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The French-Celtic Connection

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Fáilte!

A Tartan for World Peace

World peace is the universal ideal of freedom and happiness among all peoples and nations.

Summer is prime-time for freedom and happiness, as people gather to enjoy festivals and events throughout our global communities. In this issue, we profile another of the seven Celtic nations, Brittany. The largest Celtic festival in the world, Festival Interceltique Lorient, is held there each year, drawing close to one million visitors from all over the globe.

Across the water in Cape Breton, Celtic Colours International Festival also attracts thousands of musicians and attendees annually.

Along with hosting these major events, Brittany and Cape Breton share many other similarities. It is believed that Cape Breton Island was named after the Bretons of France, and the region's many Francophone communities - where music and customs are shared with their Celtic neighbors – is a testament to this. The languages have Celtic ties also; Cape Breton has its Scottish Gaelic, while Breton is closely related to Cornish and Welsh. Both languages are enjoying a period of renewal, with keen interest among the young. In both cultures, traditional music, song and dance are proudly showcased, and tartan can be readily found on display.

Today, tartan is mostly associated with Scotland. However, the earliest evidence of tartan goes back to the Iron Age and the Hallstatt culture of Central Europe. These people were the first to adopt Celtic cultural characteristics, around the 8th century BC, with evidence of tartan as part of their dress. Thousands of years later, the Celtic Diaspora is alive and well among many nations, and both Celtic culture and tartan enjoy a unique longevity and a worldly status.

It is not surprising then, and most appropriate, to find tartan being used as a symbol of global harmony. In this issue, we speak with Arun Ghandi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, about the World Peace Tartan. Like his grandfather, Arun is active in the growing, grassroots movement for non-violence.

The World Peace Tartan Initiative was founded by Edinburgh-based Victor Spence, an inter-religious consultant who studied Comparative Religion at the University of Edinburgh. Spence created the World Peace Tartan in 2011 as a means to promote non-violence, generate revenue for education initiatives, and address child poverty.

Arun Gandhi is one of several world leaders who are actively involved as ambassadors for the World Peace Tartan Initiative; others include the Dalai Lama, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, and numerous Nobel Peace Laureates.

"I would like all people to be ambassadors of the idea," says Spence. "At the end of the day, it supports charitable purposes to fund grassroots peace initiatives and the alleviation of child poverty around the world."

Celtic Life International is proud to be involved with Spence's program, and we invite all of our readers to support the World Peace Tartan Initiative.

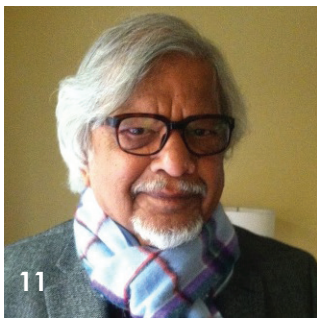
Enjoy and May God Bless
Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher

INSIDE

Volume 29, No. 4, August 2015



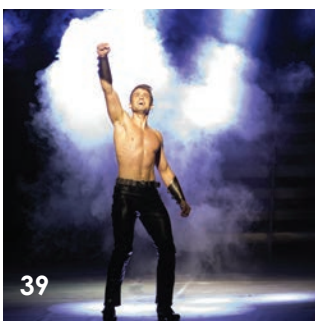


















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Our July/August cover shot features a French bagpiper at Festival Interceltique de Lorient



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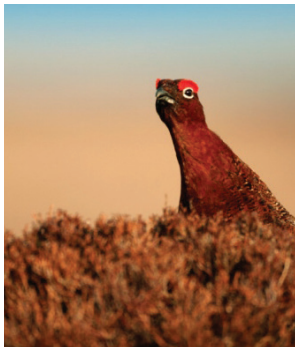
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DE tha DOL



A "cursing kamikaze" grouse is quickly becoming a legend at a Highland glen

A red grouse named Jock is causing trouble for tourists in a Highland glen near Dunkeld, Scotland. Not only has he flown at passing vehicles, but he also has a saucy mouth. Visitors have reported he lets them know they aren't welcome by making the grouse's distinctive call – loudly. Sometimes, Jock even "escorts" them back to their cars. It's not unusual for red grouse to be territorial, especially around other birds, but venturing close to humans is rare for them. Jock's unique behaviour has estate workers concerned he may meet an untimely end. A bird that isn't afraid of tourists is bound to get into trouble when faced with a less amicable intruder, such as a fox or a hunter.

East Coast Lifestyle's Alex MacLean took a trip to the White House



In just two years, Nova Scotia's Alex MacLean went from being a student to CEO of a big business. Recently, his ventures with the East Coast Lifestyle clothing line brought him to the White House. MacLean arrived in Washington on May 10 for the Entrepreneurs' Organization's Global Student Entrepreneur Awards. Having won first runner-up in the competition, the young tycoon heard President Obama himself speak at the event, among others. He also showcased his clothing designs to the president, along with the panel members of ABC's Shark Tank. East Coast Lifestyle sells a variety of hoodies, shirts and hats – most identifiable by its trademark anchor logo. The company was one of five winners of "New Business of the Year" in the 2015 Halifax Business Awards.



Fourteen bottles of Scotch whisky sold for 17,000 pounds at auction

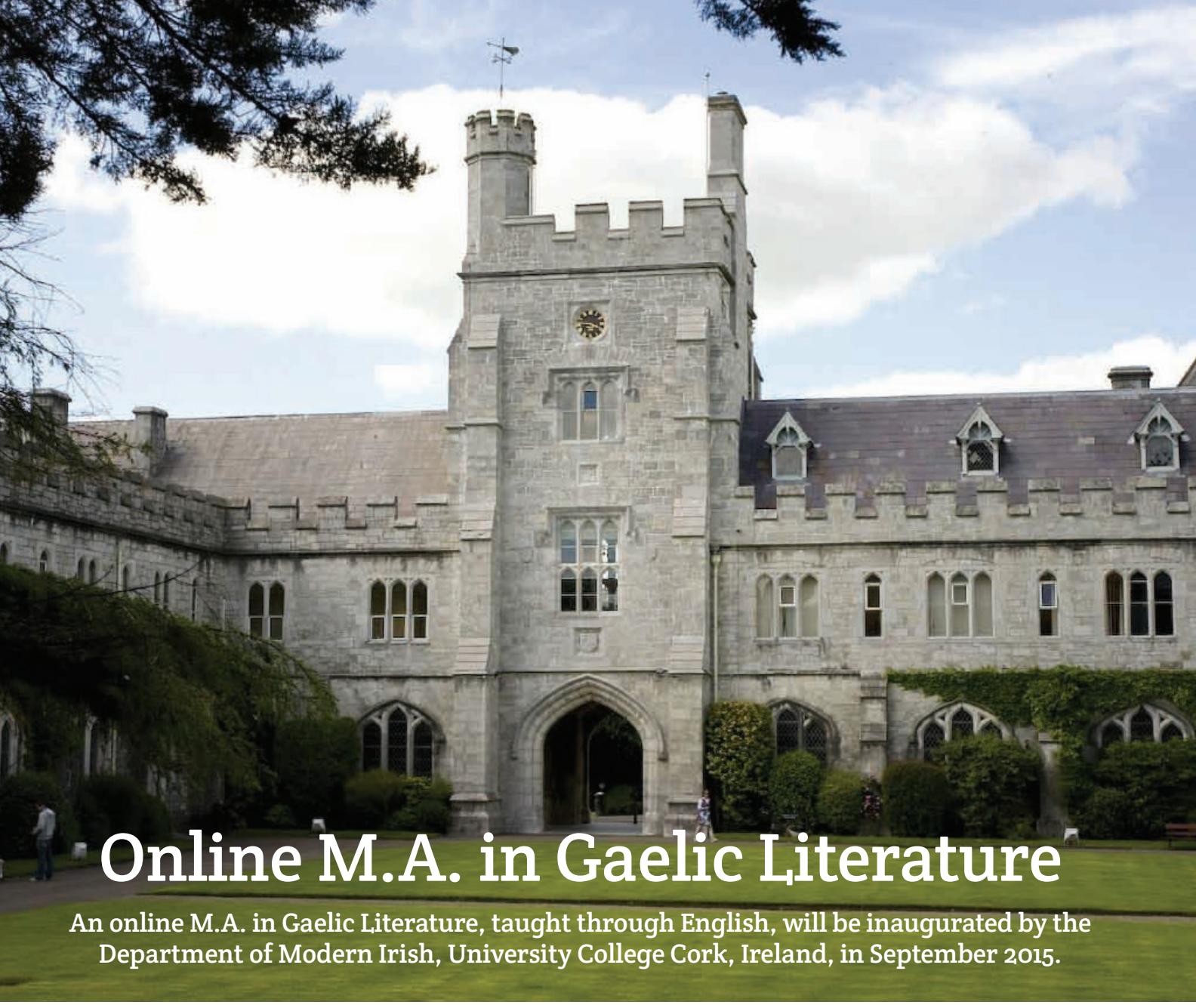
Back in the 1950s, 14 bottles of Glenfiddich Special Pure Malt whisky were hidden in the cellar of a mansion in Perthshire, Scotland. The stash was found this spring – some bottles were even in their original tissue paper wrapping. It was estimated that the rare whiskies would fetch around 10,000 pounds total at auction, but they broke that tally in April when they were sold by the Lindsay Burns & Company auction house for 17,000 pounds. This isn't a total surprise, since Scotch whisky has recently grown in popularity at UK public sales. In 2014, the number of rare Scotch whisky bottles sold at auctions grew over 68 percent from the previous year. Some buyers will actually drink the whisky, while others will save it to sell for a higher price in the future.

The Barra MacNeils have been awarded an honourary degree from CBU



The Barra MacNeils are a musical group of six siblings; Sheamus, Kyle, Stewart, Lucy, Ryan and Boyd. Cape Breton University recently honoured the group with a special degree at its spring convocation. The family, from Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, have been performing together for almost 30 years. Collectively, they play over 12 instruments, including the bodhrán and the Celtic harp. The group's performances are inspired by Celtic music, dance, language and history. They call themselves "Canada's Celtic ambassadors," and have performed throughout Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe. The family has several performance dates over the summer, including at a Canada Day celebration in Cape Breton, and at the 2015 Beach Celtic Festival in Toronto.

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



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An online M.A. in Gaelic Literature, taught through English, will be inaugurated by the Department of Modern Irish, University College Cork, Ireland, in September 2015.

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first word



In the fourth instalment of a year-long, six-part series examining Celtic culture, Dr. Ellen MacIsaac of Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, and director of the Ottawa Celtic Choir, shares her perspective on what it means to be Celtic today

The term Celtic in the contemporary world is an interesting one, both from an academic and a musical perspective.

Previous contributors to this series have remarked that "Celtic," in academic terms, is tied up in ethnicity, geography, language, identity and culture. Language, literature, art, and music, among other creative pursuits, have been one of the mechanisms by which the Celtic nations have reinforced their identity and their place in the face of repeated attempts to homogenize or subsume them into another nation or culture. Even those forced to emigrate tended to cling to the linguistic and cultural practices of home as a means of staying connected.

Yet, we draw distinctions. There is no single Celtic tradition, no one specific practice, instrument, language, literature that can be claimed by all Celtic nations. Even among diasporic groups, we don't call ourselves Celtic-American or Celtic-Canadian. We narrow the focus to names such as Irish-American.

Even today, the use of the word "Celtic" in relation to recorded music and media carries fraught connotations. It tends to be simultaneously narrowly and broadly applied. Narrow, in the sense that recordings labelled as Celtic are largely Irish, to the exclusion of other Celtic musical practices. Simultaneously, it is also broad: music that would not commonly be recognized as Celtic by the organic traditional music communities is marketed as Celtic.

Celtic is a constructed term when it comes to meaning, emotions and associations. That meaning is largely imposed from outside of the Celtic nations themselves. As noted, they self-identify as their own nations, rather than as part of a larger "Celtic" nation. And yet, the word clearly resonates with many, whether they hail from a Celtic nation or not. There has been meaning invested in the word since the days of the Celtic Twilight, when the romantics forged the image of the noble and savage Celt, the bearer of an ancient and deeply rooted culture, then seen to be fading or lost.

So, what does "Celtic" mean? What does it mean to self-identify as "Celtic"? I don't presume to speak for anyone but myself, but let me offer some observations that are based on my experience in researching, teaching and performing the music commonly identified as Celtic.

Language – Language is commonly understood to be a marker of identity, and a number of people express an interest in learning one of the Celtic languages as a means of re-connecting to their ancestry. Even those who don't invest the time in learning a Celtic language will often learn at least a few words as a way of self-identifying. How many readers of this magazine toast their friends with "sláinte", "slàintemhòr", or "Iechyd da"? I'm not immune; I often say "slán" or "slán go foill" to my colleagues as I'm leaving work for the day.

History and Character – The Celts have a long history of learning, of independence in thought and tradition, wit and humour, creativity, expressive artistry, fierceness in battle and defiance in the face of injustice. These are admirable qualities that many see as an inspiration and worthy of emulation, having been mythologized in popular culture, verse, novels and even movies.

Artistic Expression – Any discussion of Celtic identity must acknowledge the importance of the arts in all their forms in Celtic cultures. Many people admire the art, music, song and dance of the Celtic nations; the students in the classes I teach on Celtic music are continually amazed at the sheer variety and artistry. The visual styles, poetry, melodies and rhythms resonate with people, even if they cannot articulate why.

Community – Family ties and associations with past generations form strong bonds no matter what culture is under discussion. The Celtic nations and their diasporic communities are no different. Community is a poignant way of connecting to Celtic cultures, and a powerful way in which Celtic cultural groups draw in participants. I have watched grown men cry into their beers as a song is sung in a pub because the song brings to mind memories of loved ones.

Celtic is the identity we forge for ourselves, drawing from the best and most inspirational aspects of the cultures of the Celtic nations. It is the gold standard for what we aspire to be.

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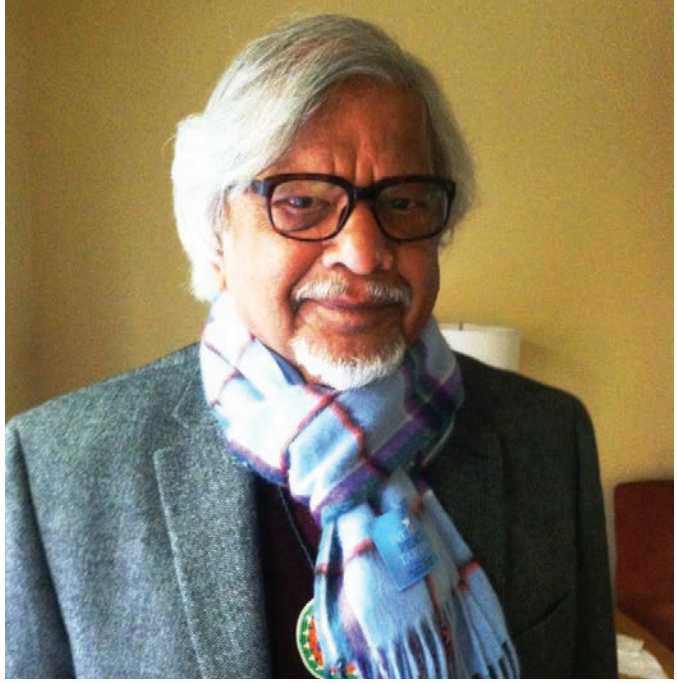
Dalai Lama

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UP FRONT

He may not be Celtic, but Arun Gandhi is honoured to wear the tartan



Arun Gandhi remembers the first time he wore a kilt.

"It was at the From Scotland with Love fashion show in Manhattan in 2012," recalls the spiritual leader by phone from his home in upstate New York. "My good friend Victor Spence from Edinburgh was there promoting his World Peace Tartan initiative, and he put me in a kilt and put me up on the catwalk like some sort of celebrity."

It was also the last time that the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi wore the traditional Scottish wrap.

"Victor wouldn't let me keep it," laughs the 81-year-old. "I believe it was the only one he had at the time, so he couldn't let it go. He did give me the scarf, however, and I wear that with great pride."

Gandhi is one of numerous notable recipients of the World Peace Tartan scarf, a list that includes eight Nobel Peace Laureates, the Dalai Lama, the Archbishop of Canterbury, astronaut Chris Hadfield, champion bagpiper Craig Weir, human rights lawyer Yola Minatchy, renowned concert pianist Grace Mo, and Bishop Desmond Tutu.

"Actually, I will be visiting with Bishop Tutu in South Africa next week," says Gandhi. "We have become great friends, with common interests, and there is always much to discuss; politics, economics, the eradication of poverty and disease.

"And, of course, world peace," he adds. "That is always on the agenda."

Given Gandhi's pedigree, his passion is understandable. Not only is he the descendant of one of the world's greatest peacemakers - with whom he lived for some time - both of his parents were involved in the global nonviolence movement as well.

Growing up in apartheid-era South Africa, his experiences with discrimination inspired him to carry on the family tradition. Over the last six decades, the sociopolitical activist has lobbied tirelessly for global harmony via endless speaking engagements, meetings with world leaders, the authoring of several books, and the creation of both the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence and the Gandhi Worldwide Education Institute.

"Change will happen from the ground up…"

Along the way, he has witnessed many injustices, most of which, he explains, are the product of greed.

"The world's current economic systems are fundamentally flawed - the axis upon which they spin favours the few at the expense of the many. Sadly, most governments - once the property of the public realm - now have their policies dictated to them by private corporate interests."

The problem of paradigm, proposes Gandhi, runs deeper than politics.

"Our thinking on these matters is awry. Most of us have an infinite growth mentality about our lives, meaning that we act as if our water, trees, natural resources, energy sources, and food supplies are limitless. However, as we are learning, they are not. And even though we know better, we continue to consume what we want, when we want it.

"We now live in a very materialistic world, where the measure of success is based upon what you possess, instead of who you are. Spiritual development, our highest calling as human beings, has taken a backseat to rampant commercialism."

As such, he acknowledges that things are likely to get worse before they get better.

"I am afraid that, as a species, we may need to hit bottom - and even drag there for a while - before we learn our lessons. Often, spiritual awakenings are preceded by rude awakenings."

Despite the dire prediction, Gandhi believes there is always hope.

"Change will happen from the ground up, it always has - grassroots organizations and movements that make sense and gain momentum. The internet is a very valuable tool in that regard, both for education - exchanging information and sharing best practices - and for organizing and mobilizing people."

The power of the individual to make a difference, he points out, cannot be overstated.

"Look at the work my grandfather did - he changed the course of history. He was one man with a vision. There are countless other examples of courageous men and women around the world with unique vision who are choosing to be a part of the solution.

"Victor Spence is a man like that. I am very proud to wear my World Peace Tartan scarf, and so pleased that he let me keep it."

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SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

Alexandria, Virginia-based Kelly McCarthy is the President of the North American Manx Association. Recently she answered our Seven Celtic Questions

What are your own Celtic roots?

I am Manx. My father's family goes back over 500 years in the same fishing village, Port St Mary, on the Isle of Man, where I grew up. The 1511 Manorial Roll shows the then MacKelly family on the same farm that one of my cousins still farms today. When I wander around the island of my childhood there are signs everywhere that we've been around a long time. My maiden name is Kelly but I use it now as my first name. It's how I carry my Celtic identity with me.

Why are those roots important to you?

Most people like to have roots. It's interesting to me that when the North American Manx Association hosts a table at a Celtic event people come and tell me they're Manx. And when I ask when they came to America they'll say something like 1715! It's clear that people identify as being American but have a sense of "being" from somewhere else. My roots are important because to me, the Isle of Man is so much more than a rock in the Irish Sea. Its beauty is permanent. Its people are stubborn and kind. We have clung to our independence despite attempts to consume it, and have hung on to our self-governing status despite various assaults from the UK and EU. We have the oldest continuous parliament on the planet. We acknowledged women as equals many years before our neighbors. We sent more than our fair share of men to fight in the world wars. Through ingenuity we developed world-class industries to deliver a first-class standard of living to people of all walks of life. I'm proud of our resourceful and caring community that treasures its culture, its people and its pristine environment.

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

When I moved to America in 2000, I got swept up in the Washington Manx Society and actually thought it was an odd thing to do. I'm Manx, I figured, I know all about the island. I don't need to be in a heritage society. But then I woke up to the fact that the Celts played an enormous part in the building of America.



I look at towns like Christiansburg in south-west Virgina, which was named for a Manxman, and reflect how such places needed to be built from the ground up. Then I got involved in the North American Manx Association and met people whose ancestors came to America from the island to labor, to mine, to farm, to fish, and I thought: I want this story to be passed to my children. They were born on the island but moved here when they were little. I want them to know that just a few generations back, their compatriots came to America and stamped their Manx mark on this new land.

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

I am the current President of the North American Manx Association and the Washington Manx Society. I also manage the NAMA blog, run the Facebook page and edit its Bulletin. So I need to keep up-to-date with Manx events in order to share them with the wider North-American Manx community. I am trying to build a bridge between the Isle of Man, and Canada and the United States. I try to keep the Manx authorities aware of opportunities for outreach in the US and Canada, and to encourage people over here to go back "home" and find out more about their heritage. Currently, I am on a mission to bring more Canadians back into the North American Manx Association, but I'd also like to see a resurgence in the heartland of America. It's estimated there are a million people of Manx descent in America, and we'd like to find them and share a little of their Manxness with them.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

I'm not sure it's that important in the grand scheme of things, but it's interesting to have a connection to where we came from. Going back to what I said about the sense of belonging that Americans have for their "home countries," and the history of the Celts in America, I believe we need to do a better job of explaining what we all left behind and why. And I truly believe we need to more widely promote how important the contribution of Celts to the American cultural landscape has been.

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

I think the arts do a really good job at getting the Celtic message out. But my big dream would be to have a National Celtic Museum. I think it's time to toast the Celts that built the country and share their stories. On the Isle of Man we have a visitors' heritage trail called the Story of Mann that links everything from the Celts, to the Vikings, to the crofters, fishermen, farmers, miners, schools, and government in a seamless trip around the island. I'd like to see something like that here. All of the Celtic nations could share their unique contributions to the America we know today in one place.

What can we be doing better?

As each generation stretches us further from the Celtic exodus of the 19th and 20th centuries, the link to a "homeland" becomes more tenuous. If we wish to fan the flames of Celtic heritage, we must attract young people to our associations and events. And while social events like Celtic fairs are a brilliant way to deploy our best weapons — music and the craic — I believe there is a real market for a Celtic Studies elective in colleges and universities.

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Cylch Male Choir



Whether at a wedding ceremony in a nomadic Kurdish yurt or at a massed choral event at Royal Albert Hall in London, the Bois Goetre-Hen a'r Cylch Male Choir charms its audiences with its tradition of Welsh singing

In a country with a long and rich history of male choirs, Bois Goetre-Hen a'r Cylch is a relative newcomer. Though it is only six years old, the group already has more than 120 performances to its credit. From teenagers to octogenarians, members come from all over County Borough of Bridgend and the surrounding areas, and from all walks of life. That diversity is also reflected in their repertoire, which ranges from Calon Lan - a Welsh hymn dating back to the 19th century - to songs by U.K. rockers Coldplay.

For Richard Howells, one of the ensemble's founding members, the choir offers the perfect balance between challenge and chilling-out at the end of a busy work week.



Richard Howells

Raised in the coal mining town of Maesteg in the Llynfi Valley of South Wales, Howells grew up with an abiding passion for music. He was equally interested in all manner of sports, including cricket, football, rugby, tennis, golf and darts. Choir music, he notes, offers the same camaraderie as sport.

"A close friend once said being part of the choir is like rugby without the bruises, and it is so true."

The choir performs frequently in Wales and throughout Britain, and in 2014 toured Brittany in northwest France.

"I have an eclectic taste in music, so being part of the choir allows me an opportunity to sing different kinds of music," says Howells. "Added to this, I get to be around others who share my interest in music. Singing is a wonderful release, and an ideal opportunity to express thoughts and feelings."

He adds that sharing that love for singing with audiences is an essential element of what they do.

"Enthusiasm and passion are fundamental, and they are the vital ingredients to any performance."

Howells is also an executive member of the Welsh Association of Male Choirs, which organizes massed choral events. Formed over 50 years ago, the association boasts 67 members in the country, as well as 13 in England and three overseas. As well, he represents the male choirs of West Wales on Ty Cerdd, a major arts organization housed in the country's Millennium Centre in Cardiff.

He explains that Wales is an officially bilingual country, where authentic Celtic culture still prevails in language and everyday life.

"Incredibly, for many years the teaching of Welsh history, culture and language was censored or even banned. Thankfully, that has improved in recent times, but we must never be too smug."

He contends that his heritage has helped to mould both he and his music.

"Being a Cymro (Welshman) is part of my roots, part of who I am. In fact, it very much shapes and defines me personally. One can never deny their birthright or believe it has no impact on their life - passion and patriotism drive us. Sometimes that is good and sometimes not, but at least we feel and we love."

Howells points to festivals such as The National Eisteddfod of Wales, and the Welsh Language Youth Festival, and wonders whether or not Wales gets its fair share of attention from those with an interest in Celtic language, culture and music.

"The success of these festivals demonstrates that Celtic culture is not only about bygone years, but is very much alive in our communities. Wales is doing more now than in the past, not only to preserve, but to educate the world about who we are, and to share our remarkable history and culture."

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Phamie Gow's Magic Music

As the sun sets, shadows cast by the classically-styled stone homes lining the streets of Edinburgh's stony Bruntsfield neighbourhood inch their way across the floor and up the walls of Phamie Gow's sitting room.

With her soft smile underlining inquisitive and worldly, sparkling eyes, Gow is a young woman. But she is also a multi-talented musician with a global following.

She lived a quiet life in southern Scotland's bucolic Borders district before moving north to Glasgow, where she attended the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and pursued her love of music.

A precocious overachiever, by age 19 Phamie had already composed, recorded and released two albums. Now 35, she has seven releases to her name, with *Moments of Time* and *Dancing Hands* being the ones she cites as most representative of her musical vision.

But simple as her childhood may have been, and as genuinely personable as Gow is, a quiet complexity prevails. First, there is her name. "My name is Phamie. It's like Amy with a Ph. And Gow means softly spoken."

Then there is her music. Classical, Celtic, folk, world and other genre-defining labels have been assigned to what is a tastefully eclectic and constantly expanding selection of highly personal, yet universally engaging compositions.

Often cited as "brilliant," Gow moves effortlessly between harp, piano, and accordion, as well as singing her compositions in a Celtic style some have likened to Enya, though every note and nuance is uniquely hers. Stylistically, her music majors in evocative melodicism and cascading chordal arpeggios. It is human, emotional and real, a reflection of this musician, a vegetarian who has an absolute respect for nature, and a humanitarian devotedly involved with initiatives aimed at making the world a better place for all.

> *"My philosophy is to keep my heart and mind open, and to live, love and learn..."*

Though her inspirations have been numerous, some are surprisingly contemporary. "One of my favourite albums is Sting's *Soul Cages*," she says. "And I love Michael Jackson's *HIStory* album." So, if she could be any other musician, who would she be? Gow pauses and then laughs, enquiring, "Can I have a sex change with that? Okay, I might be Sting."

And if Sting says, 'C'mon, let's do a gig together'? "Oh, to play with Sting would be an absolute dream come true," she beams. "I'm also a massive fan of Carlos Núñez, who plays Galician bagpipes and flute. He inspires me so much that I moved to Spain, because one of my dreams was to work with him, which, miraculously, I've done twice. Sarah McLachlan is another. She's incredible!"

What about stepping on stage with an electric guitar and just ripping away? "I would love to do that! And maybe I will. My philosophy is to keep my heart and mind open, and to live, love and learn."

While highlights for Gow include performing at the Olympics in London, and at the opening of the Scottish Parliament, having her music choreographed and performed in the Military Tattoo at the Edinburgh International Festival was an exceptional moment. She has also played with artists as diverse as Ray Davies of The Kinks and Davy Spillane from Riverdance, while touring has taken her to Europe, Canada, the Americas and China.

In addition to residing in the UK, Gow has spent time living in Montpellier, France as well as Barcelona and New York City, where she was invited by renowned pianist/composer Phillip Glass to play Carnegie Hall. "New York is wonderful, especially Central Park. I lived on the Upper East Side. It was quite high living," she laughs. "Because it's such a vibrant city, it was a challenge to keep my inner peace. I want to function well on a spiritual level, so inner peace is important."

But despite the allure of New York and Edinburgh, a return to living in Barcelona is next. "Living in different places, meeting people, learning the languages and making new discoveries have a massive impact on my creative process," explains Gow. "Cultures do influence me, which is why each of my albums is so different. My roots will always be in Scotland, but now I feel that everywhere, wherever I am, is my home."

To be sure, this creative lass from the Borders town of Galashiels now lives a life of constant discovery. "I'd like to feel all of it like that because learning is such a big part of living."

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Father Ray Kelly



With a deeply-rooted faith, and a little help from his friends on high, Father Ray Kelly has his Hallelujah moment

He might be Ireland's most unlikely rock star. And while he may not sport sexy sunglasses like U2's Bono, nor scowl like Boomtown Rats frontman Bob Geldof, nor even croon Take Me to Church like Dublin hipster Hozier, Father Ray Kelly can carry a tune with the best of them.

"A singing Irish priest," smirks the affable 60-something clergyman over the phone from his parish in Westmeath. "Who would imagine, right?"

By now, most know the story of the pastor's impromptu performance of Leonard Cohen's haunting Hallelujah at a Meath wedding last year. His stirring rendition brought the bride, groom and their guests to tears, and – within days – had tens of millions of YouTube users reaching for their tissues.

"I've been singing at weddings for many years," shares Kelly. "Music is a vital part of church ceremonies so, to be honest, I wasn't quite sure what all the fuss was about."

The video's popularity propelled the tenor to instant stardom, and soon his schedule was full with interviews, television appearances, concert performances, and record company interest.

"It all happened very quickly," he recounts. "One day I am preparing my service for Sunday Mass, and the next day I am in front of a camera on RTE One's The Late Late Show. It was surreal."

Less than a year later, the good Father has released his major-label debut recording *Where I Belong*.

"I wanted a good mix of spiritual and secular songs," he explains. "And songs that were best suited for my voice. It was important to me that each of the tracks could stand on their own two feet - both emotionally and in terms of sound and style - while at the same time work well alongside the others."

Along with Hallelujah, Kelly covers R.E.M.'s Everybody Hurts, Eric Clapton's Tears in Heaven, as well as traditional tunes from the Emerald Isle, Galway Bay and Danny Boy. Another wedding waltz – Together Forever – is included on the CD, as are a smattering of spiritual standards.

"Pieces like Amazing Grace and How Great Thou Art are classics of the church," he notes. "I've been listening to choirs sing those songs for years. They always help to lift the spirit.

> *"My faith is a deeply personal thing..."*

Spirituality is a hot topic for Kelly, since having 'found his religion' more than three decades ago.

"At one time I worked in the public service sector in Dublin," he recalls. "Across the street from my office was a church that I would often visit in the mornings before work or over the lunch hour. I always felt this tremendous sense of serenity while there - an inner peace would wash over me and take all of my troubles away. There was no bright light, no thunderous voice from above, nor 'on-the-mountaintop' moment – just the feeling that this was where I belonged."

After ordination, Kelly returned to his home county of Meath to serve his constituency.

"It's not an easy gig," he confesses. "The church has had its fair share of struggles both here in Ireland and abroad in recent years. The times have changed, and we haven't always been the best early-adapters. As well, all sorts of other options are now available for people who are looking for deeper meaning and purpose in their lives.

"That said, amidst all the troubles and strife in the world today, our doors remain open to those seeking solace and support. We are still a very strong community of faith, bound by our love for God and one another."

Kelly still believes in the power of attraction over promotion.

"My faith is a deeply personal thing, and often difficult to describe to people. I'd like to think that priests like me inspire our fellow men and women with the way in which we live our lives in service to others. Most of us go about our business quietly and steadfastly."

As such, and despite his newfound celebrity, Kelly says his life hasn't changed that much since going viral.

"Oh, I have a few more shows and weddings than usual lined up I suppose, and a Facebook page I have to monitor, but I still have my weekly Sunday service to write and prepare, and parishioners to answer to. In that way, I'm more blessed than Bono."

www.facebook.com/FatherRayKelly

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Anne Enright

Irish author Anne Enright brings it all home with her latest novel The Green Road

Anne Enright is still a little jetlagged.

"It always takes me a few days to get used to the time change," sighs the Irish scribe over the phone from Toronto where she is on tour promoting her tenth book, *The Green Road*. "Thankfully, the flight back is never as bad - it's shorter, and by then I am anxious to go home anyway.

"Don't get me wrong," she continues, "I love to travel, but coming to Canada and America does take a bit of a toll on me - along with the travel itself, there is all the packing and preparation."

Now 52, it is understandable that the author doesn't like being away from her quiet and quaint community of Sandycove, outside of Dublin.

"My husband, my children, my house, my writing, my routine," she muses, "that's home."

For a long time, home was anywhere Enright laid her head. Born in Dublin, she schooled in Victoria, Canada, and later roomed at Trinity College. After receiving a typewriter from her family on her 21st birthday, and studying creative writing at the University of East Anglia in the U.K., she released her first collection of short stories, *The Portable Virgin*, in 1991.

To her surprise, the anthology was awarded the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature that same year.

Though it would be another decade before she picked up a second trophy - the 2001 Encore Award for her sophomore novel, *What Are You Like*? – the floodgate of accolades had opened; in 2004, she won the Davy Byrnes Irish Writing Award, and then, in 2007, she was awarded the world's biggest literary honour – the Man Booker Prize - for her fourth full-length narrative *The Gathering*.

"That was the game-changer," she acknowledges. "Before the Booker, I was quite content, like most writers, to ply my trade in relative obscurity, holed up at home and all tangled up in paragraphs. Suddenly the book was selling like mad, and I was traveling like mad, making all sorts of appearances, doing media interviews...it was quite a whirlwind."

> *"I suppose that I am blessed in that regard - I get to go home again and again."*

Her newfound fame had an impact on her creative life as well.

"I would like to think that awards don't affect the way I write," confides Enright, who also earned the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2012 for *The Forgotten Waltz*. "But the truth is they probably do, both in good ways and in other ways. Good in the sense that they challenge me to grow as a writer, to hone my craft, to tell a better story. Not so good in the sense that, perhaps subconsciously, I might care what critics think of my work. Actually, any writer who doesn't admit to that isn't being honest with themselves."

More important, she notes, is the opinion of her readers.

"There is nothing so rewarding as meeting someone at a reading or at a book signing and having them tell me how much they enjoyed one of my stories. Knowing that I have touched them in some way, or that I have made even a little difference in their lives, is part of why I keep doing what I do."

With *The Green Road*, Enright indeed does what she does best; weaving threads of love, loss, memory, betrayal and redemption into a homespun quilt of warm and witty fiction.

"The idea of home is central to this story," explains the author, "home as a physical space, and as a place of emotion and connection. These characters, this family, though they are scattered like seeds in the wind across Ireland and the world, return to the roost – their roots - and that's when things get complicated."

Fittingly, the story is set along the most westerly point of the island, and of Europe.

"It is very much a place of departure - a place of great pain and great hope. How many of us left for greener pastures, and how many of us never returned home? Sadly, it is an all-too-familiar tale for the Irish - even today, with so many of us going abroad for work after the collapse of the Celtic Tiger.

"I suppose that I am blessed in that regard," she sighs. "I get to go home again and again."



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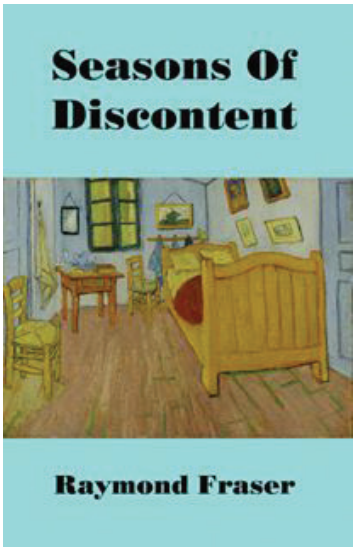


Ray Fraser

Even with 13 novels to his name, New Brunswick author Raymond Fraser is content to keep creating

Ray Fraser is keen on his Celtic heritage.

"My roots are Scottish-Irish as far back as I know," shares the 70-something scribe from his home in Fredericton. "My father's parents were a Fraser and a Buckley, my mother's a Graham and a McCarthy. The first ancestor of mine to settle in Canada was Donald Fraser, a schoolmaster who came over from Scotland around 1800. He received a grant of land in Bay du Vin, New Brunswick, and his descendants took up farming and working in the woods as lumbermen. My father did the same until the 1920s when he moved up the Miramichi River to the town of Chatham, where I was born and grew up."



Those Celtic roots, he claims, are a key component of who he is.

"People like to know where their ancestors came from, and I'm no different. The first country I visited when I made my first trip to Europe in 1967 was Scotland, the second Ireland. Most people in the town I grew up in were, and still are, of Irish and Scottish descent, which had to have a cultural affect on me, and no doubt a very strong one. A friend of mine tagged me with the nickname "The Bard", because you could say I'm in the tradition of the old Celtic bards, composing and relating tales of remarkable deeds and noteworthy characters from my homeland."

"The first rule of writing is that thou shalt not bore the arse off thy reader."

Fraser, who was awarded the Order of New Brunswick in 2012 for his cultural contributions to the province - including authoring and editing more than two dozen novels, magazines, memoirs, biographies, essays, anthologies, and books of poetry - believes he was born to be a bard.

"I was a big reader from an early age and always had a sense that writing was what I'd get around to doing in my lifetime - it was just a question of when. I thought I'd like to do more interesting things first, like be a professional athlete or a soldier of fortune or a private detective, but by the age of sixteen I'd read enough to realize writers can have interesting lives too."

The novelist, who once lived in Dublin, notes that his creative process has always been both inspirational and perspirational.

"To quote Bob Dylan, 'I don't write, I write down', and there's that part of it. What comes from who knows what spiritual dimension is usually, in my case anyway, in rough form and in need of considerable refining."

A good book, he points out, is one that readers find both engaging and entertaining.

"As my fellow Canadian writer and friend Alden Nowlan said, 'The first rule of writing is that thou shalt not bore the arse off thy reader.' A book should be good company, and make you feel glad you read it, and better for it, and want to read more by the same author."

Fraser's latest effort is *Seasons of Discontent,* part of an ongoing semi-autobiographical series about fictional New Brunswick man-about-the community Walt McBride.

"When I was at college, and later working as a teacher, I kept a journal off and on, and as I looked through it one day I saw it would make a great basis for a novel. That was the starting point, and from there I went on to spend two years writing the book."

Set in the fictional town of Bannonbridge in the early 1960s, the work has received rave reviews from both readers and critics.

"I used to feel that finishing a book was a cause for celebration, and I did celebrate. Today what I feel is mostly exhausted and somewhat discombobulated. It is an unpleasant withdrawal to go through, getting back to reality, and I miss the sense of well-being that comes from working at it every day."

Fraser won't be idle for long, however.

"I have the first draft of a novel finished, but before I get back at it I'd like to do another collection of shorter pieces, some of them fiction, some non-fiction. I have a few written now and rough notes for quite a few more. We'll see how it goes."

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Cornish podcaster **Matthew Clarke** *takes to the airwaves*



Cornish speakers, learners and the culture-curious can now immerse themselves in the ancient Celtic language thanks to veteran broadcast journalist Matthew Clarke

His weekly one-hour podcast features classic and contemporary Cornish music and news. The show attracts 400 listeners each week online, and is broadcast on four regional community radio stations as well.

Clarke lives in Camborne, a West Cornwall town that was once a centre for the Cornish tin and copper mining industry. He began his career in commercial radio as a professional broadcaster 20 years ago. Today, along with his podcasts, he also puts in shifts for an area radio station, and has a hand in video production and public relations.

The 45-year-old is a renowned musician as well, having written and performed songs with his groups Krena and Skwardya. The former won the Pan Celtic Song Contest a decade ago, while the latter has garnered global attention for singing Beatles' songs in Cornish.

Producers of the American animated television show The Simpsons shone a spotlight on the language in a 2004 episode when Lisa Simpson shouted-out a Cornish phrase, compliments of Clarke's translation.

Interestingly, despite Clarke's strong Celtic ties, he is reticent to discuss roots.

"I avoid talking about ethnicity or where people are from generally, because culture and language should not be about that. The Cornish movement is inclusive, and is about embracing those who support it, whether they are from Cornwall or from outside the country. When we start talking about background, history or heritage, it makes some people think the language and culture isn't for them, when it is accessible to everyone."

The current pool of fluent Cornish speakers is, by Clarke's estimation, approximately 300.

"You can't just phone up any organization, or stop someone in the street, and expect an interview in Cornish," he notes. "The revival of the language is a voluntary affair, on the whole, which means that people are juggling their busy everyday lives while working on it."

Clarke wrote news in Cornish online for many years, and was the webmaster for Kowethas an Yeth Kernewek (Cornish Language Fellowship) before starting Nowodhow an Seythen (Weekly News) and Radyo an Gernewegva (Radio of the Cornish speaking place). He says the scarcity of Cornish language speakers makes it challenging to get weekly contributions to his program.

"Though Cornish and traditional music is flourishing here in Cornwall, there is still a distinct paucity of music recorded in the Cornish language. There are some very positive points, though. For example, this year a Cornish group - The Changing Room - won the Pan Celtic Song Contest for their song Hal-an-Tow."

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing Clarke and his peers is a lack of proper funding.

"There is a small amount of financial support from the Cornish Language Partnership each year, and it helps. However, Cornish culture on the whole is given a pittance by the U.K. government compared with other minority cultures. Cornwall has to beg and scrape for that trifle every year, whilst trying to seem desperately thankful. Those who do work for the language are doing great things on barely zero funding.

"The rewards are really about satisfaction in wanting to provide something to help preserve and promote the language and culture."

Clarke adds that many listeners request transcriptions, but that is simply beyond his budget and resources. None of this stops him from being ambitious and optimistic, however, and he hopes to one day befriend a benefactor to finance more Cornish language projects.

"One of the other things we want to do is find a few million pounds to set up a trust and establish the first fully Cornish speaking community."

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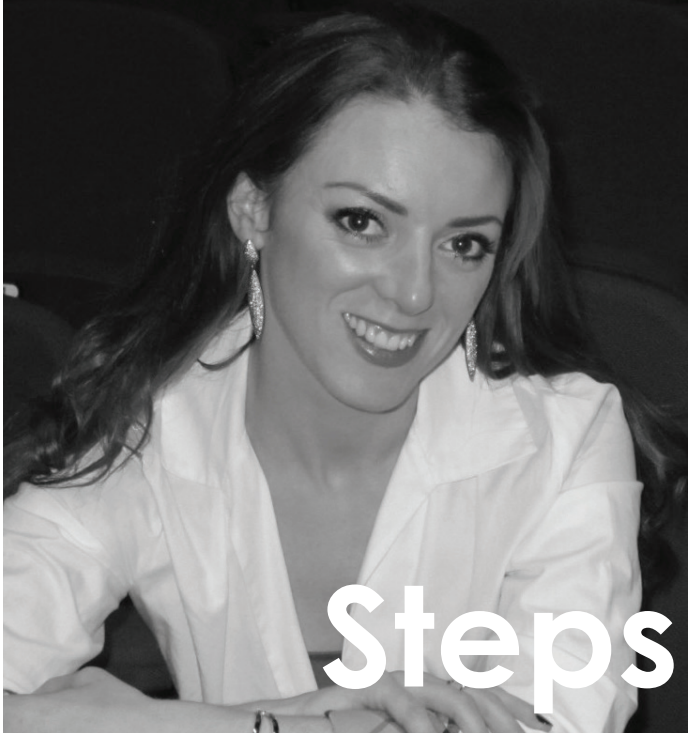






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Steps Ahead

Almost incredibly, the Irish Dance Festival is the first of its kind on the Emerald Isle

In case you missed it, Irish dancing has exploded exponentially over the last twenty years.

"I would have to say that a huge part of its popularity is because of Riverdance," says Paula Goulding, co-founder and director of the Irish Dance Festival in Co. Louth. "It sparked something in everyone; it was joyous to watch, and it just captured people's hearts. Really, it inspired an entire generation of people to put on their dancing shoes and kick up their heels."

Born and raised in West Waterford, Goulding studied Irish dance as a youngster, later touring with Riverdance for seven years.

"Having travelled to almost all corners of the world, it is amazing to find a part of our small island in every place," she shares.



The Irish Dance Festival is the brainchild of Goulding and her business partner, Shane McAvinchey. The pair ran dance camps together, but considered it strange that there were no festivals of the sort in Ireland. In 2014, the duo stepped up to satisfy the appetites of step dancers, as well as sean nós, set and céilí dancers.

The annual gathering, now in its second year, takes place in the town of Carlingford, about 100 kilometres north of Dublin. Goulding describes the coastal community as "extremely welcoming" to competitors attending the event from Europe, the USA, Canada, China, as well as from across Eire.

Participants' ages range from 6 to 60, and skill levels vary from beginners to world champions.

"Shane and I are there with the dancers for the duration, making sure everything is running smoothly from a logistical end, as well as for the individuals themselves," explains Goulding. "We make sure that classes are meeting people's needs, and that event schedules are being met."

She notes that a typical day at the festival begins with briefing the dancers on what the day holds, and answering any questions they might have. Next, attendees head off for their morning session with an assigned tutor.

"A lot of hard work and laughter happens at our classes," she smiles. "Last year, we were met with cheerful faces each morning, eagerly awaiting the day's events. It was really something special to see people enjoying dance like that."

Goulding says the gathering aims to carry on the centuries-old traditions of Irish dance.

"Years ago, the dance masters traded steps when they met and danced – sometimes at the crossroads throughout Ireland. There was camaraderie, unison, and a joy that was translated into their steps - and that is how Irish dance as we know it came to be."

Those connections are at the core of the festival's mandate.

"And we also encourage people to step out of their comfort zone, both in and outside of the dance studio," she adds. "The results have been thoroughly rewarding."

For the sophomore effort, she says they are working on incorporating the feedback they received from their first festival, including the addition of more lessons on body conditioning and fitness.

"People told us that they had a real thirst for this knowledge, and that they really wanted to know how to look after their bodies properly and prolong their years of dancing."

Goulding would love to see the festival continue to grow from year to year. It is a highlight on her calendar, and hopes that others feel the same.

"Shane and I have met with people all across the world who have adopted Irish dance and Irish culture as their own. We are so proud of where we come from, and all we can do is endeavour to spread our culture through the Irish Dance Festival."

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"In the 1990s, I was an IT professional in a high-stress corporate environment," recalls the 44-year-old healer, who lives in London, but is of Welsh, Scottish and Irish ancestry. "Whilst searching for something that would help me to cope with the day to day pressures of that world, I stumbled across Reiki. I found a local Usui Reiki Master and had a treatment."

The hour-long session moved him so profoundly that Pentecost went on to train as a Usui Reiki Master himself, before quitting his job to start treating and teaching others. Over time, he developed alternate types of therapy.

"After the initial creation of Celtic Reiki, and upon seeing how people across the world responded to it, I was compelled to help others make real change in their lives. This was no longer about 'me' and what I wanted, but about developing Celtic Reiki into a therapy that could affect deep and lasting transformation for others, many of whom were facing the darkest and most traumatic of times; those living with terminal illness, the parents of sick children, people in the grasp of life-threatening addictions, and those coping with mental health issues, HIV, and so on.

"It was through these experiences that I learned it's not about Reiki… it's about the perspective of each person and how they experience Reiki."

Much like the ancient Celts, Pentecost believes that human beings are part of an immensely complex ecosystem.

"Celtic Reiki is a form of complementary therapy that takes its philosophy from many traditions, including those of the ancient Celts. At its heart is the principle of a Universal force that not only connects us all, weaving through our lives like an unseen thread, but actually creates our physical world. This force, which is sometimes called 'Ki' - from which Reiki is derived - has been a part of mysticism for millennia. Yet in Celtic Reiki, we use the more 'Celtic' perspectives of community - the natural world, and the spirit or uniqueness of each individual person - to create a treatment or practice. For me, Celtic Reiki is like a walk in a peaceful forest or a stroll along a beach at sunset… it harnesses the force of Ki to realign us with the world around us; reminding us that together, we are all an integral part of the Earth."

He points out that Celtic Reiki is different from Usui Reiki, which was first developed in Japan in the late 1800s.

"Reiki is like electricity; it can be used to power many devices, but it is always energy, not the device it powers. Just as electricity can power an iPhone or a thought in the human brain, Reiki can be used to power many tools, like a therapeutic treatment for example. Celtic Reiki is a method of discovering your own unique perspective of Reiki, and then using this perspective to help yourself and others develop greater well-being."

Over the years, Pentecost has received thousands of emails and letters from clients, sharing the positive impact that the treatment has had upon their lives.

"Almost always, people speak of improved health, greater levels of positive thinking, or sustained and lasting change that permeates each day and the events they encounter."

One can only keep positive energy, he says, by giving it away.

"The most profound rewards for me come from the people I have met along the way. These people have taught me about kindness, compassion, forgiveness and, most of all, happiness. Every day we are offered invitations to be more loving to each other, to instill kindness in our every action, to inspire others, yet so often we ignore these. I cannot ignore these invitations; they keep getting thrust back upon me until I RSVP! Over time, I've learned that it is a wiser alternative just to be genuinely kind, loving, and forgiving in every deed. I could never have learned this in such a heart-felt way without the people I've met through my work."

www.celtic-reiki.com



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Jump into Ireland



Irish chef Catherine Fulvio blends the best of Gaelic and garlic into world-class, award-winning cuisine. Celtic Life International correspondent Lisa Jackson dishes up the details.

Catherine *Fulvio*



The first time I meet Catherine Fulvio, she is wielding an oversized golden trophy.

"I just got back from New York City this morning," she says. "I was competing in the St. Patrick's Day Beef and Guinness Stew cook-off on national TV. Guess who won?"

Despite traversing an ocean, and wrestling jetlag, Fulvio seems unfazed by an interview with a journalist, or the impending feeding frenzy of sixty hungry tourists about to land at her doorstep. But such is the day in the life of a Celtic celebrity chef, teacher, and food writer, who describes herself as having "Irish blood and an Italian heart."

Best known for hosting three TV shows – *Catherine's Family Kitchen, Catherine's Italian Kitchen, and Catherine's Roman Holiday*, she has also appeared on NBC's *Today Show* and BBC's *Saturday Kitchen,* and is now a household name both at home and abroad.

Before she was a superstar, however, Fulvio started out on the family farm in Wicklow, Ireland.

"I grew up cooking with my mother," she reminisces. "She was a fantastic cook, always entering cooking competitions. We were dragged all over Ireland. She took it very seriously."



As a child, Fulvio often played the role of sous-chef, assisting in these cook-offs across the country. Back at home, she watched her mother in the kitchen, operating one of Wicklow's first farm-based bed and breakfasts.

"She made home-cooked breakfasts, straight from the garden. Growing up here, we had our own milking parlour. We always used fresh milk and cream."

These early experiences cultivated Fulvio's appreciation for food sources, along with a strong connection to the land. Over the years, she inherited her mother's love of cookery and "field to fork" food philosophy.

"She had her own garden – as I do – and used whatever she could from the farm. That's something that I still do to this day. It's very important to me."

Today, Fulvio lives on the 280-acre family farm, where she runs the award-winning Ballyknocken Guesthouse and Cookery School. The name stems from Gaelic – Baile an Cnocan – meaning "the town land of the little hill."

"I'm third-generation here," she says proudly.

The guesthouse is old, but the cooking school is new. Arriving at Ballyknocken, it feels like entering a country estate, superbly decorated with rustic relics and dark wood floors, and with spicy aromas wafting in the hallway. I'm ushered into the parlour where a tray of leek and cheddar scones, tea, and a crackling fire await. Fulvio tells its creation story while spooning homemade carrot and cumin soup into our bowls.

"Guests began asking, how do you make this?" she says. "So I started showing them on the dining room table. I kept looking over at the empty milking parlour, thinking, this is such a waste of an empty space."

Fulvio renovated the room into a cooking studio, and within two years, opened the culinary school. Now, people flock from Ireland and abroad to the locale to learn the art of Irish cookery. Some register for a one-day workshop, whilst others stay at the guesthouse and enrol for week-long classes.

"We also book groups, and get quite a few from Newfoundland," says Fulvio. "A lot of choirs – I've been serenaded so often to Danny Boy!"

Most students gravitate to the culinary school craving inspiration, and to "fire up" their mundane daily menus. Others are keen to rub elbows with a celebrity chef - Ballyknocken certainly attracted extra attention after Fulvio appeared on national television.

"I got the opportunity to cook on the morning show here," she recounts. "It took off, and then I was on there almost once a week for a year."

Impressed, the broadcaster launched a TV series starring Fulvio, and it wasn't long before the BBC and NBC began calling as well. Since then, she has written five cookbooks – with a sixth in the works – and has won several awards.

Meanwhile, back at the farm, the esteemed chef makes gastronomy fun and easy, encouraging novices to get their hands dirty without fear. For Fulvio, the most valuable lesson is learning how to cook properly.

"I want to teach people to make 'every day exceptional' in the kitchen," she explains. "And that's not by doing extraordinary things. It's about learning the key skills in cooking."

Like what? According to Fulvio, it's about returning to the basics that many people have forgotten.

"Kneaded scones end up stones," she notes. "It's also about layering flavour – caramelizing your meat, cooking your onions until soft and sweet. Simple rules like that."

By way of example, she warns against blending all the Beef and Guinness Stew ingredients at once. Instead, build up the flavours, first by frying the onions until tender, followed by beef tossed in flour, salt, and pepper. All the caramelized juices mingle in the pan, releasing a natural sweetness into the dish that "can't be bought." Then, layer with more flavours, such as Guinness.

> *"It doesn't necessarily take more time, but it takes patience. I'm always saying, just let the cooking happen."*

Every culinary class has a theme, ranging from Irish baking to "Guinness is Good For You" to the most popular course dubbed "7,7,1."

"Seven nights, seven dinners, one plan," smiles Fulvio. "It's always booked out, because it does exactly what it says. It's one that Irish people can use frequently."

Walking around Ballyknocken's backyard, fences surround leafy greens sprouting from the soil, alongside little labels speared into the ground. Fulvio points out the various plants and herbs – golden marjoram, pineapple mint, kale – and talks about each as if they're old friends. I hear sheep bleating somewhere in the green hills, cloaked by the misty morning air.

"We have fantastic ingredients in Ireland," she says. "We've got so many forests and fresh Atlantic air. And our animals graze outside year-round. That's why our cream and milk are so yellow. Our animals are naturally grass-fed – it's why our beef and lamb have such a great flavour."

Part of the classroom experience involves picking herbs, vegetables and fruits from the surrounding gardens and orchards to use fresh ingredients in the recipes. When ingredients can't be foraged, Fulvio buys from the local butcher and neighbouring farmers.

"If you can't grow it, or if you can't produce it yourself, buy locally," she encourages. "You're supporting local farmers and there are no air miles on your food. But you're also getting the best – it's fresh and the flavour is better!

"In Ireland, we've had our fair share of problems with emigration," she continues. "We need to keep as much money in our



community as we can, keep the young people working. That won't happen unless we buy food locally."

In Fulvio's kitchen, Irish cuisine is so much more than meat and potatoes; she offers up ideas on how to create easy, tasty recipes that have Irish roots, but international flavours.

"We cook everything here, from Italian to Irish to Asian. I'm known for the Italian-Irish fusion. When you think of Italian food, it's all about eating locally and seasonally – that's the concept behind eating good Irish food as well. It works very well."

Although she acknowledges that the Irish diaspora has posed challenges for communities, in some ways, Ireland's food culture has benefitted. Years ago, Chinese food was a take-away container to be wolfed down after the pub; today, upscale Szechuan, Indian, and Thai restaurants pop up across Dublin, some serving exceptional Irish fusions.

"The Irish are very good at bringing ideas back home and mixing it with something traditional," she says. "I suppose because of our culture of being an island and always looking out. We're not afraid to travel and try new things."

Of course, some things in Ireland's food culture will never change.

"On the flight back from New York this morning, there was an Irish school tour behind me," says Fulvio, with a toothy grin. "When the plane landed, one of the young boys shouted, 'I can't wait to get home and have a big plate of spuds!' I guess the potatoes just weren't the same over there."

www.catherinefulvio.com

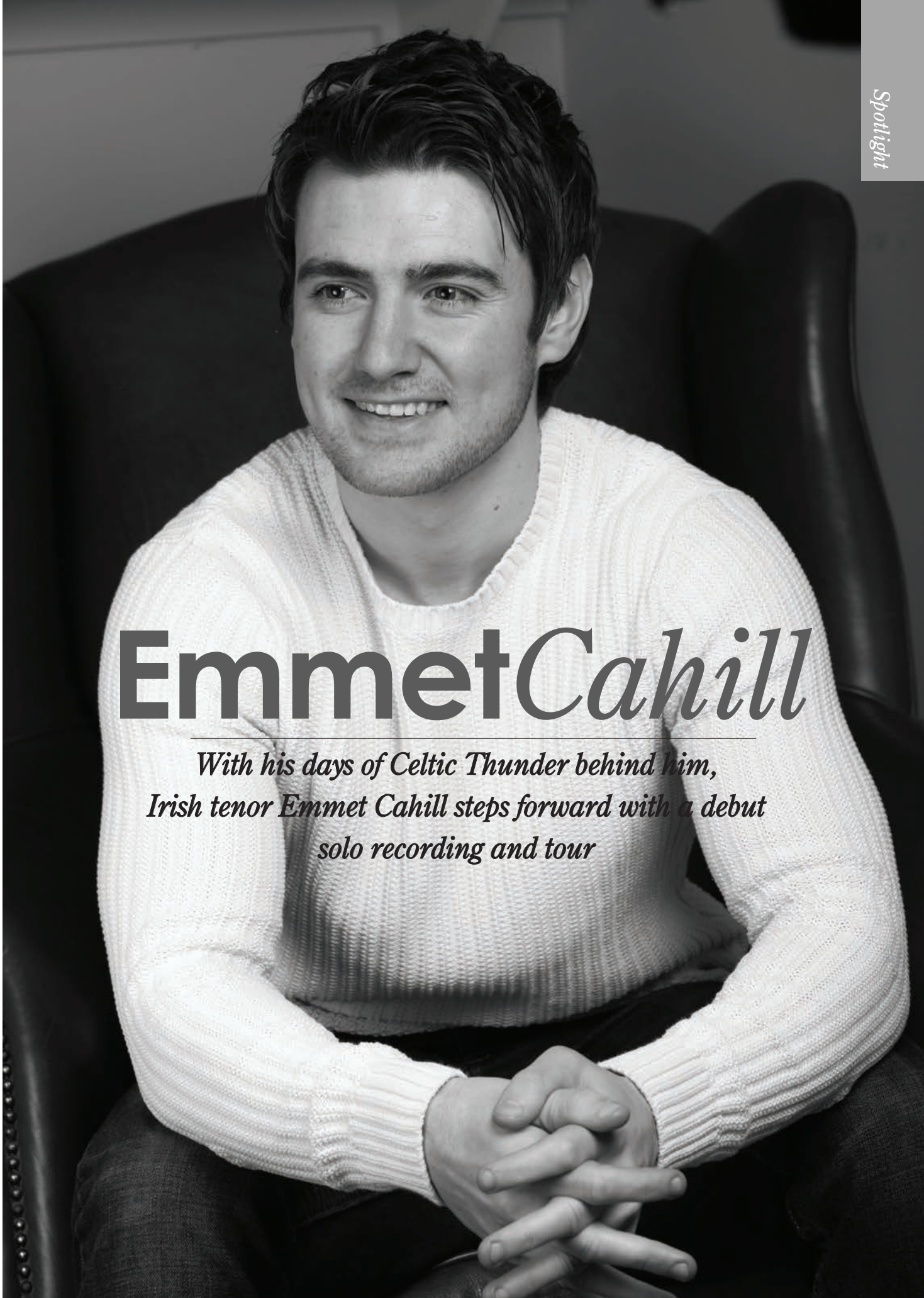


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Emmet *Cahill*

With his days of Celtic Thunder behind him, Irish tenor Emmet Cahill steps forward with a debut solo recording and tour



Despite his recent decision to pursue a solo musical career, Emmet Cahill knows the importance of having good people around him.

"I have been very blessed in that regard," explains the 24-year-old over the phone from Dublin, where he is preparing to hit the road. "First, growing up in the family that I did, and later, during my time with Celtic Thunder."

Of the latter, the Mullingar, County Westmeath native has only the fondest of memories.

"Great guys, great fun, great experience," he says. "Did I mention it was great?"

Sadly, those good times were tempered last year, after the untimely passing of the group's elder statesman George Donaldson.

"I miss George beyond words, and not a day passes that I don't think of him," Cahill says of his fallen comrade. "He was the big brother of the group, always looking out for us younger guys with a kind and encouraging word. He was always good for a bit of the craic also; you were either the butt of his jokes or you were in on the joke – it was endless.

"The last time I saw George was in Glasgow a few weeks before he died. We took in a football match together and hit the pub for a few pints afterwards. It never mattered if we hadn't seen each other for a few weeks in between shows or tours, we always just picked up right where we left off with one another."

Donaldson's death had a similar impact upon the band's other members.

"We were all shattered by the loss," shares Cahill. "The guys, the crew, management, the fans, everyone – we are a big family, and the passing of a family member is almost unfathomable. I remember thinking after sometime had passed, how can we possibly go on? It will never be the same without George. Somehow, we came together to support one another at that time, and in the months that followed, and we healed from the experience. We moved on, and I know that is what George would have wanted."

Cahill points out that his own decision to move on from the Irish supergroup was strictly personal.

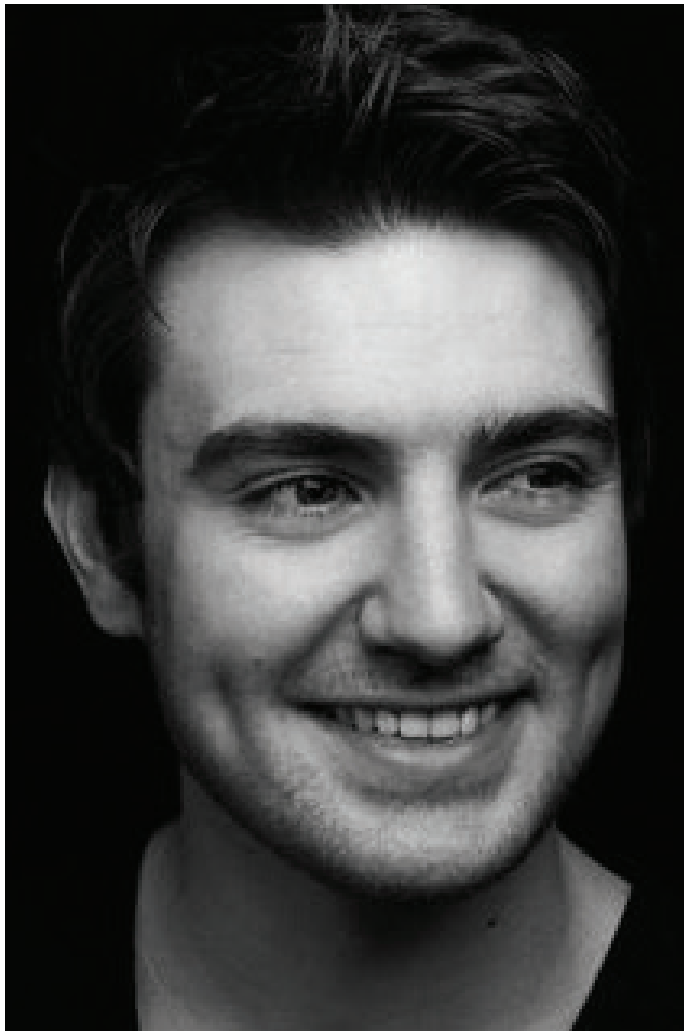
"It is something I had been thinking about for a while, actually, and after speaking with a number of people about it, I finally made up my mind to try something new. It had absolutely nothing to do with George's passing, or anyone or anything to do with the band in any way. I loved and cherished every minute of my time with Celtic Thunder, and I would never rule out doing it again down the road.

"When I joined the band I was 19 years old," he continues. "Before that I had been pursuing my own musical career so, in a sense, doing this is simply coming around full-circle."

> *"Great guys, great fun, great experience," he says. "Did I mention it was great?"*

Encouraged by his father to take music lessons at the age of four, Cahill earned a prestigious Schola Cantorum music scholarship during his high school years. After graduation, he attended the Royal Irish Academy of Music for formal classical voice training. The studies soon paid off, with the singer picking up a number of impressive accolades in the years to follow, including the RIAM Promising Young Singer of 2010 Award, and the John McCormack Young Tenor Award. And, in 2013, he was voted Tenor of the Year by The Irish Music Association in the United States.

"It is always great to be recognized and supported by your peers," he acknowledges. "To be truthful, those honours probably deserve to go to my teachers and my family more than myself. Mostly, I just kind of showed up and followed their direction and



advice. I mean, if it weren't for them, I would not be where I am today."

All modesty aside, Cahill hopes to capitalize on his good fortune in the months and years to come.

"I will be touring the US over the summer," he says, noting dates in Florida, Texas, California and elsewhere through July and August. "These are smaller, more intimate venues, which will work well with the show I have put together.

"Basically, it is just me and a guitar and piano," he says of what audiences can expect. "I will mostly be performing classic Irish tunes by singers that I grew up listening to - people like Frank Patterson and John McCormack - but there will be a few musical surprises also."

There will likely be more than a few stories to tell on stage as well.

"Well, I am Irish," he laughs. "We are known to have the gift of the gab, right? Actually, that is something I learned from my experiences with Celtic Thunder; how important it is to connect with audiences. They are just as much a part of the concert experience as the performer. That give and take of energy is an essential element, and storytelling is a great way to make that happen."

"Well, I am Irish," he laughs. "We are known to have the gift of the gab, right?"

The tenor's four-year tenure with Celtic Thunder afforded him other important lessons also.

"I went from being a teenager, fresh out of classrooms and lecture halls, to adulthood during that time. In that way, Celtic Thunder was a soft landing of sorts; I learned first-hand that there is a big difference between theory and real-life, especially in the music business, which can be very trying at times. Being on tour, in particular, has its own challenges; all the little things that you might take for granted at home - eating properly, getting regular exercise, sleeping well – those are the things that you really need to pay attention to when travelling."

Being on the road is not without its rewards, however.

"I love it," says Cahill. "Visiting other parts of the world, seeing new sights, exploring new cultures, trying new foods – it is a great life that way. The best part, for me - and I know the other guys felt this way also – was meeting so many amazing people. I've made wonderful friends around the world, people that I will know for the rest of my life."

The Irish connection, he notes, is always present.

"Being out there really opened my eyes to the impact and influence of our culture. It is simply mind-boggling to see that our little island has produced music, dance, literature and other arts that are known and loved around the world. I have met people who have absolutely no Celtic roots or ties whatsoever, and are as knowledgeable and passionate about Irish music as I am."

Cahill will continue to contribute to those customs with his first solo recording, expected later this year.

"It is still in the early stages," he confides, "so I am not going to talk about it too much just yet. I'm very excited about it, though, and for me it really is a big step towards establishing my own voice and career.

"I know how tough it can be to start something new, though. Thankfully, I am not quite starting from scratch; I can draw upon my own experiences, and I've got the love and support of good people around me."

www.emmetcahill.com

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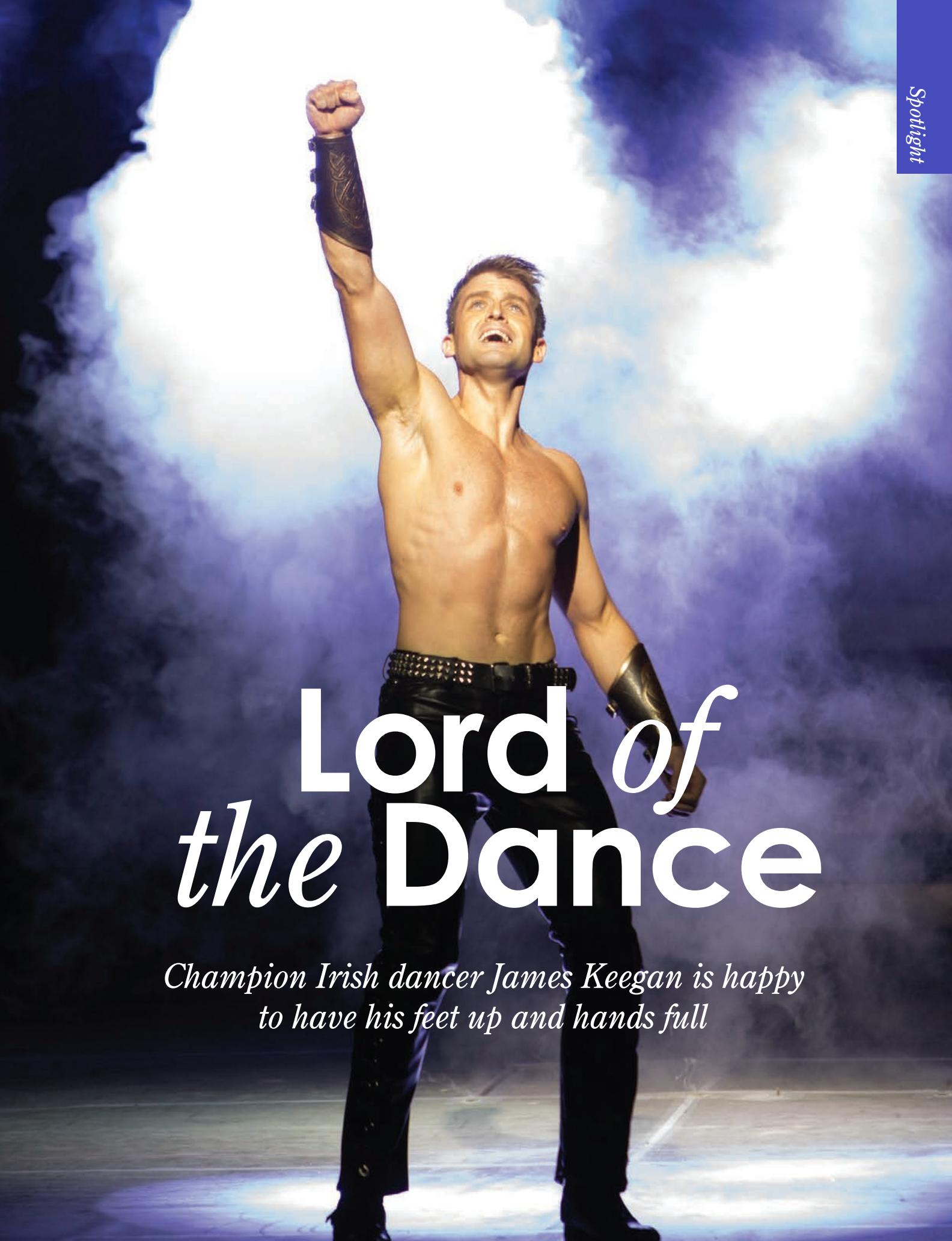
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Lord *of the* Dance

Champion Irish dancer James Keegan is happy to have his feet up and hands full



James Keegan is happy to have the day off.

"I am doing all the little things that I don't normally have the time to do," shares the 28-year-old Irish dancer by phone from London; "Errands mostly - making a few calls, shopping, cleaning - that sort of thing. Today I am the lord of the laundry."

The Manchester native sighs, then chuckles at the reference to his decade-long run with world-renowned stage spectacle Lord of the Dance.

"Actually, what would really make me even happier right now is a nice full pint," he confides with a grin. "Maybe I'll slip out for a couple of hours, find a pub where I can put my feet up, and put down a Guinness."

Keegan's Celtic roots are showing; with both his mother and father hailing from the Emerald Isle – County Leitrim and County Roscommon specifically – a thirst for the "black stuff" is completely understandable – even expected.

"Manchester, like Liverpool, Blackpool and Blackburn, has a huge Irish population," he explains. "Generations of people from all across Ireland crossed the water for work, and those communities are still very present. Really, I might as well have grown up in Dublin."

Amidst that milieu, it was natural that Keegan would take up Irish dancing.

"I was only four years old when I began attending the Lally School of Irish Dance, so I'm not sure I had much choice in the matter at the time," he laughs. "All I knew was that I liked it right away, and that it made me happy. It still does."

Unlike so many youngsters now involved with the sport, at no time did his parents pressure him to pursue the pastime, let alone succeed at all costs.


James Keegan

"They were supportive from the very start," he shares. "They would drive me to and from classes and competitions, and give me the time and space at home to practice in private. My family always encouraged me to follow my dreams. They still do."

Keegan's swift rise through the ranks is a testament to his own dedication and discipline. The drive and determination paid off quickly, and he consistently placed top-three at local and regional feiseanna in his first two years of competing. At the age of seven, he won his first title at the American National Championships. Over the next few years, his trophy case would fill up fast, winning a total of four American National, eight British National, nine Great Britain, three All-Ireland, one European and two World Championship titles. In 2000, he won every major title that could be achieved competitively in Irish dancing.

Interestingly, Keegan's other great passion – soccer – nearly blew the whistle on his dancing career.

"I remember one week winning the World Championships and flying home and three days later I had a trial with Manchester United," he told the Irish Post last year. "It was a mad one because as much as I loved the dancing, I loved the football and it was looking like I was going to have



to make a decision. The fact that it was there within my grasp, I had to give this a go, but I ended up breaking my leg. That put me out of action for about a year, so the football kind of fell away because of that."

As it turns out, one sport's loss was another's gain, and it wasn't long after recovering from his injury that Keegan was scooped up by Michael Flatley of Riverdance fame for a new production called Lord of the Dance.

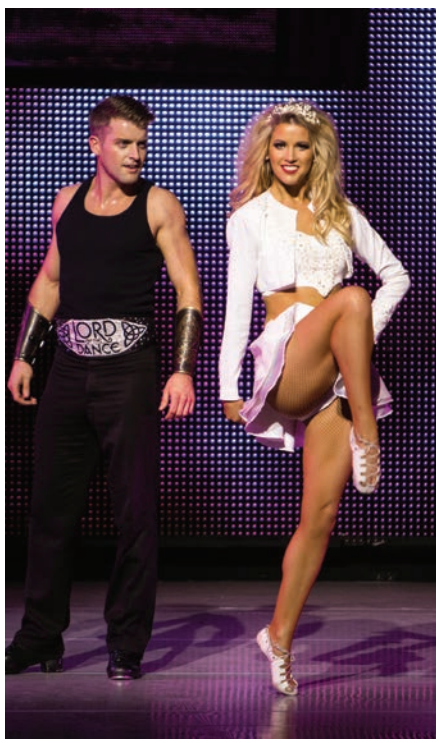
Less than a year into performances, Keegan was asked to take on the lead role, making his debut as Lord in South Africa. Since then, he has graced stages in the USA, Mexico, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Asia, and all over Europe, performing for the likes of Prince Charles and the royal families of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. One of his proudest moments came in 2010, when he showcased in his hometown.

"I had always dreamed of dancing in Manchester arena," he recalls, "and when it finally happened I was very nervous, especially with all my family and friends there."

Keegan credits his boss for keeping him cool that night.

"Michael has been an incredible influence on me. Not only is he the consummate professional, but his passion and intensity for dance – and for learning dance - is infectious. He can be tough at times, yes, but he is always fair. He has brought out the best in me as a dancer and as a person, and working with him has continuously brought my game to higher levels. It still does."

Flatley's influence can now be felt in Manchester, where, in 2011, Keegan and his sister Louise – herself an accomplished dancer – opened the Keegan Academy of Irish Dance.



"I suppose it is one way that we can give back to our community," he says. "Both of us were quite fortunate to have had the chance to be involved with dancing as youngsters – it kept us physically active and out of trouble – and we wanted to afford young people back home the same opportunities. At that age, taking dance lessons is as much about making friends and being a part of something bigger than yourself as it is about the sport. I know it was for both Louise and I. It still is."

Working with youth will likely be a part of his future, once his professional dancing days are behind him.

"It is extremely rewarding," he says. "Even now, with this production, I really enjoy being able to share my experience with some of the newer cast members. Passing on the tradition of Irish dancing, being a link in that chain, is something that I can see myself doing for the rest of my life. That is, unless Manchester United comes calling again. To be honest, though, I haven't really thought that far ahead. Right now, I am happy with where I'm at, and I've got my hands full these days.

"And I'll be even happier once I get my hands on a full pint."

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Land *of* Tweed

Our award-winning photojournalist Tom Langlands weaves his way through Scotland's west coast



Exploring the Outer Hebrides is akin to walking on a canvas where the paint is wet and the artist is never finished. A sweep of an invisible brush changes the light, landscape and colours in an instant. One moment it is flat with red-brown coloured moorlands, then mountains roll into expansive stretches of golden sand caressed by azure-tinted waters. The thing about wet paint is it sticks, and after travelling the Hebridean landscape the wonderment is you can't get it out from under your skin – nor do you want to!

My fascination with this place is more than skin deep, however. Below the veneer of ever-changing beauty lies a history and culture from which is born Harris Tweed, a fabric that clothes people, sustains the area's inhabitants, and protects a way of life.

My journey began in a rented, converted blackhouse – Tigh Bhisa – by Tolastadh a' Chaolais on the west coast of the Isle of Lewis. This traditional cottage had been restored, embracing the expectations of modern living but still oozing history and





charm. Constructed of local stone, and originally with a thatch roof, it once would have housed animals at one end and the family at the other. Harris Tweed fabric decorated the interior. The curtains, cushions and a ceiling drape were beautifully crafted in a pale blue colour that matched the sparkling waters of the sea visible from the windows.

Keen to understand more, I visited the restored blackhouse village of Gearrannan and stepped back in time. I learned about crofting; how families cut, dried and burned peat, and how they sustained themselves by farming land with poor soil, fishing the seas, keeping sheep and gathering the wool to make cloth. The practice of spinning wool and weaving cloth is indigenous to these islands and goes back hundreds of years. Each home had a spinning wheel and a small loom. The wool was coloured with natural dyes extracted from plants or from the soil of the land and the entire process was undertaken on the croft and in the home. The finished tweed was used to clothe the family, barter for goods, or was given to the landlord in lieu of rent.

My next stop was Carloway Mill. Established in the 1980s, this is the smallest of three textile mills that now produce Harris Tweed. I met mill manager Kathy Macaskill, who was born in Ontario, Canada. Her father and maternal grandparents all hail from Lewis. When she was 18-years-old, Macaskill's father sent her on a trip to Lewis so that she could explore her roots. On that trip she met her husband, also from Carloway, and they settled there in 1988. Chatting with her, it is obvious that she is passionate about Harris Tweed. "I studied textiles in Canada, and my interest in Harris Tweed started when I went shopping in SEARS. There was a big display of Harris Tweed jackets, and the colours just stood out from the other fabrics."

Carloway Mill drips with history, charm and tradition. It prides itself on its traditional craft machinery dating back to 1906, and the artisan skills of its workforce. Macaskill points out that these skills are in international demand. "We currently export to all of Europe, USA, Australia, China, Korea, Hong Kong, India, and Japan. Large companies like Chanel, Brooks Brothers and Polo Ralph Lauren all use our tweeds."

Local wool is blended with imported wool from the mainland, as the islands alone cannot sustain enough sheep. The wool is then delivered to the mill where it is washed and dyed in large vats. Each mill has its own unique range of 'house' colours, and what struck me was how the colours - now created with modern dyes - resonated with the landscape. I had seen the oranges on the moorlands, the browns in the peat, the greys in the stones of







the buildings, the yellows in the thatch of the houses, the greens in the grass and the blues in the sea and the sky.

Once dyed, batches of different coloured wools are blended in predetermined proportions to create exact colours necessary for specific customer orders. Next, the fibres are delicately mixed in carding machines before being drawn into soft yarn. The yarn is spun to make it stronger and finally wound onto bobbins ready to be used in the weaving process. None of the weaving is done in the mill. The bobbins of coloured wool and a pattern for the required weave are sent to outside weavers and the whole process returns to its roots.

> *"Watching a weaver work the pedals of a treadle loom... is to witness a craft and skill passed down many generations."*

By definition, Harris Tweed must be hand woven on a treadle loom in the weaver's home. When the company's production was at its peak in the mid 1960s there were 1,700 weavers spread across the islands. Today, there are 160 self-employed weavers.

Watching a weaver work the pedals of a treadle loom - to see the bobbins spin and watch the wefts (the threads that go left to right) and warps (the threads that go front to back) intertwine to create a length of woven fabric - is to witness a craft and skill passed down many generations.

Carloway Mill uses a regular workforce of 20 local weavers. Once the tweed is woven it is collected, brought back to the mill, and examined by eagle-eyed darners. Any imperfections are mended before the tweed is washed, beaten, steamed, pressed and finished to produce a perfect length of tweed. From its arrival at the mill as raw wool the entire process for each length of finished material is recorded. The mill then contacts the Harris Tweed Authority (HTA) in Stornoway requesting an inspection of the fabric. An HTA inspector will check the tweed and the paperwork prior to issuing the all-important Harris Tweed certification stamp with the Orb trademark. Only after the mark is ironed onto the tweed can it be labelled and distributed as Harris Tweed.

> *"It is quite amazing when you think that Harris Tweed is woven in a weaver's shed on his croft and ends up around the world."*

In 1993 the Harris Tweed Act of Parliament resulted in the creation of the Harris Tweed Authority, which subsumed the former Harris Tweed Association that had been the overseeing body since 1909. The HTA vigorously promotes and protects the Harris Tweed brand.

Lorna Macaulay is Chief Executive of the HTA. Previously, she worked for Highlands and Islands Enterprise. She grew up on Lewis and knows the importance of Harris Tweed to those who live in the Outer Hebrides. "To islanders, Harris Tweed is more than 'just another sector' in what can be a difficult and struggling economy. It is integral to our culture and our heritage, as well as retaining economic activity in the most rural districts and villages of Lewis and Harris. The Harris Tweed industry provides employment for in excess of 350 people on the islands. In an economy of our size that is hugely significant indeed."

Following its hey-day in the 1960s the industry suffered badly with the advent of synthetic fabrics and cheap foreign goods. Currently, it is enjoying a resurgence of interest with major fashion houses keen to make garments and accessories from materials with a provenance. This is generating new interest in the craft of the weaver as a way to make a living. Macaulay notes, "It is encouraging to see new weavers embracing the industry and its traditions. Weaving was largely a family tradition with the skills and the all-important loom passing from father to son. That does still happen but we also have people entering the industry who have no familial or cultural connection with the islands."

I returned from the Outer Hebrides with a few samples of Harris Tweed that now sit on my desk. They have not just travelled a few hundred miles in my bag but several hundred years through the history of an island, its people and its landscape. Harris Tweed is not just woven *on* the Outer Hebrides but woven *from* the Outer Hebrides. It is an important distinction.

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All the bits and pieces that my clothes are made of have a story. As soon as I touch any type of fabric I think about what I could turn it into, and the life I could give it. I am a big








believer in recycling materials, and I keep everything, storing whatever I gather until I use it.

I might show the work to people at shows or shoots, but I am always my first audience as I enjoy seeing the clothes live as much as I enjoyed creating them.

I love singing and dancing also, but I will always have a special relationship with designing and making clothes.

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Bretagne

The French-Celtic Connection

The past is present in western France and, as Celtic Life International correspondent Eimear O'Callaghan explains, that bodes well for the future

Singer, songwriter and teacher, Louis-Jacques Suignard, is in a hurry. The 52-year-old Breton and his band Youhadenn are booked on the overnight sailing from Roscoff on France's north coast to Ireland. He's packing his bags with all he needs for four days of performing in Cork: a toothbrush, underwear, gifts from Brittany and, if he can find them, he laughs, some matching socks. He's also taking his Irish bodhrán.

Youhadenn's immersion in Celtic culture means that Irish ballads sit as easily in their repertoire as the traditional Breton songs — including gwerzioù and sonioù, laments and ballads — for which they are renowned.

In jeans and an open-necked shirt, with his sleeves rolled up, Louis-Jacques stamps the floor and wipes sweat from his brow as he sings - traditional kan ha diskan, tales of love, adventure and the sea.

All his grandparents were native Breton speakers, but his parents belonged to a generation who were discouraged from speaking it.

"In the forties and fifties, schoolchildren in Brittany were brainwashed into thinking that their parents' language was a tragic, shameful flaw that would jeopardize their lives and chances of social success. They had to reject it and learn French instead — 'the language of a bright future' — and be saved from archaism."

The impact of that policy has been far-reaching. After the Second World War, the region hosted 1 million native speakers. Seventy years later, 200,000 remain in a population of 4 million. Most are over 60 and are concentrated in western Brittany.

Louis-Jacques' mother, Annick, spoke Breton with her parents but refused to speak it to her son. She tried to dissuade him from studying it at UBO, the University of Western Brittany. Finally, after attending one of his concerts, her attitude changed.

"I was singing my own songs in our common Breton language," Louis-Jacques explains.

"She realized the audience was understanding and sharing. Breton was no longer a thing of the past for her. It was something to be proud of.

"She agreed to do for my children what she refused to do for me - speak Breton. We're lucky."

Garvan, the musician's 17-year-old son, regularly joins him on stage to jointly celebrate their culture. Circumstances differ, but the outcome is the same: traditional Breton music is the catalyst for a new appreciation of a rich cultural heritage.

A glance at the website for Tamm-Kreiz — set up 13 years ago to promote traditional music events — lists a thousand festoù-noz, or night festivals, taking place throughout the year.

Linking arms and grouping themselves into circles, hundreds of dancers of all ages shuffle about gently in readiness for an age-old routine. Two unaccompanied singers break into kan ha diskan, 'singing and re-singing'; alternately, a pair playing a binioù and bombard provide an instrumental version of the same 'call and response' performance.

Casually dressed in baggy shirts, jumpers and jeans, long floating skirts, or short skirts and boots, the motley troupes tap, side-step and gently hop in hypnotic, revolving circles to rhythms passed down through generations.

Whether the dancers are moving to an a cappella ballad or gavotte, or to the acoustic shrill of the Breton bagpipe and bombard, the melodies set feet tapping. Unfamiliar music begins to feel familiar, connecting with something deep-rooted, elemental and Celtic.

Today the thriving Breton music tradition is among the healthiest in Europe. Every August, a love of traditional music and 'Celtic rock' brings enthusiasts from across the world to the spectacular Festival Interceltique de Lorient. In November, at the Yaouank festival in Rennes, 6,000 young people dance at huge fest-noz events to rock, jazz and techno arrangements of old and modern sounds.

More than 10,000 people play binioù, bombard and drums in bagadoù, looking and sounding similar to Scottish pipe bands; another 13,000 belong to 'Celtic circles' and celebrate Breton dance.

In 2012, UNESCO conferred international recognition on the Fest-Noz by listing it in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Citing the festivals as "communal gatherings passed from generation to generation" the UN agency highlighted their readiness to reinvent "according to changing times."

Things have changed little in 150 years around the sunny stone cottage in Perros-Guirec, the home of 63-year-old Breton activist Gireg Konan. Evergreen jasmine nightshade, laden with clusters of blue and white blossoms, climbs across its granite facade and around the blue wooden shutters and window frames.

The retired teacher recounts with pride how the house belonged to a sailor whose wife raised their children and tended to a cow, pig, chicken and rabbits while he stayed at sea. It was built in 1865 "in the traditional way" - on a framework of oak sawn from trees around their small farm, and stones from the quarry one hundred yards away.

> *"Being a proud Breton means being ready to live your life, culture and language in Brittany. Being a proud Breton is being proud of what you are, where you come from, and being ready to assume what goes with it."*

Gireg comes from a long line of native speakers and shares a name with the Welsh monk who founded Perros-Guirec 1,500 years ago. When he was born, his parents were forbidden under an 1803 French law from giving him a Breton name.

With characteristically Breton determination, his father argued that 'Gireg' was the patron saint of Perros-Guirec, and the authorities eventually relented. The original law has been relaxed but Gireg is still obliged to use his name in French, Guirec Connan, for official purposes.

The government's ongoing refusal to officially recognize minority languages militates against Breton's survival as a spoken tongue. It is the only living Celtic language without official status, and is classified by UNESCO as "endangered."

While growing numbers of children and adults are learning it, Gireg worries that the will to speak Breton may become merely aspirational.

"It isn't correct to describe the state of our language as 'healthy'," he reflects. "Rather, its social base is changing from typically rural to urban, and it's becoming, like Irish, a 'hoped for' or 'wished for' language where everyone can or could speak it, but doesn't."

One hundred thousand people understand Breton but do not use it. Supporters, like Gireg, believe its future depends on it being taught at school.

"No more progress is possible under the current system. Our schools need more money and attention but we're blocked by the State. We've little more than one hour's television per week."

He lists a host of organizations, including the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg — the Breton Language Office — and the regional assembly that are promoting Breton's use in everyday life; the proliferation of bilingual road signs suggests progress.

He predicts, however, a growing Breton clamour for political independence or greater autonomy, at least, "if France doesn't become a federal state, respecting every citizen.

"The assembly uses one per cent of our taxes and helps as much as it can but it's never enough. We need another level of decision-making.







Brigitte Kloareg

"The question now is how to go from a passive form of language and culture to an active one."

Paradoxically, while the number of Breton speakers is dwindling through age, the number of children learning bilingually is up a third in 10 years. Sixteen thousand are now studying Breton at the self-funded, 'immersion' method Diwan schools or in private Catholic and public schools.

On an unseasonably wet Thursday, 6,000 people donned waterproof jackets or plastic capes for the Tro Menez Are, the annual fund-raiser for the Diwan school in Kommanna. For one day only, landowners open their gates and make previously inaccessible countryside available to ramblers for an eight euro fee. Appropriately, this year's theme was 'water'.

Undeterred by the downpours, supporters of all ages — some wheeling push-chairs, others leading dogs — assembled in Sizun from 7:30 a.m. onwards. They registered for one of seven walks, ranging from five to forty kilometers.

Armed with maps, refreshments and hiking sticks, they set off to climb the hills of Monts d'Arrée, explore woodlands and country lanes, follow fast-flowing rivers and gaze in wonder at ancient bridges, fountains and calvaires — medieval crucifixion sculptures found in churchyards across western Brittany.

Kommanna is a town of 1,000 residents, where half the children are educated bilingually. Among those busily entertaining youngsters and helping at stalls was grandmother, music teacher and renowned traditional singer, Brigitte Kloareg.

The spirited, red-haired 60-year-old enthusiastically promotes Brittany's oral heritage. She remains angry at being denied a chance to learn Breton as a child. Though her great-grandmother was monolingual, and her paternal grandparents spoke Breton to each other, they didn't pass it on to her father.

As a teenager, Brigitte tried unsuccessfully to learn it from recordings. Remarkably, a few years later, she mastered Breton's sister language, Welsh, during just four weeks in Wales; she later learned Breton through that medium. Even now, she can't speak Breton as fluently as Welsh, although she is equally at ease singing in either.

"I couldn't find the key to Breton when I was growing up. The present didn't make any sense.

"Wales opened a door and put the pieces of the puzzle in place for me. Wales made sense of what I was and gave my life a meaning.

"Song is a safer place for me. Even so, when I was 35 and living in Wales, I tried to connect speaking and singing with a young Breton singer who was staying with us. Emotion would choke me. I'd be in tears, in pain, feeling barbaric."

Fifteen years ago, the accomplished linguist moved back to Brittany after two decades in Wales. Cultural diversity, whether in Breton, Welsh or the Gallo of eastern Brittany, is precious to her. Acknowledging that Diwan schools struggle to fund themselves, she is horrified to think that Breton could disappear.

"It's hard to be optimistic when you're fighting against a major, well-established culture that offers no state support. But it gives me a good feeling that my grandchildren and 16,000 others are learning Breton. I hoped, though, that double that number would be learning.

"To understand a country, you need to decipher its past. If you don't make sense of your past, you cannot understand your present. You cannot have a future."

At his home in Saint Yvi, Dr. Gary German from the UBO is finalizing details of a summer school to unlock some of the region's past. Uniquely, it offers language students an opportunity to learn within a Breton cultural setting.

The Centre for Breton and Celtic Research wants to introduce Brittany's Celtic linguistic and cultural heritage to a wider audience. Dr. German points out that although the Breton-speaking population is shrinking, Brittany has more native speakers than Scotland and Ireland combined.

"Despite this, Breton is 'the poor man' of Celtic Studies. Brittany is virtually unknown in scholarly circles."

He is greatly encouraged by the number of students from America and England, and other Celtic regions, that have enrolled for the summer school. Its emphasis is on the spoken word, with local native speakers participating to give valuable experience of the "living language."

The academic, who was born in Brittany to an American father, and a mother who prefers not to speak Breton, recounts coming across three elderly men as they chatted in the ancient language.

"When they saw me approaching, they switched to French. Old people are ashamed to be discovered knowing or speaking Breton. It's no longer a community language. The language of farmers



and fishermen is now hidden."

He recalls fondly how his great-grandfather, who learned French in the First World War, translated obituaries into Breton for his monolingual wife. "She wore a traditional white lace headdress — the coiffe of Fouesnant — and the most beautiful one in Brittany, in my opinion."

His maternal grandmother eventually taught him Breton. "'Learn another language like Spanish or Italian to help you get ahead in the world', she'd say.

"As time went on, and I persisted, she came to enjoy our new bond as she unveiled the secrets of the Cornouaillais dialect and the culture that only a knowledge of Breton can reveal."

That persistence is characteristic of many language proponents, and in keeping with the Bretons' historical reputation for being tough and resilient.

The spirit that motivated the first Diwan parents to establish separate schools mirrors the thinking behind Produit en Bretagne, established in 1993 to boost the economy and create employment while simultaneously promoting Breton culture. Changes in farming and fishing, Brittany's biggest industries, claimed many jobs and decimated the small rural communities which sustained the Breton language.

"If we want our economy to develop," explains manager, Malo Bouëssel du Bourg, "we have to do it ourselves. It has to be a collective approach, bringing together culture and the economy, mobilizing everybody in Brittany."

Produit en Bretagne's outward-looking strategy fits naturally with the approach of the region as a whole. Although peripheral in mainland Europe, it is well positioned to benefit from technological advances. Car manufacturing is now its third biggest industry. Its ICT sector employs 42,000 people, almost a third in research and development.

Browsing through shops or visiting town centers, in family stores and supermarkets, the impact of Produit en Bretagne is clear. More than 350 businesses, services and institutions are affiliated to it, employing 100,000 people.

Buildings and transport display its distinctive logo — a white lighthouse against a blue map of Brittany — as do 4,000 products, many labeled bilingually. More than 60 stores in Brittany and ten in Paris boast a 'Brittany corner,' boldly declaring its origins in the black and white stripes of the Breton flag.

Malo takes pride in this modern, "open to the world," business-like image. As a writer, he relishes Breton's heightened profile in music and literature; 100 books are now being published in Breton every year.

"Twenty years ago, there were only two Breton theatrical companies," he notes. "Today there are 10 times that amount producing and presenting in our language, bringing it into popular culture.







Malo Bouëssel du Bourg



"Like biodiversity, cultural diversity is best for the world. We must build relations with other cultures and be open to the world if our culture is to stay alive."

The father of five worked in the wine trade on France's Mediterranean coast before joining Produit en Bretagne. He grew up in eastern Brittany, well away from the Breton heartland, and only became fluent at 40.

"I love Breton. I create in this language. It's part of a rich culture from far and deep in the past. I love French too, but Breton feels different and I want to participate."

Language has long been regarded as a key pillar of regional identity. Early in the twentieth century, the Irish revolutionary and poet, Pádraig Pearse, wrote, "Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam" — *a country without a language is a country without a soul.*

Celtic Brittany certainly has a soul.

Language, music, education, trade and art all contribute to it. Despite obstacles in its path, it transcends nationality and crosses borders and oceans to reach out to Celts everywhere.

While most Bretons remain indifferent to activists' objectives, successive polls show that 90 per cent are proud of their ancestry and regional distinctiveness.

Brigitte Kloareg celebrates that cultural heritage, and eases "the heartache of alienation", by creating "a spiritual country".

"When I stand in my sister countries — Wales, Ireland or the middle of Orkney — it's easy to see my world all around me. Think of Italy or Hungary, and their references to a fantastic Celtic past. My country is the Celtic world."

Eimear O'Callaghan is a freelance journalist and author. Her fascination with France began as a teenager, as recorded in her memoir "Belfast Days: A 1972 Teenage Diary." She lives in Portstewart on the north coast of Ireland.



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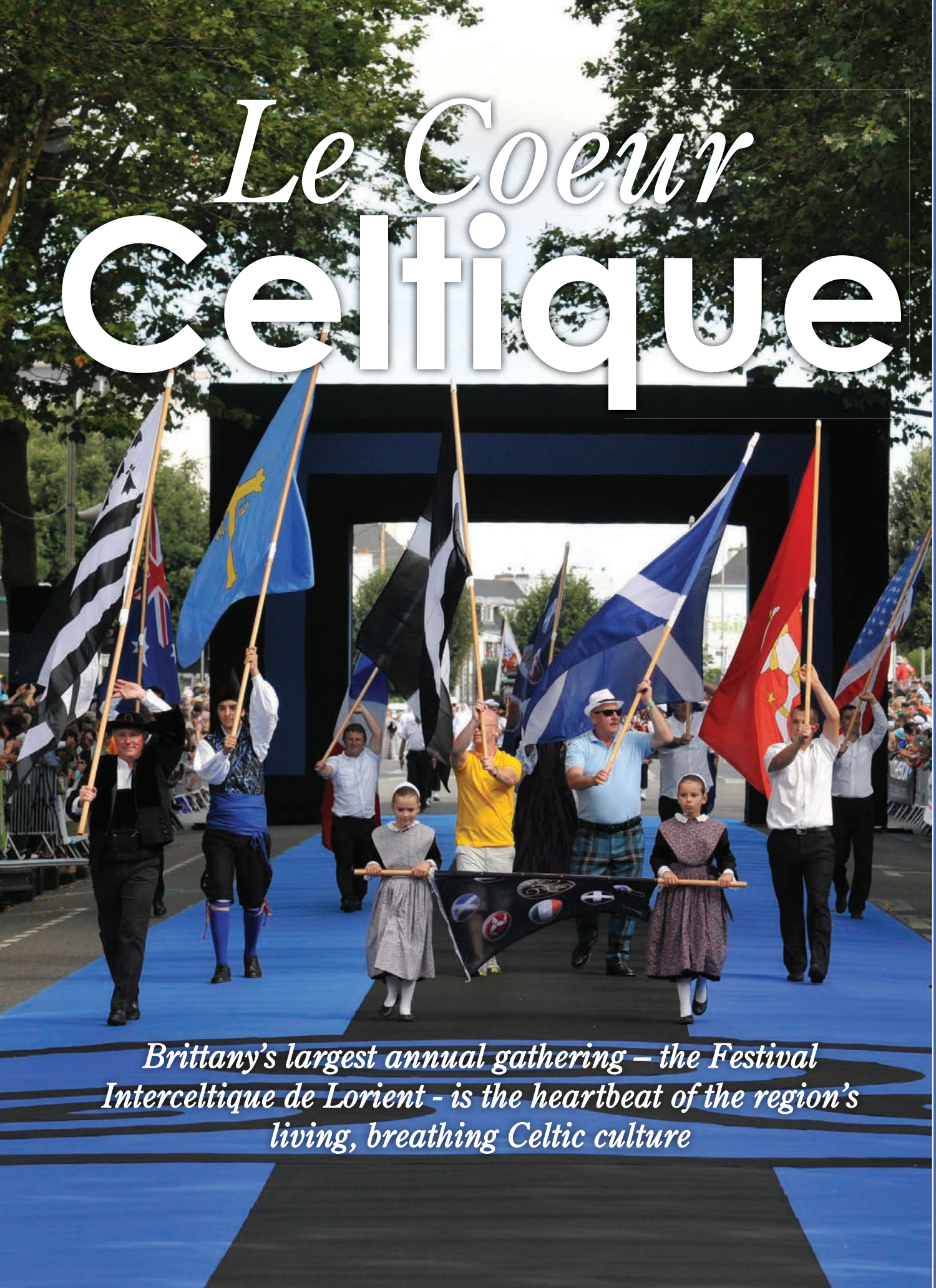
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Le Coeur Celtique



Brittany's largest annual gathering – the Festival Interceltique de Lorient - is the heartbeat of the region's living, breathing Celtic culture

He may be the busiest man in Brittany, but Lisardo Lombardia is happy to take a few moments by phone to wax philosophically on his favourite topic.

"Everyone always takes note of the melodic qualities of Celtic music," muses the executive director of the Festival Interceltique de Lorient. "And that's understandable; the voice, fiddle, and especially the pipes, are so prominent.

"Me, though – I always hear the pulse of a song first. The rhythmic instruments, especially the drums and the bodhrán, are the foundation of the music, sitting below the melody lines, keeping the tempo like a heartbeat."

As the heart and soul of the world's biggest Celtic festival – which attracts nearly one million visitors to Brittany's beautiful southwest coast each year – Lombardia is more than qualified to speak to the subject of its soundtrack.

"We've had some of the biggest names of the genre perform here over the last 45 years," he continues; "Alan Stivell, The Chieftains, Natalie MacMaster, The Dubliners – too many to recall. And one thing I noticed about those great musicians, and some of the very good new artists, is they all have very tight rhythm sections. If the pacing – that heartbeat – is sound and strong, then everything else falls into place."

Things are falling into place nicely for this year's festival, which takes place in the charming community of Lorient from August 7 – 16. Along with another star-studded line-up of performers, including Simple Minds, Carlos Núñez, Plantec, Charlie Winston, Zachary Richard and others from the seven Celtic nations and beyond, rumours have been swirling since April that the Rolling Stones might make the bill.

And if all that music wasn't enough, the 10-day gathering brings a mélange of other Celtic cultural components into the mix, including parades, dancing, theatre, literature, cinema, cuisine, competitions, and more.

Lombardia, who was born in the Asturias region of northern Spain, explains that, since its inception, Interceltique has always strived to integrate an array of influences.

"At the heart of it is the idea that what it means to be Celtic today is up for negotiation.

"How do we define ourselves as a people? And how do we redefine ourselves for the modern world? Are we cross-Celtic? Pan-Celtic? That concept has become a bit of a moving target."


Lisardo Lombardia


Dalla


Sarah Deere-Jones

He adds that, as the classification of Celtic has evolved, so has the festival.

"It has opened the door to greater opportunities for us; today we have acts from all over the world, playing styles of music that you perhaps wouldn't have heard just a generation ago – Euro-Celt, Afric-Celt, Celt-Asian, etc. This ongoing, organic cross-pollination of cultures will continue to present all sorts of exciting possibilities for us in the future."

While Lombardia's enthusiasm for fresh sounds keeps the festival going forward, he is careful to keep one foot firmly in the past.

"We know where we come from. Our roots are deeply embedded in the seven Celtic nations, and everything that has sprouted and grown here in Lorient over the last 45 years has come from that rich soil."

As with previous gatherings, the 2015 festival will again honour individual Celtic regions. This year, the spotlight is on both Cornwall and the Isle of Man.

"Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany get a lot of attention," admits Lombardia. "When we think of Celtic, we most often think of those countries. The reality is that these smaller Celtic countries – Cornwall and Isle of Man – are just as vital to our Diaspora as the others. The current Celtic revival in those two places is due in large part to the great music coming out of there right now."

Many of those artists have been invited to appear at this year's festival, including Barrule, Kezia, the Aggie Boys Choir, Ruth Keggin, 3 Daft Monkeys, Russell Gilmour, and Cornish quartet Dalla.

"I first went to Lorient many years ago in my teens,' recalls Neil Davey, Dalla's senior member. "It was a great inspiration, and in many ways a homecoming. We were in a small minority of people interested in playing Cornish Celtic music back home at the time, and suddenly at Lorient we were surrounded by thousands of people celebrating their Celtic traditions, and recognizing ours too. Those first trips to Lorient lit a fire which has driven me throughout my career."

Like Davey, Sam Kelly of fellow Cornish band The Changing Room is excited for the opportunity to appear before appreciative audiences.

"We are delighted to be involved with this year's Festival Interceltique," he shares via email. "We have all wanted to perform there for such a long time, and the timing couldn't be better for us."

Kelly is referring to the newly-formed quintet's recent string of successes; earlier this year, the group picked up Pan Celtic Song of the Year honours, along with two other awards, at an international event in Derry, Northern Ireland.


The Changing Room

"There seems to be a surge in interest for all things Celtic at the moment," he adds. "We are doing our bit to raise awareness of the Cornish language by drawing upon our country's culture and heritage, and our Celtic roots, as inspiration for our songs. It certainly gives us distinctiveness."

Cornish harpist Sarah Deere-Jones will be making her Lorient debut this year also.

"It will be terrific fun to play at one of the major Celtic festivals in the world and see all the other artists," she notes. "And I love the idea of forging closer links between Breton and Cornish traditional music – it simply makes sense considering how close we all are to each other."

That feeling of inclusiveness and belonging, notes Lombardia, remains close to the core of the event's mandate.

"We may be seven nations, and our Diaspora might be spread all around the planet, but we are one family. And like all families, we continue to grow.

"Interceltique has certainly evolved since 1970 – it's had to; the popularity of Celtic music – and the large number of artists now producing it – has grown significantly, and we have adapted accordingly.

"All that said, and however much the body of the festival has changed, the heart and soul of the event remain the same."

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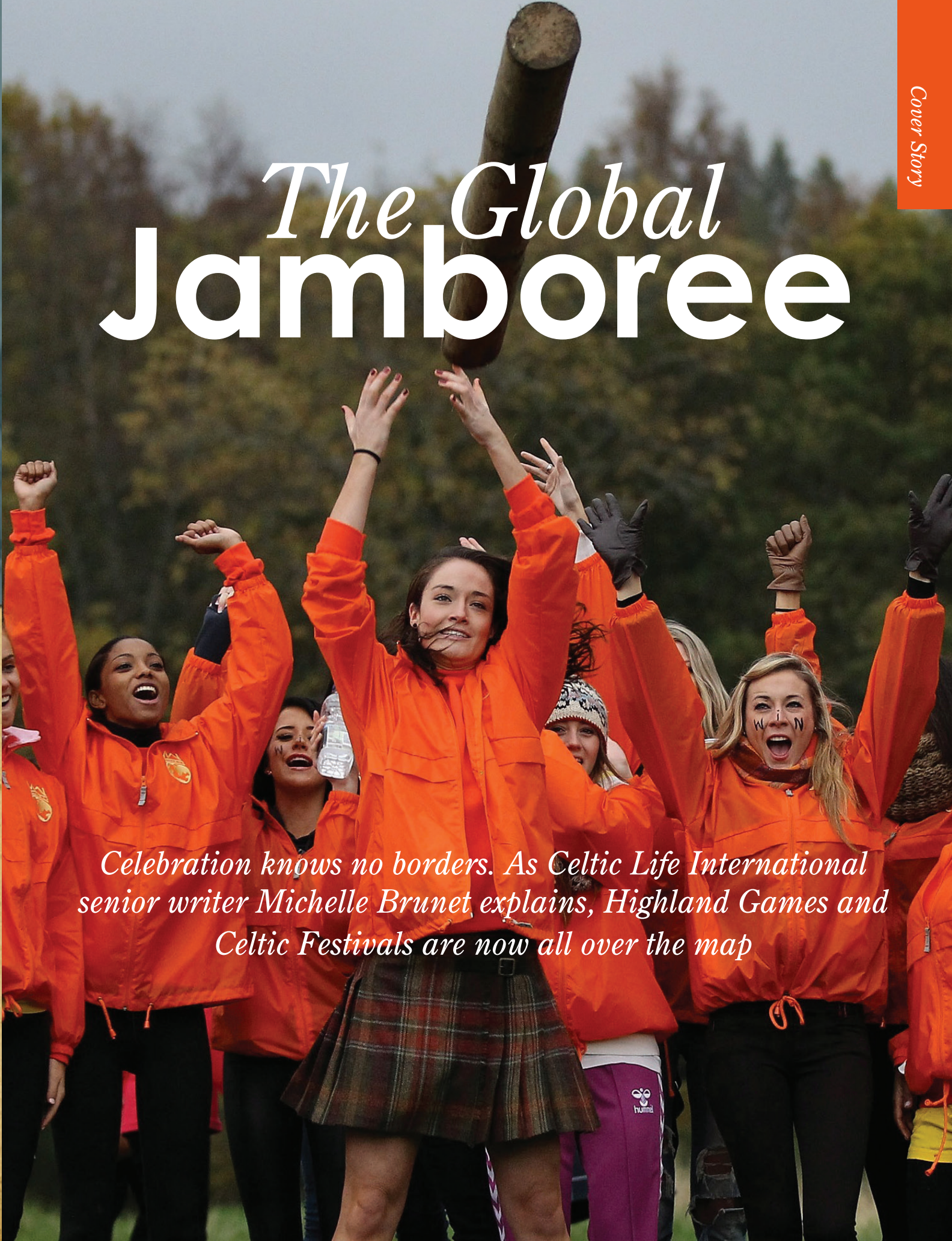
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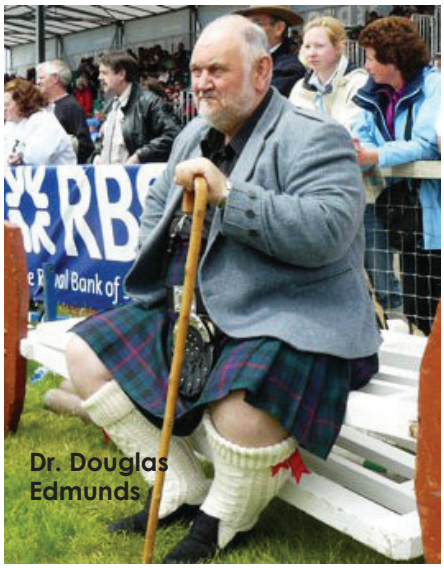
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The Global Jamboree



Celebration knows no borders. As Celtic Life International senior writer Michelle Brunet explains, Highland Games and Celtic Festivals are now all over the map


Dr. Douglas Edmunds

In 1981, Dr. Douglas Edmunds organized a World Highland Games Championships in Lagos, Nigeria.

"It was amazing," recalls the 71 year-old over the phone from his home in Glasgow, Scotland. "We had guys like Bill Kazmaier from America, Geoff Capes from England, Dave Harrington from Canada, and a local Nigerian - Christopher Okonkwo - who had competed at the Munich Olympics in 1972. The festival chieftain was the Nigerian Minister for Sport, and the Nigerian Police Pipe Band performed. It was a real jamboree!"

Edmunds attended his first Highland games when he was 17. Since then, the "Godfather of Strongman" - and former two-time world caber champion - has competed in hundreds of Games.

"When I turned professional, that was the greatest thing I ever did," he reminisces. "It opened up the international field, and I competed in America, Australia, Sweden - all sorts of places."

Along with the Nigerian gathering, Edmunds has coordinated similar events in Scotland, Northern Ireland, England, Iceland, Finland, Holland, Canada and Zambia.

He has also just finished writing another book, The Warrior Breed, which explores the history of Highland games.

"The games have become a global phenomenon...we have all these people with strange sounding names competing today - it's wonderful."

Sure enough, Highland games are now, literally, all over the map. The International Highland Games Federation (IHGF) is currently affiliated with 26 countries, including India, Chile, Singapore, Greece, Georgia, and Germany, with more expected to jump on board in the years ahead.

"It has really caught on," says Francis Brebner, who founded the IHGF in 2001 to organize and sanction international championships for both amateur and professional participants. "In the past few years it has been amazing to witness countries like Hungary, Romania and Croatia adopting the games. These people now see the event as real tests of strength, skill and endurance."

Originally from Peterhead, Scotland, Brebner himself competed in Highland games professionally for 18 years. Travelling has been a highlight for the seven-time world caber champion and two-time world record holder.

"After arriving in the town of Wipu, New Zealand, I felt as if I was in heaven," he notes of one of his favourite competition spots. "I remember walking through the town and talking with all the shop owners and finding out they were all descendants of Scottish emigrants."

The IHGF is an ever-evolving entity, regularly picking up new members. The Scottish Highland Games Brazil joined the federation earlier this year.

"It began with some classmates who discovered this competition on the internet and decided to make an amateur version at our school," says Daniel Schreiner, one of the South American festival's organizers. "It is a unique event in Brazil, and it's something people wait all year to participate in."



The gathering's fifth edition takes place this July in Esteio, Rio Grande do Sul, with an agenda that includes hammer throw, caber toss, broadsword dance, Braemar stone put, and backhold wrestling. A medieval festival and Scottish cuisine are also on tap. "I love the group games, such as the tug of war," smiles Schreiner. "The crowd always goes crazy cheering."

Cheering crowds are also part of the soundtrack for Switzerland's Appowila Highland Games, a festival born from one man's fascination with Scottish culture.

Martin "Mac" Tshirren, president of the event, says he fell in love with Scotland on his first of seven visits to the country. On one trip, he invited his closest friends to come along. Over beers at Biddy Mulligans pub in Edinburgh, the Swiss travellers founded the Appowila Association, which hosted its first Highland games in the town of Abtwil, Switzerland, in the fall of 2009.





"Biddy Mulligans has become a place of pilgrimage," explains Tshirren. "Each time an Appowila member is travelling to Scotland, he has to drink at least one pint at the table where the group and games were founded."

An affiliate of the Scottish Highland Games Association, the Swiss society currently has 138 members. Of the ten or so similar events in the country, the biennial Appowila is the biggest, attracting an estimated 16,000 visitors at their last games in 2013. Even more excitement is expected at this September's gathering.



"We will be hosting the Swiss championships in piping and drumming, with three judges from the Royal Pipe Band Association of Scotland," notes Tshirren. Other activities include a whisky tasting, a medieval market, pony rides for the kids, Irish folk music played by Serbian, German and Swiss bands, and heavy events featuring athletes from Norway, Scotland and Germany.

Like Highland games, Celtic festivals now enjoy world-wide popularity, with events happening in not-so-typical locations like China, Barbados, Cuba, Poland, and Italy.

The Montelago Celtic Festival takes place in the Italian province of Macerata each August, attracting more than 20,000 attendees annually.

"We had been pushing Celtic music here for years," says promoter Luciano Monceri who, along with co-founder Maurizio Serafini, started the gathering in 2003. "The festival was created as a chance to fuse traditional Irish songs with other genres."

Perhaps poignantly, the event is located in an area that was devastated by an earthquake in 1997. "The festival has helped to rebuild and revitalize the economy here, providing work for local people in restaurants, shops and so forth."

Visitors from all over the world are invited to pitch their tents and enjoy three days of non-stop music. Monceri calls it a "small Woodstock" where "you can feel free, away from the usual stresses of everyday life".

"It is not just a music festival, though" he adds. "There are a lot of activities, including rugby, games, conferences, trekking, a market, instruments and activities stages, a family village, and other goings-on pertaining to Celtic-European culture."

Irish-themed gatherings aren't the only ones celebrating Celtic heritage. Each spring, up to 150 organizations around the world celebrate Gouel Breizh, the annual Festival of Brittany.

This past May, approximately 2,500 people attended Breizh-related events in Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Trang and Hanoi, Vietnam. Organized by KBBV, the Breton Society in Vietnam, the festivities have been an annual occurrence since 2002.

"It is a yearly opportunity for Breton people living in Vietnam and friends of Brittany to meet, celebrate Breton culture, listen to Breton music, dance traditional dances and share our passion for all things Celtic," says Mikael Gwilhom, the society's president.

Gwilhom is also a member of the band Lang Dzu, a Breton-Vietnamese fusion folk band which performs regularly at the festival.

That cultural fusion also takes centerstage in South Africa, where Scottish dance competitions and tartan kilts hold fort alongside traditional African performances and military camouflage attire at the annual Highland games.

"For eight summers it has been the biggest event in the Midlands, attracting upwards of 4,000 people from all parts of the country," says event manager Brendan Grealy.

Sadly, this year's games have been postponed after a main sponsor pulled out in April. However, Grealy is hopeful the games will resume in 2016.

"It's the 'swirl of activity' that I'll miss most - the horses bringing out the VIPs to the main arena for the opening ceremony...the crowd urging the teams on… the teams urging each other on…the various pipe bands coming onto the field for massed pipes and drums or separating themselves into groups to play amongst the crowd….I love the hustle 'n' bustle."

Hustle 'n' bustle is also at play back at the Glasgow home of Dr. Douglas Edmunds. Just two days before the Carmunnock International Highland Games – an event he founded – his house is a flurry of activity.

"It's just a small gathering," he says modestly of the celebration, "but it attracts international competitors, and that makes for a great atmosphere.



"What we have this year, apart from the traditional heavy events, is a martial arts group doing a live fighting demonstration. I'm trying to get back to the idea that the Games began from warrior traditions.

Of course, there will be the usual dancing, music, and the participation of the local people. I love the sights, the sounds, the sensations…it's always a real jamboree!"



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Virginia Highlands Festival

July 31-August 9
Abingdon, VA, USA

The Blue Ridge Parkway is said to be "America's Most Scenic Drive." If you time your drive just right, you can stop in the historic town of Abingdon for the Virginia Highlands Festival. Robert Potterfield - founder of the famous "Ham for Hamlet" Barter Theatre - started the festival in the late 1940s. This year's event, themed "Create Your Own Adventure," takes place July 31 to August 9. Voted "Best Art Event" by readers of Virginia Living magazine in 2014, the gathering enlists over 100 volunteers. The result is an amazing array of events, including juried art shows and competitions, historic re-enactments, tours, outdoor adventures, writing, art and dance workshops, and live music. As always, there are plenty of activities for the kids. Set in the ruggedly romantic and welcoming Blue Ridge Highlands, the festival also showcases southwest Virginia's Scots-Irish heritage; the Youth Highland Games take place that first Saturday. The following day, a Celtic ceilidh is scheduled with performances from the Appalachian Highlanders, the Border Collies, Sharon Knight, Tuatha Dea and Barleyjuice. And, on August 4, visitors can learn about a particular Scots-Irish influence in Scott Schumaker's "History of Moonshine" lecture.

www.vahighlandsfestival.org



Almonte CeltFest

July 10-12
Almonte, ON, Canada

Have you heard of the Ottawa Valley twang? The distinctive dialect - characterized by expressions like "take off your hat an' stay a while" or "g'day, g'day" - came from the area's Irish, Scottish and French settlers. The southern Ontario region is also known for its unique style of step dancing, fiddling and storytelling. Since 1997, the Almonte CeltFest has celebrated that Celtic culture annually. This year's festival takes place July 10-12 at Gemmill Park in Almonte (Mississippi Mills), with additional events at the Old Town Hall and local pubs. Over three days, visitors can enjoy the music session tent, whisky tastings, a beer garden, and educational workshops. There will also be dancing, hurling matches, rugby matches, a fiddle mass at Holy Name of Mary church, and a variety of vendors. Bands and music headliners include the Dardanelles, the Peelers and the Steel City Rovers. CeltFest has something for attendees of all ages, including a seniors' tent and a Lil' Celtz Zone for the wee ones. As is an annual tradition, the Danny O'Connell Memorial Award is presented to an area fiddler for their outstanding contribution to the culture, who then performs for all on the main stage.

www.almonteceltfest.com



Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo

June 30-July 7
Halifax, NS, Canada

Whether you have never attended the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, or have been in the audience year after year, you are seeing the "the world's largest annual indoor show" for the very first time. With nostalgic culture and true-to-life history, the two-and-a-half hour show has something for everyone. Attendees will enjoy high-caliber music and dance, symbols of service and sacrifice, comedy and acrobatics, alongside moments of moving tribute. This year's production runs from June 30 to July 7. During that time, you will know the Tattoo is in town thanks to its free outdoor concerts and a massive Canada Day parade. You will also see international cast members walking the Halifax streets during their time off. This year, over 2,000 North American and European performers are featured, including Sweden's Home Guard Band of Eslöv, the Stadacona Band of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Paris Police Gymnastics and Motorcycle Teams, Estonia's Club Piruett, local Irish dancers, and Fellswater - a Celtic music group from Boston. This year's Tattoo themes include the end of the Second World War and the 30,000th "Last Post" at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing. Additionally, on July 3, the event will host a "family day" matinee, and will recognize the International Gathering of the Clans.

www.nstattoo.ca

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New Brunswick Highland Games Festival

July 24-26
Fredericton, NB, Canada

Originally built in 1828, Old Government House in Fredericton, New Brunswick has served many functions, including as a school for the hearing impaired, a military barracks and hospital, and as a headquarters for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Today, it is the home and office of the province's Lieutenant-Governor. Each summer, its gorgeous grounds host the annual New Brunswick Highland Games Festival. This July 24-26, the event will be celebrating its 34th year, and is expected to attract more than 7,000 attendees from across Atlantic Canada and beyond. Named one of the Top 100 Events in North America by the American Bus Association, the festival puts equal emphasis on the Highland Game competitions and Scottish Festival activities. A fun and festive 5K run/walk along the Saint John River is now an annual tradition, where participants are encouraged to dress in kilts or Scottish-themed costumes, and are serenaded by pipers and drummers. This year's Friday night concert features the internationally renowned band Vishtèn, who will reinforce the regional bonds between Acadian and Celtic music, while Saturday night's ceilidh will feature kitchen partiers Bottoms Up, and crowd favourites Masons Tenders.

www.highlandgames.ca

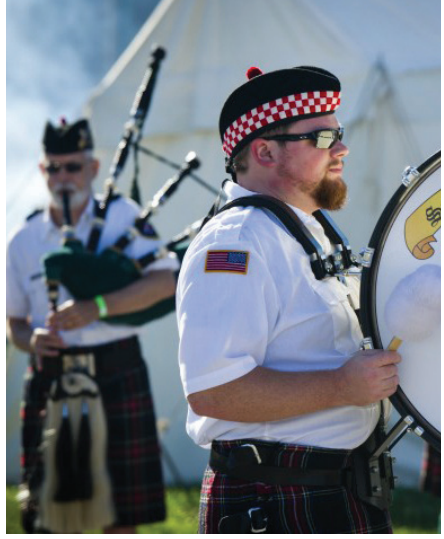


The Calgary Highland Games

September 5
Calgary, AB, Canada

"Whether you're a Scot… or not," you are welcome to attend the Calgary Highland Games. The games celebrate their 102nd anniversary this year. The events take place on Saturday, September 5, and it's sure to be a jam-packed day. Sports lovers can watch soccer games with the donation of a non-perishable food item, which will go to the Calgary Interfaith Food Bank. The 4th Annual "Scots on the Run" will take place at Springbank Park for All Seasons in support of the Canadian Cancer Society – the website says, "kilts are not mandatory, but encouraged!" For music fans and musicians, the festivities offer individual competitions for the Highland bagpipes, side drum, tenor drum and bass drum in the morning. In the afternoon, bands will compete. Of course, Highland dance is not neglected; a variety of dances are included in the competitions, including the Sword Dance, the Highland Fling, and the Scottish Lilt. Every year, the Calgary United Scottish Games Association (CUSGA) awards scholarships and bursaries to help youth further their education and pursuit of highland arts. Competitors under 18 can apply for bursaries of up to $750. Post-secondary students may apply for scholarships of $1,000. The Calgary Highland Games are always a rewarding experience for both competitors and attendees.

www.calgaryhighlandgames.org



Columbus Scottish Festival

September 12-13
Columbus, IN, USA

From September 12-13, head over to the Bartholomew County Fairgrounds in Columbus, Indiana for the 24th Annual Scottish Festival. This year, the honoured clan is the "Family of Bruce." According to the festival website, Family of Bruce International (FOBI) was established in October 2005. At that time, Family of Bruce Society of America and Bruce International were combined into a single organization. The present chief of the clan is Andrew Bruce, 37th Chief of the Bruces. The festival is also proud to host the 2015 Annual Highland Games Competition on Saturday, which is open to all who are interested in participating in heavy athletics. The same day, a ceilidh will be held at the Festival Entertainment Pavilion. The evening starts with a buffet, followed by entertainment. Musical groups to perform at the festival include the Maidens IV, Colin Grant-Adams, the Southern Indiana Pipes and Drums, and the American Rogues. There will be plenty of other activities over the course of the weekend also, such as highland dancing, sheep dog demonstrations, historical re-enactments, children's activities and more. Even pets are welcome at certain events!

www.scottishfestival.org

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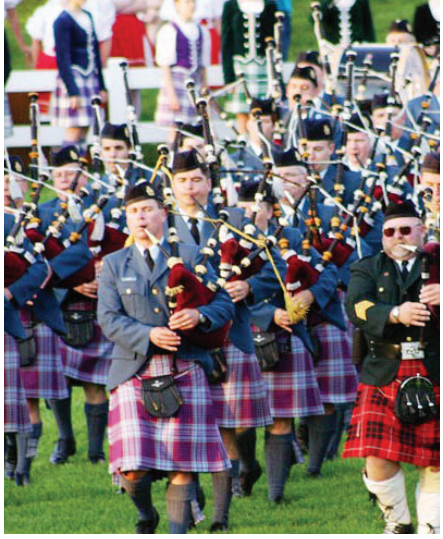


International Gathering of the Clans

July 21-26
Yarmouth, NS, Canada

Is your last name Webster, Bain or MacIntosh? If so, you're part of one of the many Scottish clans which settled in Canada. If you want to learn more about Scottish heritage and are planning to be on the South Shore of Nova Scotia this summer, the International Gathering of Clans in Yarmouth is certainly the place to be. This is the 10th gathering of clans in Nova Scotia since 1979, and activities will take place July 21-26. The celebration will be a showcase for artists, musicians and Scottish enthusiasts alike. Events include a cemetery tour, a ceilidh, a Kirkin' of the Tartan, and more. If you can't make it to Yarmouth, there are plenty of other IGC events happening in other parts of the province. If you find yourself in Halifax on July 3, you can enjoy a tour of Citadel Hill during the day, followed by Clan Night at the Royal International Tattoo. Near the Northumberland Shore, the Antigonish Highland Games Week begins on July 6. Wherever you are in the province, there's sure to be activities nearby in July. Events are coordinated by the Federation of Scottish Culture in Nova Scotia as well as the 2015 International Gathering of Clans Committee for Nova Scotia.

www.internationalgatheringoftheclans.ca



The Glengarry Highland Games

July 31-August 1
Maxville, ON, Canada

Rain or shine, the Glengarry Highland Games will be taking place July 31 to August 1 this year. According to the website, the first Glengarry games were held more than 60 years ago. The tradition continues in 2015, with over 50 pipe bands and more than 200 dancers competing. The games are held in Maxville, ON, less than an hour from Ottawa. It's the home of the North American Pipe Band Championships. The pipes are the main attraction, but there is plenty more to see and do. The Tartan Ball will be held the night before the games in the Metcalfe Centre. A "social hour" will begin at 6 pm, followed by dinner and a dance. Music and entertainment is provided by the MacLeod Fiddlers, the MacCulloch Dancers and the Glengarry Pipe Band. For music fans, an outdoor concert is featured during the Friday night Tattoo, and the Massed Bands perform at Saturday night's closing. Throughout the games, there will be fiddling, heavyweight events, military tug-of-wars, and Scotch tasting. In addition, check out the vast variety of vendors and concessionaires "selling all things Scottish." This is a premier Canadian festival, not to be missed!

www.glengarryhighlandgames.com



Caledonian Club of San Francisco Highland Games

September 5-6
Pleasanton, CA, USA

The countdown is on for the Sesquicentennial Scottish Highland Gathering & Games. On September 6 and 7, the Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton, San Francisco, will play host to the games that have been a tradition since 1866. Events include archery, a British car display, birds of prey, dancing, and a kilted mile race. Animal lovers of all ages can visit the Amador Pavilion area to see the farm critters on show. In addition to the annual Sheep Dog Trials, other furry friends - Clydesdale horses, cows, Highland cattle and belted galloways - will be present. For participants over 21 years of age, the "Whisky Live" tasting offers over 100 different brands of single and blended malt. Everything from Scotch whisky, Irish whiskey, American and International brands are available to tickle your taste buds as well. There are also cigars, as well as Belhaven Scottish Beer. A variety of entertaining acts will be performing during the games, including Albannach, Michael Mullen, Molly's Revenge and Tempest. According to the website, you'll find "the best of Scotland's merchandise" at the games, and vendors will have you dressed up in Scottish attire, whether you'd like to be decked out in kilts and period clothing or sporting something a bit more modern. As always, there will be a feast of fabulous foods on site.

www.thescottishgames.com

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Antigonish Highland Games
July 5-12
Antigonish, NS, Canada

Tìr Nan Òg means "Land of Eternal Youth" in Gaelic, and it is just one of the many components featured at this year's 152nd annual Antigonish Highland Games. Kids can participate in their own highland games - including tossing a mini caber - and partake in a number of cultural activities, such as a milling frolic and storytelling. Of course, there is plenty to keep the adults busy during the eight days of festivities; the Antigonish Highland Games has been the host for Canadian Scottish Athletics Federation and International Highland Games championships, so naturally events, piping, drumming, highland dancing, as well as track and field, tug of war, biking and distance running competitions are all a part of the gathering. Also, numerous entertainment and cultural immersion opportunities are available to attendees; archery, square dancing, clan gatherings, ceilidhs, an ecumenical service, a kilted golf tournament, the Grand Street Parade, and Nova Scotia's longest running Scottish concert - the Concert Under the Stars - are just some of what is on tap. This year's main stage will also showcase The Year of the Burning, a theatrical production portraying the 19th century journey Scottish immigrants took to Pictou, Nova Scotia.

www.antigonishhighlandgames.ca



Milwaukee Irish Fest
August 13-16
Milwaukee, WI, USA

35 years old. 16 stages. 100 acts. Over 4,000 volunteers. These are just some of the numbers that make up the Milwaukee Irish Fest. Often called the "world's largest celebration of Irish music and culture," this year's event takes place August 13-16, under the banner of "Living Tradition." Once again, the gathering will showcase a variety of musical talent from North America, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, representing both established and emerging performers. "Musically, we will honor tradition by showcasing Irish Traditional music with festival favorites and up-and-coming artists," states the festival's website. Some of the acts making their Milwaukee Irish Fest debut include the Kilkennys, Tim Edey & Brendan Power, Ten Strings and a Goat String, and Pride of New York. Also lending to the "living tradition" theme is a plethora of other talent, including Lunasa, Cherish the Ladies, Socks in the Frying Pan, Baal Tinne, Goitse and more. This musical mélange becomes the soundtrack for a cornucopia of other activities too, like cooking demonstrations, a traditional baking contest, a Gaeltacht language and culture zone, theatre, history lectures, genealogy, Celtic dog breeds, currach races and hurling, and the Jameson's lounge. You'll also find family fun at parades, a red hair and freckles contest, and the Leprechaun Village.

www.irishfest.com



Buffalo Niagara Scottish Festival
August 15
Amherst, NY, USA

Amherst, New York is regularly ranked among the safest cities in the United States. In 2014, Money magazine listed it among the top 50 best places to live. Located just 19 miles from Niagara Falls, Amherst is a "college town with a lively arts scene" and hosts "festivals and town events every month of the year," says Money. One such celebration is the annual Buffalo Niagara Scottish Festival, held at the interactive Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village. The 31st edition of the festival takes place on August 15, promising a gathering of the clans, food and drink, music, dance and entertainment. The festival's organizers are particularly excited about this year's musical headliners, the American Rogues; "If the 78th Fraser Pipe Band sat down with the Wolfstone, the Chieftains, and the Waterboys, and then asked some friends from a symphonic orchestra to join them at the table the resulting sound might begin to resemble the American Rogues," describes the festival's website. The flaming caber-tossing Buffalo Heavies will also be present for the day's Highland Games. If you are in town before the Saturday, warm up at the ceilidh pre-party at Stockman's Tavern.

www.bnhv.org/scottish

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SUN 9A-6P **26**

- Live Entertainment
- Irish Ceili Dance
- Food & Drink
- Whiskey Tasting*
- Children's Area
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* Requires ticket purchase. Space is limited. Any remaining tickets will be available at the festival. Advance sales end July 23.

DaytonCelticFestival.com

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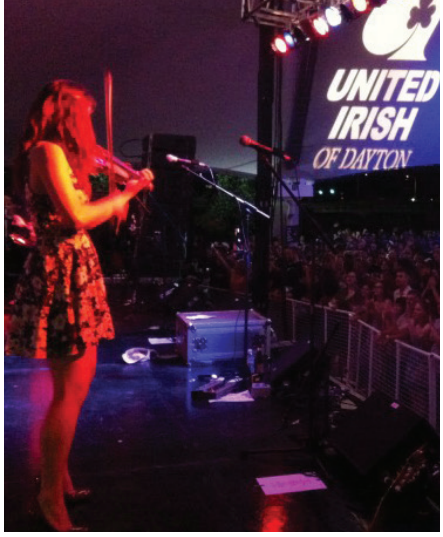


An Rí Rá Montana Irish Festival

August 14-16
Butte, MT, USA

Did you know that Butte, Montana could be the most Irish-American city? The 2010 U.S. Census reported that 23.6 percent of Butte residents claim Irish heritage. That was more than any of the country's other metro and micropolitan areas, including Boston. In his article, "Butte, Montana: Ireland's Fifth Province," George Everett describes the city's history; "As working Irish called for relatives to join them in the prosperity of Butte's mines, Anaconda's smelter, and the many businesses that supported them, many arrived with the admonition, 'Don't bother to tarry in America, go straight to Butte.'" Everett says this Irish legacy is still enthusiastically expressed today, including at a "significant celebration," the annual An Rí Rá Montana Irish Festival. This year's free, family-friendly event happens August 14-16, quite aptly, at the original Mine Yard. Some of the scheduled entertainment includes Irish Music Award winning Runa, the talented Trinity Irish Dancers and Butte's own Dublin Gulch. Each year, festival organizers also put together an eclectic itinerary of cultural experiences, from language, craft, genealogy and dance workshops, to films and lectures, as well as a food and craft marketplace, running races, children's activities and more.

www.mtgaelic.org/an-ri-ra-montana-irish-festival



Dayton Celtic Festival

July 24-26
Dayton, OH, USA

From July 24-26, the Dayton Celtic Festival invites you to "saturate your senses in the sights, sounds and tastes of our Celtic heritage." This year's festival takes place at RiverScape MetroPark in Dayton, Ohio, and admission won't cost you a cent. Returning musical headliners include Gaelic Storm, Scythian and Socks in the Frying Pan. The festival is also welcoming a new Irish band called the Tri Tones, who will be making their United States debut. As if that weren't enough, award-winning quartet We Banjo 3 is also performing. Other events at the festival range from a Celtic breakfast to a Sunday mass. While the kids enjoy themselves at the "Rainbow's End" children's area, adults can treat themselves to a whiskey tasting hosted by Bushmills Irish Whiskey. Bushmills will have a variety of samples to try, such as their 10-year-old single malt, 16-year-old single malt, Irish Honey, Black Bush and their standard Irish whiskey. Guests looking to get active can join in on the 5k run/walk or the 10k run, as well as the Celtic bike ride. Cyclists will be riding from RiverScape MetroPark to Canal Lock Park in Tipp City via the Great Miami River Trail. Wherever your interests lie, you'll have a great time at the Dayton Celtic Festival.

www.daytoncelticfestival.com



Féis An Eilein

August 18-22
Christmas Island, NS, Canada

Have you ever been to a milling frolic, where community members pound out newly woven wool to the rhythm of a Gaelic song? One can experience this by listening to the CD "Còmhla Cruinn–Gathered Together." The recording was made by those involved with Féis an Eilein, an annual festival that takes place on Christmas Island, Cape Breton. "The milling frolic brings together several of the island's Gaelic speakers for a social event, a gathering where something more than songs are sung," wrote Nova Scotia author Frank MacDonald in his review of the album. "The small community strengthens itself, native speakers giving time, instruction and encouragement to the Gaelic learners." Christmas Island became the first community outside Scotland to hold a Féis, which is "a community-based festival designed to promote the Gaelic language and culture of an area," describes Commun Féis an Eilein. The 25th Féis an Eilein will take place this August 18-22. Visitors can attend singing, dance, language and instrument workshops, as well as square dances, concerts, ceilidhs and milling frolics. Proceeds go towards the Society's Gaelic language, dance and music classes, which are offered at no charge to youth and kids. Commun Féis an Eilein also holds a winter Féis and a concert series throughout the summer.

www.feisaneilein.ca

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Adults $18, Children 6-12 $5, Under 6 Free

Thursday, September 17, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Scotch Whisky Tasting

Friday, September 18, 7:00 p.m.
Sponsors Reception / Tartan Ball

Saturday, September 19, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
44th Charleston Scottish Games & Highland Gathering
Live Music by Seven Nations and Castle Crossing
Piping & Drumming
Scottish Heavy Athletics
Scottish Country and Highland Dancing
Children's Activities

Saturday, September 19, 6:00 p.m.
Games After-Party - My Father's Moustache

Sunday, September 20 8:45 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.
Kirkin o' the Tartan - First (Scots) Presbyterian Church

Professional and Amateur Heavy Athletic Competitions
Piping and Drumming Competitions | Highland Dancing Competition
Scottish Country Dancing | Border Collie Demonstrations | Children's Games
Genealogy, Celtic and Clan Tents | Scottish Merchandise | Scottish and American Food






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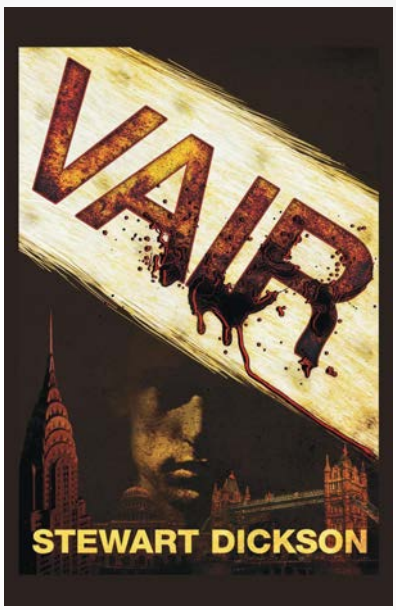
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Leith-born journalist Stewart Dickson covered major international news stories in his native Scotland, London's Fleet Street, and as U.S. bureau chief of a British tabloid. He lives in New York City with his wife, Gunna.

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Let's Go Laphroaig!

2015 is a big year for the Inner Hebridean Scottish island of Islay; two of its iconic distilleries, Ardbeg and Laphroaig, are celebrating their 200th anniversaries. Both of these distilleries, or at least their proprietors, were almost certainly making whisky well before going legit in 1815 - a common practice at the time, with farmers and cattlemen turning their surplus barley into whisky. This was especially true on the islands off Scotland's west coast.

Islay's whiskies are considered to be the most heavily peated and smoky in Scotland. Because of the island's remoteness from the rest of the country, the tradition of burning peat to dry the barley lasted longer than it did in the Highlands. By the time residents had access to other forms of fuel it was no longer in the distilleries' interest to change, as producers of blended scotch required the peaty-smoky whiskies to add character to their product.

Historically, there would have been hundreds of small stills on Islay, most of them illicit. At the height of illegal distilling in the early 1800s, the island's population was surging. Within a few decades, commercial distilling took root there, and by the end of the 19th century, there were 23 licensed producers on the isle.

Laphroaig Distillery was born during Islay's 19th century boom, established on the southern coast of the island in 1815. The distillery was built by Donald and Alexander Johnston, members of the MacDonald Clan which once ruled Islay and the Western Isles as an independent kingdom. The brothers leased 1,000 acres from the Laird of Islay for the raising of cattle, also growing barley for feed and whisky.

Word of the high quality spirits being produced at Laphroaig spread quickly across the island, and the brothers soon realized that whisky was far more profitable than raising cattle. Alexander moved to Australia, but Donald continued at the distillery until 1847, when he died - allegedly after falling into a vat of whisky. The distillery would stay in his family's hands for another century, until his last descendant, Ian Hunter, passed in 1954, leaving the distillery to his trusted manager Bessie Williamson. The distillery was then sold to commercial interests in the 1960s, and is now an anchor brand of Beam Suntory. Today it is the best-selling Islay whisky in the world.

Laphroaig has, without doubt, the most divisive flavour profile of any single malt whisky, sourcing its peats from relatively low elevation moors on the island. These peats are one of the reasons for the distillery's very distinct flavour profile. Many have tried to reproduce Laphroaig's style - most notably Lagavulin in the mid-1800s - but all have failed. The combination of Laphroaig's peat, its water, and the shape of its stills, create a truly unique expression. Antiseptic, military dressings, band aids, iodine, seaweed, smoke and tar are all terms regularly used to describe Laphroaig whiskies. This proved an asset during prohibition in the United States, when Ian Hunter was able to convince authorities that Laphroaig had medicinal properties. Laphroaig was one of the few legally available whiskies in the US during prohibition, albeit by prescription.

The distillery's core range consists of five whiskies. Most innovative is the *Laphroaig Quarter Cask ($55)* which is finished in 120L barrels, increasing the spirit's exposure to wood and speeding up maturation. Next are the *Laphroaig 10 Year ($70)*, and *Laphroaig Triple Wood ($96)*, the latter matured in Bourbon, Quarter Casks and Oloroso Sherry Butts. Atop the range are the *Laphroaig 18 Year ($110)*, and the *Laphroaig 25 Year ($540)*, each available in limited quantities in selected markets. The distillery also releases whiskies under the Laphroaig Cairdeas label - Cairdeas meaning "friendship" in Scots Gaelic. The 2015 expression of Cairdeas is the best in recent years, made with more heavily peated malt than Laphroaig typically uses (80ppm), and crafted only with the distillery's three small stills, giving it a fruitier character. The Laphroaig Cairdeas 2015 will be making its way around the world this year, available to the Friends of Laphroaig.

The distillery has long been a favourite of Charles, Prince of Wales. He was apparently especially keen on the old 15 Year, which was discontinued about a decade ago. He'll be happy to know there is a new 15 Year set for release this year. Charles gave the distillery his Royal Warrant in 1994 - a rare honour. Whether it will become The Royal Laphroaig Distillery when he ascends the throne remains to be seen.

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A Welshman's Pub is His Chateau



à la Cork

with Michael Davies

One of the perks of being the 'wine guy' in a small village in Wales is that I have a certain amount of influence over what wine is offered in our local pub. I must admit that having an old friend as the pub owner - and a close family member as an employee on site - helps too.

When I first moved to the village of Llangors - located in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park in mid Wales - from the industrial valleys of south Wales in the early 1990s, it felt like an idyllic place to live: beautiful countryside, the largest natural lake in the southern part of the country, a close-knit community, and two pubs. Little has changed in the last quarter-century here except, perhaps, for the pubs which have had to adapt to survive.

Rural pubs, traditionally the centre of the community, have been closing at an alarming rate in recent years. The Castle Inn in Llangors used to be a very typical 'spit and sawdust' sort of place, serving beer, cider and not much else. If wine was served, it was out of a box, and you drank it at your own peril.

Times and tastes have changed, even in rural Wales. Wine consumption now competes with beer, and people are expecting drinkable wine by the glass and bottle in their pubs.

The Castle Inn has been transformed under the stewardship of Mike Tunnicliffe and his small team of dedicated employees. Thankfully, they have done this without sacrificing the old pub's charm. It continues to offer excellent local ales and ciders in very traditional surroundings, but now it has an extensive food menu, with everything sourced locally.

To complement the food, and to appease those who prefer the grape to the grain, Tunnicliffe needed a good, affordable, wine list. Although most pubs now provide a selection of wines by the glass and bottle, it is rare to get an imaginative selection at pub prices. Typically, the wines on offer are from the New World; Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, Chardonnay from Australia, and Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon from South America. Nothing wrong with that; good producers from those countries make some of the best wines in the world, and many of their affordable, mass-produced wines are ideal as 'pub wines'. These offerings can be somewhat generic, however, and for true wine lovers it can be frustrating looking for better choice and quality.

After many hours of painstaking research (a.k.a. marathon tasting sessions at the Castle with tunnicliffe and his team) we came up with a small selection of wonderful wines that now sit proudly on the shelves of the newly refurbished bar area. My step-daughter, Ailish, works at the Castle and has recently developed quite a palate for wine. Although Sommeliers are not currently associated with pubs, if ever that were to change, she would be an ideal candidate for the post.

I have already admitted, in a previous column,that I am a confirmed 'Rhoneaholic'. I do believe that wines from the Rhone are the best value quality wines in the Old World. Needless to say, the Castle list is now very well represented with examples from that region of southern France.

One of the many nice things about Rhone Valley wines is that it is pretty easy to learn a 'rule of thumb' in relation to their quality and what to expect for your money. The basic wines are simply called Côtes du Rhône. You can get tremendous value at this level, although the less expensive versions (under £5 UK per bottle) are unlikely to be spectacular. The next step up is the Côtes du Rhône-Villages, made by a smaller number of communes and generally to a higher quality. Expect to pay around £8 UK for a good bottle. Next up the scale are the named villages - so the bottle will say Côtes du Rhône-Villages, followed by a named village such as Cairanne or Séguret. These wines can offer superb quality and value (typically around £12 UK per bottle from a good merchant). The most prestigious wines from this region are the Crus, identified by their village name without the requirement to include Côtes du Rhône-Villages on the label.

Perhaps the most famous of these is Châteauneuf-du-Pape, named after the village near Avignon where, in medieval times, the papacy built a castle and planted many of the vineyards still under cultivation there.

Other wonderful wines in this category are made at places such as Vinsobres, Rasteau, Vacqueyras and Gigondas. Prices can vary tremendously at this level (from under £10 UK to hundreds and even thousands of pounds per bottle from the top producers). It is unlikely that you will buy a bad wine in this category, but you may end up spending more than you need to. Châteauneuf-du-Pape, for example, can occasionally be found for around £10 UK per bottle but a good Côtes du Rhône-Villages for around the same price could well be a nicer wine. It is also possible to spend far too much on one of the named wines and find out that a big percentage of the cost was 'for the name'. So although the above 'rule of thumb' is useful, it does not replace the type of painstaking research alluded to above if you want to be really sure of your Rhones. My advice would be, find a small corner of a cozy pub, line up your chosen candidates, and take notes with the aid of family and friends.

Michael Recommends :

Boutinot: La Cote Sauvage, Cairanne (Red): **£10.50 UK bottle.**

Boutinot: Les Coteaux, Côtes du Rhône Village (Red): **£7.50 UK bottle**

Domaine Chante Cigale, Châteauneuf-du-Pape (White): **£15.95 UK bottle**

Domaine Chante Cigale, Châteauneuf-du-Pape (Red): **£19.95 UK bottle**

Paul Jaboulet Aine: Secret de Famille, Côtes du Rhône (White): **£9.95 UK bottle**

Dr. Michael Davies is an author, historian and wine expert in Wales. www.dragon-tours.com

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Whether you fancy a pint of ale, a dram of the good stuff, a hearty meal or great conversation, these three spots will bring you back for the Craic!

Molly MacPherson's Scottish Pub & Grill *Savannah, GA, USA*

Judging by the online reviews, this quaint and cozy locale is the epitome of southern hospitality and charm. The warmly lit main room and bar are accented by an array of unique art and artifacts, much of which surrounds the showcase fireplace. If the décor doesn't get you, the food surely will. Start your stay with old-school Scottish meat pies, potato scones or traditional neeps & tatties. The Irish spring roll – corned beef and cabbage, hand-rolled and deep fried – is a must, as are the cock-a-leekie soup and savoury Scotch broth. Of course, pub grub is the mainstay here, with perfectly-sized portions of bangers & mash, steak and Guinness stew, shepherd's pie, Scottish meatloaf and superb fish 'n' chips on the menu. The salmon is reputed to be the best in the area, and the really adventurous will want to sample the Blackwatch Burger. Leave room for dessert – sticky toffee pudding, Molly's Scotch cake, and the sweet-beyond-words Edinburgh Delite – and wash it all down with one of over 120 selections of Single Malt Whisky. As if all that wasn't enough, the staff is amongst the friendliest you will ever meet, always up for a chat, and wonderfully hospitable and charming.



Welsh Dragon Bar
Wellington, New Zealand

You have to love any place that lists their street address as "Middle of the Road." That relaxed, easy-going and fun-loving attitude is inherent to both the Welsh and New Zealanders (except on game days when the two rugby-giant nations meet on the pitch). Most often, however, staff and patrons of the Welsh Dragon Bar in Wellington – the only one of its kind in the southern hemisphere - can be found side-by-side, beers in hand, musing over the many merits of the "real man's game." Of course it helps to have a fully-stocked bar open to both locals and those from outside the region. The Wales-inspired menu is short, simple and scrumptious; wedges and chips, faggots and peas, leek and potato soup, and cawl are served up as starters, while classic curry 'n' beer is the only option, albeit devilishly delectable, as a main course. Sundays, the pub offers up a special old-fashioned roast with all the trimmings, including traditional pudding. Be sure to book well ahead, though, as between the meal, afternoon rugby and evening trivia, the facility fills up fast. Live music on weekends, snooker and darts make the terrific tavern more than "middle of the road."



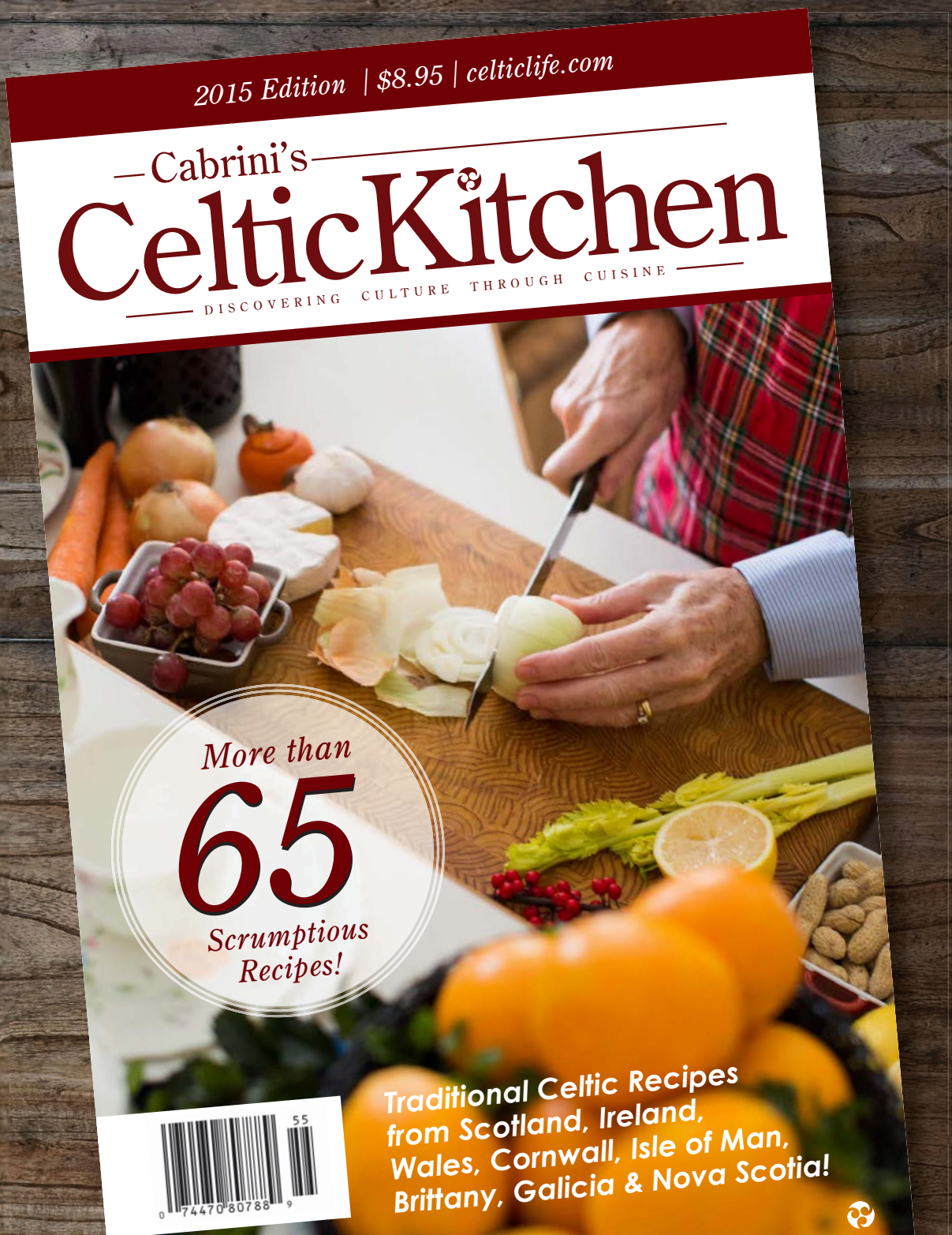
Shenanigan's Irish Bar
Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



A Canadian friend of mine who travels to Brazil regularly for work tells me that there are two reasons to visit Shenanigan's in Ipanema; the first is the stunningly beautiful women who frequent the facility, and the second is he doesn't remember. It could be the crossover cuisine, featuring local and regional favourites (fajitas, quesadillas, tacos) alongside traditional Eire fare (Irish stew, Muldoon's chicken, Dublin sausage). Or perhaps it is the huge selection of domestic and imported ales and stouts, including Devassa, Duff, Guinness and Murphy's. The nightly musical entertainment and weekly dart tournaments are very popular, and the pub's prime location in the heart of year-round, party-hardy Rio de Janeiro helps also. Most likely, however – and knowing sports-mad Brazil - it is the onslaught of wall-to-wall big screen TVs blasting international soccer matches all day long that draws the crowds, as both area residents and travelers keep the bar staff busy from opening whistles to closing time with bets and beers. And while my friend agrees with all of those possibilities in principle - as a regular there, he is qualified to judge - he keeps coming back, and going back, to the exquisiteness of the eatery's female patrons.

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Cabrini's Kitchen

Field Berry *Crêpes*

Crêpes originated in Brittany and were mostly used as a daily bread. They are celebrated annually on February 2 - Candlemas Day - a Catholic holiday which falls exactly 40 days after Christmas. It is a feast to commemorate the Virgin Mary's purification and the presentation of the child Jesus.

Crêpes were once cooked on large cast iron pans heated over wood fires, but are now made with hot plates heated with electricity or gas. They are prepared by pouring a thin batter onto a hot frying pan, with just a trace of butter on the pan's surface. The batter must not be too thin, nor the pan too hot. The batter is spread evenly over the cooking surface by tilting the pan.

Crêpes are versatile and easy to make. They can be enjoyed with a savoury filling of ham, mushrooms, eggs, spinach, peppers and sour cream - which can be meals by themselves, or they can be sweetened with banana, peach, haskap berry, any field berry, cherry, and Nutella. Top them up with whipped cream and shaved chocolate and watch your guests go speechless.

One added bit of fun to have with these is fortune-telling: it is a Bretagne tradition to hold a coin in your writing hand and a crêpe pan in the other and flip the crêpe into the air. If you manage to catch the crêpe in the pan, your family will be prosperous for the rest of the year. Better chances than the lottery!

INGREDIENTS

2 eggs
1 cup milk
1 tablespoon butter, melted
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon salt
Dash ground nutmeg
Dash ground cinnamon

FILLING

2/3 cup sugar
1/3 cup cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Dash ground nutmeg
1/2 cup orange juice
2 cups blueberries
2 cups fresh haskap berries
2 cups halved fresh strawberries
Whipped cream + shaved chocolate

INSTRUCTIONS

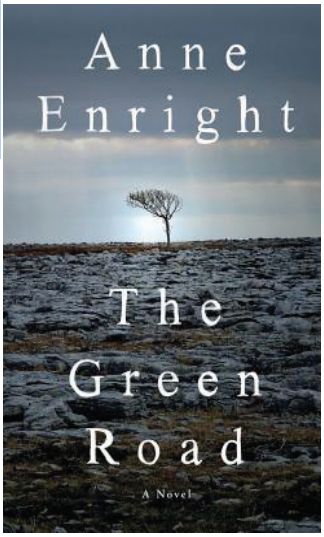
In a small bowl, beat the eggs, milk and butter. Combine the flour, salt, nutmeg and cinnamon; add to egg mixture. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and nutmeg. Add the orange juice, stir in blueberries, haskap berries and strawberries. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 5-10 minutes stirring occasionally. Set aside.

Heat a lightly greased 8-inch non-stick skillet; pour 2 tablespoons batter into the center of skillet. Lift and tilt pan to evenly coat bottom. Cook until top appears dry; turn and cook 15-20 seconds longer. Remove to a wire rack. Repeat with remaining batter, greasing skillet as needed. Stack cooled crêpes with waxed paper or paper towels in between.

Ith do shàth! Cabrini

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

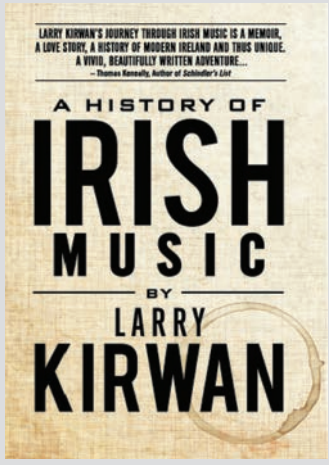


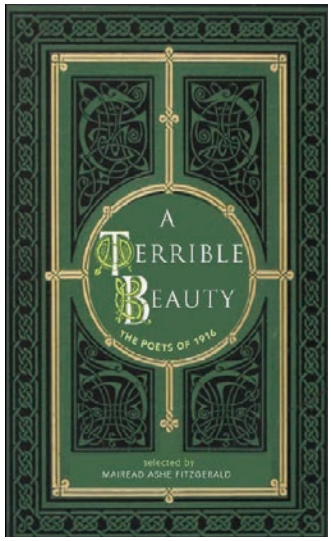
The Green Road
By Anne Enright
McClelland & Stewart
310 pp / $29.95

Man Booker Prize winning writer Anne Enright puts the pieces together in her sixth novel – *The Green Road* has it all, and more; setting, mood, tone, theme, memorable characters, and a soaring narrative arc that invites readers along for the ride. After Rosaleen Madigan's children scatter off in all directions - Dublin, New York, Mali, and the Priesthood – she decides to sell off the family home on Ireland's west coast. When the siblings come home for Christmas they are shocked to see their mother aged and angstful. Richly detailed, lyrical, and chock full o' memory, love, loss, longing and redemption, the author has given us a hearty and heartfelt reminder that the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that tear us apart. ~ SPC

A History of Irish Music
By Larry Kirwan
Black Forty Seven
358 pp / $17.55

Irish musician, broadcaster, playwright, author and activist Larry Kirwan brings music to life, and life to music, with this comprehensive chronicling of Eire's musical past and present. Set against the backdrop of war, social issues and revolution, Kirwan explores how music inspired events on the Emerald Isle, and vice-versa. As such, everyone makes an appearance, including Thin Lizzy, Horslips, Rory Gallagher, Christy Moore, Sinead O'Connor, Liam Clancy, The Saw Doctors, Hothouse Flowers, and U2. Taking it further, the narrative also examines the impact on the Irish musical Diaspora in London (Pogues), Boston (Dropkick Murphys) and New York (Black 47). More than a soundtrack of the country's ups and downs, however, the work is a personal and poignant portrait of one man's place amidst often-turbulent times. ~ SPC



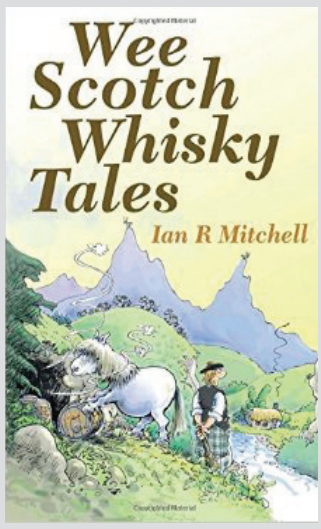


A Terrible Beauty; Poetry of 1916
Selected by Mairéad Ashe Fitzgerald
O'Brien Press
160 pp / €14.99

Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising was led as much by writers as by militants. This collection, divided into poems from before, during and after the insurgency, does well to capture and convey the revolutionary spirit of the times. Works from the likes of Padraic Pearse, Joseph Mary Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh, Eva Gore-Booth, George Russell, Dermot O'Byrne, Pádraic Colum, Seán O'Casey, Dora Sigerson Shorter, Thomas Ashe, Joyce Kilmer, and Katharine Tynan bring the battles home to both head and heart. Particularly poignant are the writings of William Butler Yeats, including his classic "Sixteen Dead Men." The Sligo scribe, Protestant by birth, developed nationalist sentiments after falling in love with a Catholic activist. Like the Emerald Isle itself, this anthology is by turns joyous, melancholy and, ultimately, bittersweet. ~ SPC

Wee Scotch Whisky Tales
By Ian R. Mitchell
Neil Wilson Publishing
67 pp / €4.99

You don't have to be a whisky lover or connoisseur to enjoy this entertaining and engaging selection of short stories, trivial tidbits and tall tales from one of Scotland's foremost writers and broadcasters. Part history, part comedy, these ten terrific anecdotes cover everything from illicit stills and Highland smugglers, to the temperance movement, rioting in Glasgow, and moonshine in New Zealand. While the narratives themselves are cozy and charming, the real treat is the writing itself. Harkening back to storytellers of yore, Mitchell spins a yarn so well that you will want to wrap yourself in it for weeks. At 67 pages, however, the work will only get you through a night or two. Still, sit back with a wee dram, put your feet up, and smile. ~ SPC





The Real McKenzies
Rats in the Burlap

With more than 'two decades of debauchery under their kilts', Canada's foremost Celt-Punk legends The Real McKenzies are back with their ninth full length recording. From the opening pipes of Wha Saw the 42nd to the closing chorus of Dead or Alive, the salacious sextet rocks, rolls and rollicks through 14 torrid tracks. Who'd a Thought, Spinning Wheels, and What Have You Done are full-throttle barn-burners, while Lilacs in the Alleyway and The Fields of Inverness are mid-tempo and more melodic. The real treat here is the Celtic-Reggae swagger and smirk of Bootsy the Haggis Eating Cat, a talk 'n' walk through number to remind us that good times are what this band does best. Be sure to catch them on the road this summer. ~ SPC

Barrule
Manannan's Cloak



Barrule are the best band to come from the Isle of Man since the Bee Gees. Their sophomore effort, *Manannan's Cloak*, is more than a stirring ode to the trio's Celtic roots, however; these ten terrific tracks capture and convey the essence, élan and allure of Manx history and heritage. Traditional fiddle, accordion and bouzouki bring the past soundly into the present on The Wheel of Fire and To Dingle with Love. The sweet and playful The Laxey Reels and Graih Foalsey wouldn't sound out of place on Cape Breton Island, while the pirate-like anthem, and first single – The King of the Sea – is an instant classic. They may not sport the seventies-era style of the three Brothers Gibb, but they sure have the substance. ~ SPC



Qristina & Quinn Bachand
Little Hinges

Award-winning Canadian brother-sister act Qristina & Quinn Bachand come of age with their third full length recording *Little Hinges*. A haunting 90-second soundscape/intro opens the door on a vibrant and vital variety of classic and contemporary jigs, reels and more. The dynamic duo does well to mix the melodies up, paying homage to their Celtic roots on The Reunion, Never Goodbye, and Hangman's Reel, while exploring new musical ground with Hang Me, Saint Nothing and the title track. The stirring Three Little Babes, and Jimmy's Fiddle are reason enough to merit a 2015 West Coast Music Award nomination, especially if there is a category for best "Celternative" recording. No longer emerging artists, the pair has established themselves at the forefront of modern Celtic music. ~ SPC

Batemento
Overture



At the other end of the Celtic musical spectrum, though no less essential, is Galician electro-pop-dance project Batemento. Though admittedly not for everyone – especially listeners who eschew experimental takes on tradition - the trio's debut demo *Overture* offers a window of opportunity to those looking to carry on their history and heritage by attracting younger audiences (um, hello Scotland). It's all here – the pipes, fiddles, whistles and drums – just set to a booming backbeat and coated with new-age sonic sensibilities. The band has already made big musical waves across Europe, selling out shows and appearing at major festivals, and it is only a matter of time before North Americans figure out the appeal; that it's ok to be Celtic and sexy at the same time. ~ SPC

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Jérémy Tétrault-Farber

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber brings a long love of piping to la Belle Province

Jérémy Tétrault-Farber says he fell in love with piping when he was 12 years old. His father was on a business trip to Sarasota, Florida, and the preteen tagged along. There, they stopped at a Renaissance Fair, where a hybrid medieval /Celtic band was performing – the youngster was immediately hooked.

"I lived parallel musical lives for a few years afterwards," smiles the Montréal native. "While learning the rudiments of music on the trumpet in high school, I listened to Irish and Scottish music and taught myself the tin whistle. By the end of high school I'd firmly drifted into the proverbial musical Celtic fringe."

At that time, Tétrault-Farber admits he wasn't overly concerned with the quality of his piping – he was happy just to be playing the instrument. However, his teachers encouraged him to morph his enthusiasm into focused musicianship. The push paid off, and he now has 12 years on the uilleann pipes under his sash, along with 9 years of Highland piping.

He is quick to credit those mentors, and duly notes other important influences, including the late Gordon Duncan, a piper and composer from Turriff, Scotland, Chris Armstrong of the Scottish Power Pipe Band, and Stuart Liddell, who has won multiple awards for solo piping.

Tétrault-Farber is currently one of two directors of the Montréal Pipes and Drums (MPD) band, which has a number of parades and shows lined up this summer. As well, the group will be competing at several Highland games around Quebec, Ontario and New Hampshire.

MPD may be a traditional Scottish bagpipe and drum band, but the Pipe Major says his personal style and sound does not always fall into that category.

"I like playing traditional tunes as part of non-traditional arrangements and medleys. Some of my favourite piping moments are at the end of band practices - when pipers and drummers throw a few tunes together and let medleys spontaneously take shape."



Though he enjoys passing his passion for piping along to younger people in his home province, Tétrault-Farber doesn't see an overwhelming interest in the instrument there.

"I think fewer young people here make piping a pillar of their life than, say, youth in places like Ontario, or even Scotland," he shares. "This makes sense for obvious historical reasons. And while I could be wrong, it seems to me that for those youth who do take up bagpipes, piping remains just one of many interests in their busy, perhaps overloaded lives."

Tétrault-Farber has no ancestral connection to Scotland (that he's aware of,) but he continues to pipe for the beauty and challenges of the music. As for career highlights, he can't narrow it down to just one – there are three key moments he gets nostalgic about.

First, he recalls piping at Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario in the summer of 2008.

"An epic downpour was clearly about to force a show cancellation, and I felt bad for the people who had paid to see the Fort Henry Guard perform. Even under the soaking-wet circumstances, however, a soggy rendition of Scotland the Brave managed to spark a rousing applause."

Another fond memory is winning first place in Grade 5 solo piping at the Glengarry Highland Games in 2009.

"For me, this marked the start of the shift from wild-eyed enthusiasm to a more focused approach to piping," he notes.

Of course, he can't forget when he was asked to take on the central role with Montreal Pipes and Drums. The incumbent Pipe Major was moving to the U.S., so Tétrault-Farber was asked to step in, and he jumped at the opportunity.

"I figured a chance like this would never come again," he says. "I've been leading the band since August 2013, and I haven't regretted a moment of it."

www.montrealpipesanddrums.org

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Erika Nagel

American fiddler Erika Nagel keeps it in the family

As a child, Erika Nagel pictured herself triumphantly playing the flats and sharps of a gleaming French horn. However, by the age of 10, she had taken up classical violin in her school orchestra.

"My grandfather actually made violins," she recounts via email, adding, "so it made sense for me to switch over. Logic won, thank goodness – that French Horn was a lot for me to lug around."

With an Irish, Scottish and French background, it was only a matter of time before she made the transition from Vivaldi to Celtic fiddling.

"Over the years, as I became more interested in my own heritage, I began to incorporate Irish and Scottish fiddle styles into my personal practice time," she says of the evolution. "Sadly, going from classical to Celtic is almost looked down upon in some circles. But that only pushed me to pursue it further."

"Celtic music is the expression of our people, and I feel that I do my ancestors honour when I remember their songs and musical styles."

Raised in Tennessee and now living in Georgia, Nagel loves both making traditional fiddle music accessible to others, and taking new twists on traditional tunes. Although it may look easy to unsuspecting audiences, she says that performing is hard work.

"Aside from mastering technique, there are the real issues of muscle aches and sore fingers, and then the dreaded off days when nothing is coming out right – the rolls aren't rolling and the trebles aren't trebling."

The joy of playing for the people in her life outweighs the trials, however.

"I generally perform at weddings, pubs, churches, and the like. Sure, they are all fun and fulfilling, but at the end of the day there is no greater gig than getting to share this beautiful part of my heritage with my family and friends. I mean, my job is to make music - can it possibly get any better?

And while music is a wonderful way to pass along her passion for the past, Nagel shares that more should be done to preserve, promote and celebrate Celtic culture in the USA and elsewhere.

"We of Celtic stock are some of the most creative, fierce, loving, and historically strong people in the world. Sadly, most of our kids aren't even aware of their heritage. They aren't taught that being a part of that particular lineage is just as unique and special for them as it is for every other cultural group."

She points out that many of those younger people are "not even aware that Irish Gaelic is actually a language." Parents, she contends, must be aware of their Celtic legacy, and have a responsibility to instill a sense of pride in their own children if the culture is to flourish.

"Take them to a local Highland Games, grab an Irish language learning program, sign up for an ancestry site. Inviting friends to Celtic music nights at a local pub is a great way to ignite interest."

A good song, says Nagel, is one that evokes a response - happy, sad or otherwise. When pressed, she admits to an abiding love for a busy reel.

"I think I have stopped seeing Celtic music as just a 'feel-good' sound and style, and I have become more in touch with the nuances – a flick of the wrist, and the roll of a finger may not seem significant to someone just starting out, but those subtleties are so important."

In the beginning, though, simple words of support can inspire a struggling fiddler to become an aspiring musician.

"If I ever see a young person in an audience who seems even remotely interested, I make it a point to approach them to chat. Sometimes that is all it takes – the right person to be encouraging, to take the unreachable mystery out of music for kids."

www.lisdoonvarnamusic.com

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Fiona Lee

Highland dancer Fiona Lee carries on a family tradition

For Coquitlam, British Columbia, native Fiona Lee, Highland dancing is a family affair.

"Both of my parents were Highland dancers when they were young, and I began dancing at the age of four," shares the 25 year-old via email.

That lineage runs deep. Lee's father has a lengthy list of accomplishments, and was once presented a dancing award at the Braemar Highland Games by none other than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. As well, Lee's great aunt, Adeline Duncan, was a very well known teacher and adjudicator, and Duncan's daughter, Heather Jolley, is Lee's dance teacher.

Lee has not only carried on that family pedigree, she has even grown it - winning over 75 championships, including the 2007 World Juniors.

That accomplishment, she says, was her ultimate career highlight.

"This was a lifelong dream of mine, and something that Highland dancers work towards and strive for year after year."

The ancient sport has afforded her many other rewarding experiences also.

"The Canadian Championships take place in a different province every year, and I have had the privilege of representing the province of British Columbia more than fifteen times.

"I am still dancing partially because of my background," she adds, "but more so because of the great friends that I have made over the years. Another benefit of Highland dancing is that it keeps me in great physical condition, and offers me the opportunity to travel."

In addition to performing across Canada, Lee has graced many of the world's famous stages (alongside BC's Simon Fraser University Pipe Band), including the Sydney Opera House in Australia, the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow, and Lincoln Center in New York.

Of course, like any sport, Highland dancing is not without its risks and challenges.

"I have been lucky enough not to have had any serious injuries," she says, "but I once had to miss an entire year of dancing due to a foot injury."

Though she believes that more can be done to promote and preserve Celtic culture, Lee does what she can to carry on the heritage. She is currently a member of the British Association of Teachers of Dancing, the Scottish Dance Teachers Alliance, and ScotDance Canada. As well, she teaches Highland dance classes at Simon Fraser University, which are open to both members of the educational facility and the general public. She is also an instructor at the Heather Jolley School of Highland Dance, which performs at various local, regional, national and international functions and events throughout the year.

To better support Celtic culture, Lee suggests that Scottish organizations pick up on the popularity of the television program Outlander, a series set in Scotland during the mid-1700s.

"The show is great, and should generate some overall interest in Scottish cultural activities."

And while she acknowledges that the number of competitive dancers seems to have decreased in recent years, Lee says there is still an overall allure to the sport.

"Young people continue to show an interest in Highland dancing, especially if they have family members or friends that are involved in the Scottish community. There still seems to be a lot of additional interest from dancers who just enjoy doing recreational Highland dancing, such as choreographies and concert appearances."

Competitive dancing isn't for everyone – Lee admits it's an expensive hobby. There is also an abundance of other available activities for young people. Still, she is resolved to remain involved with the activity and to carry on the tradition.

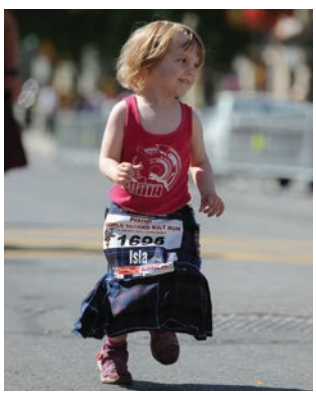
"I will continue to teach Highland dance for many years to come," she says. "I am still competing at a high level, and I still enjoy traveling to various events, including this summer's ScotDance Championship Series in London, Ontario.

"And, who knows, maybe one day I will be able to pass that passion along to my own children."

www.sdccs.ca

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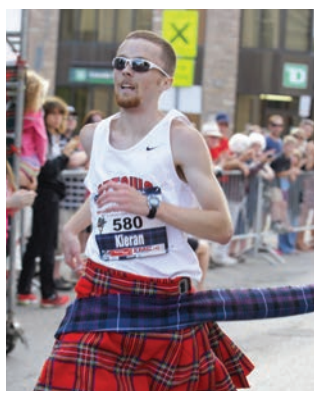
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Clan Armstrong

A small clan in the USA with several hundred members - about 40 of them active in day to day operations - Clan Armstrong nonetheless boasts champion pipers, genealogists, and a great enthusiasm for the old traditions.

"We are a Norsemen (Viking) Clan and not of Celtic origin," explains spokesman Bill Armstrong.

"Legend has it that a Danish Earl (Siward) was 'dehorsed' in battle, fully armored, in the mid-eleventh century. Certain death was near for Siward, when another Dane (Fairbeorn) lifted him from the battlefield and onto his horse using only his 'arm.' The Danes won the battle, and Fairbeorn was awarded lands and the appellation 'of the strong arm '."

The Armstrong clan was quite powerful on the western Scottish-English borders from the 1300s to the early 1600s.

"Our occupation was reiving (raiding) during these centuries," says Armstong. "With the union of the crowns, leaders of reiving clans were captured and executed. Our last clan chief (Alexander) was executed in 1610, and we remain without a chief to this day. At that time large numbers of borderers fled to what is now Northern Ireland."

A well-known Scottish country dancer, Armstrong joined the society in 1988, and has hosted a clan tent at the North Alabama Scottish Festival each year since. His clan duties have also carried him to Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia and South Carolina. He has been both president and vice-president of the organization, and continues as its webmaster and newsletter editor.

He says that he remains involved because he is happy to promote the Scottish heritage, and enjoys hosting clan tents with his wife.

"We have kept up with modern times, though membership has varied with world events and the economy. And we have re-established strong ties with our sister organization in the UK, the Clan Armstrong Trust."

This year, the Clan will be in attendance at events in Glasgow, Kentucky, North Carolina, Atlanta, and across the American northeast.

www.armstrong.org



Clan MacKinnon

Clan MacKinnon Society is the only recognized organization representing MacKinnon and its septs worldwide. The small, but growing group was reconstituted in 1980, and now boasts members in 23 US states, 4 Canadian provinces, Australia, France, New Zealand, Scotland, and Southeast Asia.

The clan is most active across the USA, where it has enjoyed some success at a number of events. Last summer, the society's 2014 Highland Dance scholarship winner, Breagh MacKinnon of Ohio, won the Midwest Regional Championship in Alma, Michigan. She then placed first runner-up at the USIR Competition, in the age 7-12 category, in Sugar Land, Texas.

At the clan's annual general meeting last fall, held at the Stone Mountain Highland Festival in Georgia, the organization honoured two recipients with special "Thistle" awards for their contributions. Receiving plaques were Stacie Solemslie of Washington State for her efforts as newsletter editor and as manager of the Facebook site, and Carolyn Jackson of Minnesota for the outstanding job she has done as membership chairperson.

To attend the AGM, members had travelled from as far away as British Columbia, Washington, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. Newly appointed officers include Cindy Newman as membership chair and Melinda Wiens as treasurer, both from Tennessee, and Jack MacKinnon of Minnesota as high commissioner. Newly elected board members are Shannon MacKinnon of Washington, and J.W. McKinney of Tennessee.

Also of note for the organization was the release of the Shank Bone Papers, the society's first authorized publication of history, lore and culture relating to the clan, published by the group's chief representative and historian, Gerald McKinnon. The book was recently presented by John McKinnon, chairman of the society, to Elizabeth Roads, Lyon Clerk and Keeper of the Records for the Court of the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh.

www.themackinnon.com





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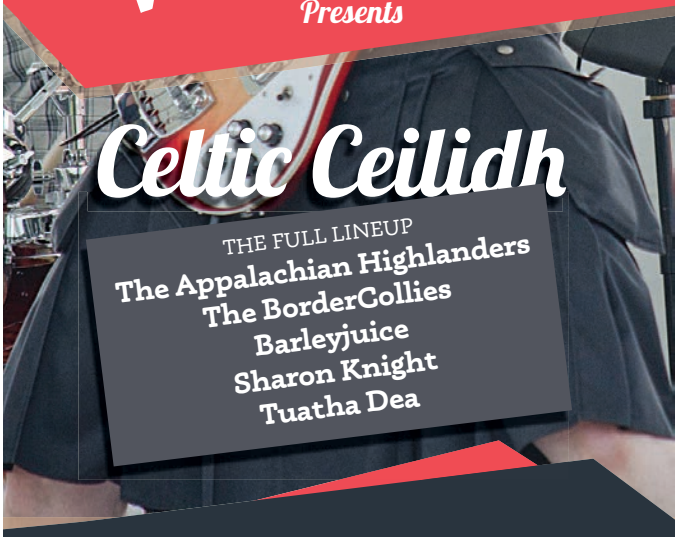
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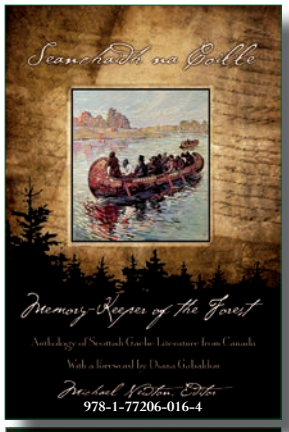
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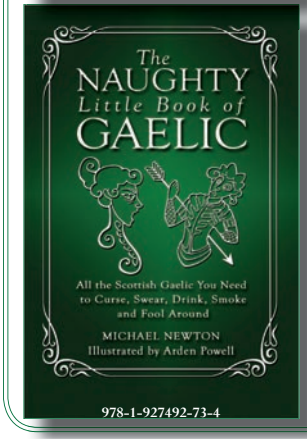


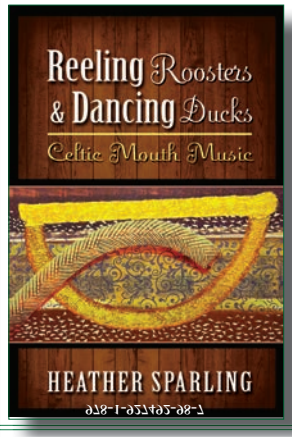
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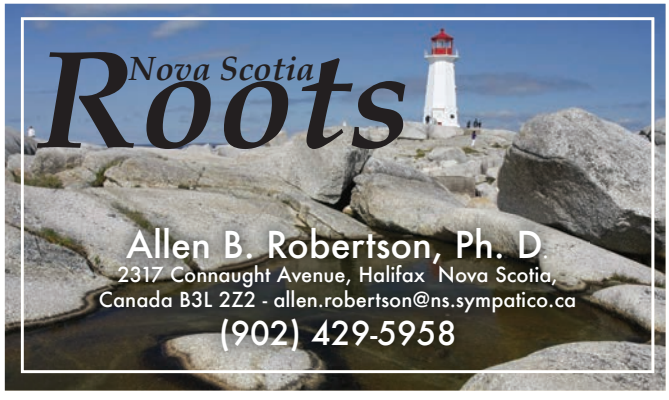
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Dennis Sheehan

Over the course of a long career, Dennis Sheehan became known to U2 band-mates as Saint Dennis of Dublin. He was, to quote the Irish supergroup's lead singer Bono, "a legend in the industry, and a legend within the band."

It was Bono who announced Sheehan's May 27th death at a Los Angeles hotel in the midst of the band's current Innocence + Experience tour.

"We've lost a family member - we're still taking it in. He is irreplaceable," wrote the esteemed vocalist on U2's website.

Sheehan's job was entirely behind the scenes – logistics, transportation, set up, sound checks, always with one eye on the clock. From all accounts, he did it with precision, grace, and the utmost reliability.

Though staggered by his sudden death from an apparent heart attack, U2 members decided that the 68 year-old would want the show to go on, and they returned to the stage at the Los Angeles Forum that night. Bolstered by prayers shared backstage, they opened as they had the previous night, but with a poignant photo montage upon the show's big screen. A few songs in, Bono spoke of Sheehan's 33 years with the band, saying they were all "extended family." He dedicated several songs to Sheehan that night, and later, announced that the entire tour, scheduled to run until November, would be performed *en homage* to their departed friend.

Rolling Stone magazine marveled at the intimacy Bono brought to the sold-out venue when speaking of the loss.

"He actually lived the dignity that our music aspires to," said the iconic front-man. "You fight with your friends. You love your friends. It's kind of a dysfunctional family in U2… but actually quite functional in other ways because we look after each other."

Sheehan shared the same sense of family in an interview for a U2 website.

"This entire band and organization are artists first, but they are also tremendous individuals. Bono, Edge, Larry and Adam seem like brothers in a way."

Born in England of Irish immigrant parents, Sheehan spent his childhood in Dungarvan on Ireland's south coast, before attending English school and touring with his own band as a teenager. At 19, he left the stage and took his first job as a roadie, embarking on a career that would, in 2008, earn him a Parnelli Lifetime Achievement Award. For much of the 1970s he worked for Led Zeppelin, widely considered one of the most commercially successful and influential bands in rock and roll history. In 1982 he was hired by U2 as they prepared to release their third album, War.

Britain's *The Independent* credited Sheehan with bringing a logistical, level-headed approach to Led Zeppelin, a band renowned as much for its excesses as for its music.

Zeppelin's singer Robert Plant shared his sentiments in a statement to the *Los Angeles Times* shortly after Sheehan's passing; "Dennis travelled with me as we approached the end game of Led Zeppelin, his charm and humor a beacon in the meltdown of the late 70s."

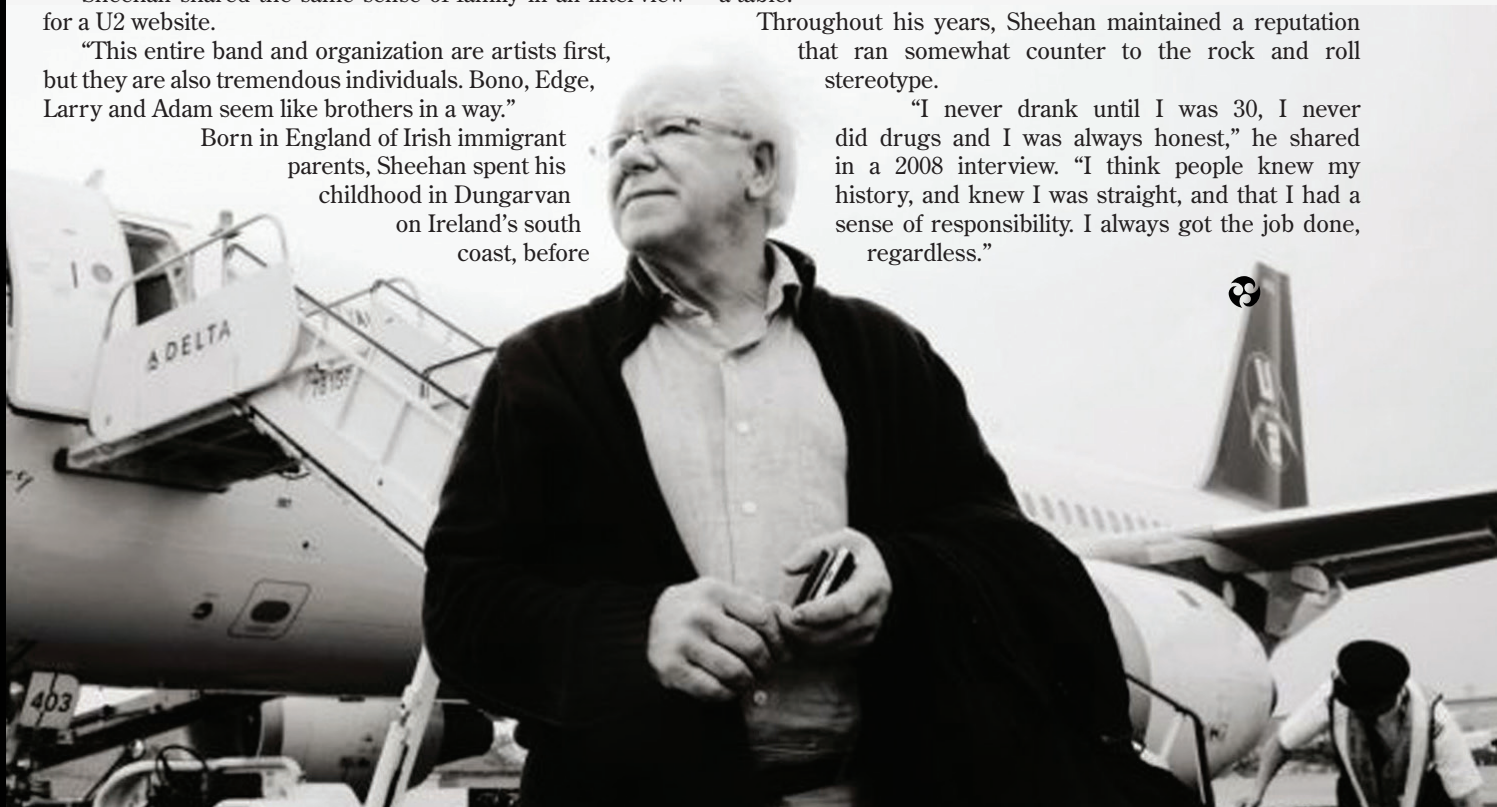
The band broke up following the death of its binge-drinking drummer, John Bonham, and Plant further recalled Sheehan's presence and support during the weeks and months that followed.

"He ironed my green flares with a straight face and helped me reacquaint with the gift of speech every morning. I loved him like the impish brother that he was."

In fact, Sheehan's career could have ended much earlier; in 1972, while working with Scottish rockers Stone the Crows, guitarist Les Harvey was electrocuted on a wet stage in Wales while Sheehan, who was frantically pulling plugs, was jolted off a table.

Throughout his years, Sheehan maintained a reputation that ran somewhat counter to the rock and roll stereotype.

"I never drank until I was 30, I never did drugs and I was always honest," he shared in a 2008 interview. "I think people knew my history, and knew I was straight, and that I had a sense of responsibility. I always got the job done, regardless."



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