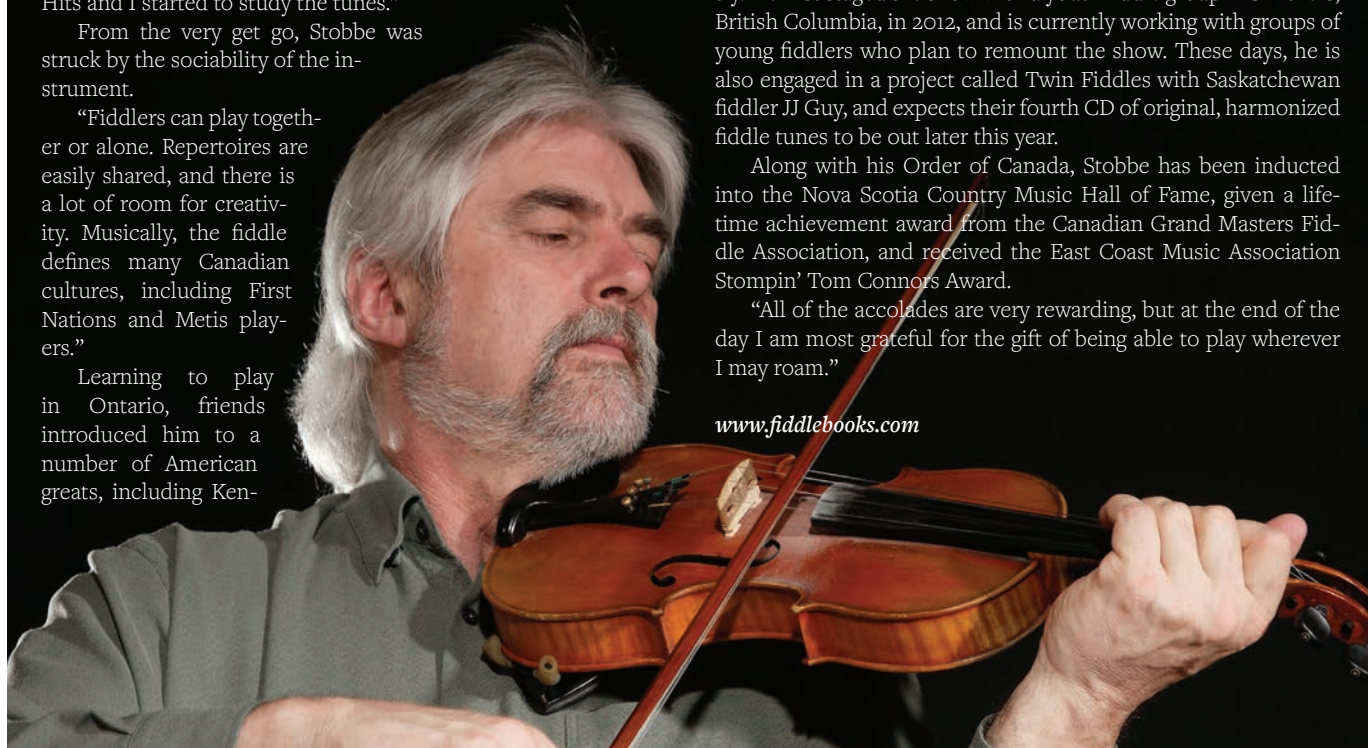
Early in his career he gigged with the Dixie Flyers in Ontario. Later, in Nova Scotia, he plied his trade with the Ladies Choice Bluegrass Band, Those Fabulous Cliches, Mighty Oak String Band, RazzMaTazz for Kids, the John Gracie Band, Bowties with Duo Concertante, and the Gordon Stobbe Trio. Over the years he has been in high demand as a sideman for touring acts, and has contributed to countless recording projects.

More recently, Stobbe has been composing new music and arranging traditional tunes for fiddle ensemble. He developed a two-hour stage show, *The Fiddler's History of Canada*, which traces the spread of fiddle music through the development of the country. He first staged the show with a youth fiddle group in Smithers, British Columbia, in 2012, and is currently working with groups of young fiddlers who plan to remount the show. These days, he is also engaged in a project called *Twin Fiddles* with Saskatchewan fiddler JJ Guy, and expects their fourth CD of original, harmonized fiddle tunes to be out later this year.

Along with his Order of Canada, Stobbe has been inducted into the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame, given a lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle Association, and received the East Coast Music Association Stompin' Tom Connors Award.

"All of the accolades are very rewarding, but at the end of the day I am most grateful for the gift of being able to play wherever I may roam."

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Kelly MacArthur

Kelly MacArthur makes no apologies for her traditional approach to highland dance

“Unlike many other forms of dance, highland dancers learn certain dances specifically and perform these for the rest of their careers,” explains instructor, and former dance champion, Kelly MacArthur from her home in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. “Highland dancers are a never-ending work in progress, constantly perfecting their technique and style.”

Although she acknowledges that it is important “to keep the longevity of the dancers” by allowing them to explore other forms of choreography, MacArthur firmly believes in fine-polishing the fundamentals - something she calls “the traditional core” - of Highland dance.

“In this profession, it is absolutely necessary to learn the basics really well before trying anything new or out-of-the-box. When my students are performing with a piper or a fiddler in a traditional setting they must dance straight-up, old-school Highland and step dance.

“There is something powerful and challenging about the unobtainable perfection of the form that has always just dug right into my soul.”

MacArthur, whose career has carried her across Canada, the United States and to Scotland, was only seven years old when her mother placed her and her sister into their first dance class.

“Since my family was of Scottish background, my mother opted for Highland dance; she loved the pipes, the music and the kilts. Later, when I was 11, I started studying step dancing at the Gaelic College (Colaisde na Gaidhlig).”

While she may be strict when it comes to Highland dance, MacArthur enjoys a casual approach to step dance - a more relaxed form that has proven popular amongst her provincial peers for generations.

As an aspiring young step dancer, she was particularly awed by Nova Scotia fiddler Ashley MacIsaac, who was renowned for his unique and energetic approach to more traditional customs.

“I wanted to dance strathspeys like Ashley did back when he was younger; he would dance eight minutes of strathspeys, and no one else did that at the time. I love Cape Breton strathspeys, and I love the percussion, the jigs, the hornpipes, and the Earl of Errol for Highland. For me, there has always been something about the beats and the syncopation with the music that hits home.”

MacArthur is mindful of how history and culture are connected through dance.

“My own Celtic background is a big reason why I continue to preserve and promote the Gaelic dance tradition today.”

“I am fascinated with that heritage, and I think it is important for younger generations to know and understand their past,” she says, noting that 99 per cent of her dancers have some sort of Celtic bloodline.

MacArthur began teaching with her own trainer, Karenanne (Campbell) Peck, at the age of 13, and later worked with international instructors at the Colaisde na Gaidhlig.

She believes that dance is the beginning of a journey that builds skill and confidence in young people, while offering great opportunities to compete, perform, and travel.

“One of the greatest experiences that I have had was appearing on a full episode of the television program *Amazing Race Canada*.

I was a judge, and a few of my dancers taught and performed with several of the show’s contestants.”

Each year she takes a number of her students on the road with Cape Breton’s acclaimed musical comedy show, *Summertime Revue*. They also tour with the Barra MacNeils’ annual Christmas concert, and last year she and her crew were invited to perform at a festival in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, for an event commemorating Canada’s 150th anniversary.

“We even got to skate on Lake Louise,” she shares with a smile.

As her Sydney-based dance school is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year - an occasion that MacArthur hopes to mark with a big reunion - she looks back fondly at all of the students that have graced her classes.

“I am so very proud of their development as athletes, dancers, performers and as people. My hope is that we have taught them some important life lessons while they were with us - intangible things like grace, work ethic, and humility. These are vital qualities in their own personal growth, and are essential to the evolution of our culture as a whole. The most rewarding part of doing what I do has been helping young people to reach their potential.”

www.macarthurdance.com



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June 29th and 30th, 2018 Malad City, Idaho

We are delighted to announce that the 2018 Malad Valley Welsh Festival, on June 29th and 30th, will feature Carla Kelly, author of the historical fiction "My Loving Vigil Keeping", a story of the Scofield Mine disaster in Utah that employed many Welsh miners, and Laraine Miller who will present on traditional Welsh dances.

Other Festival events typically include presentations on Welsh history and culture, games, and vendors, local history presentations, quilt and photography shows, wagon tours of historic sites in Malad, family history exhibits, visits to Olive Osmond's cabin and the Blue Goose in Samaria, a community breakfast, and music performances including a concert with several choirs, piano duets, youth performers, and outdoor performances by Celtic bands.

See the many festival events available for this two-day festival, which includes presentations on Welsh history and culture and a poetry competition.

For more info visit

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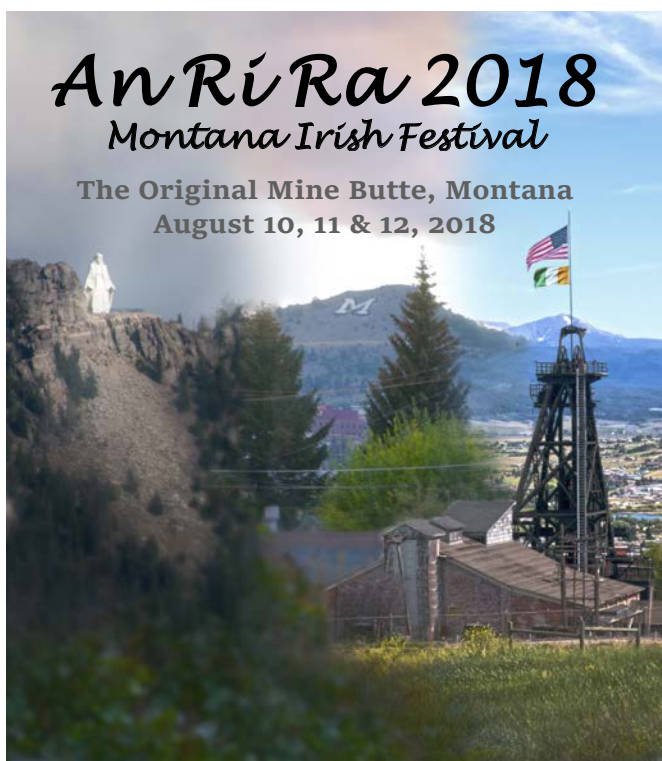


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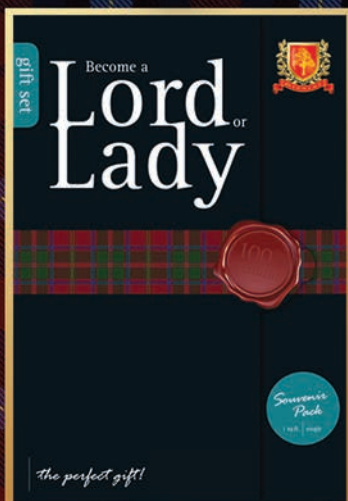
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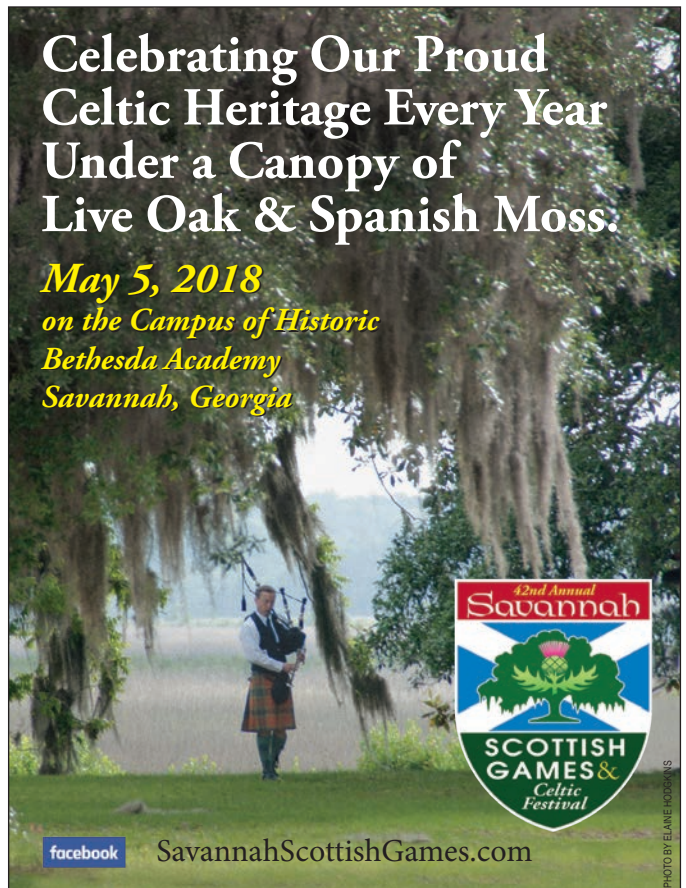


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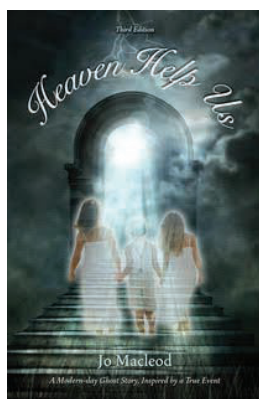


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Dolores O'Riordan;

1971 - 2018



As a teenager, Irish singer Dolores O'Riordan ran away to embrace music. Later, when the fame it brought proved too much, she ran from it. Ironically, as she was laid to rest in her native Ballybricken, outside Limerick, it was her own iconic music that played softly in the background.

The 46-year-old vocalist for The Cranberries, one of Ireland's greatest musical exports, was found dead in her London hotel room on January 15. While the cause of death is yet to be established, police do not consider it suspicious.

Fellow musicians reacted with shock and sadness, while Irish political leaders lamented the loss of an acclaimed artist who carried her country's flag wherever she went.

Irish singer Andrew Hozier-Byrne, better known as Hozier, described O'Riordan's voice as unforgettable.

"It threw into question what a voice could sound like in the context of rock music. I'd never heard anyone use their instrument that way."

Cranberries' guitarist Noel Hogan pointed to her rich musical legacy, which includes such mega-hit songs as *Linger*, the aching story of a first kiss, and *Zombie*, a compelling response to an IRA bombing in England that killed two children.

"There are only a few artists who get to have maybe one song they are remembered by," he told *Rolling Stone* magazine. "Dolores has so many."

Although O'Riordan battled depression and anorexia, and was recently diagnosed as bipolar, Hogan, who was in contact with her shortly before her death, insisted she seemed well, was in good spirits, and was anxious to get to work on the group's first new release in six years. She had come to London for a recording session.

O'Riordan left home at 18, against her family's wishes, to go down the short road to Limerick to audition for a teenage band, The Cranberry Saw Us, in 1990. During her audition she shared the early lyrics for *Linger*, which appeared on the band's first album, *Everybody's Doing It So Why Can't We?*

"We were all blown away that this small girl from Limerick had such an amazing voice," Hogan continued. "The fact that she was not already in a band was a miracle."

The group toiled, toured, and shortened its name. Although early critics panned their music as dull and traditional, the public fell in love with its stirring melodies and O'Riordan's haunting, mercurial voice - one which never lost its distinctive Irish accent.

With its alternative, punk and pop elements, overlaying an intrinsic strain of Irish folk, The Cranberries sold 40 million records worldwide, with four top 20 albums on *Billboard*'s charts and eight top-ten singles. It was the kind of fame O'Riordan, the youngest in a working-class family of seven, dreamed of. For an inexperienced young band, however, the pace proved to be punishing. Both O'Riordan and Hogan later reflected they should have slowed down.

For 20 years the seemingly feisty, yet fragile singer was married to Canadian Don Burton. When The Cranberries took a six-year hiatus in 2003, Burton, O'Riordan and their three children moved to Ontario where they spent much of their time on a lake in Buckhorn, north of Peterborough.

"I got sick of being famous," she told the *Irish News*, adding she was treated as an ordinary person in Canada and was able to volunteer at her children's school.

Despite her fame, she insisted that the best years of her life were spent at home with her family.

"I love being a mom," she told the *Irish News* in 2015. "My kids don't see me as a famous person or have any kind of expectation. I'm just their mom."

In 2009 the band reunited to celebrate O'Riordan being named as an honorary patron of the University Philosophical Society at Trinity College in Dublin. Within months they were back touring internationally. Their final album, *Something Else*, was released last April.

Thousands turned out to wake O'Riordan in two Limerick churches before she was given a modest and traditional Catholic funeral in Ballybricken, in the church where she once played the organ and sang in the choir. With her mother, her brothers and sister, her former husband, her children, and all members of the Cranberries in attendance, the Mass began with a recording of her duet with Luciano Pavarotti, *Ave Maria*. As family members carried her coffin from the small church, she could be heard singing *When You Are Gone*.

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