

Vol. 28 No. 6 | \$5.95 CDN/USA | December 2014 | celticlifemag.com

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NS, Canada B3K 5M4

Celtic Life International is an ethnic journal
published in Canada six times a year by
Clansman Publishing Ltd.

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Subscriptions
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Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
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Phone: 902-818-8051
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Please send review books and CDs to:
223 Bluewater Road, Bedford,
NS, Canada B4B 1H1

Please return undeliverable
copies of Celtic Life International to:
PO Box 8805, Station A, Halifax,
NS, Canada B3K 5M4

Publication Mail Registration
No. 40050439 ISSN 1918-0497

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Celtic Life International acknowledges the
financial support of the Government of
Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund
of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Canada 

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Fáilte!

Much has happened since our last issue.

Paying our respects

Canada and the rest of the world mourns the senseless death of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo of Hamilton, Canada, a 24 year old soldier shot down by a sole gunman as he stood as honour guard at the National War Memorial in front of Canada's parliament building. A dedicated young soldier and father, he was standing guard for his country. As a proud member of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Cpl. Cirillo will receive a full regimental funeral. Celtic Life International joins thousands of Canadians and others throughout the world to express our condolences to his family. We salute, with the utmost of respect and gratitude, Cpl. Cirillo and the men and women in our military who put their lives on the line every day as they defend the freedom and the safety of all Canadians.

Scotland's Independence vote

On September 18th the people of Scotland decisively rejected independence but, in many respects, won the spoils of battle. Prime Minister David Cameron said he will honour the promises made during the referendum campaign. Alec Salmond, First Minister of Scotland, said he will focus on forcing Westminster to deliver on its promise of more power for Scotland. He said Scotland now has the opportunity to hold Westminster's "feet to the fire," which places Scotland in a very strong position. He added, "Scotland can still emerge as the real winner." I feel the majority in Scotland do want independence but not at any price and this was not the right time. Of major significance in this referendum was giving, for the first time, 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote. Results show the highest percentage of "Yes" votes came from the 16 – 17 year olds at 71 per cent. Cameron has to deliver on his commitment to the electorate and in short order. If he fails in his campaign promises, the people will not forget. However, it will be the youth of today, with a lifetime to decide, whether Westminster delivered on the campaign promises of more power to Scotland. It may be inevitable; Scotland's independence may not be a question of "if," but a matter of "when."

Buddy MacMaster

Buddy MacMaster is remembered as one of the greatest Cape Breton fiddlers of all time. In this issue Rosalie MacEachern speaks with several of Buddy's colleagues and friends. Respect, kindness and unselfish generosity resonate as expressions of feelings by friends toward Buddy the musician, the friend. Buddy's unique style of music won him international acclaim and numerous awards, however, it was Buddy the person - his humility, his generosity - that set him apart and above the rest. Buddy will be remembered and will be truly missed.

The Christmas Season

Finally, the Christmas holiday season is almost upon us. Unbelievable. For me the Christmas period has always consisted of two components. The preparation - Christmas concerts, gift buying, office parties, Christmas cards, preparing for Christmas day and Midnight Mass. Returning home from Midnight Mass marked the beginning of part two as a glass was raised to Good Health and Happy Holidays. There was the fiddle music, songs and friends until dawn. New Year's Day brought back reality, responsibility and enough holiday cheer. Whatever your traditions and custom may be, may you and yours have a wonderful Christmas season.

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



INSIDE

Volume 28, No. 6, December 2014

Special

- 43:** Liam Neeson
- 51:** Home for the Holidays
- 59:** Celtic Gift Guide

Stories

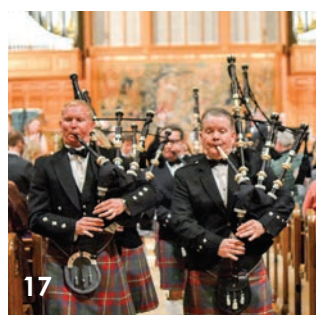
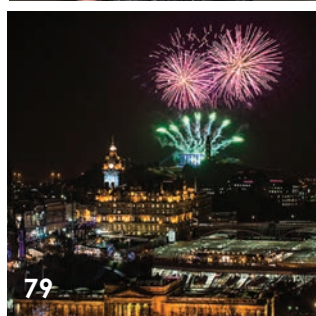
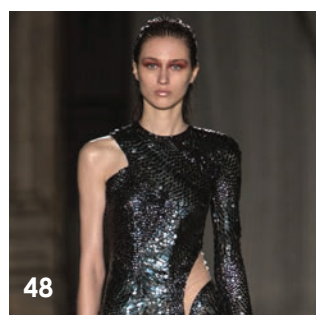
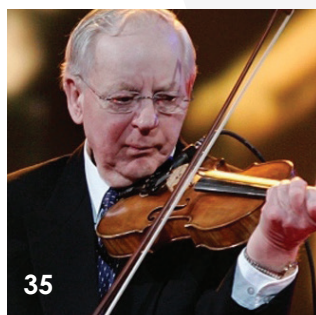
- 15:** Snowy White
- 17:** The Pipes of Christmas
- 19:** Mullaghbawn
- 21:** Duncan Saunders
- 23:** Mary Sutton
- 27:** Neil McCormick
- 31:** Alan Doyle
- 35:** Remembering Buddy MacMaster
- 39:** Kelpies

Style

- 48:** Julien MacDonald

Standards

- 9:** First Word
- 11:** Up Front
- 13:** Seven Celtic Questions
- 65:** Dram
- 67:** Sláinte
- 69:** Cabrini's Kitchen
- 73:** The Piper
- 75:** The Fiddler
- 77:** The Dancer
- 79:** Festival Focus
- 81:** All in the Family
- 90:** Last Word



Our December
cover photo



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New gin a rousing success

Using mainly locally harvested ingredients, the U.K.'s most northern distillery sold out its first batch of 500 bottles of gin in 48 hours. That, despite the fact that the distiller, Bay Dunnet in Caithness, Scotland, clearly warns prospective purchasers on its website, "We do not claim that drinking Rock Rose Gin will ward off colds, ghosts & ghoulies or give you added strength!" The disclaimer obviously wasn't enough to scare away eager tipplers who wanted to sample Scotland's newest drink. Claire and Martin Murray, the founders of Rock Rose, want to produce 700 bottles per batch, aiming for a total of 10,000 a year. While they use juniper from Bulgaria and Italy, the gin is flavoured with more nearby ingredients, including rose root, sea buckthorn and rowan berries, all gathered from the Scottish coast. The herbs and fruit are infused overnight before the Murrays transfer them to "Elizabeth," the traditional copper still, which "works her magic."

Star Wars and shearwaters

On the remote Skellig Michael Island off the coast of Ireland, the breeding puffins, Manx shearwaters and storm patrols had something new to contend with: space ships. The cast and crew of the latest Star Wars film descended on the UNESCO world heritage site, in the process setting off a battle of a different sort. The use of the protected site for the film, particularly during the bird's breeding season, drew inquiries from a number of critics – including UNESCO and Birdwatch Ireland – as to who authorized use of the stark island. The Irish Times reported that the Irish Film Board said Skellig Michael was given the green light after "extensive scientific analysis by the National Parks and Wildlife Service." The island, 11 km west of the Iveragh Peninsula in County Kerry, was the site of a now-abandoned Christian monastery founded between the sixth and eighth centuries and is a world heritage site partially on the basis of cultural significance.



A world's record on a forsaken, lonely rock

Scottish adventurer Nick Hancock set the world's record for the longest occupation of Rockall, a miserable, tiny piece of land, far, far from anywhere. To set the scene of what it means to stay on Rockall, Hancock included the following quotes on his website: "The most isolated speck of Rock, surrounded by Water, on the Surface of the Earth," said James Macintosh in 1946. In 1971, Lord Kennet noted of Rockall, "There can be no place more desolate, despairing and awful." It took Hancock two attempts to break the world record of 42 days, most recently set by three Greenpeace campaigners. Hancock lasted 45 days. Battered by raging seas, the island is 366 km west of the Outer Hebrides and 430 km from the nearest point on the Irish mainland. For his time there, Hancock hung out on the only inhabitable part of the island, a three-and-a-half metre by four metre area known as Hall's Ledge, named after the first recorded person to land there.

Confusion causes problems for pipers

Confusing new rules on the transport of ivory are causing difficulty for bagpipers crossing borders. Two young pipers had their pipes seized in September while traveling between the United States and Canada, The Scotsman newspaper reported. The problem is new regulations introduced by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Anyone transporting anything with ivory, such as pipes, must have a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) certificate. But the certificates aren't straightforward and often need amendments for certain border crossings. Even though he had a CITES certificate, Campbell Webster, 17, watched in horror as border officials confiscated his \$6,000 pipes once owned and played by his father. The young man was able to recover them two days later, The Scotsman said. Pipers world-wide have decried the new rules that include leaving and returning to the U.S. through one of 38 designated ports if their pipes contain elephant ivory.



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A few months ago I went out to dinner with some old friends and new acquaintances. We were a motley crowd – American, British, Irish, all in the Celtic business – and somehow we were half way through dinner before the Irish woman sitting across from me heard my last name: Nagle. She looked at me, bewildered, “I would never have believed that somebody who looks like you could have such an Irish name.”

An Irish name. Although few Americans realize it, Sarah Nagle is a very Irish name. The Irish, of course, have an edge. My family name, Nagle, is literally as Irish as the hills. (The Nagle Mountains flank the Blackwater Valley.) Someone who looks like me. She had a point though. My name may be as Irish as the hills, but I don’t look very Irish.

“This is America. Things can get a little complicated in 100 years.” We both laughed it off. But there was a truth there, in the question and in the answer, that we – as individuals, as a family, as “Irish” people, as Irish-Americans and as a Celtic collective whole – have never, until recently been particularly good at acknowledging: Things do get complicated. And I see that messy, complicated 21st century Celtic reality reflected in my family tree and my family business.

I am the great-granddaughter of an Irish emigrant who married a thoroughly Americanized woman of primarily Scottish descent. I am the granddaughter of a man of mixed Celtic heritage who married a woman with no Celtic heritage. Products all of us, ethnically or culturally, of the emigrant cauldron of America from the early 20th century.

Today there is nothing particularly startling about the hybrid nature of Celtic culture. Fusion, indy and alt bands headline the festivals. The knife-edge identity politics of the 1920s – hyphenation was a dirty word in America in the ‘20s and ‘30s – are now barely remembered. And yet...on the business side of things there is often little acknowledgement of the hybrid nature of much modern Celtic culture, or the complex origins of so

much ancient and traditional Celtic art.

Celtic art has gone mainstream in the past 20 years. Celtic jewelry in particular has become a staple of many non-Celtic businesses. (A man might only buy one kilt in his life, but chances are he’ll buy several kilt pins as well as belt buckles, plaid brooches and cuff links.)

I’ve been fortunate enough to see the Celtic market in general expand over the past decade and become more diverse. I’ve also been fortunate enough to see my own family’s business expand and become more diverse. Today we are making more than 200 stock designs that we were not making 10 years ago. We’ve expanded our plaid brooch line – we now have a colour catalogue with more than 120 different plaid brooch designs – we’ve also expanded our kilt pin line. We’ve recently started making belt buckles again. A few years ago we started working in bronze – a copper-tin alloy beloved by the pre-Roman and Roman era Celtic tribes – as well as pewter, silver and gold. We’ve expanded our wholesale business and today about 30 small Celtic retailers in the U.S. and Canada carry Nagle Forge & Foundry pieces.

But sometimes I think the sheer diversity of the Celtic artistic tradition can be as bewildering as the idea that someone who looks like me could have such an Irish name. Celtic design has always been about more than claddaghs and thistles. But for a long time if a design didn’t have a shamrock, thistle or cross – something immediately identifiable as “Celtic” – it wasn’t salable. In recent years I think the pendulum has swung the other way and a lot of people are actively seeking out “different” Celtic designs. Today I think we finally have the opportunity of fully embracing the broad range of Celtic art forms that have developed over the past 2,000 years.

By Sarah Nagle
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UP FRONT



When it comes to visiting Wales, Manon Antoniazzi, the chief executive of Visit Wales for the Welsh government, makes a compelling argument

“We will provide the warmest of welcomes, outstanding quality, excellent value for money and memorable, authentic experiences, whether you are looking for a great family holiday, a short luxury break, or a thrilling outdoor adventure.”

And if that’s not enough to convince you, Antoniazzi goes on to extoll the region as a culturally vibrant country with renowned opera companies, choirs and orchestras and what she calls a “buzzing” traditional and pop music scene. She also notes the country’s reputation for hosting major sporting events, which have made huge strides in credibility thanks to such forthcoming highlights as the World Half Marathon Championships in Cardiff in 2016 and the Volvo Ocean Race scheduled to take place during 2017-18.

As you may have guessed by now, Antoniazzi is big on Wales. And why not? She was born and brought up in the country’s capital city of Cardiff, but has family links throughout the country to Treorchy, Llanelli, Aberystwyth and Machynlleth.

“I love the journey from south to north, during which the striking urban landscapes of the valleys give way to the rolling Cambrian hills and then increasingly dramatic mountains leading back down to the sea,” she enthuses.

The chief executive notes Wales is a wonderful place for a relaxing holiday, but jokes that if you have to drive around the

country as much as she does on business that your energy can be depleted.

“The problem is that I keep getting distracted by the landscapes and having to stop to take pictures,” she laughs.

Antoniazzi describes the country as a “hidden gem.” She asserts: “Although the quality of what’s offered to tourists has been transformed in recent decades, perceptions have not always kept pace with reality. There are many cultural and historical reasons why Wales isn’t as well-known as it deserves to be internationally. In many places, few people realize that Wales is a separate nation within the United Kingdom, with its own ancient history and language. But on the plus side, we can offer visitors maximum quality with minimum crowds. With 641 castles, there’s a fair chance you’ll have one to yourself.”

Antoniazzi’s office channels public money into the tourism sector to support investment, and leads the national marketing of Wales. As is the case with other tourism authorities, Visit Wales is increasingly taking advantage of digital channels to promote the country and make it easier for tourists to discover the region. A recent endorsement from no one less than the President of the United States doesn’t hurt matters either. At a NATO summit meeting at the Celtic Hotel in Newport, President Obama praised Wales’ “extraordinary beauty, wonderful people and great hospitality,” and urged American citizens

to visit the country.

Seeing such things come to fruition along with excellent results this year to date in visitation is naturally gratifying for Antoniazzi.

“It’s a very competitive global market,” she notes, “and people expect constant improvement.”

Another upside for herself personally is getting to test out all the new highlights. Those highlights range from luxurious hotels and wonderful restaurants serving delicious local produce, to innovative attractions and highly distinctive, unexpected smaller places to stay.

All of this is deeply important to Antoniazzi. She was raised in a Welsh-speaking home by parents who were keen to ensure that both her and her sister knew their own country well before setting out to explore others. Every year while growing up she attended the National Eisteddfod, which she describes as a great celebration of everything Welsh and which gave her a ringside seat for some of the nation’s best traditional and contemporary culture.

“I subsequently read Celtic Studies at university and so learned a little bit of every single Celtic language, ancient and modern,” she points out. “I have drawn on those roots all my life, wherever I’ve worked.”

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Sheila MacKenzie FitzPatrick is one of the co-founders of Prince Edward Island's new Celtic Learning & Educational Foundation (CLEF). A fiddler and promoter, FitzPatrick noticed a lack of young people attending traditional music shows and decided to establish CLEF as a way to bring Celtic music, dance, language, history and culture back to the forefront for the younger generation.

What are your own Celtic roots?

I am of Scottish decent. My mother was a Northpole MacDonald from Little Pond and her mother was a MacInnis from St. Peters Bay. Their ancestors came from South Uist.

Why are these roots important to you?

My roots are very important to me because they form an essential part of my identity. There's a comfort and strength that derives from knowing where you came from, what your ancestors went through, and what they were able to accomplish. My roots explain my music, and they make me feel connected to something. My Celtic roots and all the people connected to them are a part of me. It's important to me that I try to preserve the culture they brought with them because this is a culture that was taken away from them.

What does it mean today to be of Celtic Heritage?

To me, it's all about being a part of a community that is strong in character and rich in history and music and stories with wonderful characters. It's all about determined people who work hard and play hard.

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

I'm a fiddle player and stepdancer. I was about six years old when I started. My whole life, I've always had an interest in Scottish history, Gaelic language and of course music and dance. I've been going to dances and ceilidhs since I was very young and now I get to take my own children. I've always been involved in one way or another. I organize many events, concerts, workshops and that sort of thing. I've been the president of the PEI Fiddlers' Society and I was a member of the Queens County Fiddlers. And now I'm busy these days with establishing CLEF.

Why is it important to help keep Celtic culture alive?

It's important because we should never forget where we came from, so that we never take what we have for granted. We need

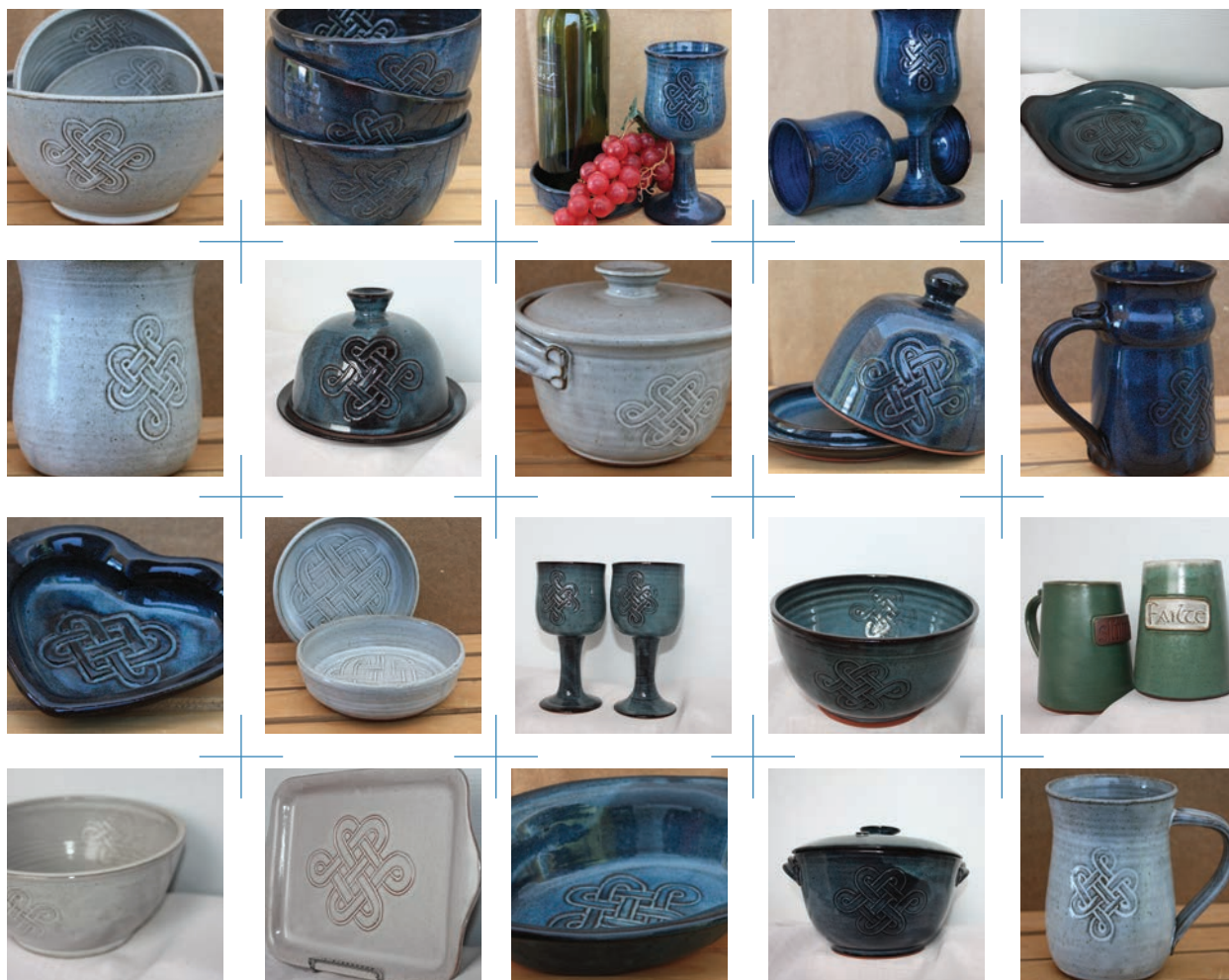
to remember all the hardships our ancestors faced in coming here. We need to remember in order to truly appreciate what they have built for us. We've managed to hold onto the old music and ways that have been lost even in Scotland and Ireland. Us being able to hold on to that; I believe that makes us "keepers." Celtic Culture is so inclusive. It encourages and allows people of all ages to come together. It's pure, it's clean and it just feels right. The Celtic culture promotes a real sense of community in younger people especially, and it gives them a safe place to grow up. This is our identity. If we lose it, life will be sad and empty. It will feel void of colour.

Is enough being done to preserve and promote Celtic culture?

I think that, in general, there is a need for more Celtic preservation. There seems to be a great deal of promotion on a commercial level, but in terms of something more in-depth that's not the case.

What can we be doing better?

We need to work together as Celtic regions. We've got to celebrate each other and get people to participate. People need to do more than simply watch; they have to get involved, and we have to bring people in, get them interested in learning and feeling pride in who they are. If we can do that, then more people will be able to celebrate their Celtic culture. We need to make it more accessible to everyone. Taking part and celebrating our culture shouldn't be out of anyone's reach financially. It should be all about grass roots, and based in the local history of each area. It needs to be fun, lively and integrated into daily living as much as possible. We need to get people of all ages working together because we all have so much to learn from one another, no matter how young or old we are. We could be using new technology to our benefit. We have to figure out how to get people to celebrate their culture every day, and not just once a year when St. Patrick's Day rolls around!



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Snowy White

Cornish blues guitarist Snowy White has been there, done everything!

You may think you've never heard of him before, but chances are you've heard Snowy White play guitar. That is if you ever liked Thin Lizzy in the early '80s, saw a Pink Floyd or Roger Waters concert live or online, or once owned Pink Floyd's *Animals* album...on 8-Track.

That's the kind of anonymity Snowy White has enjoyed for close to 50 years now. And, it seems, the most successful blues guitarist to come out of the Celtic nation of Cornwall, likes it that way.

Only one problem; Snowy will be seen, a lot, playing alongside Roger Waters in the soon to be released *Roger Waters: The Wall* documentary. The film takes an intimate look at the 2010 – 2012 *The Wall* world tour. When the documentary opens in theatres, Snowy won't be able to hide anymore.

"It is my nature," he shares. "I'm actually quite a private person. If the spotlight hits me, my natural inclination is to step out of it."

Shy, silent nature aside, the affably-professed "recluse," Snowy – born in Barnstaple, Devon, home of the Dumnonii Celts, and raised on the Isle of Wight, pre-Roman homeland of the Durotriges – is driven to play the blues, and has been right from the start.

"My father was a drummer," Snowy explains, "doing quite well before the war broke out. Afterwards he got a job, but still played early in the evenings and for dances, and holiday camps. His guitar player was really good. And when I was about ten, I just got into guitar playing."

"A bit of a recluse even then, I didn't do much except sit at home and learn to play. Eventually, maybe 16, I plucked up the courage to go play at my local youth club."

Recluse or not, there was very little for a teenager to do on the Isle of Wight. So Snowy had to travel by steam train to

London to find records from BB King and Otis Rush, Robert Johnson, Elvis and Big Bill Broonzy. "Which I guess made it more of an adventure, something a bit more special," he says. "And after a little while I got into thinking that maybe the guitar was my way. Maybe I could actually earn a living playing the guitar."



And what a living he made! Snowy's 50-year guitar playing career has seen him record with the legendary British blues guitarist and old friend Peter Green, as well as Al Stewart and Mick Taylor. He was once a touring musician with Pink Floyd, and a full-fledged member of Ireland's Thin Lizzy, at the same time. To follow that up, he had a number three hit on UK charts in 1983 with the ballad *Bird of Paradise*.

Not to be labelled a balladeer, Snowy turned his back on his sudden pop star status and went on to record 15 albums between 1983 and 2013 with Snowy White's Blues Agency, Snowy White & The White Flames, and the Snowy White Blues Project – all the while never forgetting where he was from.

"After I moved out, I realised that our accents were quite different. It evoked a feeling of being quite separate, 'out that way.' A few years ago I drove back to Devon, and past the house where I'd been born. It seemed quite a long way out still. Even now."

His Cornish folk and Celtic musical roots always with him – clearer, melodic and more akin to Welsh and Breton styles than the northern Irish, Scottish and Manx R&B – Snowy is easily recognizable on recordings because he sticks to his blues principles. Live in concert, he's also easily recognized by his career-long, one-and-only guitar, his 1957 Les Paul Goldtop, which, after almost half a century together, he is putting up for sale.

"It's a bit of an unknown quantity this guitar," Snowy suggests. "Because the aficionados who collect them, they want a guitar that's as much in original condition and is as tidy as possible. But mine is a 'working guitar' and is sort of the opposite. But, it's got a lot of history. A lot of history."

Snowy's guitar doesn't have the pedigree of his friend Peter Green's 1959 Les Paul, which sold for over \$2 million in 2006. But with its storied history, it is expected to fetch in the neighbourhood of \$200,000 on auction this spring.

"Sometimes when I think about not having it... it's quite horrendous," he reveals. "And then other times I'm a bit, well it's time. It does feel like it's time to move on from it." *Story by Donald Wiedman*





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“It’s the best holiday celebration in New York City, and this comes from a cynical soul who has all but given up on Christmas,” declares Sarah B. Roberts, blogger at Adventures in the Endless Pursuit of Entertainment. “It also stirs up my wee dram of Celtic blood and makes my soul soar! I plan my entire December around the Pipes of Christmas.”

“One patron brings his entire family every year,” shares Bob Currie, president of the Clan Currie Society and producer of the Pipes of Christmas. “Everyone is spread out on Christmas Day itself, so this is how they spend Christmas together. He just bought 50 tickets for this year!”

Along with a loyal audience, the Pipes of Christmas enjoys a faithful company of musical talent from across North America and Scotland. These include the Solid Brass ensemble, New England fiddle champion Paul Woodiel and uilleann piper Christopher Layer. The latter are both players in Sting’s Broadway musical *The Last Ship*. Other performers include the lead guitarist for Jersey Boys, Steve Gibb; the “First Lady of Scottish Country Dance Music,” Susie Petrov; acclaimed harpist Jennifer Port, and the Kevin Ray Blandford Memorial Pipe Band, named in honour of the Pipe Major who co-founded Pipes of Christmas.

While much of the program features traditional tunes, the Pipes of Christmas



also showcases compositions never performed before.

“I’ve been quite pleased with our ability to offer new music composed by some very fine Scottish composers,” says Currie. “We began this tradition back in 2001 when Pipe Major Blandford composed *Lament for the Lost*, a haunting piece to commemorate the 9/11 terror attacks.”

“This year we are thrilled to be hosting the winner of the Alexander McCall Smith Prize for Composition which we coordinate with our generous sponsors from Edinburgh Napier University,” adds Currie. “If last year’s selection is an indication of the quality of music we can expect from ENU students this year, we’ll be in for a great treat.”

A tribute to the renowned Cape Breton fiddler, the late Buddy MacMaster, will also be included in this year’s program.

“The MacMaster family has been very generous to send us the tune list of music played at Buddy’s memorial service and

we want - strike that - we need to add our tribute to this great musician and human being,” says Currie.

Proceeds from tickets to the shows, as well as *The Best of the Pipes of Christmas* CD sales, go towards the Clan Currie Society’s extensive outreach programs which foster and promote Scottish arts and culture, including events and scholarships at such institutions as Nova Scotia’s Gaelic College and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye.

As he gears up for the 16th Pipes of Christmas, Currie shares how lucky he feels to not only have the “most talented people you can possibly imagine come and make beautiful music,” but also an incredibly devoted creative team, including musical director Jeff Rickard, writer/narrator Susan Currie and his “right hand person” and spouse, Suzanne Currie.

“In my life, I’m most proud of my incredible wife and two beautiful daughters,” says Currie. “But after that, I think I’m most proud of the Pipes of Christmas. I wanted my audience to experience what one guest described as ‘the best Christmas Eve in Scotland he could have ever imagined.’ I have people that come up to me at intermission with tears in their eyes. I look at them and say, ‘Are you okay?’ They just say, ‘I needed this. This is my Christmas.’”

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The Mullaghbawn Occupation

The International Women's Movement was born more than a half-century ago and contrary to popular belief, it didn't begin with Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, or a legion of bra-burning feminists. They're wrongly credited with leading the women's lib charge.

If history demands vindication and truth be told, the international women's movement started one inauspicious Sunday in a chapel in Mullaghbawn, South Armagh, Ireland. I know this because I witnessed the event that triggered the earth-shattering universal sexual revolution.

In fact, my wife and Jemmy Toal, a local blacksmith, are responsible for igniting the firestorm that transformed Mullaghbawn, Armagh, and, in time, the whole Western World.

What happened that historic Sunday with my wife and the legendary blacksmith is soon told.

It was a half-century ago, in 1964, that my wife, three boys, and I moved into a dank house owned by a distant relative on the river in the Village of Forkhill. "Joe Gorman's house," as the dampish manse came to be known, was a mere mile from the family farm, where my grandfather was born.

I was told that I was related to half the countryside. We were "known" in Forkhill, but Mullaghbawn was another story — it was a mystery to us.

Nestled up the Markethill Road along Slieve Gullion's side, the hamlet (one could hardly call it a village) had only a few shops and a chapel. But, because Forkhill had no chapel of its own and Joe Gorman's house was "on the wrong side of the river," we were informed by distraught kin that Mullaghbawn was indeed our parish and that our absence at mass might be taken as a slight.

So, on the first Sunday in Joe Gorman's, we dutifully dressed and journeyed

a mile up . . . and two centuries back . . . to Mullaghbawn and the Church that Time Forgot.

As we made our way into the only vacant pew on the right side of the cramped chapel, my wife smiled across at familiar women's faces in the congregation — all of whom registered degrees of shock and disbelief. Two women signaled frantically to her, but she took it as a vigorous gesture of recognition. She couldn't decipher the code.



"Is it okay if we sit here?" she asked in innocence as the other occupants of the pew grinned, nodded in unison, and shifted to make room. We genuflected and filed in. With that, the sacristy bell was rung, and priest and servers made their way to the altar.

Our pew-mates, now fidgeting and elbowing one another in anticipation of what was to come, could hardly contain themselves. And it soon came in the gaunt figure of the ancient blacksmith Jemmy Toal brandishing a blackthorn and thumping his way menacingly up the aisle.

Tension was building — priest and servers froze in place to witness the calamity in the making — as the weathered blacksmith peered into the bench with

his one good eye, caught a glimpse of the strange woman occupying his place, and rotated the stick threateningly above his head, like a druid hurling a curse and shouting for all to hear, "Is it women on the job?"

The penny dropped, and my wife, suddenly realizing she was not only the lone woman on the male side of Mullaghbawn chapel, but also that she'd committed an unpardonable sin that cried out to heaven for vengeance — she'd taken the pew that the grizzled blacksmith had no doubt occupied from birth.

What began as silent warnings from the women's side of the chapel had, at the smith's entry, turned to near hysteria. There was, among the women in the congregation, a mass epiphany that would lead to a common cause. There was shared outrage at the insensitivity of husbands, sons, and brothers, and there was resolve to buck tradition and a system that had assuredly outlived its time.

The following Sunday, in defiance of Jemmy Toal and his ilk, the women of the parish, raised the battlecry "women on the job," and began a revolution of their own. They "occupied" the entire male side of Mullaghbawn chapel and sat back to watch Jemmy Toal and other hapless menfolk wander aimlessly in search of new roosts.

Life would never be the same — not in Mullaghbawn, not in Ireland, not anywhere else. The international women's movement broke ground that Sunday, and it would not go away.

And, I'm thinking, if he were alive and able, Jemmy Toal, the blacksmith who inspired the feminist revolution wouldn't have voted for a Mary Robinson or Mary McAleese or any other female. . . Jemmy never liked women on the job.

By Donal O'Cathasaigh



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Duncan Saunders

wears his harp on his sleeve

Most people don't like to be harped at, but when Duncan Saunders comes around everyone gladly makes an exception. Saunders doesn't lecture folks; rather, he is an accomplished harp player who makes music to help heal and calm patients in a medical centre.

The former mental health counselor and therapist is currently one of two Celtic harpists who are Music Ministers of the Spiritual Care Department at the Peace-Health St. Joseph Center in Bellingham, Washington.

"I need to note first that I am not a music therapist nor do I practice music therapy with the harp," notes Saunders. He points out that the harp has a long history of being used to help bring healing and soothing music to individuals with mental, physical and spiritual needs and who may be in distress. He explains that in ancient Ireland, for instance, the god Dagda was known for the ability to change the physical and emotional well-being of his listeners by playing three different strains of harp, which could bring about either sleep, tears or laughter.

"Harp music has been shown to reduce blood pressure, increase oxygenation, provide relief from pain, relieve mental distress and reduce the need for pain medica-

tions in some situations," Saunders says. "Another benefit, especially for hospital staff on acute and busy wards, is that the music brings some needed soothing and calming as they attend to patients. And of course some patients are delighted to have the soft sounds of the harp to counterbalance the noise of the machines and the busy units."

Saunders believes the harp's power to heal and bring calm to the listeners comes from the fingers on the strings bringing forth a sound that he says is authentic and resonates at a vibrational level needed to bring comfort.

"There is something iconic or magical-mystical about the shape and sound of the harp, which is found in many tales and legends from around the world," Saunders avows.

The patients and staff love the music when he and the other harpist show up, Saunders says, adding that one patient told him after Saunders had played for 15 minutes that it was the first time he'd been pain-free in three days.

"The staff of the emergency department has told me that before I enter, there is usually a buzz in the unit that goes away when the harp music is heard. I sometimes see and hear a more relaxed staff

when the harp plays," Saunders declares.

Saunders, 69, took up harp in 1982. He took a beginner's class in the Celtic harp after a friend of his showed up with a harp and asked if he wanted to try it.

"Unaware that my life was going to be transformed, I said, 'Sure,' and when she handed me the harp and it cuddled up to my shoulder I knew I had found my instrument."

Saunders says as an instrument the harp can be intimidating at first – "so many strings!" he interjects – but when he realized the instrument is a piano keyboard turned upright by 90 degrees he became more comfortable with it.

"Once you realize it's like a piano, you can begin to pluck out simple tunes. The real work comes in learning how to let the fingers find the notes without having to look where to place them and to let the heart and soul of the music come through."

The musician rarely performs in front of an audience, preferring instead to bring the music to individuals in hospital settings.

"I have experience first-hand about how much the music of the harp brings peace to the soul and body in those settings."





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Mary Sutton's *Ceilidh Surprise*

Mary Sutton knows her tartans. “The kilt I’m wearing right now is an Ancient Scott tartan,” she says over the phone from her Regina, Saskatchewan home. “In my family, a lot of them wear their kilts, the boys especially. I give them each a kilt when they graduate from high school. They pretty well all wear the Elliot tartan—that was their dad’s, my first husband’s, name. My youngest daughter wears the Dunlop tartan—that was my maiden name.”

Owner of the Ceilidh Surprise in Regina, Sutton’s shop has access to over 5,000 tartans, the majority of kilts coming from certified kilt makers in Scotland. Sutton and her team enjoy helping a range of clientele select a plaid that reflects their heritage or sense of style.

In the last year, for example, Ceilidh Surprise outfitted a group of Grey Cup fans in Highland garb.

“They wear the Hamilton Tartan, which is as close to the Saskatchewan Tartan as we could get, and has green, the colour of the Saskatchewan Roughriders,” says Sutton, who also played clarinet in the Roughriders’ pep band for 20 years.

Originally from Stratford, Ontario, with Scottish and Irish roots, Sutton lived in Nova Scotia for 16 years before moving her family to Western Canada.

“When we moved to Regina, my daughter was highland dancing,” she says. “So we decided we would open up a store to provide highland dance equipment.”

In its 15 years, the Ceilidh Surprise has grown into a larger location and also sells its merchandise online now. It continues to retail all the equipment and address the needs of highland dancers, and is Canada’s only distributor for Dancer’s Dream Duffel. Sutton’s daughter Leah runs a highland dance studio behind the shop.

Additionally, Ceilidh Surprise sells products for pipe bands, as well as Celtic jewellery and gifts, and a range of specialty and clan items, from confectionary, glasses and flasks to baby clothes and hats, imported from Scotland, Ireland and England. The shop helps set up traditional Scottish and Irish weddings too, providing dress and décor.

A highlight for Sutton is helping people learn more about their Scottish or Irish history when they come into the shop.

“What is most rewarding is when somebody finds out what their actual background is,” she describes. “They may have listened to stories, and when we check it out, the stories are not accurate. They’re quite excited when they can find out what their actual heritage is.”

Sutton has also been heavily involved with the Scottish community outside her shop. She’s the Chief of the Sons of Scotland for Camp Balmoral, and Ceilidh Surprise sets up a booth in the Scottish pavilion at the Mosaic Festival in Regina and Saskatoon where 20 or more cultures are represented each year.

“Saskatchewan is a melting pot for

many ethnic origins,” says Sutton. “The aboriginal community here is a large one too, and some of them have Celtic roots, so they come into the store and pick things up.”

Sutton has travelled extensively across Western Canada and Scotland for the business and with Leah’s highland dance troupe.

“There’s a sense of belonging and I’ve never not felt that each time I’ve gone to Scotland,” reflects Sutton.

In Saskatchewan, Sutton feels that same sense of kinship.

“The Scottish community in Saskatchewan is alive and well and I think probably larger than most people realize,” she notes. “We have Highland dance groups, country dance groups, pipe bands...it’s quite lively here!”

Now 76, Sutton has passed the tradition of running Ceilidh Surprise onto Leah. But she continues to help out at the shop a couple times a week.

“It’s a busy little store and we have some awfully good employees,” beams Sutton. “It’s been a wonderful experience and we’ve met many, many wonderful people. The Scottish community has given us a very good life. I think belonging to a group, especially a group that represents your heritage, you create a bond, and the bond is very important.”

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Scottish Gaelic Awards

November 19th is a big night for the Scottish Gaelic community. That's when the second annual Scottish Gaelic Awards are set to take place in Glasgow. The awards are a way to recognize and reward outstanding work from members of the Gaelic community, both in Scotland and internationally, and to promote and develop Gaelic language and culture.

"Not only do the awards recognize the talent, success and commitment of those who are involved in developing and maintaining Gaelic in Scotland, but they also shine a light on the many thriving initiatives which exist at a grassroots level," says Anndra Grace, a digital communications officer with the Bord na Gaidhlig. The latter works to promote Gaelic in partnership with the Scottish government.

A number of different award categories each focus on different aspects of Gaelic culture. The categories include awards for



arts and culture, best event over the year, a community, tourism and heritage award and one for innovation in education.

"The huge amount of nominations this year made the judging process extremely challenging, and this alone proved Gaelic is a vibrant and relevant language in modern Scotland," notes Grace.

The Campbells of Greepe, for example, were the recipients of the arts and culture award in 2013. Described as "one of the great singing dynasties of Scottish-Gaelic

music," they are pipers and singers from the Isle of Skye. Grace says award-winners often go above and beyond their job description.

"Innovation is the key to sustainability of Gaelic in the future," Grace points out. "So many winners are people and organizations who are breaking new ground in the use or promotion of Gaelic, be it through business, art or education."

Adds Grace; "Academics generally agree that legislation can only go so far in the reversal of language decline. For the process to take effect, a strong will is needed at the grassroots level. The Scottish Gaelic Awards are an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the people in the community who work at promoting, developing and normalizing Gaelic."

www.scottishgaelicawards.co.uk



The Wallace Award

One of the recipients of this year's Wallace Award may not be Scottish, but does have a strong Celtic connection.

Claudio Del Vecchio, CEO of New York City retail giant Brooks Brothers, was born in Italy, but has lived in the United States for 30 years. He is being honoured at the Wallace Award Gala Dinner in Manhattan this November for his firm's commitment to bringing quality Scottish wear to the global marketplace.

"Brooks Brothers is an institution," shares Alan Bain, President of the American Scottish Foundation, who hosts the annual event. "Their collection of classic and contemporary clothing has been outfitting Scots around the world for generations."

The award is presented annually to people who contribute to the Scottish community and Diaspora. Past winners include actor Sean Connery, former US Senator Trent Lott and the Forbes family.

Del Vecchio says that his company's success comes from seamlessly merging the past with the present.

"Brooks Brothers is at once traditional



Claudio Del Vecchio

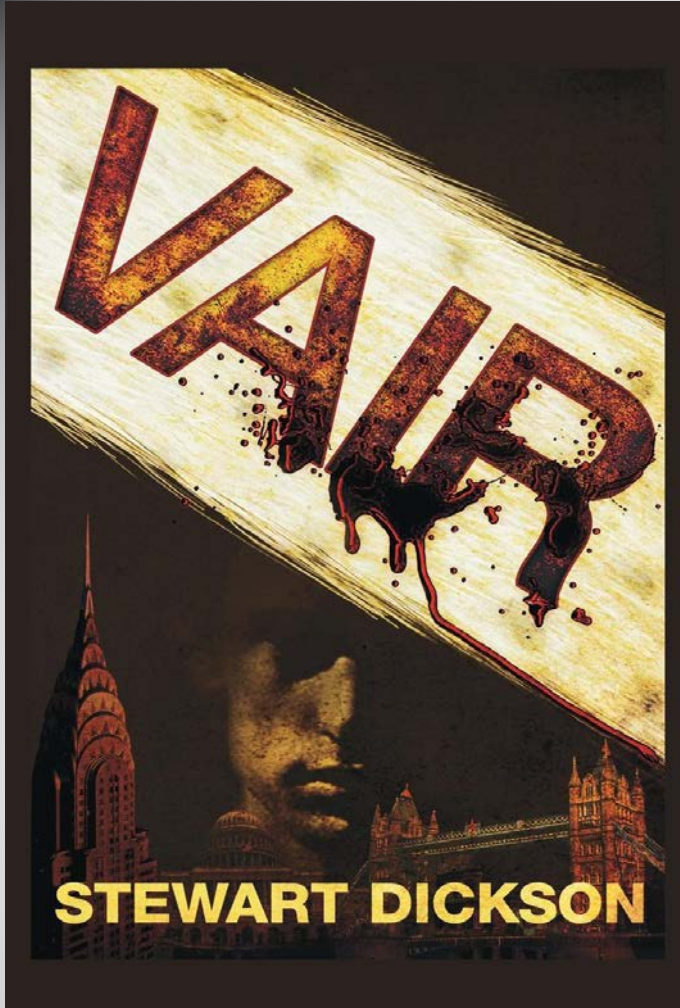
and innovative. That has been one of the reasons the company has survived for 196 years. We have a healthy respect for the past but we are also looking at what's to come. As the world changes we must change with it looking to our heritage for inspiration.

"I am deeply proud and flattered to be recognized. Our relationship with Scotland goes back to the lineage of Livinia Brooks, the wife of our founder Henry Sands Brooks. We honour our Scottish roots in many ways whether it's with our official Tartan, the Scottish products we prominently feature in our stores around the world, or our experience of bringing our customers to St. Andrews each year for Golf on the Old Course. Though I'm an Italian living in America, I feel very welcomed and at home when I visit Scotland."

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A portrait of Neil McCormick, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, a light purple shirt, and a dark tie. He is sitting in a director's chair with a wooden frame and black armrests. His hands are clasped in his lap. The background is dark with some out-of-focus lights.

Neil McCormick

Journalist, author and musician Neil McCormick has been picking the hits and misses since 1978

My father was Scottish, my mother was English and I grew up in Ireland. So I don't quite know what that makes me. When they hear my mixed-up accent, a lot of people assume I'm American. I can play up whichever aspect of my heritage suits me, but I would never identify myself as English, although the truth is, since I moved to London in 1983, I've lived here longer than anywhere else. The McCormick clan hail from Scotland, the area of the Forth. Both my grandparents were coal miners. We don't seem to have anyone of distinction in our historic lineage, just working peasants stretching back centuries. My parents' generation clawed their way up to the middle class in an era of post-war opportunity that I don't think we will see again. I think what they did was an incredible achievement, really. I spent eight years in Ayrshire in Scotland, then we decamped to Dublin. I loved it there. If I'm going to be patriotic about anywhere, it would be Ireland, which is pretty dodgy since I was born in Coventry and hold a British passport. Confused?

Neil McCormick

What inspired you to take up writing?

Reading, I suppose. I've been voracious since I was a child, and I delight in words, they spill around my brain, they buzz at my fingertips at the keyboard of my typewriter. I always knew I would write a book one day, but I didn't really plan on being a writer. I was going to be a film star, rock star, pretty much anything with star in it, and maybe do some writing on the side. But all that time I wasn't planning on being a writer, I was actually writing: songs, poems, magazine articles. Until one day I had to make a living, and found I already was making one.

Are they the same reasons you do it today?

Economics didn't come into it as a kid. In fact, when I was an 18-year-old punk working in the art department (well, let's be honest, I was the art department) of Hot Press magazine in Dublin (motto, "keeping Ireland safe for rock and roll"), I asked the editor if I could do reviews, and he kindly allowed me to, but it never even occurred to me that I should be paid extra for them. Now, I write for a living, and I write a lot, mainly for the Daily Telegraph. It's nice to be heard, to feel that I am part of the conversation about music and pop culture in Britain and in the world at this moment in history, but I wouldn't be writing all that if I wasn't getting paid, let's be honest. I'd probably be boring my friends in the pub. But whatever I was doing, I'd still be writing, and I do still write for myself, first and foremost. I write songs and poems whom no-one but my nearest and dearest ever hear or see, just because they have to be written. And I've always got a book churning about in my mind, which, if you know anything about publishing in the 21st Century, is as close as you can get to working for the pure joy of it, 'cause chances are you're never going to make any money.

What are the challenges of the profession?

Journalism is an increasingly challenging profession in the age of the internet, because its worth is being devalued, copyright is under threat, and you can only pitch your particular voice and expertise into the churning mill of information that is instantaneously available to everyone and hope some will still find value in what you have to say. It's tough out there.

What are the rewards?

To be heard. I feel very intellectually involved in my life and my field. I am constantly bursting with thoughts and opinions and questions, and I have the privilege of being paid to express all this, to be part of a public conversation. I've also met most of the great music makers of our time, and got to ask them questions, find out what makes them tick. My life is very full, and changes day to day. I go to concerts all the time, I travel, I listen to music and think, with quiet glee, I'm being paid to do this!

You have been involved with a number of other creative projects; books, film, music - are you still active in these areas? If so, in what way?

I'm involved in all, to greater and lesser degrees. They made a film of my memoir, Killing Bono, and that was fascinating to be part of, but it was also a process that sucked the joy out of people (it took seven years to get made, and went through many, many changes on the way) so I can't say I have thrown myself eagerly back into the maw. I've been writing a novel though, which I have enjoyed as much as anything I have ever done, for the imaginative freedom it grants, the sheer thrill of expression. I make a TV series with Vintage TV (Britain's only independent music channel) called Needle Time, which is an hour long in-depth music interview show, and that takes up a lot of my time, and I really enjoy it (it's interesting how differently people behave in a TV interview as opposed to a press interview. They do

tend to sit up and make an effort). And I still make music, the difference is that I no longer even think about it as something I do for a living, it's just something I do for the joy. Occasionally I write a song, sometimes I play an acoustic gig if anyone asks, and sometimes I sing with a bunch of old rockers who call themselves Groovy Dad (because we are groovy, and we are dads) and that is the most fun I have ever had making music.

What makes a good song?

That's a wonderful mystery. It's a confluence of melody and lyric and something more, heart, mind and soul, coming together in ways that add up to more than all of its parts. There are formulas for writing songs, but I don't think there are formulas for writing good songs, and that's the magic of it. You know it when you hear it.

Who are your favourite musical artists of all time?

The Beatles and Bob Dylan top my lists and I would probably be okay on a desert island with the collected works of both. Or maybe not. Mostly I listen to new music because that's my job and my pleasure. I think Kanye West is the genius of the moment. FKA Twigs is the best thing I've heard all year. My iPod is full of mad funk, 'cause it stirs my soul and keeps my feet pounding when I go for a run. But I do have a soft spot for singer songwriters. I'm looking right now across a shelf of alphabetically arranged albums by some of my all-time favourites and it goes David Bowie, Johnny Cash, Nick Cave, Leonard Cohen, Elvis Costello, Bob Dylan, Neil Finn, David Gray, Joe Henry, John Hiatt, Elton John, Jackie Leven, Nick Lowe, Laura Marling, Natalie Merchant, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon, Damien Rice, Tom Waits and Mike Scott. That probably tells you a lot. And then there's the electric guitar. I've got shelves groaning under the weight of Elvis Presley, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Oasis, The Beatles, Bob Dylan and (of course) U2.



What are you listening to these days?

Mostly whatever I've got to write about next. So this week it's Taylor Swift, Jerry Lee Lewis, Yusuf Islam, Damien Rice, Hozier, Annie Lennox ... and a bit of U2.

What are your thoughts on the state of the music industry today?

The mass-market global music industry as we know it is less than 100 years old and its glory days are over. It is shrinking as a business, even though there is more music around and instantly available than there has ever been in the history of mankind. That's part of the problem. Original music as a commercial entity is overly abundant and devaluing itself, driven of course by the Internet's total disregard for copyright. But I'm not saying any of this is a bad thing. Music is one of the fundamental art forms, it is intrinsic in who we are as human beings and perhaps the 20th Century professionalization of music will turn out to have been an aberration. Music belongs to everyone, it is in everyone, everyone can make it. My dad used to play guitar and sing folk songs, my mother played piano, and that's where my love of music came from. When I was a kid growing up in Ireland I would see fishermen playing sessions in the pubs. You know, none of those people were making money from music; all of them were making wonderful music. It's a hard place to make a living these days and I don't see that getting any better.

What are your thoughts on music journalism today?

As a profession, we are not much respected by the music industry itself, which increasingly tries to bypass criticism and market its goods directly to the consumer. There are less and less high profile forums for any kind of serious music journalism. It's not well paid, and so it is left to enthusiastic amateurs to fill the bottomless pit of the Internet with trainspotterish equivocation,

where everything is of interest and nothing of significance. But so be it. Everyone is a critic these days, so what do people need professional critics for? Music is no longer the central pulse of popular culture so perhaps the most interesting young writers are gravitating towards other fields. I've still got my beat. I'm 54, and I suppose I'm speaking to and for a generation who took this a little bit too seriously.

Have your thoughts on U2's new recording changed since you first heard it?

I don't think my opinion has really changed. I like it more and more. I listen to it a lot, I think there are some great songs on there that have magical depths to be explored, but it is still essentially a pop rock album operating in a very contemporary sonic field. I don't think it's the equal of their very greatest work, but why should it be? Albums like Joshua Tree and Achtung Baby happen as much by accident as by design. I do think Songs of Innocence is a very good album, much more potently engaged with the moment than you would perhaps expect from a bunch of middle aged superstars.

What advice might you give young musicians, authors, filmmakers and music journalists?

Just do it, really. Do what you love because you love doing it and then good things might happen. But even if they don't you will still have loved what you were doing. It's tough out there, but talent will find a way.

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Musician, actor, and now author

Alan Doyle

makes a present of his past...

“Everything is a wee bit upside down and ass-backwards.”

Alan Doyle is laughing over the phone from Toronto, where the renowned singer-songwriter has been touring his first book, the autobiographical *Where I Belong*.

“What I mean is that I have to get up early these days,” jokes the former frontman for Canadian minstrels Great Big Sea. “All the action takes place during the mornings and afternoons. Unlike being on the road doing concerts, there isn’t this big event happening at the end of the day; no show, no after-show parties. All we might do at night is head out for dinner.”

Make no mistake; the 45-year-old isn’t complaining about his literary whistle-stops, which have him crisscrossing the continent over the coming while.

“Actually, I am really, really enjoying it. I always love the opportunity to meet and say hello to people. I’m seeing a lot of familiar faces - folks who are fans of the band and who are interested in the ‘behind the music’ stuff.”

Doyle’s first foray into non-fiction does just that, and more; at 315 pages, the work digs deep into the author’s rural Newfoundland roots.

“The folks at (publisher) Random

House had been following my blog on my website and approached me in 2012 about putting a book together. Honestly, I didn’t know if I could do something of that scale, but I thought to myself why not? And then with *Great Big Sea* going on hold last year, the timing seemed right to take on the project.”

The process of penning a personal memoir, he notes, was very different from writing a song.

“Music always came very quickly to me. I could work on something for 30-40 minutes and it would be done. It’s the same for the blog stuff. Writing a book



was more a marathon than a sprint, and it required a greater sense of daily discipline, even if it meant writing on a bus or at an airport. It took some time to get used to the idea that I just had to keep going, but like anything, once I had done it for awhile it became part of my regular routine."

Drawing on memories of his early years in Petty Harbour, just south of Newfoundland's provincial capital of St. John's, wasn't the challenge he thought it might be.

"The book is filled with memorable characters and stories because all these people, and all these things that happened while I was growing up, are simply unforgettable; they left a pretty powerful impression upon me. Newfoundland has that effect on everyone, really, whether you live here or are just visiting. The province is rich with unique and distinct people and landscape."

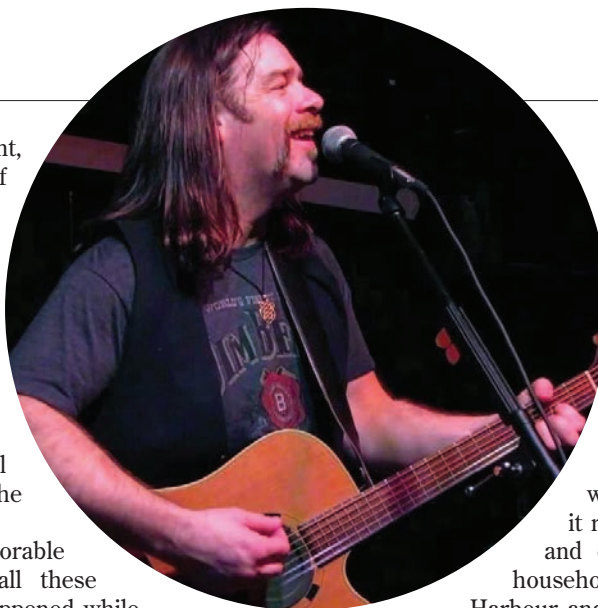
There is also, adds Doyle, a robust creative culture on "The Rock" these days.

"You could call it an overabundance," he chuckles. "Now that the province has some money, all the artists are coming out of the woods. It's quite exciting to experience and be a part of actually."

That creative edge, he explains, isn't new to the island.

"We have a long history of story and song in Newfoundland. Most of it comes from our Celtic heritage, right? The Irish influence, in particular, is still very much a part of our music and literature. For years, it was the way we carried on our traditions and culture from generation to generation. And we're still doing it. The thing is, now the rest of the country, and the world, is paying attention."

On a personal level, Doyle points to his parents as an inspiration.



"Both my mother and father were musicians, so our home was filled with melody growing up. My kid sister is also a singer, so I'm not the only one of the litter who was bitten by the bug."

So far, feedback from his family and friends to *Where I Belong* has been exceedingly positive.

"I don't think any of them were surprised with where I went with it," he shares. "They have told me it reads like a love letter to our parents and our family, which it is. The Doyle household was always a hub of sorts in Petty Harbour, and there were plenty of people gathered

there on any given night with tons of tunes, tall tales, laughter and hockey games.

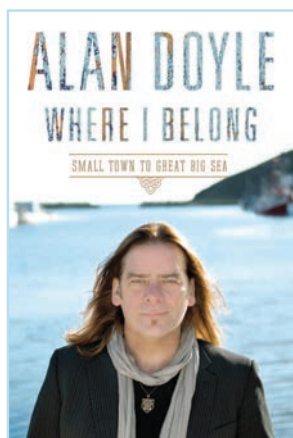
"More than anything, writing the book has given me the opportunity to look back on those years and my family and community and feel very blessed for the wonderful life I have had up to this point."

With so much still on the go, Doyle continues to count his blessings daily.

"I'm busier than ever," he says. "Along with this book stuff, I have a new album coming out soon (tentatively titled *So Let's Go*), with the first single dropping on radio next week. And I've got all these book appearances and solo musical gigs coming up over the next few months also.

"Honestly, between the bookstores and the concert halls, my body won't know which way is up. Everything is going to be a wee bit upside down and ass-backwards for the next little while – and that's just fine by me."

www.alandoyle.ca



Where I Belong

Doubleday Canada / 315 pp / \$32.95

Alan Doyle's feel-good memoir of growing up in Newfoundland in the 1970s and 1980s, and his sweet reminiscences and laugh-out-loud tales of his early years in Petty Harbour, are an out-and-out delight. Doyle, of course, is best known as the former lead singer for the popular band Great Big Sea, as well as a sometime actor in films such as *Robin Hood* and on television's *Republic of Doyle*. While *Where I Belong* does recount the formation of Great Big Sea, Doyle mostly stays away from the band, instead focusing on his boyhood in Petty Harbour - 20 kilometers outside of St. John's, but a world away in attitude. Ultimately, the narrative is much more than one man's chronicle; it captures the province at a particular point in time, detailing the region's rural life. As such, the book transcends its genre and moves from autobiography into the realm of social history. With stories as rich and fantastic as anything in Wayne Johnston or Michael Crummey's fiction, Doyle's real-life Newfoundland is unforgettable. ~ CM

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Remembering Buddy MacMaster

Silent is the fiddle and still is the bow as the old fiddler takes his rest while those who marveled at his music and his manner burnish the legend of internationally acclaimed Cape Breton fiddler Buddy MacMaster. by Rosalie Maceachern

They talk of performances in Scotland, Ireland, Boston and Detroit but more often of dances at Glencoe Mills, Mabou ceilidhs and concerts across Cape Breton Island. The beautiful lift in his music, his endless repertoire, his quiet wit, his signature dress shirts, and his simple acts of kindness are all remembered. Wherever

Tullochgorum, King George Medley, Miss Lyle Reel or Hector the Hero is heard, stories will be told for years, perhaps for generations, lamenting the loss of the King of the Jigs. Hugh Allan MacMaster, Buddy to all, died at his home in Judique, NS, in late August, weeks short of his 90th birthday.

Sheldon MacInnes, author of *Buddy MacMaster: The Judique Fiddler*, said he melded the best of three musical eras.

"He was steeped first and foremost in the oral tradition of Cape Breton's early fiddlers, but he later developed a wonderful appreciation of the written music. Then with television and the music industry he

was able to assimilate certain things into his technique for a wider audience. MacMaster never altered his commitment to play the music as he thought it should be played,” he added.

Peter Murphy, an independent film maker, first encountered MacMaster at a concert and dance in Glendale and later made two films about him.

“Unlike many people, I didn’t grow up with his music so I was totally surprised by his magnetism. There was something magic in the way he played and the way he related to people. It didn’t matter to him that I was kind of a shy guy and didn’t have much experience as a film maker. We’d talk about the music and he’d tell a little story or two. He had such respect for the music - his music - and he played it with such passion.”

Lewis MacKinnon, executive director of Nova Scotia’s Office of Gaelic Affairs, said MacMaster’s exposure to the Gaelic language and culture shone through in his music.

“The intonations of the language and its rhythms, which can be found in traditional piping and fiddling, are certainly there in his playing.”

It is, of course, the dancers and musicians who MacMaster influenced most. Dawn Beaton, artistic director of Celtic Colours International Festival, and her sister, Margie, were nine and six when they first step-danced on stage with MacMaster.

“He was so calm, so kind to two little red-haired girls from Mabou. Every night before we went to bed we’d dance to an old recording someone had made of Buddy at a dance. He was the very best fiddler for stepdancers.”

Fiddler Ashley MacIsaac also made his musical debut step dancing with the renowned MacMaster, but he ran off the stage when MacMaster switched to a tune he could not dance to. His parents sent him back to ask for another tune.

“Imagine me, five years old, telling Buddy to play something else but that’s what happened. As a young musician I idolized him. I never heard him play a bad note in his life. He had such a steadiness and you just knew his way of playing a piece was the right way.”

As a teenager, MacIsaac was equally taken with MacMaster’s cars.

“He always drove a Pontiac Parisienne or a Chevy Caprice. I’d made a bit of money dancing and playing through the years and when I turned 16, I bought the same car Buddy had. It was cooler than a sports car to me.”

MacIsaac points to his own playing of Devil in the Kitchen with a punk band.

“If you strip away all the instrumen-



Natalie MacMaster



Ashley MacIsaac



Rodney MacDonald



Dawn Beaton

tation what you hear is exactly the way I learned it from Buddy first.”

Natalie MacMaster, a dynamic fiddler in her own right who grew up listening to her Uncle Buddy on home recordings, at square dances and family gatherings, calls him the most influential of Cape Breton fiddlers, but it is his kind spirit she remembers most.

“The great impression he left on me was more about being generous with your music,” she told CBC News, adding MacMaster never turned down a gig if he could get there.

Rodney MacDonald, CEO of the Colaisde Na Gaidhlig/The Gaelic College, said MacMaster had a reverence for old composers such as Scotland’s Niel Gow and an amazing talent for linking pieces of music for dancers. He was just a boy when MacMaster asked him to step dance at an upcoming concert.

“Being asked by Buddy was a big deal. Just before he hung up the phone he told me to bring my fiddle, too. I was so nervous playing in front of him. What I remember most is the shine on Buddy’s shoes. He was so classy, always so well-dressed, even if he was just mowing his lawn.”

Years later, after playing together in Halifax, MacDonald drove back to St. Francis Xavier University with MacMaster.

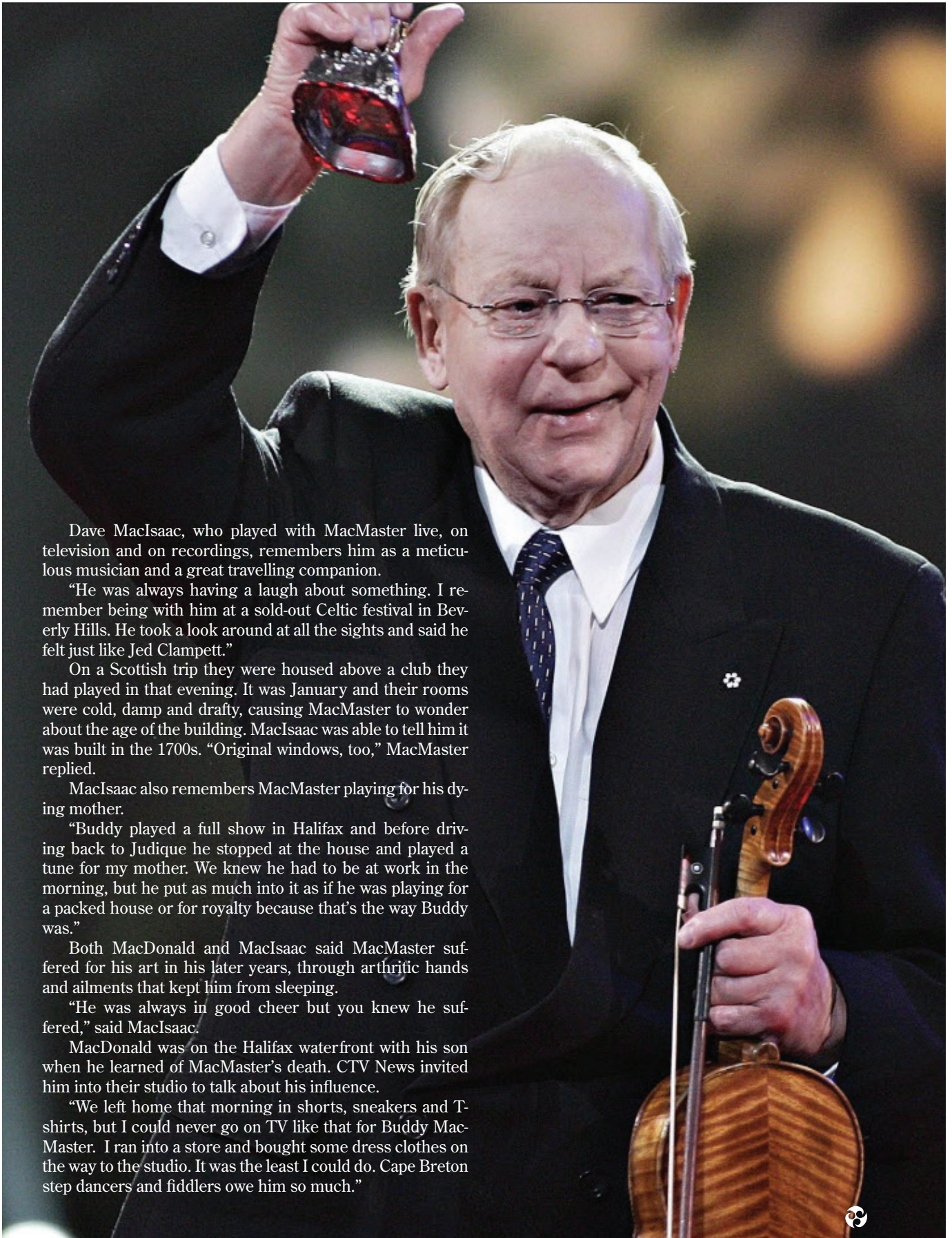
“It had been a long night and he was driving back to Judique and had to be at work in the morning, but he had a great interest in genealogy and all the way he told me stories about my grandfather (fiddler Donald Angus Beaton) and other relatives.”

Piano player Joey Beaton of Mabou, who accompanied MacMaster frequently over a period of 50 years, recalls one of their first times playing together. It was the mid-60s, rock and roll was coming on and the crowd in Judique’s Kildonan Hall was small.

“Buddy asked if I’d mind not taking any payment because he didn’t want to see them go in the hole. It touched me in two ways, first his concern for the organizers and secondly, that he even asked me because I was just a young guy starting out. What an example he set for all of us.”

Beaton, who played with MacMaster at the first-ever ceilidh in Edinburgh Castle, also described the fiddler as a man of great faith.

“When we travelled together we always made time for Sunday Mass. I can remember times when we’d be staying in a hotel and Buddy would suggest we say the Rosary right after supper in case somebody invited us to a party that night.”



Dave MacIsaac, who played with MacMaster live, on television and on recordings, remembers him as a meticulous musician and a great travelling companion.

"He was always having a laugh about something. I remember being with him at a sold-out Celtic festival in Beverly Hills. He took a look around at all the sights and said he felt just like Jed Clampett."

On a Scottish trip they were housed above a club they had played in that evening. It was January and their rooms were cold, damp and drafty, causing MacMaster to wonder about the age of the building. MacIsaac was able to tell him it was built in the 1700s. "Original windows, too," MacMaster replied.

MacIsaac also remembers MacMaster playing for his dying mother.

"Buddy played a full show in Halifax and before driving back to Judique he stopped at the house and played a tune for my mother. We knew he had to be at work in the morning, but he put as much into it as if he was playing for a packed house or for royalty because that's the way Buddy was."

Both MacDonald and MacIsaac said MacMaster suffered for his art in his later years, through arthritic hands and ailments that kept him from sleeping.

"He was always in good cheer but you knew he suffered," said MacIsaac.

MacDonald was on the Halifax waterfront with his son when he learned of MacMaster's death. CTV News invited him into their studio to talk about his influence.

"We left home that morning in shorts, sneakers and T-shirts, but I could never go on TV like that for Buddy MacMaster. I ran into a store and bought some dress clothes on the way to the studio. It was the least I could do. Cape Breton step dancers and fiddlers owe him so much."

LANDSCAPE OF MYTH ART OF MYSTERY

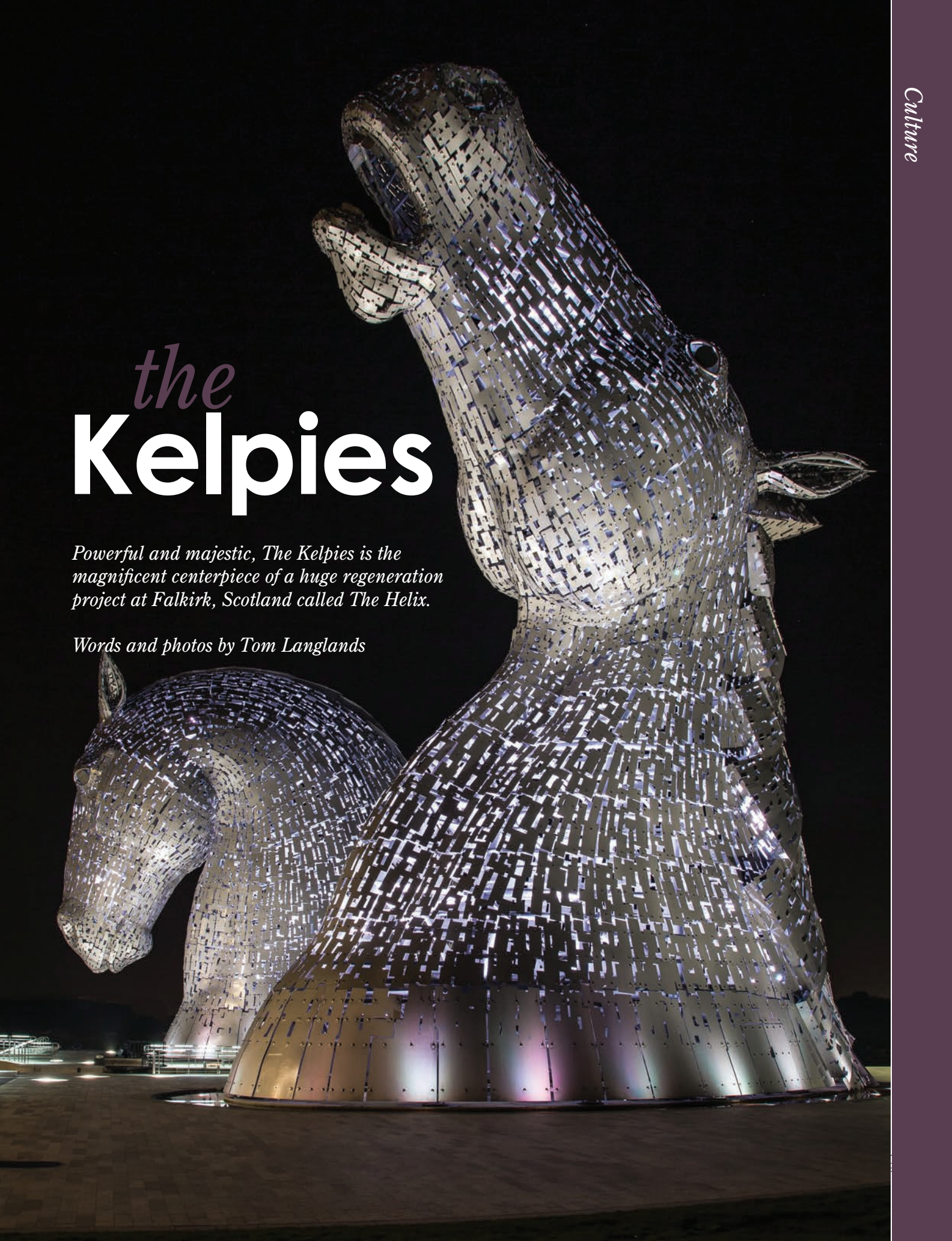
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The image features a large, metallic sculpture of a horse head, constructed from thousands of small, reflective tiles. The sculpture is illuminated at night, creating a shimmering effect. It is positioned in the foreground, with another similar sculpture visible in the background. The background is dark, and the ground is a light-colored, paved surface.

the Kelpies

Powerful and majestic, The Kelpies is the magnificent centerpiece of a huge regeneration project at Falkirk, Scotland called The Helix.

Words and photos by Tom Langlands

The Kelpies' name comes from the water-dwelling horse-spirits of ancient Scottish folklore. These massive, shimmering beasts – towering sculptures that artist Andy Scott created – are mirrored in the waters of the Forth and Clyde Canal, and serve as cultural icons, reflecting an oft-forgotten aspect of Scotland's industrial past.

Glasgow-born Scott's creation opened in the spring of this year. The two 100-foot (roughly 30-metre tall) steel horse heads each weigh 300 tonnes and are clad in stainless steel plates. They stand as equine guardians on either side of the newly opened section of the Forth and Clyde Canal. They are the largest of their kind in the

Scott has produced public art in Scotland for many years. His designs are "influenced by the location, the social history, the geography and in many instances the aspirations of the local people." In the case of The Kelpies, "The client had a vague concept of a massive civil engineering structure which was to act as a boat lift mechanism and they had a title. My brief was to re-interpret that start from my angle as a sculptor."

As discussions progressed it was decided to separate the boat lifting element of the project from the artwork. The concept of the two horses' heads, in strikingly different poses, first came to Scott when he was sketching at his future wife's kitchen table in



“ We have created a brand new green space in Helix Park that has replaced a disused wasteland... ”

world and are already attracting international attention.

Bold and inspirational, they embody the spirit and aspirations of the Helix while remaining firmly anchored in the history of the land from which they spring.

Walking around the Kelpies, they seem alive. Looking up at their expressive faces against the blue sky, they appear to move. They are huge, yet approachable, engaging and captivating, just as those powerful draught horses of yesteryear must have been. I can sense their ancestors straining at big heavy ropes as they ploughed their way along the old Canal towpaths, their skin glistening in the sunlight as it reflects the ripples from the water surface. At night, looking into the black depths of the Canal, the colours change from gold through silver, to blue and red. Enchanting and hypnotic, I can't help but wonder if a true pair of water-dwelling Kelpies is bewitching me.

The Kelpies is the largest piece of public art in Scotland and the largest equine sculpture in the world. It serves as a focal point within the wider Helix Park. Given its visibility from the nearby motorway and the low-lying nature of the surrounding land it also acts as a magnet for attracting visitors to the area.

Amsterdam. It came from several considerations, "The vast open site of the Helix Park, the sight lines, the relationship to the distant Ochil Hills, the potential for illumination, the proximity to the M9 motorway and, of course, their function as an entrance gateway to the Forth and Clyde Canal. There was also my own attraction to the equine theme, and the idea of an artwork with two components, but not a symmetrical pair. The different poses create a dramatic tension and give rise to narrative interpretations."

Once the basic concept was set, Scott advanced the design, resolving many of the sculptural issues in the second set of maquettes that were eventually scaled to full size. The foundations for each of the Kelpie heads is made of 1200 tonnes of steel-reinforced concrete. Each Kelpie's main frame is constructed of tubular steel that in turn supports a secondary structure of steel brackets. These facilitate the fixing of the final 990 individually shaped stainless steel cladding pieces. This awe-inspiring work of art is in itself a significant work of engineering. The frames were delivered to site in sections and the entire installation was erected in 90 days at the Forth and Clyde Canal.

The Forth and Clyde Canal was conceived in the mid 18th

century and completed in 1790. It provided a valuable inland east-west waterway link between the lowland industrial communities of the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde, avoiding the previous route around the treacherous seas of the north of Scotland. The main way to transport materials the 35 miles (56 km) between these communities was via barges pulled by powerful draught horses such as Clydesdales, Shires and Percherons. This was the heyday of the industrial revolution and it was against this backdrop of industry and trade that the harbour town of Grangemouth came into existence at the Forth end of the Canal. Falkirk, just a few miles inland, prospered owing to its prime location at the

projects. With a grant of £25-million from the Big Lottery Fund and additional funding from other project sponsors, The Helix has a £43-million budget to create a cutting edge multi-purpose space linking 16 communities via 16.7 miles (27km) of pathways. Opened in 2013 The Helix boasts a 650-foot (roughly 200 metres) diameter lagoon, play areas, educational resources, community woodlands with associated nature and wildlife resources, cycle tracks, open space for hosting large events, a new extension to the Forth and Clyde Canal and the newly completed Kelpies.

Grant Mackenzie, Helix Team Leader for Falkirk Community Trust and responsible for managing The Helix and The Kelpies,



“...One of our objectives is to help provide opportunities for the local population to be healthier. Our visitors are already walking, cycling and roller skating around their new park.”

junction of the Forth and Clyde Canal and the Union Canal that linked it with Edinburgh.

Throughout the 19th century a gradual increase in the size of sailing vessels rendered them unsuitable for the shallow, narrow waters of inland canals. The advent of rail travel also took vital trade away from the waterways, as did the invention of motor vehicles and the construction of reliable road networks. The Forth and Clyde Canal slipped into disuse during the 1930s, officially closing in the 1960s.

Today, there is a renewed interest in leisure craft, sailing and houseboats. It partly comes from a desire to rediscover our lost landscapes and history and also from a renewed interest in nature, wildlife and sustainable living. In 2001 the Forth and Clyde Canal reopened as part of the Millennium Link, an £80-million project to re-engineer and revive both the Forth and Clyde Canal and the related Union Canal. The project is part of a wider initiative meant to regenerate communities and create economic, leisure and health benefits.

Following the Millennium Link project, and associated with it, came The Helix. It is one of Scotland's most innovative parkland

says “We have created a brand new green space in Helix Park that has replaced a disused wasteland. One of our objectives is to help provide opportunities for the local population to be healthier. Our visitors are already walking, cycling and roller skating around their new park.”

With a new Kelpies visitor centre due to open in summer 2015, Mackenzie is already seeing the benefit of Scott's Kelpies. “Since The Kelpies opened in spring 2014 there have been significant numbers of visitors to the site and we have already beaten our budgeted figure of 500,000 and we are only in September. Visitors have really taken The Kelpies to their hearts and are awed by the sculptor's design and vision for them. We have created a completely unique work of art that our visitors just can't wait to see up close.”

Thanks to Andy Scott www.scottsculptures.co.uk and Grant Mackenzie, Falkirk Community Trust www.falkirkcommunitytrust.org

For additional information about The Helix and The Kelpies see www.thehelix.co.uk



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*Few exports from the
Emerald Isle have had more
of an impact on Hollywood
than Liam Neeson.*

Liam Neeson

The 62-year-old from Ballymena has done it all on the silver screen: from winning an Academy Award for his breathtaking performance in the Steven Spielberg classic *Schindler's List*, to playing a Jedi Knight in the much-anticipated Star Wars prequels. Neeson has voiced Aslan in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, appeared as Batman's nemesis in Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* series, and reinvented himself as the no-nonsense hard man in action thriller, *Taken*. But it is his portrayal of revolutionary Michael Collins in the 1996 historical biopic of the same name that has resonated most with Irish audiences.

Now Neeson is drawing positive reviews yet again for his portrayal of ex-NYPD cop Max Scudder in *A Walk Among the Tombstones*, drawn from Lawrence Sanders' novel of the same name. The terse drama sees Neeson help a heroin dealer find the men who kidnapped and killed his wife. But it's not the first time the criminals have done such a crime and suddenly Scudder finds himself hunting for the men before they kill again.

Such action roles are almost standard stuff for the actor. Before he was an actor, Neeson worked in the trenches as a forklift operator for Guinness, a truck driver and assistant architect. His life took a turn when in 1976 he joined Belfast's Lyric Player's theatre, which would set him upon his acting career, culminating in a move to Dublin's Abbey Theatre, where director John Boorman signed him on to work in *Excalibur*.

Neeson is a picture of health upon his arrival at our Los Angeles meeting; he is tanned, in remarkable shape and looking a good decade younger than his age.

"It's just a number. It doesn't bother me at all. It really doesn't - and my knees are actually okay," he says, despite his new status as an all-action superstar. "I don't often get beaten up, except in [*A Walk Among the Tombstones*] I did a little bit. My stunt coordinator, Mark Vanselow, we have done 16 films now, so we are a very tight little family. I've never been hurt, nor has he; we

rehearse hard and for a long time. Then we just try and make it look real, as well as trying to avoid what we had done in the last film or the film before that," he explains. "I do a hodgepodge of stuff [to keep fit]. I've trained in gyms from the age of nine and every so often you hit a wall, so I try and be outside as much as possible. I do a lot of power walking and I use kettle bells a lot."

While the one-time boxer still uses a punching bag to work out, he reveals that he's also taken to doing yoga with his longtime friend Ralph Fiennes.

"He's a real practitioner. He's very into yoga and stuff like that and I do little bits of it with him. We hike and walk together."

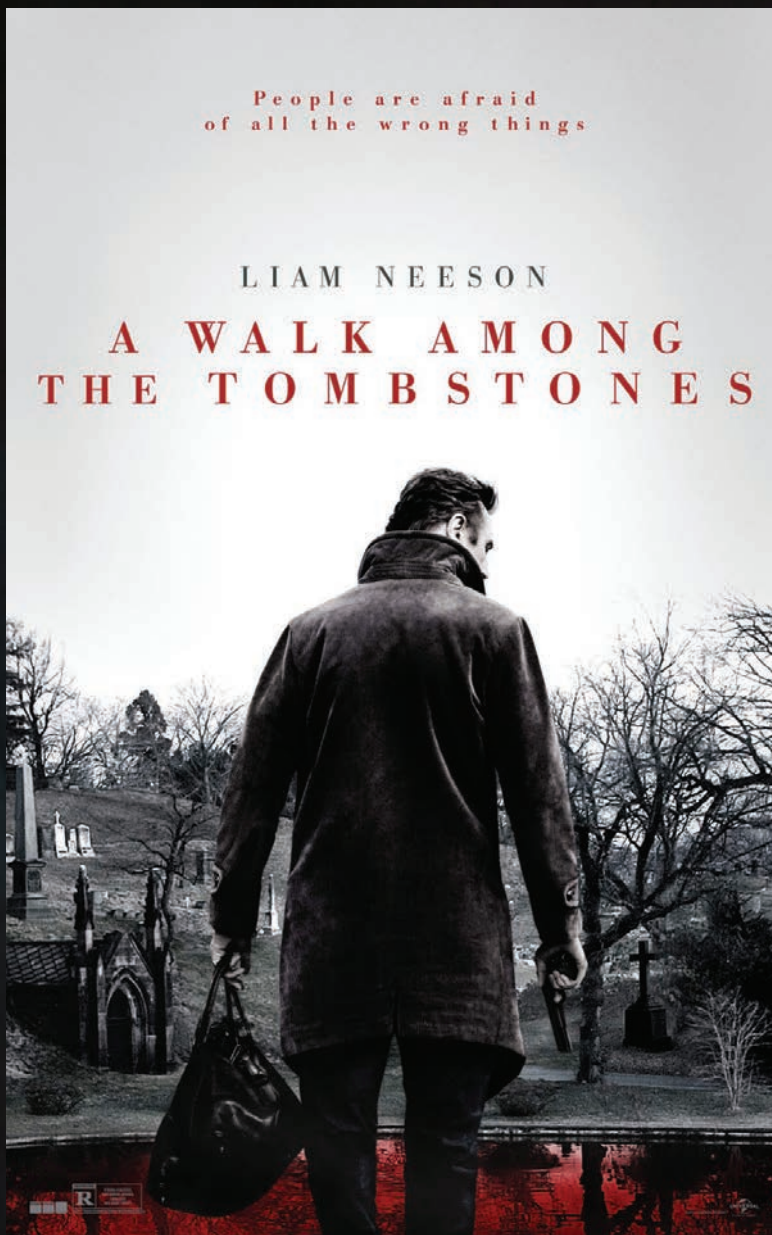
When asked if he would consider emulating his friend in returning to theatre any time soon, Neeson responded: "I would love to. Find a new voice. A new playwright. I think off-Broadway or maybe Broadway. It's very, very hard because the failure rate is so high. And it is with musicals too, actually. But I have been asked over the years to do revivals of things and it just hasn't interested me."

Despite his keenness to get back into theatre, Neeson admits that there isn't a role he has forever yearned for: "I never wanted to be Hamlet or King Lear, any of that. There's nothing that springs to mind, I'm ashamed to say. I'd maybe like to do a Chekov, like an Uncle Vanya with my friend Ralph. I would love to do that. He is awfully good with Shakespeare."

While failure rate may have deterred him on the stage, on-screen Neeson has no such concern

and is currently ranked among Hollywood A-list's elite high earners. But at an age when an actor's career typically slows down, what has contributed to the upward trajectory of his?

"The first *Taken* film. I thought it was a good little European thriller that was going straight to video, not because it wasn't good enough, but because it just didn't belong to this time for some reason. But 20th Century Fox took it, did an amazing PR job with it, it became a hit and was very successful. I guess Hollywood started seeing it in a different light."





“I came over here to LA in 1986 because the work in London kind of dried up for me and the pound was getting very strong against the dollar. The Americans had stopped coming in to make TV shows, because I did a bunch of those in the early 1980s. So they dried up and I just thought I would have to go where the work is. It was here.”



Such is his stature; Neeson's name alone is now enough to bankroll films, yet the Irishman remains humble.

"It's good. It's lovely and I don't abuse it. I have no designs to become a director or even a producer, but it's nice to get a script that says 'offer' rather than 'look at this and let me know what you think.' It's kind of nice."

But it hasn't always been so simple, Neeson revealed, citing a lack of work

as the reason he moved to Los Angeles where he now resides with his two sons, Michael, 19 and Daniel, 18.

"I came over here to LA in 1986 because the work in London kind of dried up for me and the pound was getting very strong against the dollar. The Americans had stopped coming in to make TV shows, because I did a bunch of those in the early 1980s. So they dried up and I just thought I would have to go where the work is. It was

here."

Nevertheless, the actor has not forgotten his Celtic roots. Having recently attracted an overflowing crowd to an Irish heritage tribute at New York City Hall, where he was given the seventh City Council's Thomas Manton Irish Man of the Year award, in addition to voicing several adverts in a Northern Ireland tourism campaign, Neeson admits he misses home too much to stay away for long.



"I go over quite often. My family still lives in Ireland."

It is there that Neeson sometimes visits another long-time showbiz pal, U2 frontman Bono, with whom he is cooking up a film project of sorts.

"We chat. And with him a lot of the time you just listen. He's a wonderful man; he's very interested in film and he's got an idea for a script that we have been kind of currently working on and have been for the past six or seven years now. We have an idea for a story that is his original idea. Musicians in Ireland are called show bands, and they are really indigenous to Ireland. They are a team of seven or eight musicians and there are saxophones and guitars and all the rest of it. They do covers of pop songs. And there was only one group who ever moved out and were successful in Las Vegas for 30 years - a total anomaly. Anyway, we have an idea to do a story, not about that band, but the band that has been there for 30 years and has been playing really tiny, tiny hotels."

Neeson sees it as something of a comedy and a drama: "It's a terrific idea he has, but it's just taken a long time to put all the

pieces together." With two cross-industry powerhouses at the helm, he estimates the project could get off the ground in the next two to three years. Music, however, can be filed neatly with directing and producing for Neeson, with the actor having no desire to make the transition like many of his Hollywood counterparts; "I listen to music, but am not familiar with popular music. Ever since John Lennon was killed, I stopped listening to popular music."

For now, Neeson is content with his status as an action hero, taking some inspiration from on-screen ass-kickers before him.

"Steve McQueen in the '60s and some of those guys Robert Mitchum played [in the '70s], the Dirty Harry character that Clint played, they all had something. They were just the right side of the law but they put their foot in both camps. They were iconic and audiences seemed to like that sort of screen character."

When quizzed on which British or Irish director he would most like to work with, Neeson was quick to praise the British camp.

"They [British and Irish actors and

directors] are so fantastic now. There are some good up and coming directors, and Danny Boyle I would love to do something with. There's a very good crop."

We couldn't let Neeson go without inquiring as to whether his on-screen adrenaline fuelled antics extend to his everyday life. So what is the most daring thing the Irishman has ever done?

"I actually climbed a tiny little mountain in Utah and I have a fear of heights! My son and I climbed this little peak, it was called Molly's Nipple," he laughs. "It was only about 3,000 feet or something. I was really scared, especially getting near the summit and it wasn't quite pick axe territory, but it was pretty steep. There were a couple of moments where everybody said 'don't look down,' but you have to look down, you just have to. But it was scary, God! My son wanted to do it and I thought I had better go do it. He went up there like a mountain goat but when I was up there I was like 'Ahhh!'"

Liam Neeson: human after all.



Julien Macdonald *Winter 2014*

I was born in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, and I had the pleasure of going to Cyfarthfa High School - a castle steeped in Welsh history with fabulous grounds and flower gardens.

It was during my studies at Cardiff Art College - Howard Gardens - that I found my passion for clothes and fashion. My mother and sisters were also fashion lovers and used to knit all of their dresses and sweaters. You could say I was brought up in a Welsh knitting circle.

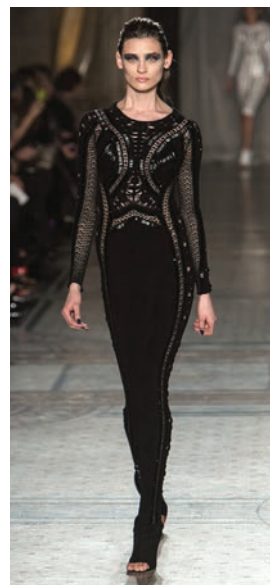
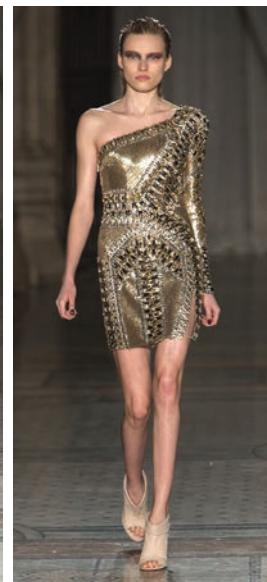
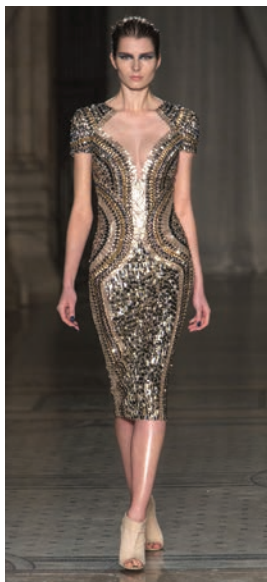
Today, my clothes are worn by the most famous and glamorous women in the world, and my brand is recognized

internationally. And I love that my clothes can be worn by women of all ages, shapes and incomes.

The highlight of my career was being awarded an OBE for outstanding contribution to fashion by her Majesty the Queen.

I love being a fashion designer as fashion changes every day and my life changes with it.

www.julienmacdonald.com





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Home *for the* Holidays

*As Perry Como once sang,
“There’s no place like home
for the holidays.”*

*But “home” can be open
to interpretation.*

*For some it is returning to
the place they grew up; for
others it is bonding with
other expats. Some prefer
to seek new adventures,
while others crave a sense of
normalcy after a traumatic
time. Six guests invite us
into their “homes,” old and
new, reminding us of the true
meaning of Christmas.*



Something about **Wales...**

Romance author Sophie Pembroke, originally from North Wales, has never missed a Christmas back home.

"My mother's birthday is Christmas Day, so missing it just isn't an option!" she says. "I have so many favourite memories, like going up into the mountains to pick our Christmas tree, then coming back to my aunt's house for bacon butties; hunting for golden chocolate coins at my grandparents' house with all my cousins; and my family singing all our old favourite songs together. Oh, and the year I had tonsillitis, when my mum arranged for the Father Christmas float to stop outside my window and serenade me to make me feel better!"

"Boat Sunday," the Sunday before Christmas where about 30 people dress up and feast together at a local hotel, The Boat Inn originally is Pembroke's family's biggest tradition.

Other customs have evolved over the years, such as "Christmas Tree Saturday."

"Now, my parents come down to stay with us [in Hertfordshire] usually the first weekend in December, and my brother pops up from London," Pembroke shares. "We all go out together to choose the tree for my house, then spend the afternoon decorating it, listening to Christmas music, and watching Wales play rugby on the telly! It's the start of Christmas for me!"

Imagining being unable to get home for Christmas inspired Pembroke's novella, *The Kiss Before Christmas* (HarperImpulse 2013). Her soon-to-be released *The Kiss Before Midnight* (HarperImpulse 2014) "features plenty of snippets from my own festive memories, including mince pies, carol services, and fortune telling fish," she adds.

"There's definitely something about Wales that makes it feel just perfect for Christmas – especially when it snows," Pembroke muses. "There's simply nowhere I'd rather be for the holidays."

www.sophiepembroke.com

An International **Celebration**

Before moving to Ireland in 2002, Anne Canaveera grew up in Brittany. There she was immersed in regional Celtic culture, such as attending bagad and Breton dance performances, many fest-noz, and learning the Breton language.

Canaveera misses family and friends back home, along with the cuisine—her mum sends her regular care packages of "buttery biscuits and homemade Breton cake"—and the weekly markets, music, dance and days at the beach, but she has fallen in love with the Irish.

"The 'land of a thousand welcomes' is definitely not a myth," she enthuses. "The majority of Irish people I've met have been just fantastic. People are more laid-back and less judgmental and I love the fact that they always find a funny side to every situation. I also love the atmosphere of a traditional Irish pub. Every time I go to my local, there are people of all ages, from young adults to retired, and you would never see that in France."

Growing up in Brittany, Christmas was important for Canaveera, from decorating the tree and setting up the manger with her family to attending midnight mass, anticipating the arrival of Père Noël and eating a festive dinner of fresh langoustines, roast chicken, green beans, salad, cheese and Christmas log.

"The Christmas season starts early in Ireland!" she marvels as she compares. "As soon as Halloween is over, shops are filled with decorations, chocolate boxes, toys, cards, Christmas pudding...The streets and houses are decorated. You'd never see that many lights in Brittany!"

In her 12 years in Ireland, Canaveera has only once been able to spend Christmas in Brittany. But she, her husband and children have started a new tradition.

"Because we don't have any family around—my husband is from Mauritius—we usually spend the day with friends who are not going home either," she shares. "We've spent Christmas with many different people over the years, but the celebration is always 'international.' We usually take this chance to learn about the way other countries celebrate Christmas."

www.nearlyirish.blogspot.ie



Like a **Fairy Tale**

Celtic Castles is an award-winning business that books castle stays in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England and France. Known as “The Castle Man,” Roger Masterson of West Yorkshire started the business after he had trouble finding information on castle holidays.

“We gathered as much knowledge about the respective castles and then started to holiday in them so we could learn more,” he says about starting the business. “I love staying in unusual places and being able to share my own personal experiences.”

Masterson has stayed in castles with his family a number of times, including Ireland’s Ashford Castle for his daughter’s 10th birthday. While they have never done so for Christmas, many of Celtic Castles’ clients have.

“During the festive period, they take on a kind of magic,” enthuses Masterson. “Self catering castles are all decorated and family and friends are all together with roaring fires and plenty of food and drink. For those who spend a bit more, they have an exclusive castle to themselves with staff and this is just the icing on the cake!”

One client from Australia, after staying at Aldourie Castle in Scotland, wrote Masterson, thanking him for arranging their festive holiday:

“From the moment we arrived to a beautifully night-lit castle & Christmas tree (complete with piper), we were overwhelmed by the level of personal service, comfort, food (oh my God), warmth and extraordinary pleasure of simply being at Aldourie... We were made to feel so welcome and comfortable and it really was a home away from home at Christmas...”

www.celticcastles.com



A Travelling **Tradition**

For Monika McMahon and her husband Jonathon of Boulder, Colorado, travelling has become their Christmas tradition; and this year they are headed to the Emerald Isle.

“We decided on Europe as I had never been, and Ireland is the perfect place as the vast majority of Jonathon’s family lives there,” explains McMahon. “I’m excited to explore areas I’ve never been to before. Most of our time will be spent in Dublin and we will be checking out some touristy things like the Jameson Distillery, the Guinness Brewery, Temple Bar and Tivoli Car Park. We are considering taking a trip out to Galway to visit family and see the western coast as well.”

McMahon is a huge music fan—she and her mom Lisa invented the stylish Noiselace earplug necklace for fellow concert lovers—and she is looking forward to immersing herself in Dublin’s music scene, and going back in time in at least one of the city’s speakeasies.

McMahon adds, “I am excited to see the differences in how the U.S. and Ireland celebrate this holiday.”

www.monikarunstrom.com/blog



Maybe this **Christmas**

Since Dave Parry moved to the Chicago area from Wales 16 years ago, he hasn't been able to make it home to Aberystwyth for Christmas.

It hasn't been because he hasn't wanted to. Back in Wales "it was a fantastic time of year," he says.

"When I was young I used to go out with my Taid gathering holly and ivy to make yule logs," Parry shares. "I might have to resurrect that with my son."

Another fond memory was helping his girlfriend, a farmer's daughter, serve mulled wine outside the village of Talybont.

"A lot of people from the village, to walk off all the excess from Christmas, would go out on this 10-mile walk and hit every farmhouse on this circular path," he recalls. "Our stop was the mulled wine stop. Another farm further on made sausage rolls or pasties or something. It was a lovely tradition."

Parry's first Christmas in Chicago was a bit of a culture shock. "A ham for Christmas? What's this about? Turkey was served a month ago for Thanksgiving?" he laughs. "In the UK, it's a turkey for Christmas, Christmas crackers, silly hats, jokes and a glass of sherry afterwards."

After moving to Illinois, Parry started the Chicago Tafia Welsh Society, a social group for ex-pats that also raises awareness about Welsh culture. Members get together during the yuletide season too.

"A lot of us are in the same boat where we can't go home for Christmas," says Parry. "We'll set aside one night a year for all the Welsh strays. We'll meet up at a pub, have a good dinner, one or two of us will get up and start doing a bit of A Child's Christmas in Wales...to make it feel a bit more like home."

Parry reveals he is looking at flights to see if it's possible for him to go home this year. "Maybe this Christmas..." he says.

www.chicagotafia.com



The Ultimate **Gift**

In 2009, at five years old, Mackenzie Furniss of Clackmannanshire, Scotland was diagnosed with neuroblastoma. This aggressive form of cancer affects approximately 100 UK children each year, according to NHS Choices (National Health Service, UK).

After intense treatment Mackenzie went into remission. But in 2012 her body sadly relapsed.

"Most of the time when you find out your kid has got the disease, it's at stage 4," says Mackenzie's mum, Kimberley Furniss. "So it's much more difficult to try and treat it. It's just a very nasty [cancer]—they're all nasty—but this one's got a higher chance of coming back."

In the last year, Mackenzie has travelled to Germany six times for haploidentical stem cell transplantations—procedures for relapsed neuroblastoma are limited in the UK. Fundraising through NCCA UK, an organisation specifically dedicated to children who suffer from neuroblastoma, made Mackenzie's treatments abroad possible.

In August 2014, Mackenzie flew to Germany for her last treatment. Then on October 3rd, a picture was posted on the "Mackenzies Miracle" Facebook page. It was of Mackenzie holding a sign that read "I HAVE KICKED CANCER'S BUTT 4 THE 2ND TIME!"

"When she did relapse, it wasn't a very good prognosis, so to go to the state where she is now is absolutely amazing!" beams Kimberley. "So it was definitely worth all the trauma of getting here because she's doing brilliant now!"

Although last year Mackenzie was able to get out of hospital just in time for Christmas, this year will be extra special.

"When they're going through treatment, you never know if they're going to be home at Christmas; they can take on ill at any moment," says Kimberley. "This year we can enjoy Christmas like any other normal family. Mackenzie is keeping really well, so she doesn't have to think about going to hospital or away for tests... She'll be able to enjoy it with her friends and family for the first time in quite a while."

With the Christmas spirit in mind, Kimberley urges those who would like to help children currently suffering from neuroblastoma, to check out the NCCA website and give what they can:

www.wncca-uk.org



Celtic Christmas Traditions

According to the longstanding theory, the origins of Christmas stems from pagan winter festivals. One main reason early Christians were able to spread their religion across Europe so quickly came from their willingness to embrace celebrations prevalent among regional populations.

One such example is the Celtic “Alban Arthuan,” a Druidic festival that took place around December 21st, the Winter Solstice. This traditional fire festival celebrated the re-birth of the Sun.

Although a celebration of the Son’s birth replaced that of the Sun’s, still a number of Christmas-tide traditions – including those the ancient Celts practiced – remain today.

As we look at the Celtic nations, it is interesting to note some similarities among Christmas traditions that cross geographic boundaries. They include, for example: Holly (a symbol of rebirth among Pagan Celts, but also of hospitality—it was believed fairies sought shelter inside the evergreen leaves to escape the cold);

Mistletoe (believed to have healing powers so strong that it warded off evil spirits, cured illnesses and even facilitated a truce between enemies); fire and light (most notably the Yule log or candles placed in windows to light the way for strangers and symbolically welcoming Mary and Joseph); and door-to-door processions, from wassailing to Wren Hunts.

Each of the seven nations possesses its own variations of Celtic Christmas customs. Surrounding cultures and local identity shape these practices as well.



SCOTLAND

Christmas was not officially recognized in Scotland for nearly four centuries. The Puritan English Parliament banned Christmas in 1647 and it did not become a recognized public holiday in Scotland until 1958.

However, according to Andrew Halliday, in his 1833 piece Christmas in Scotland, Scots were not discouraged from celebrating Christmas. Halliday wrote, “We remember it stated in a popular periodical, one Christmas season not long ago, that Christmas-day was not kept at all in Scotland. Such is not the case; the Scots do keep Christmas-day, and in the same kindly Christian spirit that we do, though the Presbyterian austerity of their church does not acknowledge it as a religious festival.”

Halliday’s 19th century account went on to describe festive sowens (sweetened oat gruel) ceremonies, “beggars” (actually “strapping fellows”) singing yule song, dances and card parties and children’s teetotum games.

Despite Puritan rule, some long-time Christmas traditions are preserved. These include burning the Cailleach (a piece of wood carved to look like an old woman’s face or the Spirit of Winter) to start the new year fresh; or on Christmas Eve, burning rowan tree branches to signify the resolution of any disputes. The Celtic tradition of placing candles in windows was also done in Scotland to welcome “first footers” (strangers, bearing a small gift) into the home.

Traditional dishes also continue to be featured at Christmas lunch and throughout the holidays, including Cock-a-Leekie soup, smoked salmon, beef or duck, Cloutie dumplings, black buns, sun cakes, Christmas pudding and Cranachan.

Because Christmas was not an official holiday until the late ‘50s it is no surprise that today, for some Scots, Hogmanay (New Year’s Eve) is the most important event of the season. Arguably, locals ring in the new year with much more gusto than any other place on the planet.

IRELAND

A fall-time clean up was a common practice in Irish homes to prepare for Christmas. Women looked after cleaning the interior, while men took care of the outdoors, including whitewashing all exterior surfaces. Then holly, grown wild in Ireland, was spread throughout the house with cheer. Contemporary Ireland also highlights this clean-up ritual; once complete, fresh Christmas linens are taken out of storage.

Other customs include the Bloc na Nollaig or Christmas Block (the Irish version of the Yule log), candles in the window (perhaps one for each family member), and leading up to Christmas, “Calling the Waites,” where musicians would wake up townspeople through serenades and shouting out the morning hour.

Christmas Eve Mass is still a grand affair, a time for friends and family to reconnect. It is not uncommon for churchgoers to end up at the local pub after service to ring in Christmas morn.



On Christmas Day, traditional dishes include roast goose or ham and sausages, potatoes (such as champ), vegetables (such as cabbage with bacon) and plum pudding, whiskey, Christmas cake and barmbrack (currant loaf) for sweets.

Traditionally on December 26th, St. Stephen's Day, Wren Boys with blackened faces, carrying a pole with a dead bird pierced at the top, tramped from house to house. Today the custom sometimes sees children caroling throughout the neighbourhood to raise money for charity. It is also quite common to go out visiting on this day.

One modern-day Irish tradition to note is gathering around the television to watch The Late Late Toy Show in late November/early December, said to be the most watched program in Ireland.

WALES

Dylan Thomas' story A Child's Christmas in Wales is renowned around the world. An excerpt offers a glimpse of a traditional Welsh festive season:



“Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang ‘Cherry Ripe,’ and another uncle sang ‘Drake’s Drum.’... Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-coloured snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steady falling night.”

Music was and still is a major part of Welsh holidays. Plygain is a Christmas day church service, traditionally held between three and six a.m., featuring males singing a capella in three or four-part harmonies. While today this may be mainly practiced in rural areas, Eisteddfodde (caroling) is abundantly popular in homes, door-to-door and as part of annual song-writing competitions.

Other intriguing Welsh traditions include toffee making; drinking from a communal wassail bowl of fruit, spices, sugar and beer; children visiting homes on New Year's Day looking for their Calenig gift; and Mary Lwyd (Grey Mare) featuring wassail singers going door-to-door carrying a horse's skull and challenging residents in a contest of mocking rhymes.

ISLE OF MAN

Carolling also holds a special place in Manx Christmas celebrations, but traditionally an unconventional twist characterized it. On Christmas Eve, large numbers attended church for Carval. While the congregation sang, all of a sudden women would begin the traditional food fight, having peas on hand to throw at their male counterparts!

Accounts from the 1700s and 1800s describe 12 days of non-stop Christmas celebrations where every barn was filled with dancers accompanied by fiddlers the local parish hired. “On the twelfth day the fiddler lays his head on one of the women's laps, which posture they look upon as a kind of oracle,” recorded Reverend John Entick (as published in 1774). “For one of the company coming up and naming every maiden in the company, asks the fiddler, who shall this or that girl marry? And whatever he answers it is absolutely depended on as an oracle.”

As in Celtic fashion, Hunting the Wren processions occurred on the Isle of Man and today the practice is going through a revival, characterized by costumes, singing and dancing.

Other Manx customs include Mollag Bands, wearing eccentric clothing, swinging a mollag (fishing float) and demanding money (a practice since outlawed); the kissing bush (a more elaborate ornament than a sprig of mistletoe); and Cammag, a sport that originated on the Isle of Man traditionally played on December 26th and/or Easter Monday.

Finally, in older times but even as recently as the early 20th century, Christmas decorations were not taken down until Pancake Tuesday (when they were burnt under the pancake pan). Now holiday décor tends to be packed away on Old Christmas (January 6th).



CORNWALL

As a result of Oliver Cromwell banning Christmas, authentic holiday carols began to fade through much of Britain. However, throughout the 1800s, Cornish composers and collectors sparked a revival of local Christmas song.

“Contrary to the effect Methodism might have had on the English carollers, in Cornwall its impact was to stimulate song,” states the Cornwall Council (Cornish Christmas Carols – Or Curls, 2011). “In those areas where Methodism was strongest, music and signing had their greatest appeal, and notably so at Christmas. The singers would practice in chapels and school-rooms, some of them walking miles to be there.”

Certain carols well-known around the world, such as Hark the Herald Angels Sing, and While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks, are credited to Cornish origins.

Today, Cornwall erupts in festivals, fairs and markets during the holidays. The Montol Festival in Penzance (named for Montol Eve on December 21st) is a six-day celebration highlighting many Cornish traditions. These include Mummers plays, lantern processions, and Guise dancing (participants dress in masks and costume, such as mock formal dress, to play music and dance).

Montol is also the time for burning the Mock (yule log). A stickman or woman is drawn on the block of wood with chalk. When the log burns, it symbolizes the death of the old year and birth of the year to come.

BRITTANY

Brittany boasts a wealth of folklore and supernatural beliefs around Christmas time. Christmas Eve was known as a night of miraculous apparitions from fairies to Korrigans, and at midnight, for just a brief moment, waters in the wells would turn into the most sweet-tasting wine. It was also at midnight, when families were either at mass or in bed, that ghosts would surface; traditionally food was left out for deceased loved ones just in case they visited.



During the holidays, Christmas markets come alive in many Breton towns, vending hand-made crafts and toys, baked cakes and bread and ingredients for Christmas dinner. You can also buy Galette des Rois at stalls, as well as bakeries, and which is traditionally eaten on January 6th (Epiphany). A tiny figurine (the fève) is hidden inside the puff pastry cake; the person who finds the figurine in their piece gets to be king or queen for the day and wear a crown. Another special tradition through all of France is a meal after Christmas Eve's midnight mass, called Réveillon. Specifically in Brittany, the traditional dish for this occasion is buckwheat crêpes with cream.

GALICIA

Galicia has its own unique Christmas gift-bearer that predates Christianity. He is called Apalpador, a giant who lives in the mountains. For Christmas, he descends into the villages below to make sure each child has a full belly. He brings treats, such as chestnuts, and well wishes for a year full of delicious sustenance. While Apalpador may not be widely observed in Galicia, his legend is seeing a revival.

Food is very important during the Galician holidays, featuring at least two feasts (on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day). Not surprisingly, seafood is on the menu, including lobster, prawns, shrimp, sea bass, and cod with garlic and paprika sauce. Other culinary delights consist of cured meat, cheese and bread, roast beef with vegetables and for dessert tarta de Santiago (almond cake), filloas (stuffed pancakes) and turrões (nougats).

Throughout all of Spain, including Galicia, children anticipate the coming of the Three Kings or Magis who fill their shoes, left out on Epiphany Eve (January 5th) with gifts. Many Galician municipalities also host a parade featuring the Kings on January 5th.





Celtic Gift Guide

*Looking for that special something for that special someone this holiday season?
We've got you covered with our annual Celtic Gift Guide!*



The Claddagh

Peter Townsend

Legend has it that Richard Joyce, a Galway seafarer whom pirates had kidnapped and sold into slavery, originated the Claddagh symbol. While in North Africa Joyce learned the art of the goldsmith. When he was released, nothing could keep him from his beloved Galway where he returned and created the Claddagh ring. The Claddagh may be worn as friendship, engagement or wedding rings. To signify friendship: place the ring anywhere on your right hand. Engagement: place the ring on the third finger of your left hand with the heart pointing outwards. Wedding: place the ring on the third finger of your left hand with the heart pointing inwards towards your heart. Claddagh Ladies, Medium - This ring also comes in 10k All White, 14k All White, 10k All Yellow, 14k All Yellow. Sizes range from 4 to 9. Claddagh Gents, Heavy - This ring also comes in silver, silver & 10k heart, 10k All White, 14k All White, 10k All Yellow, 14k All Yellow. Sizes range from 9 to 13.

www.irishcollection.com



The Haggis

Stahly Haggis

No longer just a delicacy featured on Burns Night, haggis is becoming a dish eaten year round. Stahly Quality Foods of Glenrothes, Fife, Scotland, produces several styles of award-winning haggis. Their Scotch Haggis, for example, is a blend of the finest lamb, oatmeal and spices. Another choice, the Royal Haggis, replaces the lamb with Scottish venison, giving it a distinctive, richly flavourful taste. Stahly also produces a Drambuie and Whisky Haggis as well as a vegetarian version. They even have available a Haggis, Neeps and Tatties, using turnips and potatoes in the recipe. The entire haggis range is produced in Scotland and comes canned whole in a synthetic skin, which retains the haggis as a traditional product with the convenience of a long shelf-life, no need for refrigeration and which is easily transported. The Stahly family name has been associated with fine food since 1923 when Fred Stahly Senior and his wife first opened a butcher shop on Kirkcaldy High Street in Fife.

www.thehaggis.com



Tullamore Dew

In the last 10 years, Tullamore Dew Irish Whiskey has won 22 gold medals, gaining recognition from the International Spirits Challenge 2013, and The Irish Whiskey Masters 2010, among others. No wonder: the widely acclaimed, blended whiskey is known for its smooth and gentle complexity. Tullamore Dew Original is triple distilled and then aged in a combination of ex-bourbon and sherry casks. The malt and pot still whiskey used in its creation gave the dram its distinctive citrus and spicy notes. Tullamore also produces a 12-year-old special reserve and a 10-year-old single malt. Additionally, Old Bonded Warehouse Whiskey is a bottling the distillery released to mark the reopening of the Tullamore D.E.W. visitor centre in 2012. This exclusively crafted batch can only be obtained at the building itself. The Phoenix is another special bottling celebrating the opening of Tullamore's new distillery. The Phoenix is a medium-bodied whiskey with distinctive sherry notes.

www.tullamoredew.com

Celtic Love Knot

The Blue Frogs Company

Show your eternal love this holiday season. Love knots have evolved over the years, but their beauty and universal appeal remains timeless. Their intricate and interwoven patterns create endless paths which have no beginning or end. The love knot symbolizes the never-ending cycle of life in love, friendship, faith and loyalty. Beautifully hand-crafted one at a time from mahogany, each wood carving starts from an original drawing. Every step of the carving and finishing process is performed by hand, allowing for exquisite craftsmanship, quality and detail in every piece. As a final touch, the pieces are waxed with a French paste which enhances the handsome wood grain and provides a rich luster. Whether you're looking for a unique way to celebrate your heritage or you're trying to find that perfect gift for your loved one, this is a work of art to be treasured for generations.

www.bluefrogscompany.com

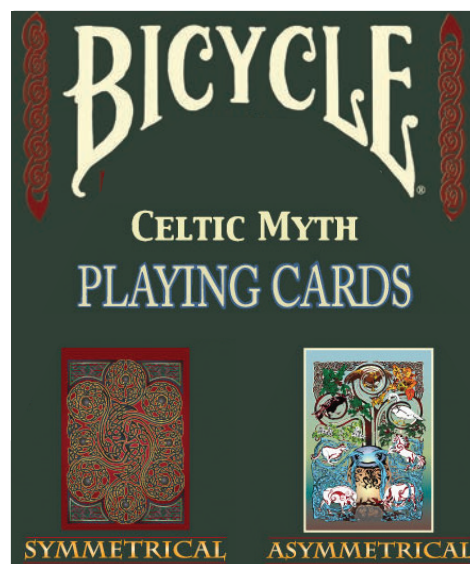


Celtic Playing Cards

Culturlan

James Acken, a professor of medieval studies, is the mind behind Culturlan, a company that blurs the lines between education and entertainment. The firm's latest offering is a deck of beautifully illustrated Celtic playing Cards. The Bicycle Celtic Myth Playing Cards celebrate the rich pantheon of mythological gods, goddesses and heroes. Acken designed and illustrated the cards. The combination of his academic background with his artistry provides him with the ability to produce images that are deeply informed by myth and long established traditions of story-telling. "For instance, the Ace of Diamonds features the Lia Fáil, which is similar to the Stone of Scone used in the crowning of Scottish Kings, while the Ace of Hearts shows one of the most iconic of Celtic symbols, the cauldron."

www.culturlan.com



Celtic Pendant Knot

Echoes of Erin

Nothing equals the enchantment or the intricacy of Celtic artwork. Echoes of Erin is a jewelry design and manufacturing company that sisters Connie Hatt and Vicki Haddon began in 2003. The company is located in New Brunswick, Canada's scenic Passamaquoddy Bay. New Brunswick received large numbers of Irish immigrants in the 1700 and 1800s and one of the original suggestions for the province's name was New Ireland. This particular knot is etched in copper, treated with a patina to preserve the warm chestnut tones, combined with brushed silver and finished with a gold accent strip. The continual looping of knot designs suggests themes of eternity and interconnectedness. Knots may have also been created to confuse evil spirits in much the same manner as the Native American dreamcatcher. Entirely handcrafted, the knot is a timeless gift to treasure for years to come.

www.echoesoferin.com



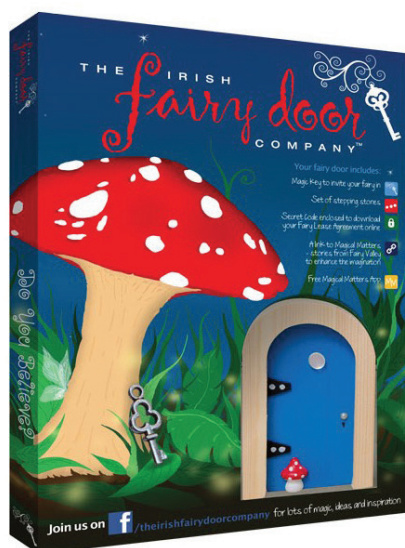


Landscape Coffee Pot

Nicholas Mosse

This whimsical pottery “landscape” coffee pot from Nicholas Mosse holds six cups of your favourite java, allowing many friends to share. It can be used with filters, or you can just “jug” it, or dare we mention instant as an alternative. Nicholas Mosse’s love affair with pottery began more than 55 years ago when the sensuous beauty of clay and its possibilities captivated him at age seven. He met, married and fell in love with an American botanical artist who had been drawn to Ireland by her love of the Irish countryside. Drawn together by their craft and shared love of nature, in 1976, Nick and Susan, based in a small shed on the Mosse family land in Bennettsbridge County, Kilkenny formed their family business. Patterns are applied using an age-old tradition dating back to the 18th century. Every piece of Nicholas Mosse pottery undergoes a 20-step, hand-made process, while Susan Mosse is the creative force behind each original and distinctive pattern.

www.nicholasmosse.com



Blue Round Irish Fairy Door

The Irish Fairy Door Company

“All you need to do is believe,” exhorts The Irish Fairy Door Company. “This is not a toy.” The company sells hand-crafted, wooden fairy doors made and decorated in Ireland. They come “sprinkled with a little magic and ready for your fairy to move in.” Each of the cute doors comes with its own key contained in a glass bottle. The doors are approximately 12 centimeters high and suitable for indoor or outdoor use. According to the company, once you’ve installed your door and registered your fairy’s name, the fairy will come to inhabit the door and will take possession of the key “as he or she needs to come and go a lot.” Fairies are secretive, so while you might never see your fairy, you are encouraged to write it letters and leave them outside the door. Whimsical and charming, the fairy door is certain to ignite your child’s imagination.

www.theirishfairydoorcompany.com



Onesies

Scott's Highland Services

Onesies from Scott’s Highland Services Ltd. are the perfect way to dress the fledgling Irish or Scots in your life. These one-piece outfits for babies come adorned with slogans such as “I love haggis,” “Irish Princess,” and “O’baby.” But if that’s not enough of a statement, then you might want to get the Tartan Kilt Onesie, which is available in different sizes and tartans. The onesie snaps at the bottom in traditional fashion and has a kilt sewn onto it. Available tartans include Royal Stewart, Nova Scotia, Cape Breton and Black Watch. Beyond onesies, Scott’s Highland Services is your one-stop shop for everything Celtic. The online retailer stocks just about everything imaginable, from bagpipes and drums, to Highland dress and CDs and DVDs.

www.scottshighland.com

Celtic Blue Collection

Island Stoneware

Prince Edward Island's Island Stoneware company creates elegant, durable and unique tableware sets. The Celtic Blue Collection has a hand-incised Celtic knot on each piece of stoneware and features a blue-green glaze. The collection adds an interesting flair to any table setting. The dishes are oven, microwave, and dishwasher safe and chip and scratch resistant. The collection includes bowls, serving plates, goblets and a casserole dish. Cindy and Darryl Lentz, the couple behind Island Stoneware, have been creating for a number of years. Cindy started working in clay in the 1990s when she took a course the Deep River's Potter's Guild offered. In Kingston, Ontario she joined the CFB Kingston Pottery Club and further honed her skills and began taking part in local studio tours and artisan shows. Darryl refined his skills in tile and wheel work. Since then, they expanded to Island Stoneware and having been working side-by-side since.

www.islandstoneware.ca



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www.expo-cruises.com



Peter Stone Jewelry

If it's good enough for Rihanna, the renowned pop singer, well then, you'll settle won't you? Peter Stone's black snake ring showed up on the singer's hand on the cover of Complex Magazine. It's just one of hundreds of pieces of jewelry Peter Stone designs and manufactures. The company's many artisans use the highest quality sterling silver available to create a variety of designs, encompassing such themes as animals, fairies and fantasy and pirates. Peter Stone is especially well known for its Celtic designs, producing both traditional and contemporary interpretations of Celtic symbols. Such beautiful works as Trinity Knots and Celtic Snakes are available as earrings and brooches. Peter Koslowski, the man behind Peter Stone, first became passionate about jewelry in the 1980s while working as an engineer in Sri Lanka, where he had the opportunity to come across an abundance of gems. In 1992, after educating himself in the art of jewelry, he opened The Peter Stone Company.

www.peterstone.com





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Fire & Ice

with
Andrew Ferguson

Bourbon is a uniquely American style of whiskey, born on the American frontier in the late 1700s from strong Celtic and northern European roots. While beloved around the world, it is one of the least well understood of world whiskies, a fact that is surprising when you consider that its manufacture is without doubt the most tightly regulated of all world whiskies. I recently made a pilgrimage to Kentucky, to tackle the Kentucky Bourbon Trail. What I learned along the way is that there's a lot more to bourbon than the rules that govern its manufacture.

Bourbon was born in tandem with the State of Kentucky, and even today the vast majority of it comes from that state. Settlers to the new frontier were granted 400 acres of land if they built a dwelling, planted corn and remitted one acre's worth of it to the government as tax. Many of these settlers were from Northern Europe, Scotland and Ireland, where it had been common for farmers to convert surplus grains into whiskey. Not surprisingly many of the new colonists started distilling from the word go, and some of them chose to pay the government in whiskey rather than grain.

The chief crop of the new frontier was corn, which has a much higher sugar yield than the wheat, rye or barley that the settlers would have used for distilling in their homelands. It also wasn't possible in the 18 and 19th Centuries to produce a whiskey purely from corn, because the grain lacks the enzymes found in malted barley or rye required for fermentation. So it evolved that bourbons were made from a mash bill consisting mostly of corn, some barley (generally at least 10 per cent) and either wheat or rye for flavouring. Today bourbons must be produced from a mash bill that contains at least 51 per cent corn.

Today bourbon is matured in new American oak casks for at least two years. The stipulation that the cask cannot be reused was a SOP to a powerful coopers union by the US Congress. This gives most bourbons an intensely toasty palate with lots of honey, vanilla and creamy tones. It also means inexpensive casks with lots of life left for the Canadian, Scottish, Japanese and Irish whiskey industries.

Kentucky's bourbon distilleries are very guarded about their exact mash bill and the strain(s) of yeast (usually proprietary) that they employ. This is principally what gives each of the distilleries and or whiskey brands their own unique profile. Some producers, like Four Rose and Buffalo Trace, use different combinations of mash bills and yeasts to produce distinctly different bourbons

with the same stills. Makers Mark distillery doesn't include rye in its mash bills, which is the most spicy and flavourful of the grains, instead opting for red winter wheat which is much lighter and more delicate.

New distilleries making bourbon, straight rye and other types of whiskey are popping up in Kentucky and all over the United States, and existing distilleries are increasing capacity to meet demand. The bourbon industry has come a long way from the early days of sending an acre of corn back to the government in liquid form.

Try these Bourbons:

Buffalo Trace: One of the most iconic of Kentucky bourbons, it is perfect for cocktails or sipping neat and is nutty with creamy oak, lots of character and a hint of rye spices. **\$40**

Four Roses Single Barrel: Always a little different owing to the fact it is a single barrel bottling, this Four Roses is very fruity with spices and vanilla. **\$54**

Knobb Creek: Very caramelized with vanilla and hints of rye, this nine-year-old Bourbon is produced by Jim Beam in small batches. **\$48**

Maker's 46: They take the regular delicate Makers and finish it with French oak staves to create a very smooth, spicy and fruity Bourbon. **\$64**

Michter's Small Batch: Produced in very small batches of less than 24 casks, this is a very sweet and smooth bourbon with notes of corn and drying rye. **\$66**

Wild Turkey Kentucky Spirit: Another single barrel bottling, the Kentucky Spirit is an older expression at higher proof from a single cask. Caramel, dark fruits, brown sugar and toasty oak. **\$58**

Woodford Reserve: This is a single malt drinker's bourbon, triple distilled in Pot Stills it has a round full body with layers of spice, grains, vanilla and coffee bean. **\$49**

www.fergusonswhiskytraveltours.com





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Learn how Norway's first holy marker towns and early Saints were instrumental and the sacred geometry connections between countries and connections of secret societies such as the Knights Templars and

Freemasons is explained. The tour takes you back in time and presents an opportunity for spiritual discovery whilst exploring some of the superlative scenic locations in Norway.

Spiritual aspects will be led by Rev Tracy Crowe from USA and those interested will have prospects to participate in ceremonies at some of the sacred sites visited that will blend her spiritual traditions of Native American; Scandinavian; and Celtic Irish heritage to respect the elements of Mother Nature and discuss the similarities between nations at the sacred sites and portals along the ley lines of the earth, as well as provide an introduction to Archangels.

Capacity restricted to only 20 participants reserved on a first to book basis for the open tour. Private tours can be arranged for other dates and lower numbers.

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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!

The Plough and Harrow *Murton, Swansea, Wales* www.ploughandharrow.eu

Wales is awash in a sea of gastro-pubs these days, and none are finer than The Plough and Harrow in the quaint village of Murton, near Swansea. The reviews on the refurbished restaurant have been stellar so far, with many noting the eatery's preference for local produce. Sure enough, the Ffrywth yr mor (blanched cockles, whitebait, mussels and prawns, laverbread mayonnaise, leek and red onion salad) is as fresh as it gets, as is the cawl y dydd (soup of the day). The real-deal meals here, however, are the smoked gressingham duck breast, the trio of salt marsh lamb (two bone rack, kidney and



hotpot), the hereford, 36-day dry aged rib eye steak, and the 12-hour, overnight roasted belly of Gloucester free range pork.

Leave some room for the sweets, as the date & apple lattice, sticky toffee pudding ice cream, maple syrup and smoked bacon popcorn is to absolutely die for. And don't depart without sampling something special from the extraordinary wine list, or, if you prefer, one of the many excellent local and imported beers, lagers, ciders and stouts.

The décor and surroundings are spectacular, as is the service, which is both personable and professional.

Jaks Bar and Steak House *Douglas, Isle of Man* www.jakspub.com

The salty seaside town of Douglas bustles each spring with the Isle of Man TT Races, but remains popular through the summer months with visitors from across the UK who come for its pristine beaches and busy nightlife. More evenings than not, Jaks is the hub of activity, and with good reason: with three menus to choose from, and a bar stocked with fine wines, spirits and beers, there is something for everyone's taste. That said, the 24-year-old establishment stakes its reputation on, er, what else? Steaks. Both the T-bone and fillet are beyond scrumptious, and the lesser-priced rump, ribeye and sirloin are excellent options also. The ribs, lamb and pork loin can be mixed and matched seasonally, as can the fresh seafood, caught daily. Both the taps and bar menus offer up a selection of smaller choices, including meat, cheese and fish-based appetizers, ideal to whet one's whistle. While you're at it, be sure to savour one of Jaks' famous cocktails – many of whose names can't be published here. A sprawl of big-screen TVs, along with nightly live entertainment, means you never have to go home. If you do disappear, you can walk off your soirée by the sea.



O'Connell's Irish Bar *Rennes, Brittany, France* www.oconnellspub.fr



A little like the Dirty Nelly's franchise from Ireland, O'Connell's is part and parceled out across the globe. Thankfully, that's not the case here with this independently owned and operated tavern. Situated directly across from Brittany's historic parliament buildings, it's a miracle that the region runs smoothly, let alone at all. The area's Celtic past comes to life daily at this virtual shrine to the Emerald Isle - you won't find anything fancy or French on the menu, only wholesome, old-fashioned pub grub – including club sandwiches, ham, potatoes, lamb, chicken and a sampling of salads that pay homage to Irish namesakes. You will, however, enjoy the area's heartiest (and only) Irish breakfast – replete with authentic black pudding - served all day long. While the venue is open daily at 11 am, things don't really get going until happy hour, which starts at 7 pm. The Guinness and Harp flow freely after that, as does the conversation – something both the French and Irish excel at, especially after a few pints. Be watchful of the dartboard, however, as things can literally get a little out of hand. And while taps may shut at 1 am, the party spills out onto the street until the wee hours.





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Get in touch with nature again, you say! There is no better way than adding your name to the list of competitors who take part in the Great Pumpkin Regatta that takes place each Autumn in Windsor, Nova Scotia on the choppy waters of Lake Pesaquid.

Originally designed to extend the tourism industry in Windsor, it has taken on a life of its own. Great pumpkins are part of Nova Scotia's heritage. It all began on the farm of Howard Dill, where he perfected the art of hugeness and took pumpkins to a whole new level. Dill is a four-time Guinness Book of World Records holder and developer of the internationally acclaimed Atlantic Giant Pumpkin seeds.

The annual tradition is based on a contest of who can grow the largest pumpkin. After a weigh-off, the pumpkins are hollowed out to create boats and the race is on. Participants must be creative, bold and strategic. After all, how would you like to navigate a 600-pound pumpkin across water when a pumpkin's natural habitat is that of a landlubber?

Here is a fine recipe for a hearty and healthy pumpkin soup. The Celts were careful not to waste a morsel and to use whatever was available to them. This is a rich creamy soup excellent on its own or for the beginning of a meal.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb. pumpkin flesh

1 c. water

3 c. boiling milk

Butter as large as an egg

1 tsp. sugar

Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Take out seeds and pare off the rind from the pumpkin; cut into small pieces.

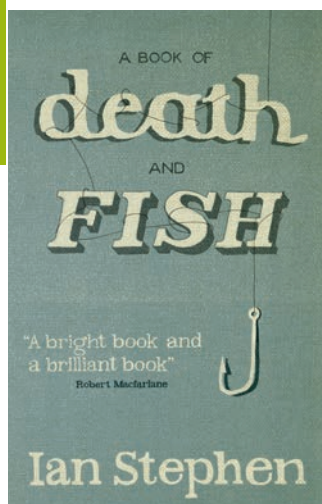
Put into soup kettle with water and simmer slowly for 1 ½ hours.

Put through sieve and return to the soup kettle with boiling milk, butter, sugar, salt and pepper.

Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally and serve.

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



A Book of Death and Fish

By Ian Stephen

Saraband / 576pp / €18.99

Scottish author, poet and playwright Ian Stephen employs all elements of scribery in his epic debut novel. The tough and tender tale of one middle-aged man's look back on life after a terminal cancer diagnosis,

A Book of Death and Fish explores the bigger themes of love, loss, reflection and regret through a series of smaller, personal vignettes.

And while the protagonist (Peter McAuley) hovers over what was and what could have been via interactions with family members and friends, the author skillfully avoids being over-sentimental. The result is much more than a mere trip down memory lane; the work offers up powerful and poignant perspectives on the modern world, and in particular, Scotland from the 1960s to today. An excellent, enjoyable and engaging read.

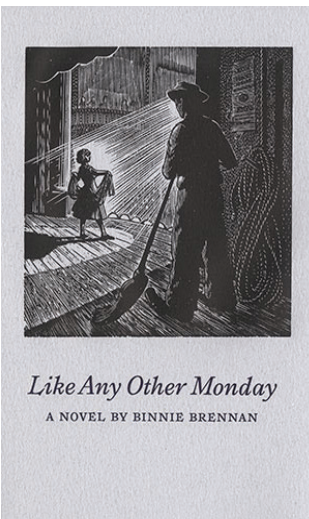
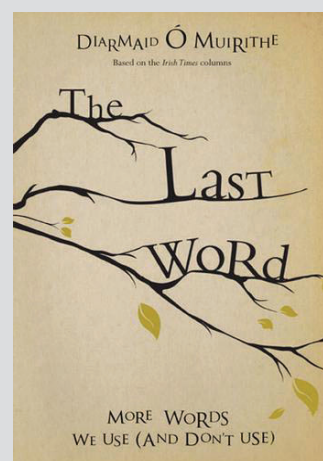
~ SPC

The Last Word

By Diarmaid Ó Muirthe
Gill & Macmillan

/ 304 pp / €19.99

A senior lecturer emeritus at the University College of Dublin, Ó Muirthe is best known as a longtime columnist for the Irish Times. A wise and witty wordsmith by trade, he has penned a number of bestselling books about the use and abuse of the English, Irish and Scottish languages. The Last Word carries on where his previous works left off: exploring the constantly changing linguistic landscape. Traditional British and American English are in danger of extinction he says – albeit with a lighthearted hand – however, it is his examination of the growing continental drift between Irish and Scottish Gaelic that will be of most interest to readers. As always, Ó Muirthe approaches the issues with flair and fancy that is unmatched on the Emerald Isle. ~ SPC



Like Any Other Monday

By Binnie Brennan

Gaspereau Press
/ 224pp / \$27.95

A cellist with the Nova Scotia Symphony Orchestra by trade, Halifax native Binnie Brennan is making beautiful music on the side as a scribe. After her debut novella (Harbour View) and follow-up short-story collection (A Certain Grace) struck chords with both readers and critics, Brennan reaches for the high notes with her first full-length narrative, the story of two failing vaudevillian performers who meet by chance and put together a touring act in early 20th century Canada.

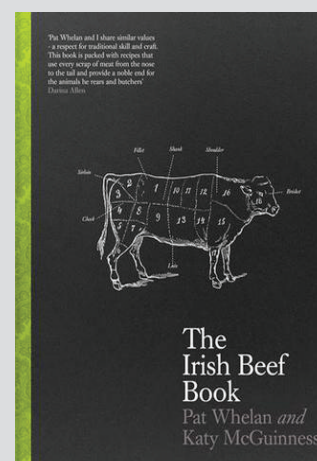
Like Any Other Monday explores the dynamic, and often distressed relationship between creative types. Set upon a series of stages, the work does well to transport readers back to the pre-talkies era, when Chaplin and Keaton ruled the entertainment roost with their unique brands of pure physical comedy. ~ SPC

The Irish Beef Book

By Pat Whelan & Katy McGuinness

Gill & Macmillan
/ 256pp / €18.39

Perhaps more than anyone, the Irish have learned to do more with less - and anyone who grew up in an Irish kitchen knows that no scrap of food was ever to be wasted. That same mindset has gone into The Irish Beef Book. Billed as the definitive guide to buying, preparing and cooking beef, the tasty tome covers all angles from stable to table, nose to tail, with no recipe left unturned. Chapters on proper butchery, culinary culture, history and breeding make for fascinating reading, and the accompanying, mandatory "food-porn" will be sure to make mouths water. Traditional fare takes the day here, though there are contemporary recipes that better reflect the country's more recent transition to a multicultural society. Definitely not for vegans. ~ SPC





U2

Songs of Innocence

Those waiting on the U2 of old will have to be patient; the Irish super-group's evolution has shifted their perspective from telescopic to microscopic in this deeply personal, 11-track effort. Even the grandiose gesture of releasing the recording free to iTunes users last month is overshadowed here by the sonic subtleties of Every Breaking Wave, Sleep Like a Baby Tonight and Song For Someone. Sure, the trademark echo guitar and soaring vocals are there on Iris, Raised By Wolves and Cedarwood Road – if it ain't broke don't fix it, right? - but the band's decision to explore their past instead of re-inventing it was a wise one artistically. Risky, perhaps, but U2 fans are among the most brand loyal in the world and will follow. ~ SPC

The Mahones

The Hunger and the Fight (Part One)

The first component of a conceptual double-album, *The Hunger and the Fight (Part One)* is an ambitious musical undertaking from Canadian rockers The Mahones that chronicles both the pre-emigration struggles of the Irish people and the evolution of their culture on the Emerald Isle. The fiery four-piece band from Kingston, Ontario punches well above its weight here, producing one of the best albums of the year of any genre with a stirring selection of songs that go way beyond the group's raucous, three-chord roots. Imagine Celt-Punk meets The Who's *Quadrophenia*: complex, compelling, and content-cohesive in its centre-line that runs like a roaring river through a plush Celtic landscape. Truly, this is a masterpiece that captures the band at the very pinnacle of its creative prowess. ~ SPC



Various

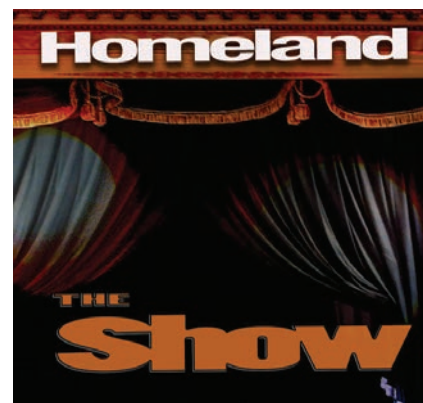
The Best of the Pipes of Christmas

Recorded in concert over a decade at various venues across New York City and New Jersey, this 15-song selection is sure to stir the soul this holiday season with a treasure trove of traditional Yuletide tunes and Celtic classics. From the opening solo drones of *The Highland Cathedral* to the fading pomp of *The MacMhuirich's March*, the magic, splendour and pageantry of Christmas comes alive with a musical mélange of vocals, harp, fiddle, flute, cello, organ, accordion, guitar, and brass. But it is the pipes and drums - brash and bold - that drive the likes of *Joy to the World*, *O Come All Ye Faithful*, *Amazing Grace* and *Scotland the Brave* to new heights. Be sure to stuff this into someone's stocking this year. ~ SPC

Homeland

The Show

Ohio is the undisputed home of rock 'n' roll in North America – the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame and Museum are in Cleveland for a reason – and that influence and inspiration can be heard and felt on Homeland's latest recording, *The Show*. Hailing from nearby Springfield, the Celt-Rock quintet sounds tight and terrific on *Modern Man*, *Mud*, *Ghost Ship* and the title track. Fiddles reel and rollick over guitars, bass, drums and mandolin on *Cloud Cover* and *Pressed for Time*, and a guest appearance by legendary piper Kevin Palm on *The Climb* and *Leaving of Liverpool* brings the band to great highland grounds. The gentle lament and gorgeous vocal harmonies of *Closing Song* are a fine and fitting finale to this excellent, engaging effort. ~ SPC



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Chris Layer

When it comes to playing the pipes, Chris Layer says it came down to a matter of circumstance and reasonable aptitude.

It's not like a bike," he notes. "It's more like riding a unicycle while attempting to set yourself on fire. Oh, wait, that's been done already, right?"

Layer may not wield the pipes while unicycling, but there's no question that he is one of the most talented pipers working today, having performed with at least a dozen symphony orchestras, worked as a sideman for a couple of touring rock acts, and workshopped Broadway shows with the likes of the New York Public Theatre and the Simon sisters, Carly and Lucy.

He's currently returning from six weeks of music, community work and concert production for the Moab Music Festival; a chamber music festival that Layer says treats all acoustic music with equal respect in its presentation.

"It's kind of not great for the pipes since it's so dry, but the people and the music make up for what Utah lacks in humidity."

Next up he'll be playing in the orchestra as part of the new Broadway show, *The Last Ship*, with Sting. According to Layer, the experience has been particularly gratifying not only because Sting has been with them throughout the entire process, but also because the former front man for The Police has a work ethic that puts everyone else to shame.

"Combine that with his immense talent and focus and I believe we might get to enjoy some success as his work goes forward," says Layer. "The Last Ship has something there that the traditional music public will enjoy. It's an extraordinary work of musical theatre, in my opinion."

Inspired by Sting's childhood, the musical is set in an English sea-faring town that operates around the local shipyard. When the future of the shipyard is endangered, the workers are forced to take matters into their own hands, led by Gideon Fletcher who has returned home after 14 years away.

Layer will also be performing at this year's The Pipes of Christmas concerts in New York City and Summit, New Jersey on December 20 and 21.

Although he may not have Celtic roots – he's 100 per cent Alsatian with Swiss, German and French in his background – he began piping at an early age, shortly after he learned to dance. His father is a fiddler and his mother a singer. As a child he learned both the Strathspey and the Reel. But the sound of the pipes led him to pick up the instrument.

"From a very young age, I felt drawn to Scottish and Irish music and ultimately piping because I could feel the music so easily, the way a jig lifted or how a reel made my feet go in just such a way," he shares.

Today, he is a multi-instrumentalist who is equally comfortable with the Uilleann pipes, small pipes, recorder, flute and whistle, among other instruments. He jokes that he's never picked a favourite instrument out of the bunch, but if he had to, he'd have to check the altitude and wind speed before he made that particular decision. "Piping is a very localized craft with either wide appeal or general disdain based upon the relative talent of the player. In other words, you don't ever want to be loud and bad at the same time, but if you're lucky you can be one or the other without great discomfort to either the public or yourself."

To date, Layer professes that the highlight of his career is that he can walk into a commercial studio or Broadway orchestra pit or festival stage and hold his own with players whom he claims practice far more than he does. Beyond that, he began his own festival and summer school in New Harmony, Indiana a few years back.

"That is truly the love of my life these days."





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Jessica Wedden is only 12, but the young fiddler already has her sights set on recording her first CD.

Jessica Wedden

“People have been asking to buy my CD for over a year now,” she exclaims. Not short of ambition, Wedden also wants to have her first solo fiddle concert before she turns 14 and confides, “Someday it would be nice to have my own band, and play with other bands.”

Wedden may be one of the next generation of upcoming Natalie MacMasters. She lives roughly an hour from Ottawa and Kingston, in a rural Ontario village called Tichborne. Her heritage includes Irish, Scottish, Dutch, English, German and French.

“A couple of my ancestors were fiddle makers,” she notes, “but that goes back quite a few generations.”

Nonetheless, fiddling must be in her blood. She started on the instrument two-and-a-half years ago at the age of nine. That was when she joined her friends in the Blue Skies Fiddle Orchestra beginner group, situated in Maberly, Ontario.

“The fiddle teacher and director, Cindy McCall is very nice and it sounded like a fun thing to learn,” Wedden comments.

McCall, a food services supervisor at the Grove Nursing Home in Arnprior, Ontario, acts as the conductor of the Blue Skies Fiddle Orchestra.

The orchestra began 15 years ago as a way to foster fiddle music traditions in the community through “fun and affordable music instruction.” Every year the amateur, charitable, non-profit group performs in local venues, seniors’ homes and elsewhere. The ensemble gives individuals the

opportunity to learn a musical instrument and to read music, play as part of a team and follow a conductor.

The orchestra’s main sponsor is Blue Skies in the Community, the registered, non-profit charitable arm of the Blue Skies Music Festival. The former supports the conductor and the purchase of sheet music as well as maintaining an instrument-lending library which rents fiddles at a nominal cost so that all families and individuals have access to the orchestra.



For a young musician such as Wedden, it can mean the introduction to a passion for fiddling and music. Wedden learned not only how to play the fiddle, but received the opportunity to attend fiddle workshops and learn from a variety of more experienced fiddlers.

“I get to meet new people,” she says. “I love to go to Blue Skies Art Camp where I can play my fiddle. I also get to travel and play on stage for the audience at different events. I even get to do a bit of step dancing and do my own trick fiddling.”

Now Wedden plays with the main or-

chestra, having graduated from the beginner group. She practices with the orchestra two hours a week and also takes lessons from Cindy Thompson. With three CDs of her own music, Thompson has performed on the Tommy Hunter Show as well as with Ashley MacIsaac when Rita MacNeil had a television show. To get her one hour and 15 minute lesson every other week, Wedden travels an hour and 20 minutes to meet Thompson.

Ask her about her career highlights, Wedden ticks off any number of contenders; an already impressive list for such a young fiddler; she has played on stage with Scott Woods, a multiple Canadian Open and Canadian Grand Master Fiddle Champion; won the fan favourite award in the Enterprise Youth Talent Competition in 2013; and won first place in the instrumental class at the Parham Idol Competition in 2013.

But Wedden’s favourite story involves attending the Greeley Legion Country Music Festival. As she was about to play, she encountered problems with the electric pick-up on her fiddle. The man who played before her lent her his own fiddle. After she had played, Wedden discovered she’d been using the fiddle of Peter Dawson, who was inducted into the North American Fiddlers’ Hall of Fame in 2005.

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Carmen Hunt

Carmen Hunt first began Cornish dancing to stay fit, but soon the unique style of dancing evolved into an end unto itself

From first learning the style in 2001, Hunt later found herself joining a couple of Cornish dance groups, dancing at festivals and leading workshops. These days she dances with the Kemysk Cornish Dancers and the Scoot Lyskerrys.

For those not familiar with the form, Hunt describes three different types of Cornish dance. The first are social dances, popular at feasts and special occasions. These include the “furry” dance, a processional dance which winds its way from one part of town to the other.

Cornish set dances come from manor houses in sets of two, three, four or more.

“They have similarities to some of the Irish set dances and Scottish longways set dances, although the distinctiveness of dances such as Newlyn Reed’s almost eastern European ‘Oi!’ with the folded arms, the finishing serpent for Tremadheves and the big wheel in Ros Vur has led onlookers to recognize they’re in a very different Celtic country,” Hunt says.

Finally Cornish step dances are where solo or sets of dancers “show off” or take a challenge. Hunt compares the discipline to the Scottish sword or pipe dances, except that, of course, the latter implements aren’t employed in the Cornish step dance. Notes Hunt: “Typically scoots, clogs, taps or hard shoes are worn to make one hell of a clatter.”

Hunt says that reels have been “in living memory” for a long time in Cornwall and that, unlike the Irish soft shoe solo-style reels, involves sets of three or four dancers weaving in and out of each other with a specific step for the dance.

Hunt is quarter Irish on her mother’s

side and born on a farm in Oxfordshire, England. She lives in Cornwall now with her husband, who is a folk musician and a journalist, and their son. She first took up ballroom dancing at the age of 13 at the Coreen Bailey School of Dance.



“My sister and I missed out on the ballet and went straight into learning the waltz, fox-trot and disco dancing,” Hunt says. “It was a good foundation for picking up rhythms and beats and the classic structures of dance and posture.”

Since then, Hunt shares that she’s enjoyed dancing as a way to relax, have some fun and get some exercise. In her travels, she’s picked up a range of styles, including African, Indian, Flamenco, Salsa, Irish, English, Scottish, Cornish, Breton, Manx and more, along with styles such as jive, jazz and contemporary. “I love the music and the rhythms,” she says, “the similarities and the feel-good factor.”

In 2010 the Kemysk Cornish Danc-

ers invited Hunt to join them. The idea was they would bring together a group of dancers from across the Duchy to create a set of specially choreographed traditional Cornish dances for a couple of festivals. Since then the group has continued to perform occasionally at festivals and special events around Cornwall.

She says Scoot Lyskerrys evolved from the Sparkling Saturdays Cornish Dance Workshops, which were established when dance artists Lois Taylor saw a Kemysk practice. Taylor and Hunt came up with the Vital Spark Festival of the Arts, which revolved around a single Cornish dance, FerLyskerrys, along with a series of workshops culminating in a big celebration.

“The dancers and musicians enjoyed the series so much, they wanted to continue and since that first workshop series, Sparkling Saturdays has continued to flourish for both musicians and dancers,” Hunt notes.

The future of Cornish dancing looks bright as Hunt asserts that young people are attracted to the dance style and eager to join in any time Cornish dance groups or street musicians perform in the street.

“In Perranporth, for example, there’s a few hundred school children who join the annual procession and gather with their parents and grandparents for singing and dancing.”

www.scootskernow.blogspot.co.uk

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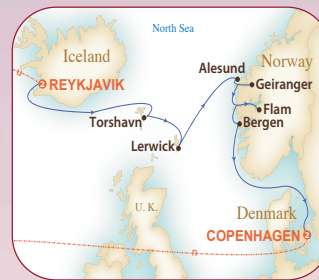
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International Gathering of Scottish Highland Dance at Disneyland Paris

November 21-24, 2014 - Disneyland Paris, France

Who knew that Mickey and Minnie could Highland fling? In la belle France at least they can, but it is human dancers that take centre stage at the International Gathering of Scottish Highland Dance at Disneyland Paris. Marking its fourth year, the Gathering's mission is "to create the ultimate magical experience for Scottish Highland Dancers from all over the world." Participants of various ages and levels have the chance to perform, parade and compete in Disney Paris' whimsical settings. The pre-parade, choreographed by Billy Forsyth MBE, former highland dance director for the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, features 100 or more performers dancing down the festively decked out streets that thousands of spectators line. Highland dance groups can also audition to perform their own set on a Disney Stage and the Gathering hosts an optional SOBHD (Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing) sanctioned competition. Those most devoted to all things Disney can attend workshops led by the park's performing arts pros. New this year is the ChoreoMagic challenge, open for all dancers to interpret their favourite Disney tale. And don't fret! While Mickey and Minnie are not the stars during the Gathering, they will make guest appearances wearing their best tartans.

www.scottishhighlanddance.co.uk

Dunedin Celtic Festival

November 22, 2014 - Dunedin, Florida, USA

Scottish families began settling in Dunedin, Florida during the 19th century. The town's name comes from the Scottish Gaelic for Edinburgh, "Dùn Èideann." Today, locals continue to enjoy the area's Scottish heritage. The Dunedin Highland Games & Festival Committee alone puts on several events each year, including a Highland Games, a Tattoo and the Dunedin Celtic Festival. November 22nd, 2014, will mark the 16th Dunedin Celtic Festival, an event that celebrates "Celtic rock music, craft beer and the gathering of the clans." Musicians from near and far come to play. Some of this year's line-up includes Scotland's high-octane band Albanach, the Celtic tribal sounds of Brother, Tampa Bay's Lucid Druid and "Appalachian Punksters" Cutthroat Shamrock. As per tradition, local craft breweries will be showcasing their extensive suds, and new this year is a scotch whisky tasting. Proceeds from the event go towards the town's three Scottish bands, the Dunedin Middle School, Dunedin High School and the City of Dunedin pipe and drum bands, which also perform at the festival.

www.dunedincelticmusicfestival.com

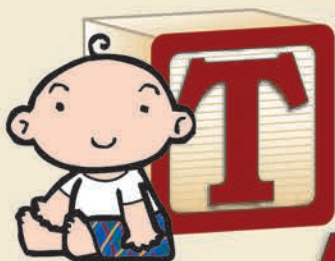


Edinburgh's Hogmanay

December 30, 2014-January 1, 2015 - Edinburgh, Scotland

Nobody celebrates New Year's Eve quite like the Scots, and Edinburgh's Hogmanay is one of the biggest NYE parties in the world. It is with good reason that authors Neil Téplica and Dave Freeman included the extravaganza in their book 100 Things to Do Before You Die. December 30th features the Shetland's Up Helly Aa' Vikings illuminating the city centre in company with pipes and drum bands during the famous Torchlight Procession. A day later, New Year's Eve festivities include a massive street party that people from all over the world will attend, live bands, dance music and several hourly firework shows; a candlelight recital at St. Giles' Cathedral; a kick-ass Keilidh on the Mound; and a Concert in the Gardens—this year pop star Lily Allen headlines. For those who are wide awake on New Year's Day, they can additionally explore "nine incredible, new worlds" brought to life with art, theatre and music throughout Edinburgh's Old Town. Perhaps the biggest highlight of the event is what EdinburghsHogmanay.org describes: "As the bells strike midnight, join hands with friends from across the globe in the world's biggest rendition of Auld Lang Syne!"

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Clan Campbell

In 1960, when he was 15 years old, David Stedman's paternal grandmother took him to Scotland and bought him his first kilt. The young man often wore it at high school and later at Dartmouth College.

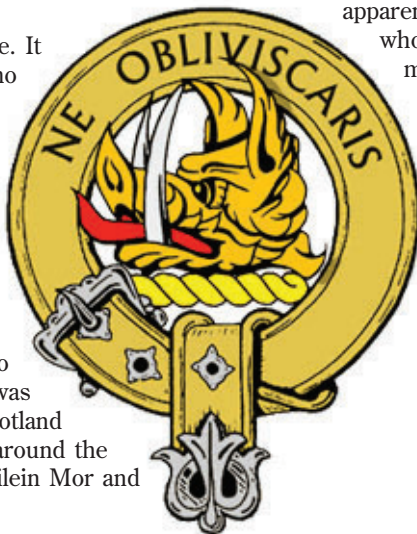
"She was very proud of her Scottish heritage. It was her grandmother, Elizabeth Campbell, who is my connection to the clan," Stedman says. "And our family tree is studded with Campbell Weirs and Duncan Campbell Weirs."

The kilt, along with another trip to Scotland in 1983, obviously left a lasting impression on the young man who today is the president of the Clan Campbell Society and who himself has brought a dozen family members into the society. The trip in 1983, that was also so seminal in involving Stedman with the clan, was a two-week trip to the Campbell lands in Scotland where he met hundreds of Campbells from around the world, including then clan chief, the Mac Cailein Mor and the 12th Duke of Argyll, his wife and children.

According to Stedman, the Clan Campbell are descendants of the warrior Diarmaid O'Duibhne, a quasi-mythical member of

the Irish followers of Finn MacCool, who slayed the enormous wild boar whose head may be seen on the clan's badge. In the 13th century King Alexander II brought the family to Argyll on Loch Awe. The surname "Cambel" or twisted mouth, was apparently the nickname of a member of the family who suffered from torticollis of the neck, which made his mouth lopsided.

The Campbells absorbed many other clans and the surname is the fifth most common in Scotland. In North America, some 45,000 have the name in the United States and another 5,000 in Canada. More than five million people consider themselves part of the clan and the clan counts the famed poet Robert Burns as one of its own.



Clan Chisholm

A clan with its origins outside of Scotland? Sacrilege! Well, not really. David Holmes, president of the Canada Branch of the International Clan Chisholm Society, explains that in fact many clans had their origins outside of the country.

Certainly, that's the case with Clan Chisholm. According to Holmes, the first Chisholm is believed to have come from Normandy with William the Conqueror in 1066. Half a century later a descendant followed David I when he returned to Scotland after being brought up at the Anglo-Norman court.

"This may very well have been the case as many Normans came to Scotland in this way, but the first Chisholm to appear in the records of Scotland was Alexander de Chesholme, who witnessed a charter in 1248/49," Holmes says.

The early Chisholms were found near the English border, but in the 1300s marriage into the Lauder family led them into the Highlands.

In 1951, Mairi Chisholm of Chisholm organized the Clan Chisholm Society. By 1978 branches had been established in Inverness, Edinburgh, London, Australia and the United States. Currently, the society has active branches in the United

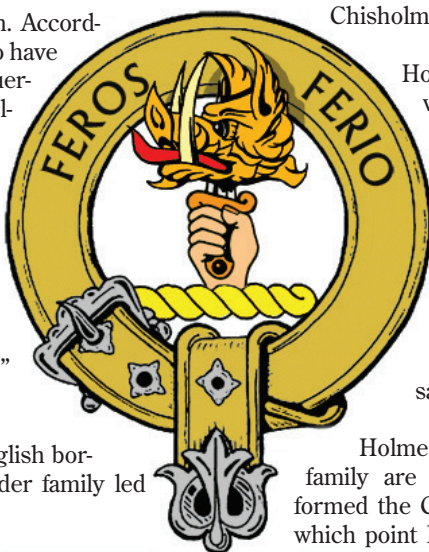
Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the U.S. and Canada.

According to Holmes, the society publishes an annual journal that is distributed to all members, has an active website, supports a genealogy study and acts as the registrar of significant Chisholm artifacts.

Holmes notes that clan members try to attend various Highland games. However, he points out because of the sheer size of Canada and the distances involved from one place to another, it's difficult for everyone to attend all the games.

"We try to get representation from local members to the games as they occur," Holmes says.

Holmes notes that his mother's family are Chisholms. Her brother formed the Canada branch in 1997, at which point Holmes joined. In the upcoming year, Holmes hopes to see the Nova Scotia Chisholms carry the flag at the International Gathering of the Clans in Halifax next summer.





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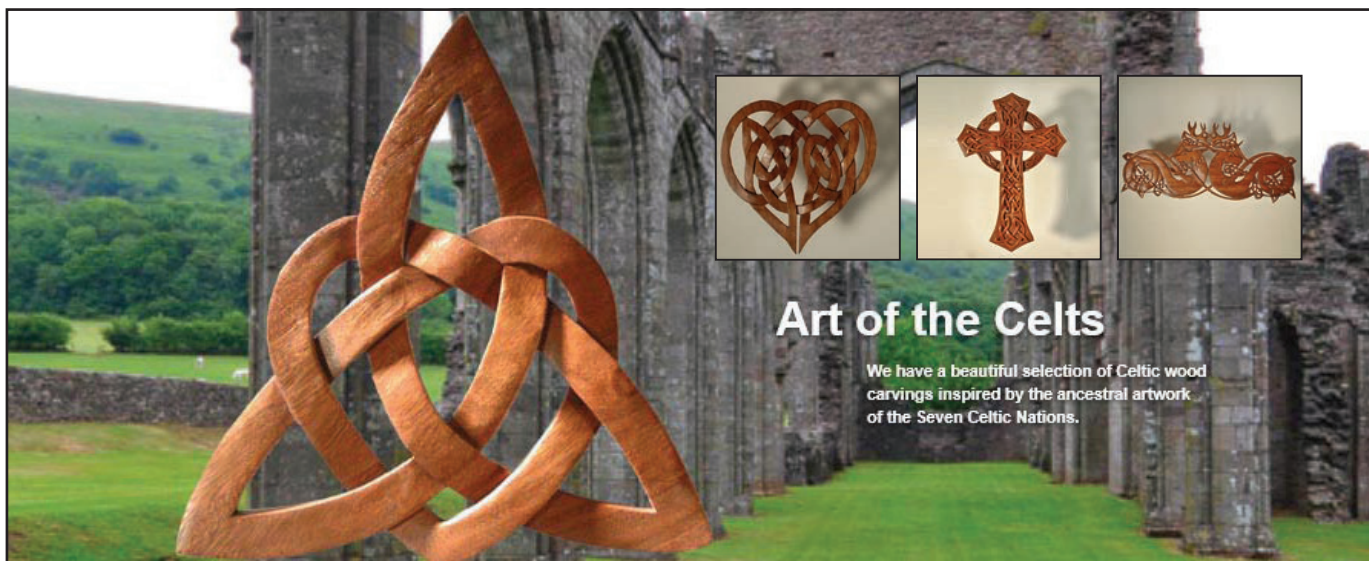


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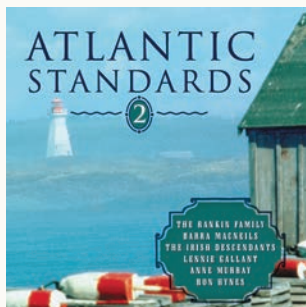
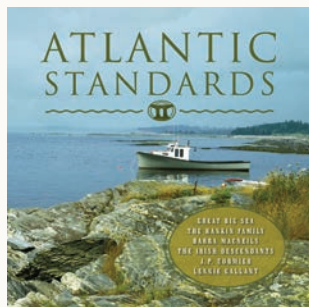


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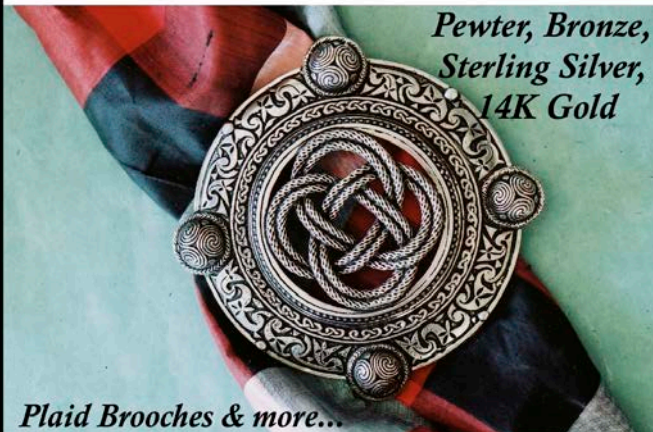
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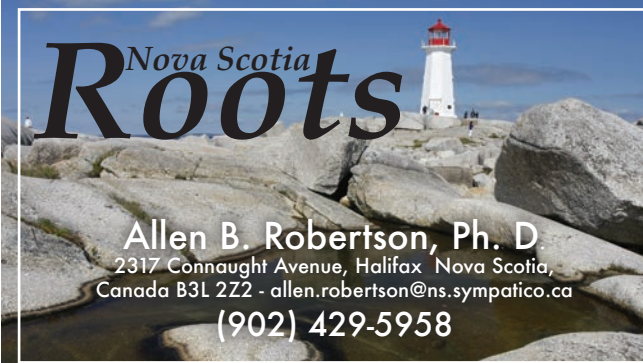
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Ian Paisley

1926-2014

Firebrand is the word most associated with Ian Paisley. As news of the former Northern Ireland leader's death spread, one after another, the world's major media released their obits.

"Once a firebrand preacher..." said the Belfast Telegraph. The New York Times called him "Northern Ireland's firebrand Protestant leader." The Guardian, in its sub-head to its story, declared him a "DUP firebrand turned Northern Ireland peacemaker."

Paisley came by his fearsome reputation honestly. To judge the man by his quotes alone showed a fierce personality. He called alcohol "the devil's buttermilk," and referred to the Queen as "the parrot of the Labour government." Famously, he said of Sinn Féin, "I am not going to sit down with bloodthirsty monsters who have been killing and terrifying my people."

And those were just the relatively innocuous quotes.

Paisley died in mid-September, aged 88. The New York Times reported that in recent years he had been in poor health. In 2011 he received a pacemaker, at which point he also retired from politics.

Tributes poured in - some from odd places indeed. Minutes after the news broke of his death, Martin McGuinness, Northern Ireland's deputy first minister and one-time head of the Provisional IRA

(which once debated internally whether to assassinate Paisley), tweeted his condolences; "Very sad to learn that Ian Paisley has died. My deepest sympathy to his wife Eileen and family. Once political opponents - I have lost a friend."

Nobel Peace Prize winner and former political opponent, John Hume, told the newspaper: "History will record his political career as a journey - one which took [him] from the politics of division to a place where he accepted agreement as a solution, the need for power-sharing and the respect for diversity - but history will also ask if he should have reached this point sooner."

Paisley was born in Armagh, Northern Ireland in 1926, the son of a Baptist preacher and a Scottish evangelist. No surprise then that he was ordained as a minister himself in 1946.

"But he soon came to believe his church had deviated from biblical scriptures and he founded the Free Presbyterians, a relatively small fundamentalist sect," The New York Times wrote. "The Presbyterian Church, Northern Ireland's largest denomination, disassociated itself from his anti-Catholic rhetoric."

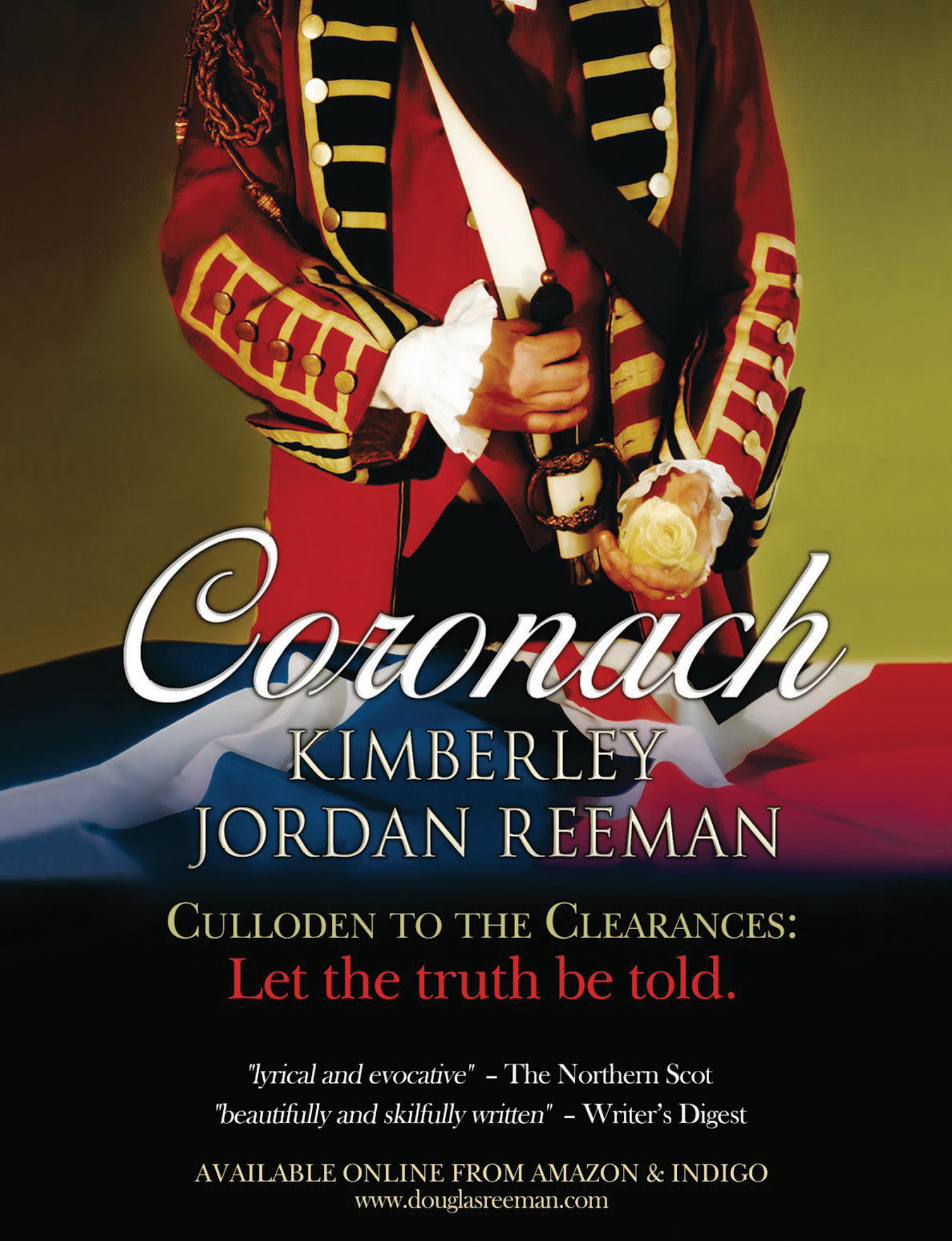
The New York Times describes a tumultuous life. In the 1950s Paisley organized vigilante patrols to defend Protestant neighborhoods against IRA attacks. The paper said he lived through "decades

of deadly turmoil - bombings, assassinations, clashes with British troops and general strikes and riots he had fomented" as he fought any peace deal that meant the sharing of power with Northern Ireland's nearly 1.8 million Catholics.

In 1971, he established his own political party, the Democratic Unionist Party, which in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement in 2007 - that ended The Troubles, during which time 3,700 died - saw Paisley join with McGuinness as respectively leader and deputy leader of Northern Ireland. The Financial Times wrote that "Paisleyism was as much a response to the divisions within unionism as it was a reaction to the militancy of the anti-British Sinn Féin party and the atrocities perpetuated by its military wing, the IRA. His was part of a working-class movement that pledged loyalty to the Queen, but not to her ministers and the laws they laid down."

The paper also repeated a witticism from Maurice Hayes, a former Northern Ireland civil servant, who, according to the Times, wrote in his autobiography: "I have often thought there were about six Paisleys. Two were very nice people. Two were quite awful and the other two could go either way."



A person in a red and gold military uniform, likely a British Grenadier Guard, is shown from the waist up. They are holding a sword in their right hand and a white rose in their left hand. The background is a solid olive green.

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