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Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher
Stephen Patrick Clare, Managing Editor
Charles Mandel, Senior Editor
Michelle Brunet, Senior Writer

Celtic Life International Office
Phone: 902-835-CELT (2358)
Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
Fax: 902-835-0080
Email: info@celticlife.ca
Website: www.celticlife.ca

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Phone: 902-835-CELT (2358)
Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
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Toll-Free: 888-215-6850
Fax: 902-835-0080
Email: sales@celticlife.ca

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Contributors
Andrew Ferguson
Tom Langlands
Laura Jayne MacKay

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We regret the error.*

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Fáilte!

As a young lad growing up on a small farm in Arisaig, Nova Scotia, one of my tasks was to remove an unwanted weed from the newly cut hay. The pioneer Highland settlers, some of whom had fought at the Battle of Culloden, called this despised weed "Stinkin Willie" or "Stinking Willow" - named after the reviled Duke of Cumberland, the English commander who stood on a large rock at Culloden Moor directing the slaughter of so many Highlanders. The memories of Culloden, the Clearances and other injustices were forever entrenched in the minds of those forced to leave their beloved homeland. For these Highlanders, the atrocities and hardships formed a deep sense of identity and a determination that this identity be forever passed on to future generations.

I was raised with a respectable grasp of my Celtic roots. Gaelic was spoken at home and the sound of bagpipes, the fiddle or Gaelic song was common. Even locations on our farm such as the *lochán duhb* (black pond) or *drochaid beag* (the little bridges) were every day reminders of the Scots who settled the coastline of Nova Scotia.

Stories of the hardships were handed down. There were the accounts of the wailing and keening of remaining relatives left behind at the rock pier on the Isle of Eigg as family left for America with the knowledge this would likely be their final good-bye.

When I first went to Scotland I was surprised to find little knowledge of the families who left for the New World. I was fortunate to meet the late Hugh MacKinnon of the Isle of Eigg, a tradition-bearer who has much of his recordings at the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh. Hugh brought together many missing pieces in my family and the history of the people of that area who left for America. However, to most locals, the Clearances and evictions of long ago were just more past events in the history of Scotland. It was something that happened to some people who once lived in the area.

That is about to change in 2014, as Scotland welcomes us back to their shores to celebrate our culture and ancestral heritage in a year-long event called Homecoming Scotland 2014. In July of 2014, Arisaig Scotland is hosting the Arisaig Highland Games which is but one of many communities participating in Homecoming Scotland 2014. Over 400 events will represent the best of Scotland.

Highlights are numerous, but one of the most significant events must be the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. On June 23 and 24th it will be 700 years since Robert the Bruce led Scots to victory over the English at Bannockburn. To commemorate this epic historical event, Homecoming 2014 will host the largest ever re-enactment of the Battle of Bannockburn to take place at the National Trust of Scotland's Battle of Bannockburn site.

Homecoming Scotland 2014 is a wonderful way to remember those who endured the hardship of crossing the Atlantic only to be welcomed by the hostile conditions of untamed forests and severely cold winters. With Homecoming 2014, in a small way, we honor the memory of those hardy pioneers.

May God Bless!
Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher



INSIDE

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Our January/February 2014 Cover.





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Bono beats on the brat

U2's roots are showing. The renowned Irish band says its next recording, its first in four years, will see a return to their punk beginnings. Songs scheduled for their highly anticipated 13th studio disc include covers of the Talking Heads and Ramones, including the latter's *Beat on the Brat*. In an interview with the Sunday Independent newspaper, frontman Bono said the new album sounds "like it was put in a blender" and prepped fans that it will be "not a version of us you have ever heard before, that's for sure." The recording is due out in April. In the meantime, fans are likely downloading the trailer for the biopic, *Walk to Freedom*, about Nelson Mandela and which premiered at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival and includes a snippet of a song titled *Ordinary Love*, the band's first new music in three years.

Iconic images featured on new Irish passport

Combining iconic imagery with high-tech security, Ireland's newly designed passport transcends its status as a mere government document. The passport features everything from Irish landmarks such as Kylemore Abby to drawings depicting Irish music and dance and Gaelic games. Even included is verse from three of Ireland's renowned poets: Nuala ni Dhomhnaill, William Butler Yeats and James

Orr. Unveiling the new design in Dublin in early October, the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore T.D., said: "We have combined the latest security technology with selected imagery in order to produce a passport which represents Ireland – our culture, our history, and our people." More than 603,000 passports were issued in 2012.



Sexy salsa meets Irish thunder in Heartbeat of Home

Following the phenomenal success of *Riverdance*, the show's producers and director have once more...er, stepped up, this time with a "music and dance spectacular" titled *Heartbeat of Home*. This new show fuses together Irish music with Latin and Afro-Cuban elements. Composer Brian Byrne, best known for his score for the film, *Albert Nobbs* and for his work with singers ranging from Katy Perry and Bono to Vince Gill and Van Morrison, wrote the music for the production. The cast of 39 includes a 10-piece band and dancers from Ireland, U.S.A., Australia, Britain, Canada, Italy, Mexico and Spain. Irish writer Joseph O'Connor, who wrote the show's narrative and lyrics, says: "When we marry the sexiness of salsa to the thunder of Irish dance, the lyricism of tango to the yearning of sean-nos, what a night of storytelling we shall have."

Signed, sealed and delivered at Sanquhar

The small market town of Sanquhar in Scotland's Nith Valley gets the stamp of approval for its post office, reputed to be the oldest operating one in the world. In fact, a sign above the door of the tiny white-washed building dates the structure's workings as a postal outlet to 1712. Its 300-year anniversary didn't go unnoticed. The BBC News pointed out the Scottish post office predated rivals in Chile and Sweden and said the site originally began as a staging post for runners transporting mail on foot and horseback and developed from there. At one point in 2013, the Royal Mail wanted to shut the Sanquhar post office down, but community outrage put the plans on hold.



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first word

When I first sat down to write this article, I had intended to answer the question ‘what is Celtic?’ This question has been discussed again and again over the last century, and if no complete consensus exists as to its precise meaning, there is at least a kind of general understanding, a sort of pervasive collection of associations: to academics it is linguistic, to artists aesthetic, to romantics emotional, to politicians controversial and to brewers definitive of certain classes of alcohol. This question misses the point, though, because — like many questions of its kind — it does not address the need to answer it. Why do people need to know what is and is not Celtic?

The answer lies in the past (as usual). Our use of the term Celtic is distinctively modern. Appropriated from Greek along with a slew of other academic words, the term became popular in the early 19th century after James MacPherson’s various translations of Gaelic poetry acquired an avid following across Europe. Napoleon was said to carry a copy with him on his campaigns.

At the same time, a surge of academic interest in the Celtic happened as well. German philologists had developed a method for the scientific comparison of language, and the discovery of a number of close parallels between Gaelic and ancient Sanskrit began to awaken an awareness that the Celtic past reached further than anyone expected. Thus from the beginning, the academic and romantic notions of the Celtic were intertwined. Notably, however, these early roots of our sense of the Celtic do not lie in native Celtic communities but rather in those communities attempting to objectify and define the Celtic from outside.

The idea of the Celtic was almost immediately adopted within those Celtic communities, however, and by the end of the 19th century a number of Scottish and Irish organizations fully embraced the term as a kind of guide for revitalizing the Gaelic culture that was in such danger of being completely wiped away. From John Murdoch and Alexander Carmichael in Scotland to W.B. Yeats and Eoin MacNeill in Ireland, the idea of the Celtic became a touchstone for those attempting to define a clear image of what was in danger of being lost in those tumultuous years prior to the World Wars.

This same period in which the rise of the term Celtic became a cultural signifier saw also those struggles that have defined our modern societies: the industrial revolution, political revolutions across the world, social reorganization, and the cultural devastation two world wars caused, to say nothing of rampant colonization with its concomitant social evils (and it can be argued easily that no culture has been more thoroughly colonized than the Celtic). It has become one way of finding continuity with our past that transcends these vicissitudes of history. If romantic, it allows us to formulate an ideal of what we would like to see preserved across generations. If historical, it allows us to understand better how we have come to be who we are in this day of this life. If tragic, it allows us to define those

What Does it Mean to Be Celtic?



James Acken is a professor of Medieval and Celtic Studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia www.culturlan.com

things that we see as anathema to the good life in this new, ever-changing world of post-modernity.

If this is why we need to understand what it means to be Celtic, what then does it actually mean to those who wish to claim this term? What does it mean to be Celtic? One thing is certain, it does not entail complaints about being the victims of history and thereby succumbing to the diminishment inherent to colonization. A thriving culture produces original art, defines its own narratives for history and myth, and deliberately cultivates its own distinctive language for doing so. Perhaps no better way exists of putting it than in that most enigmatic of expressions, “Celtic is as Celtic does.”

By James Acken

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UP FRONT



George MacKenzie is a recording artist. But unlike The Beatles for instance, MacKenzie doesn't cut records; he literally records: data, facts, figures and statistics. From 2001 to 2012, MacKenzie was Scotland's Keeper of the Records. During his time as the head of the National Records of Scotland, MacKenzie led the merger of the National Archives with the General Register Office in 2011. Today, he is the chairman of Scotland's Ancestral Tourism Steering Group, which is a position that draws upon his past experience as an archivist.

"I still get a buzz from documents," MacKenzie declares. "Being able to see up close documents that shaped our history, like the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320, was always a thrill. Archives tell a story that no other historic object can. The photograph from 1887 showing a worker on the Forth Bridge hanging out his washing; the suicide note by a troubled young man from the Western Front in 1916; or the 1879 railway telegram that the Tay Bridge had collapsed give us a unique, vivid picture. Working with archives lets you discover those stories."

After helping with the transition between the merger of the National Archives with the General Register Office, MacKenzie decided it was a good time to step down. At that point he moved into the ancestral tourism field, something he'd already been interested in during his time at the National Records of Scotland. "I felt there was more we could do to join up things, so that people in the travel and visitor businesses understood the great assets we have for people to discover their roots," he says. "I also wanted to help people in the archives, libraries and museums to understand what the ancestral visitor really wants."

Ironically, MacKenzie didn't pay too

much attention to his own ancestry until recently. "It was too much like my day job in the archives, helping others trace their families" he explains. His own roots are in the Scottish islands. His father was born and brought up in Skye, his mother's mother hailed from Jura. Last summer he returned to Jura for the first time in decades and his aunt pointed out where his grandmother was born. "It was an emotional experience to see the ruined



cottage and that I am directly linked to it. It brought home to me just how important ancestral journeys can be."

Educated at schools in Scotland, India and England, MacKenzie finally settled on his career while studying history at university in Stirling. As a post-graduate student he had seen the inside of the Scottish Record Office when he used the historical search room for research on economic projects in 18th century Scotland. "I found it a strangely attractive place, elegant, rarified and full of exciting documents," he recalls. "After university I trained and then worked as a teacher,

but when a job came up in the archives I jumped at it, although I wasn't really sure what I was getting into."

MacKenzie attributes the enormous popularity of and interest in family history to people searching for points of reference in an increasingly complex world. He points out questions such as who am I and how did I come to be here are fundamental. Add to that the Internet, which has allowed for records to be placed online and made research much easier and you end up with a boom in genealogy. "When I started working, we had maybe a couple of hundred people coming to use our services each year. Today ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk has a million subscribers."

The main point of archives is to preserve our documentary heritage and to help people use it, whether that's to understand our shared past or to research their own stories, he says. Not everything can be kept, because if we did people would never understand what's important, so part of the archivist's skill and creativity is in determining what to discard.

Still, MacKenzie notes the most formative experience of his professional career was when UNESCO asked him to go to the former Yugoslavia to advise on the condition of the archives. "With civil war raging, Sarajevo under siege and cultural sites targeted through the evil of ethnic cleansing, our colleagues were fighting to protect their records," he remembers. "This was not about history or research. They were safeguarding the vital evidence of their communities. It showed how starkly how our identities, our rights as individuals, depend ultimately on archives."



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SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

Since retiring his position as senior prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at the United Nations in The Hague, Netherlands, Colorado's Ken Scott has been busy with the American Scottish community. Here he answers our Seven Celtic Questions.

What are your own Celtic roots?

Like many Scottish-Americans, I have a number of Scottish family lines, including Scott and Douglas, and also some McLean and MacGregor. My principal line, and the one that I most identify with, is the Scotts, although I'm very flattered to have the others as well. As a Scott, my heritage is in the Borders, in the area of Hawick and Selkirk - and I love that part of Scotland, and have been there many times. And in terms of Celtic roots, I also have Irish ancestry, but I know less about it. Taken together, I'm pretty darn Celtic and proud of it.

Why are those roots important to you?

I think it's important to know where you come from and to have a sense of personal and family history that goes back more than just three or four or five generations. For many people, this seems to become more important as you begin to get a bit older. Life is just richer when you have that deep sense of history. And it is fun when you read the relevant history, such as George MacDonald Fraser's *The Steel Bonnets* and Alistair Moffat's *The Borders*, and realize that you are connected to it, that it's also part of your story, your history.

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

The Celts were, and are an interesting, pretty incredible people, an interesting combination of a fairly rough-and-tumble, often war-like or warrior people, an emotional and sentimental people, but also a very artistic, spiritual and intellectual people. I see all of that, to varying extents, in myself. Look at all the Celtic contributions to science, philosophy and literature, including both the



Scottish Enlightenment and the Scottish Renaissance, not to mention Celtic music and art. Look at Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Glasgow Boys - James Guthrie and John Lavery and those guys. It's a rich texture and adds fabric to your life. And when I'm in the Borders - sure, there are differences from American life, but it always feels like home.

How are you involved with the American Celtic community?

I've been actively involved with the Clan Scott Society for almost 20 years, as the Commissioner in Colorado, then acting as "International Commissioner," when my family and I lived overseas for many years, and presently as Corporate Secretary. I am also the Vice-President and on the Board of Trustees of the Council of Scottish Clans and Associations (COSCA). I love to attend Scottish games and festivals, go to Burns suppers, etc. And you also just enjoy hanging out with people that share the same or a similar heritage.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive in the U.S.?

The U.S. is famous as a melting pot, and that's a good thing, it's made the United States a very good, productive and interesting place. But beyond the melting pot, we all have history somewhere else, and it's fun and interesting and enriching to know where you come from, to know the bigger, longer story and see how it fits into who you are now, and also the influence on U.S. history and culture.

Are we doing enough to keep Celtic culture alive generally?

I think a lot of good things are going on: the games and festivals, Clan societies, St. Andrews groups, Scottish and other Celtic dancing, music and piping. I think there's been an increasing interest in all of these things in the past 20 years or so. Of course, more can always be done.

What can we be doing better?

I'm overall optimistic, but I think more needs to be done with younger folks. An awful lot of the membership in U.S. Scottish and Irish societies and organizations are 50 to 60 years old and older, and obviously, the younger generations have to be brought in to keep these things alive. I think there is more exchange and interchange going on between the U.S. and Celtic countries, and that's very positive, and more of that should be done. And I think we still need to connect more Celtic people with their heritage. There are a lot of Celtic Americans out there who really haven't made the connection, and the stronger that connection, and the fuller it survives, the better.

www.clanscott.org



Alex Salmond

Scotland's First Minister shares his thoughts on the country's drive towards independence

The central purpose of independence is to make life better for people living in Scotland. Only a Scottish Parliament and government will always be able to put the interests of the people of Scotland first. We only have to look at the track record of devolution since 1999 to know this is the case; these powers have been good for Scotland, but in those areas still controlled by Westminster there have been many costs for families and communities in Scotland.

Democracy, prosperity and fairness are the principles at the heart of the case for independence. Independence means that the people of Scotland will take responsibility for our future into our own hands, giving us the economic and social powers that any country needs to build a more prosperous and fairer society. Scotland can afford to be independent.

Crucially, these principles work in harmony. By transferring decision-making powers from Westminster to Scotland we are more likely to see policies that are in tune with the values of the people of Scotland that close the gap between rich and poor, and provide greater opportunities for everyone in Scotland regardless of their background. We can build a fairer society. In doing so we can create a more prosperous country because we know that successful countries are more equal and cohesive.

Rather than remaining a peripheral concern for Westminster governments that we did not elect and do not necessarily support, we can forge our own path.

Driving our ambition is the firm knowledge that Scotland, and all of the people who live here, should be enjoying the benefits of higher levels of sustainable economic growth. We can achieve so much more with all the advantages that we enjoy.

Immediately following a vote for independence next year, Scotland will look familiar, but will already have changed for the better. The yes vote will be a resounding statement of national self-confidence.

A transition period will take place between a yes vote in September 2014 and Scotland becoming independent. Negotiations will occur in this period with the Westminster Government and international partners, particularly the European Union (EU). Setting a date of March 2016 for those to be completed will allow a realistic time period for all of the preparations needed for the Scottish Parliament to take on the necessary powers of independence.

On independence, the Queen will remain our head of state, just as she is for 16 Commonwealth countries. Scotland will be a constitutional monarchy for as long as the people of Scotland wish us to be so. Scotland will take our place amongst the member states of the EU and the United Nations.

Scotland's existing institutions and structures of government will continue, but independence will extend their powers and responsibilities.

We will replace a costly, remote and unrepresentative West-

minster system with a Parliament elected entirely by the people of Scotland, saving the Scottish taxpayers around £50 million a year in their contributions to the costs of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

However, the biggest difference will come from the opportunity to take action to meet Scotland's needs, across all areas of the nation's life, to make the most of Scotland's strengths and build on key principles supported by the people of Scotland. The first election to the new independent Scottish Parliament will take place on 5 May 2016.

During the transition period, many more countries will set up embassies and consulates in Scotland. We can expect an increase in transport connections to and from Scotland, and the new independent Scottish Government will start to be created - bringing jobs which are currently based in London to Scotland.

On independence, the structure of local government in Scotland will remain the same, with local councils continuing to deliver the full range of services they do today. This will include schools, leisure and social services. The next election to Scotland's local authorities will take place as planned in 2017. Independence will give us the power to embed the role of local authorities in a written constitution and consider the most appropriate responsibilities for local government and communities. The NHS,

which is already the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament, will operate on exactly the same basis the day after independence as it does the day before.

The most important point, however, in considering what an independent Scotland will look like is this: it will look like the kind of Scotland we as a people choose to build. What happens to our country will be our responsibility.



Brian Wilson

Rt. Hon Brian Wilson makes the case for keeping Scottish ties to the U.K.



All of us in Scotland are looking forward to a big year in 2014, particularly in the world of sport. Both the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup are drawing near.

These things take a long time to deliver and we need to thank the far-sighted people who, in the early part of the last decade, made the decisive moves which secured these two major events for Scotland in 2014. At the time, they seemed a long time away, but now they are almost upon us.

When securing the Commonwealth Games, Glasgow City Council at the same time determined to use the event as a major regeneration opportunity for the east end of the city, which has long suffered from high unemployment and poor social indicators.

Now the magnificent infrastructure that is being put in place will transform the area's prospects and I very much hope that the economic benefits can be maintained long after the Commonwealth Games are over. As a director of Celtic Football Club, I am delighted that our great stadium in the east end will be the venue in July for the opening ceremony.

The Ryder Cup has been on an even longer fuse. Back in 2001 the then Scottish Government backed Gleneagles' bid to secure the event in 2010, but lost out to a Welsh rival. The "consolation prize" was for Gleneagles to be named at that time as the next European venue thereafter.

That was a little disappointing at the time. But what, in retrospect, did a mere 13 years matter? They have ticked by all too quickly and now the great showdown between the United States and Europe is drawing nigh. Every golf fan is looking forward

to the occasion – and it will also showcase Scotland as the great home of golf to the world.

I hope that politics don't get in the way of these events and that nobody tries to confuse the two. They belong to everyone in Scotland irrespective of one's views on the constitutional question, which will be addressed in the September referendum.

It is my very firm view that Scottish interests are best served by remaining part of the United Kingdom. We lose nothing in terms of identity and gain a great deal through being part of something bigger and more influential in the world. The ties of 300 years are too deep and too complex to break irrevocably.

Scotland makes a huge contribution to the United Kingdom, not just economically, but in terms of the predominant values and priorities which we share with millions of people in England and Wales. We should not turn our backs on people who have shared the same struggles and the same needs. The UK without Scotland would, in every sense, be a very lop-sided little island.

I hope that many of you will make the journey for the Year of Homecoming, an event first staged in 2009. You will find plenty to celebrate and enjoy.

Rt Hon Brian Wilson is a former Labour MP and Minister. He was the founding editor of the West Highland Free Press and is currently chairman of Harris Tweed Hebrides in the Isle of Lewis.



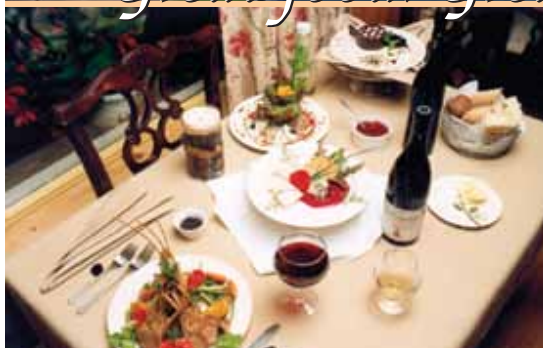
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Daimh

Celtic quintet Daimh has a great new recording and tea towel out. Er...wait, a tea towel? That's right: download the band's newest CD, *Tuneship*, and they'll throw in a limited edition tea towel. "A tea towel and a download," says band member and piper Angus MacKenzie. "Everybody needs a good tea towel and ours are the best."

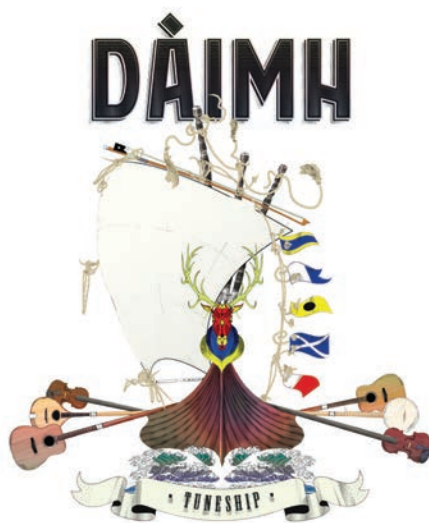
If that sounds a little off-beat, then clearly Daimh isn't your run-of-the-mill group. A self-declared "Celtic super-group," the band combines the far-flung influences of California, Cape Breton, Ireland and Scotland. MacKenzie says the idea is that Daimh represents the kinship among the Celtic diaspora. Music and song ties it all together.

Since its first album in 2000, *Moidart* to Mabou, the band has built a reputation with its urgent pipe and fiddle tunes. MacKenzie says the music runs the gamut from high-energy and fast flowing songs to subtler, more personal pieces. MacKenzie calls his band mate, Gabe McVarish a great fiddle player whose style suits MacKenzie's piping. "We've added the banjo and mandolin playing of Damian Helliwell to the group and he's got a great groove to his playing and underpinning the whole sound is Ross Martin's driving guitar playing."

The newest addition to the band is Griogair Labhruidh, who is well known as a fine Gaelic singer in both Scotland and Ireland. In the release for *Tuneship*, the band comments, "The depth of understanding and passion in Griogair's singing further highlights the band's roots in their beloved West Lochaber and North Argyll, yet blends perfectly with their cutting-edge compositions and contemporary arrangements to create a consummate snapshot of Gaelic music in today's Scottish Highlands."

Tuneships marks a couple of changes for the band, both in personnel and in their approach to the music. A couple of

the former members worked full-time and found it increasingly more difficult to get away to rehearsals and gigs, leading to a line-up change, including the addition of Griogair, whom started out doing a few shows with the band. "He's really talented," MacKenzie says. "He studied jazz at Strathclyde University, plays guitar, small pipes and highland pipes and has added the Uilleann pipes to his repertoire, which he plays on one of the songs on the album."



MacKenzie notes this is the first time the band has written a recording entirely composed of its own compositions. They've also released *Tuneships* on their own recording label, Goat Island Music. "It's taken a bit more time and effort to get an album out there, as opposed to doing it with a label," MacKenzie says, "but I think it's a bit more rewarding and means we're in control of the product."

The band members write the music on their own and then take them to the group, where they work together on the arrangements. MacKenzie and McVarish

wrote together for the first time, working on original music the Island of Raasay inspired. "It was a new experience for both of us, but I think that it turned out really well," MacKenzie says.

The biggest challenge facing the group is the Scottish weather. Two of the members live on the Isle of Eigg and MacKenzie lives on the Isle of Skye. To get together, they ferry over to Mallaig, which is a couple of miles from where their guitarist lives. As MacKenzie dryly notes: "In the winter, boats and the weather can be a challenge."

MacKenzie himself originally hails from Mabou, Cape Breton, but now calls Portree home. His mother was a Rankin from Mabou and his father from South Uist in the Western Isles of Scotland. MacKenzie began piping at a young age and ended up going to the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts in Cape Breton. While MacKenzie's parents didn't play music, they emphasized the Scottish culture in the household and spoke Gaelic as the first language.

As MacKenzie got older, he began to listen to CDs by such groups as the Battlefield Band, Wolfstone and Ossian. "They really opened by eyes and ears to what you could do with the pipes," he says. MacKenzie notes he never planned to become a full-time musician and originally moved to Scotland to study Gaelic at Sabhal Mor Ostaig on the Isle of Skye, where he ended up meeting his band mates at various sessions and dances along the west coast.

Next up for 2014 are a number of festivals with the band as well as project they're calling *DaimMor: The Big Band*, which will feature an expanded line-up of percussion, double-bass, double fiddles and brass. No word on what the tea towel design for that project will look like.



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To ensure that Dylan Thomas does not go gentle into that good night, Wales has put together a diverse number of events to celebrate the Welsh poet's centenary of his birth in a small house in Swansea. The country intends to honour Thomas properly with a multitude of events designed to revitalize interest in his work and introduce him to a younger audience. Known as the Dylan Thomas 100, the festival will feature new television and radio productions, film projects, book publications, academic initiatives, original productions in theatre, music and the arts, a range of new Internet-based initiatives, and a pan-Wales education program.

Thomas was one of Wales' greatest poets and writers. "His work enriched the English language and is still widely read and performed around the world to this day, resonating with an international audience through its universal themes and lyrical beauty," according to the Dylan Thomas 100 Festival organizers. The festival will hold events in locations significant to Thomas' life, in London, Oxford and America, and the British Council is putting on a series of international events throughout 2014 in Argentina, Australia, Canada, India and the USA entitled *Starless and Bible Black*.

The author of such timeless classics as *A Child's Christmas in Wales* and *Under Milk Wood*, Thomas had a hard go of making a living during his lifetime. A sometime journalist and broadcaster, Thomas's hard-living ways eventually caught up to him. In 1953 he succumbed to a coma while in the United States. He is buried in Wales in a cemetery in Laugharne, where he once wrote in a

shed, penning such lyrical words about where he looked out over "the elegiac fisherbird stabs and paddles in the pebbly dab-filled shallow and sedge."

Today, visitors will have the chance to experience Thomas's settings for themselves. Over the next 15 months, many of the events and performances will be held in and pay homage to the places in which Thomas lived. He called the fishing village of New Quay "the most precious place," and Cwmdonkin Drive in Swansea (which he referred to as the "ugly lovely town") was where, famously, he couldn't tell whether it "snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six."

One of the feature exhibits is scheduled for Cardiff, where Peter Blake presents his illustrations for *Under Milk Wood*. One of Britain's best known pop artists and designer of the Beatles' iconic cover for Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, Blake spent 28 years on the project, which is being exhibited for the first time. The exhibition features portraits drawn in black and white pencil on tinted paper, watercolours illustrating the dream sequences in the narrative and collage and photographs. A long-time admirer of Thomas, Blake says he's always been fascinated by the play.

Generally, no shortage of events exists for the year. They range from productions of *Under Milk Wood*, to the play done as an opera. Literature Wales presents *A Dylan Odyssey*, offering a boat ride up the Taf Estuary with Guy Masterton, the actor and nephew of Richard Burton. Or you can ride a horse-drawn carriage with

to Fern Hill with the National Poet of Wales, Gillian Clarke. These are among the one-off, residential day and half-day tours which illuminate the poet's life in the settings that inspired him.

Some events might seem a little contrived: Swansea is hosting an Under Milk Wood Classic Vehicle Run of historic cars, trucks and the like. But for every one of those are meaningful celebrations of the poet such as *Dylan Unchained: The Dylan Thomas Centenary Conference*, which will bring together leading critics to discuss the work and influence of the poet. The *Dylan Thomas Manuscripts* exhibition showcases manuscripts of poems and photographs, among other artifacts. A number of specially composed musical pieces will also make their premiere at The Dylan Thomas 100 Trilogy Project.

Over at the website for the Dylan Thomas Society, Hannah Ellis Thomas, the president of the society and Thomas's grand-daughter, writes: "My vision for Dylan Thomas 100 is that it will help promote and revitalize interest in my grandfather's work, allowing new audiences to understand his complex and interesting life, and enjoy his many different types of writing, in particular...I hope that the centenary will leave a lasting legacy for Dylan Thomas, his work, and the places that inspired him."

Dylan Thomas Centenary

For more information:
www.dylanthomas100.org/english
www.thedylanthomassocietyofgb.co.uk

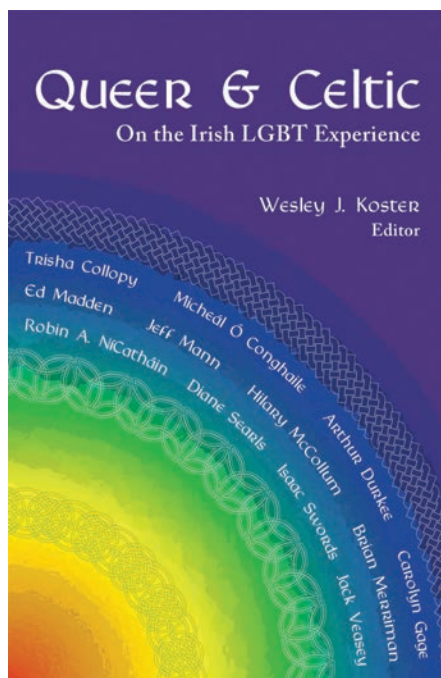
Queer & Celtic

You won't find any James Joyce, Roddy Doyle or Maeve Binchy in a new anthology of Irish writing that's just been published. In fact, out of all the canon of Irish writers the only one you're likely to recognize is Oscar Wilde. That's because Queer & Celtic is as much about gender as it is about culture.

Subtitled *On the Irish LGBT Experience*, the book purports to examine what it means to be gay and Gaelic in today's world. "Love, politics, family and Catholicism are the powerful forces at play here," says the volume's blurb, "all tendered with the unmistakable and complex feelings one associates with their home country. Their words sing of pain and pride, and always with an ear for story-telling. You will not forget their voices long after the neighbourhood pub has closed."

The book contains fiction, poetry, play excerpts and memoirs from 12 authors who are either Irish or of Irish descent. The tome itself is the work of editor, Wesley J. Koster, a teacher for Gaeltacht Minnesota, a community organization for the study of the Irish Gaelic language. Koster is also a consultant for the University of Miami for graduate studies in Gaelic. The Minneapolis resident said as both a member of the LGBT community and a teacher of the Irish Gaelic language, he realized that there was a "remarkable perspective" that could be expressed by people living at the intersection of those two seemingly disparate experiences. "I wanted to share a sample of literary expression from that perspective," he explains. "I knew those two ingredients would yield a colourful anthology."

Even so, it wasn't the easiest volume to compile. Koster found it challenging to balance the book between Irish natives and Irish immigrants, male and female voices and genres of literature. He wanted quotes from Oscar Wilde to place between the pieces, but found choosing the exact ones a time-intensive undertaking. The most difficult part of putting together the anthology, however, turned out to be finding Irish authors who actually wrote in the Irish language. Of



the submissions, he only ended up with one. "It's an exceptional piece," Koster says, "with versions included in both Irish and English. But unfortunately, the percentage of Irish language stories in the anthology ended up somewhat paralleling the low percentage of Irish speakers left in Ireland."

Being both Celtic and gay comes with challenges and potential, Koster adds. On the one hand, he finds the two are very different points of view within the individual and that it means trying to come to grips with two frames of mind that are often in conflict with each other. On the other hand, the two characteristics offer a unique set of social tools to celebrate an individual's personality. "Examples that anyone will recognize are the music and artistic expression that come from

both the Celtic culture and the LGBT community."

Generally, Koster says queer literature has a long way to go and that the form is still relatively new. The good news is he sees plenty of promising talent and jokes, "Better to be on the upswing than on the decline, right?" He offers the same advice to gay writers that he gives to any would-be authors: write what you know and don't hold back. "You'll find quite the inexhaustible well of ideas if you look to your own experience and don't censor yourself."

By the same token, Celtic and Gaelic culture is doing well in Koster's opinion, particularly music and art. But he worries it's the language that's failing to keep up. He suggests everyone needs to do their part by "living" the culture as well as encouraging children to interact with each other through the music, art and languages. "Don't force it, but make it fun for them," Koster suggests, "and they'll appreciate it all the more. The soul of a culture is its language and a great source of cultural expression would be lost if we don't help revitalize them."

Coming back to the anthology, Koster says he discovered that the perspective he's presenting is more potent than he anticipated, and that the strong and varied expression in the disparate pieces pleased him. The quality of submissions made it all that much more difficult to include everything that came in. Now that the book is finished, he says he'd be "elated" if he could give the anthology some "sisters and brothers in the future." "Being Irish and LGBT," he smiles, "certainly doesn't result in a subtle point of view."



Hittin' the TIRFF

From its first screening in 2010 with the Canadian premiere of *The Yellow Bittern: The Life and Times of Liam Clancy*, the Toronto Irish Film Festival (TIRFF) has grown to feature over 20 Irish films three years later. Of those, 15 constituted Canadian premieres. Now the TIRFF is gearing up to celebrate its fifth year in 2014 at the Tiff Bell Lightbox. The program has yet to be announced, but at the time of writing TIRFF was calling for submissions for its 2014 celebration of Irish film, something that makes the festival unique within Canada.

An Irish film festival, you wonder? Is there much call for that sort of thing? Well, yes, as it turns out. Ireland's reputation for excellent filmmaking has not only existed, but excelled, for many years. Such fine examples of the Irish film-making sensibility may be found in such movies as 1952's *The Quiet Man*, a romantic comedy that earned John Ford his fourth Academy Award for Best Director and another for Best Cinematography.

Other outstanding examples of Irish cinema include Neil Jordan's 1993 film, *The Crying Game*, which netted the director the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay; and father and daughter team, Terry and Oorlath George's *The Shore*, for which they won an award for Best Short Film (Live Action) in 2012. Ask TIRFF's Michael Barry (who along with John Galway founded the festival in 2009) what makes the Irish so adept at movies and he'll tell you: "As a culture, storytelling is in our blood, so it makes sense that we can create amazing films."

Each year, while searching through TIRFF submissions, Barry is pleasantly reminded that "The Irish sensibility for compelling stories, interesting characters and impressive production values are second-to-none." The same could be said of the audience. Since the festival began, Toronto's Irish community has grown, yielding a potential audience of over 250,000 of Irish descent, in addition to the several million other people living in the city. Certainly, selling out screenings at all four festivals to date suggests the interest is solid.

Beyond that, the festival supports the city's Irish community. TIRFF works in partnership with the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre and has created a new arrivals volunteer initiative. The project connects new members of Toronto's community with those who have lived in the city for decades, providing new immigrants with support and the



ability to network, while keeping the Irish community united.

When it comes to working in film, Galway and Barry have some experience, to put it mildly. Galway is currently president of the Harold Greenberg Fund, the funding arm of Bell Media. For his part, Barry works as director of content operations and content development at Cineplex Odeon. Both have connections to Belfast: Barry was born and raised there, while Galway is the son of a Belfast man.

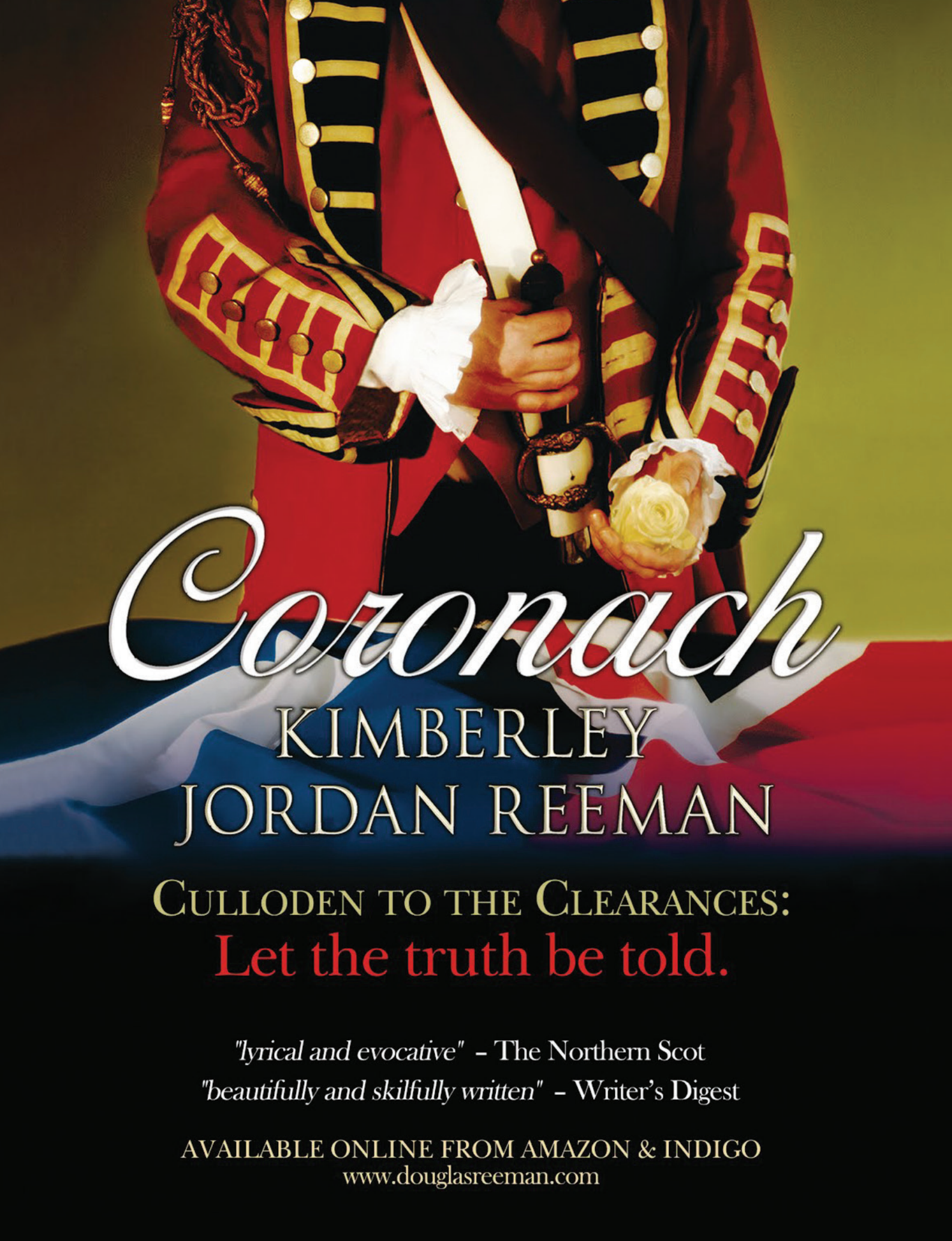
When Galway and Barry founded the festival, it was with the intent of creating an annual event that would celebrate the best of Irish cinema. They've succeeded in that and then some: TIRFF has continued to grow and showcase a wide variety of Irish cinema. After the sold-out screening at Innis Town Hall of *The Yellow Bittern* in 2010, by March 2011 the festival was presenting Oscar-nominated films *The Secret of Kells*, *Granny O'Grimm's Sleeping Beauty* and *Give Up Yer Aul Sins*. In 2012, TIRFF offered up 11 Canadian premieres of the best Irish cinema available.

One of the highlights from the 2013 festival was the debut feature from Gerrard Barrett, *Pilgrim Hill*. Despite being shot on a limited budget, the film's raw realism and moving filmmaking earned Barrett the IFB Rising Star Award at last year's Irish Film and Television Academy Awards. Barrett's recognition shows that Ireland's high standards of filmmaking are still being met; nor is this going unnoticed at the Toronto Irish International Film Festival.

So what can we expect from TIRFF in the future? With the full line up for the 2014 festival to be released early in the year, a lot of energy and excitement surrounds TIRFF at the moment. One thing is certain: with the outstanding quality of the previous years' efforts, the audience is continuing to multiply the dedication from its directors to constantly strengthen the festival both operationally and financially means we can expect the absolute best of Irish feature film, documentaries, short films and music videos to be represented in years to come. Already, we're eagerly awaiting to hear the final line-up for this year's festival hosted at Tiff Bell Lightbox, Toronto, between February 28th and March 2nd, 2014.

By Laura Jayne MacKay
www.torontoirishfilmfest.com



A person in a red and gold military uniform, likely a Scottish Highland 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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funny guy

Ron James

follows his own bliss



Driving himself from gig to gig across Canada, comedian Ron James describes himself as a “boutique operation,” who can tell you all about the rigours of the road. Only half-joking, James says he’s been stuck in primal blizzards a Yeti wouldn’t wander out in and stayed in motels Norman Bates wouldn’t be caught dead running. “Canada is the largest national land mass on Earth and I’ve been running my trap line across it for 15 years,” James declares. “Even though the hotels are more comfortable now and my car is cooler, I’m still logging the kilometres on highways glazed in black ice to get to the gig. It’s been a rewarding ‘white knuckler’ of an adventure.”

Indeed, it has: born in Glace Bay, Cape Breton in 1958 and educated with a BA in history from Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, James has become one of Canada’s best known comics. Comedy is a calling, according to James, and while he says he has always drawn a laugh growing up, he didn’t commit until after university when he joined Toronto’s famed improvisational troupe, Second City, staying with them for a decade. Along the way he performed in film and television, with roles in *Tommy Boy* and *Robocop*, to name a couple. He appeared before 4.7 million television viewers in 2004 when Conan O’Brien filmed in Toronto, is now heading into his fifth season with his own titular television show, and still tours regularly.

The rewards for all this hard work are many, James says, not the least of which is “the obvious one of seeing a packed theatre laugh their arses off.”

More seriously, James is grateful to be carving out a career in a profession that doesn’t suffer fools. But the best part of his work is the discovery of people and places across Canada. “From Cornerbook, Newfoundland to Courtney/Comox, British Columbia, I’ve heard the authentic heart line hum of country beneath my wheels. “It’s a primal pull that grounds me to something far greater than the myopic pursuit of the showbiz grail.”

James doesn’t view comedy as a means to an end, but a way to explain the world in which he lives.

Along the way, he’s been able to hone his delivery. Early on, the comic says he approached every performance like a welter-weight before a fight and viewed the audience as opponents he needed to pummel into submission. These days James is “more comfortable in his own skin” up on stage and enjoys the experience more. But he doesn’t want you to think he’s becoming complacent either. “Don’t get me wrong,” James says. “I’m still killing, but I ride the waves differently. I’m still nervous when I step out there, but it’s a nervous enthusiasm for the two hours I’m about to experience and not a nervous anxiety.”

Working out material comes a bit easier these days too, but James concedes writing is still 70 per cent perspiration. “The artist who waits for that eureka moment of inspiration doesn’t eat,” he quips. “Plus, I love the way words trip off the tongue

and tickle the ear as well as the funny one. So I labour over rhythm, punctuation and clarity.” James says a lot of his material moves straight from the page to the stage, particularly with television, because of the ravenous medium’s appetite for content. But nothing hones the material like the road, the comic says, noting that live performance gives the work an edge a paying audience deserves. “I detest lazy comedy and sloppy delivery. If someone pays \$50 to see you, they’d better get a show.”

Generally, Canadian comedy has never been more fertile, James says, and he calls the level of talent and commitment to the craft inspiring. Toronto is the proving ground for young comics, but it’s also a supportive and nurturing environment, contrary to its reputation as a “shark-infested environment.” That said, he points out comedians, like any other art form, needs support, something he believes isn’t financially forthcoming from the current government.

In the immediate future, James’ fifth season of his television show kicks off in February, immediately following the Olympics and thus likely guaranteeing him a huge audience. That same month, he’ll start his second leg of his national tour with 20 dates across Ontario. If the series gets picked up for another year, he’s back in the “writing room,” and if not he plans to write his own book. “Either way, I’ll be doing what I do and following my bliss.”



the Fife Flyers

The Fife Flyers, “featuring some of the most famous players from the teams of Canada, Switzerland and London,” took to the ice for the first time on October 1, 1938.



On that day the team skated out onto the surface of the Kirkcaldy Ice Rink, ready to do battle with the Dundee Tigers. A capacity crowd of 4,265 attended the game, causing a traffic jam in Gallatown and a two-mile tailback of cars, according to the history on the Flyers' website. Lord Elgin declared the arena open and threw the ceremonial curling stone. And then the game began in earnest – and 75 years later it still goes on today.

The oldest ice hockey team in the United Kingdom, the Flyers celebrated their 75 anniversary this year with a “legends” game in October. Players from the past drew a huge crowd when they played against the current team. Legends indeed: the Flyers boast over 60 Scottish and British cups and titles to their name. But ice hockey in Scotland? Sweden, certainly. North America, for sure – but Scotland? In fact, after Great Britain's surprising win at the 1936 Olympics in the sport, enthusiasm for the game rapidly spread throughout the United Kingdom, resulting in a number of teams – including the Flyers – forming. Over the years, the sport has experienced its ups and downs, but at this time its longevity seems assured.

“Ice hockey seems to be very popular in certain areas of Scotland,” agrees Daniel Stewart, associate coach of the Flyers club today. “There is a lot of history there and hopefully if teams can find some stability and stay for the long term, then the sport will continue to grow. In Fife, hockey is very popular and although we have a smaller town than most clubs in the league, our fans are as passionate as any.”

Passionate might be putting it mildly. On any given night, 1,500 fans will crowd into the arena for the game, but just as often crowds of 2,500 to 3,000 will gather. The rink has a low roof, which means the noise of the cheers echo loudly and for opposing teams it can seem an intimidating venue. “Our fans will let you know when they are not happy, but also when things are good, they are as loud as any,” Stewart affirms.

Stewart believes hockey in Scotland is on the way back up now that four Scottish teams are back on top. He says the success will give the league more exposure and encourage youngsters to join and learn about the sport as well. That said, he acknowledges that within the U.K. hockey will always be a minority sport – but not in Kirkcaldy. “The town loves the sport and with the team being back in the top level, hopefully we can continue to make it

grow into something even bigger,” Stewart says. “As for the elite league, I think it is in better shape than it ever has been.”

For those not familiar with the game in Scotland, Stewart says the elite league in the U.K. is probably more similar to the North American style of play than the European. “It has the same kind of physicality and character among players,” he notes. “The difference in play here stems from less depth among the squads and bigger ice surfaces. You tend to have more time on the puck and maybe the game is a bit slower pace as players log a lot more minutes on the ice. So it makes it tougher to be at full energy every shift.”

Originally from the Alberta oil town of Fort McMurray, Stewart comes by his involvement in both Scotland and hockey honestly. His ancestors hailed from the Glenlyon region and his mother was a Kirkland. All of his immediate family right up to his grandparents were born in Canada. Like many a good Canadian, Stewart started skating as soon as he could walk. His father was a hockey player and his two older brothers began the sport at an early age as well. “In Canada, hockey is religion,” Stewart avows. “Almost everyone does it. It is by far the main sport in Canada – similar to how football is in the U.K.”

Love of the sport brought Stewart to Scotland, where he's been coaching the Flyers for over two and a half seasons. The first season he spent as a player/assistant coach before moving into his current position. “The reward at the end of the day is winning and having success. Hockey is very physical and tough on the body, but all those bumps and bruises feel a bit better after a game when you win and you know the guy beside you battled alongside you.”

Fife Flyers *Established 1938*

Norman McQuade scored the team's first ever goal.

In 1948, the Flyers beat Team Canada, then the world champions, in a home game exhibition match, 6-5.

In 1952, the team almost folded from economic problems.

From March 1976, for a full year, the team was unbeaten, winning 32 games in a row.



World Peace Tartan 2014



When we last spoke with Victor Spence (July 2013), his World Peace Tartan had just launched in New York City. Since then, he and his iconic design have travelled the globe promoting harmony and understanding. Recently we spoke with him about what he has been up to, and what's on tap for 2014.

What are the latest developments regarding the World Peace Tartan?

Interest around the world is growing for the World Peace Tartan. We are delighted to announce that we have our first US based retailer, Prince of Scots, who have also placed World Peace Tartan scarves and other items on Amazon. We've now received an enquiry for potential orders for distribution in North America for up to 20,000 World Peace Tartan scarves. This shows me that not only is the World Peace Tartan an attractive tartan design that people will wear, but that the message of peace with this tartan travels widely. Online sales are also growing through our principal licensee Heritage of Scotland. Further to that, the available product range now includes men's kilts, ladies' skirts and kilts, mini kilts, waistcoats, neck ties, bella corsets, ladies' sashes and men's trousers.

What has the response been like since we last spoke?

Following on from the fantastic feature you published last summer, we've received many enquiries from Canada and the US for kilts and cloth. Since our first launch in Scotland in 2012, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama receiving the very first World Peace Tartan scarf, our design and message has been warmly

and enthusiastically received. Our social media following has grown significantly, and people are now regularly sending us photos of themselves wearing the World Peace Tartan. Photos have arrived in from Vancouver, Louisiana, and as far as Adelaide in Australia. Another very exciting development was linking up with Barb Stegemann from The 7 Virtues. Barb commissioned the Nova Scotia tartan fashion designer Veronica MacIsaac to make a gorgeous dress that she recently wore at a charity fundraising event. We're receiving a growing number of enquiries from dress makers as well as kilt makers.

Is the initiative as rewarding as when you first started?

'Rewarding' is an understatement. It's been life changing for me, and others involved, not only in terms of having created what I refer to as a 'brand with meaning and purpose', but the creation of a new symbol for the greater good. I am happy indeed, and I feel a deep sense of achievement in knowing that a simple idea has done something positive for the lives of others. The more that the World Peace Tartan, in whatever form, is sold around the world then the more good can be done - and not just by way of 'handouts' but through something I call a 'hand up'. Sustainable development and transformation is the goal in our sense of purpose.

What do you have planned for 2014?

We would like to have a launch event in Canada. We are also looking forward to Tartan Week in New York City in April. This would hopefully include being involved again in the Dressed to Kilt fashion show, and we are open to collaboration with fashion designers again for unique contributions for that event. To further promote the World Peace Tartan initiative and message, we'll be looking to possibly organize a number of events ourselves to create new opportunities to formally present the scarf to significant people that we not only wish to honor, but with whom we wish to share love and friendship with from the heart of Scotland. I'm personally hoping to 'scarf' Prof Peter Higgs of 'The Higgs Particle' very soon after he receives his Nobel Prize. Ultimately, we aim to continue to develop an entire World Peace Tartan Collection to build on our message, by adding additional designs and enhancing accessibility and wearability.

www.facebook.com/worldpeacetartan

Sign up for our newsletter and you could win one of five authentic World Peace Tartan scarves!

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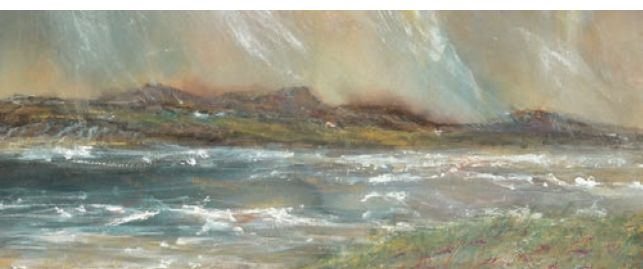
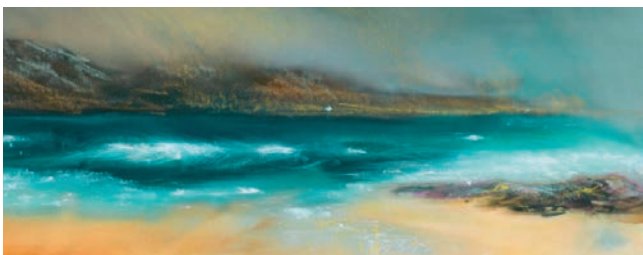
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Sheila MacLean

I can't remember a time when I wasn't creatively preoccupied in one form or another. I was brought up in a family and community where practical skills and craftsmanship were very evident. Some of my strongest childhood memories are of watching my granddad for hours on end making his own rowing boat.

My work is inspired by my Highland-Hebridean background, drawing on the richness of its landscape, language and culture. My work is an emotional response to my homeland and I paint very instinctively.

There is no shortage of diverse, creative talent in Scotland and a great variety of art centers and galleries in both urban and rural areas.

www.sheilamaclean.co.uk



Scotland's northern Gannets



*Celtic Life International contributor
Tom Langlands captures and conveys the grace
and mystique of Scotland's Northern Gannets*

I am on board the Scottish trawler Fisher Lassie with the owner/skipper, Gordon Easingwood, who is taking me out to Bass Rock or 'The Rock.' This small island is a 320-million-year-old volcanic plug in the Firth of Forth. The Rock shares its geological ancestry with the not-too-distant Arthur's Seat and Castle Rock in Edinburgh as well as with several smaller islands in the area. With me is Maggie Sheddan, the Bass Rock guide for the Scottish Seabird Centre at nearby North Berwick. It may not be far, but when you cross the open sea to Bass Rock you realize just how inhospitable and inaccessible this place is. Even in a gentle breeze the swell of the sea rises high against the vertical cliff faces and the murky blue depths swirl with dangerous currents. Easingwood has made this journey many times before, but he never underestimates the difficulty of manoeuvring the boat alongside the steep staircase that forms part of the cliff.

Once I have disembarked I climb a short distance to a small sloping plateau to take in my surroundings. The Rock towers above me, the sea slops menacingly below and the coastline of Scotland is visible to the west, but, overwhelmingly, the sky is alive with seabirds - thousands of them.

Continuing higher, I pass through an old fortified wall and here the dark secrets

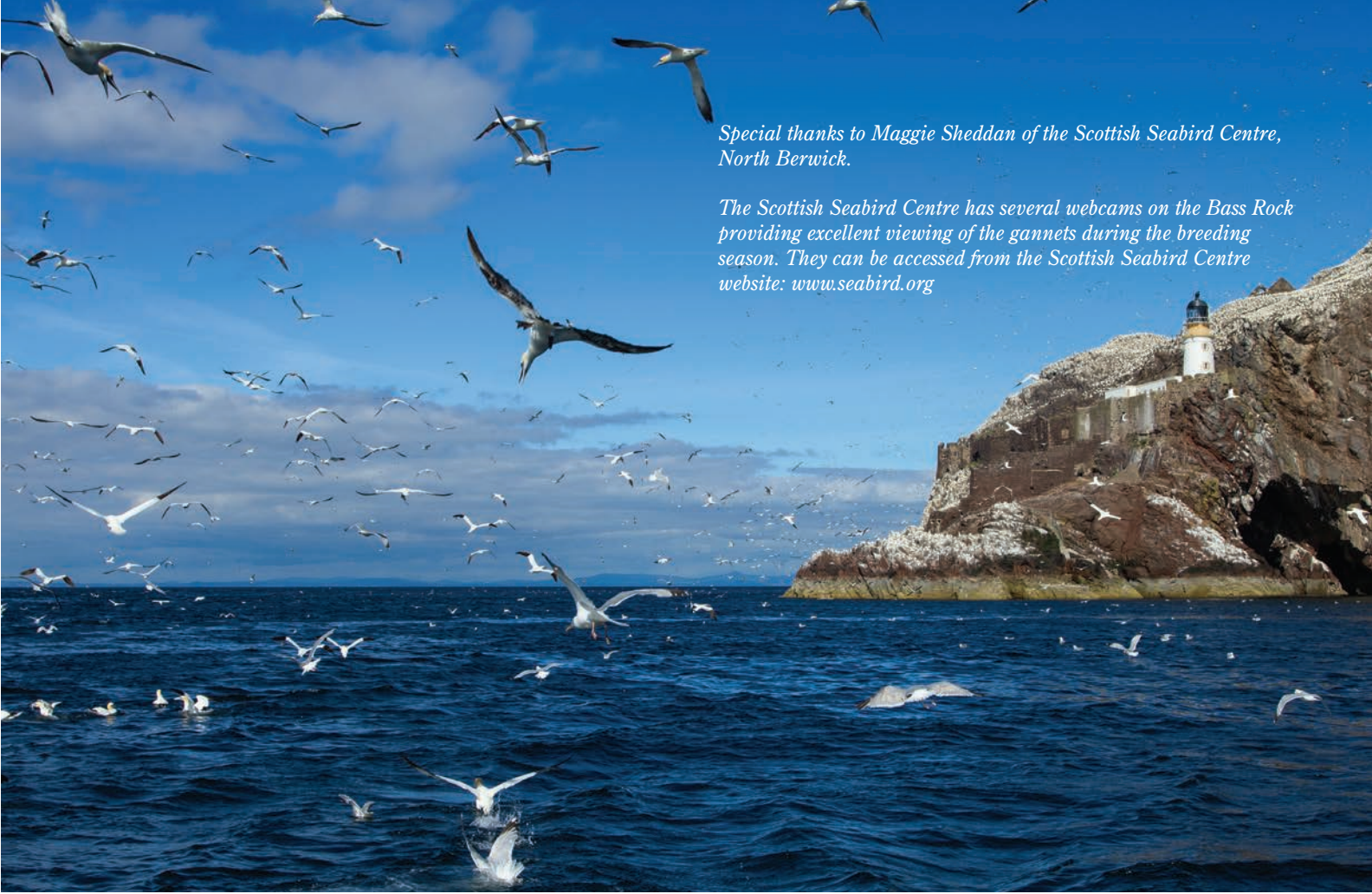
of Bass Rock begin to unfold. Although unoccupied today, it was home in the 6th century to an early Christian missionary and hermit, St Baldred. The place where I stand was the site of an ancient castle dating back to the 13th century and the remnants of a crown prison in the latter part of the 17th century. Here, in terrible conditions, many Covenanters and Jacobite supporters were imprisoned and died for their beliefs. Being at the mouth of the Forth on the approach to Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh, resulted in Bass Rock becoming an important part of Scotland's historic defences. Canons from the castle could fire down on approaching ships and Mary Queen of Scots had a garrison here, including French troops, in the early 16th century. The dank history of the place is palpable in the crumbling stones around my feet.

A further climb takes me to the site of an ancient chapel. This is as far as I can go and standing below the 105-metre summit of the Rock that still rises above me I find myself in the middle of the largest single-rock gannet colony in the world. Sixty thousand breeding pairs of northern gannets surround me. Birds soar overhead, some carry nesting material while others proffer seaweed and feathers as courtship gifts to their mates. Chicks

and parents sit on nests so densely packed that there are over two nests to every square metre of ground. Looking down to the sea I watch gannets fold their wings and turn themselves into avian missiles plunging up to five metres into the water at speeds of up to sixty miles per hour (96 km/hour) in search of fish. The scale of the spectacle is breathtaking.

Sheddan explains why and when the birds came to Bass Rock. "Gannets have been recorded on Bass Rock since as early as the 6th century. They are colonial birds and this is both a suitably safe and remote site for breeding in a location with a ready food supply of fish. Mature birds can arrive from late January onwards, although most don't settle until March. After breeding some will stay until late October."

The northern gannet is the largest indigenous seabird to be found in the UK with a wingspan of just under two metres. Some 60 per cent of Europe's gannets make Scotland their breeding ground and the Latin name of the species, *Morus bassanus* reflects the significance of Bass Rock in its classification. They have a life span of up to 35 years. Mature birds are strikingly white with a long neck and yellow blush around their heads and weigh around 2.4 to 3.6 kg. The ends of their wings are black. They have long pointed



Special thanks to Maggie Sheddan of the Scottish Seabird Centre, North Berwick.

The Scottish Seabird Centre has several webcams on the Bass Rock providing excellent viewing of the gannets during the breeding season. They can be accessed from the Scottish Seabird Centre website: www.seabird.org

grey-blue beaks with black linear markings and a stunningly vivid blue eye surround.

Young birds usually pair at around three years of age with pair bonds generally lasting for life. Once the mature birds have arrived on Bass Rock they await their mate whose arrival will instigate a courtship and bonding ritual comprised of stretching wings accompanied by often prolonged rubbing and “fencing” with their distinctive beaks. They are highly territorial and nest sites are fought over and protected fiercely. Straying into another pair’s territory will result in a noisy confrontation and often an unpleasant clash of beaks. One of the reasons these birds prefer rocky stacks is that the wind uplift permits an almost vertical take-off and landing from the nest site. A bird that has to walk through the territories of others in order to reach its nest will be made to suffer.

Only a single egg is laid, usually between mid-April and mid-June and it will hatch around six weeks later. One parent remains with the chick at all times while the other searches for food, mainly fish. The parents will feed the bird for about 11 weeks after which time it will attempt the dangerous journey of gliding down to the sea. This is the stage at which the young bird, or guga as it is known, and its parents separate. Alone at sea, gugas must learn quickly how to fly and fish in preparation for their journey south along with the rest of the gannets in October. At this stage the mortality rate is high, with approximately 75 per cent of youngsters coming to grief during their descent or succumbing to starvation and exhaustion in the ensuing weeks.

How well is the gannet population and how easy is it for the adults to find essential fish supplies? According to Sheddan,

“Gannets fish over huge areas and have been recorded fishing 200 kilometres from Bass Rock, although in summer feeding can be closer on the rich tidal banks. Because of their ability to travel such distances they fare better than many other seabird species.”

For the moment this is good news, but Sheddan notes that despite current growing population numbers, “The balance of the food chain is vital. Fishing policies and environmental issues are closely monitored for changes that could have a negative impact on food supplies.”

For gannets born on Bass Rock, those that survive the harsh journey towards adulthood will head to areas around the Mediterranean, with some traveling down the west coast of Africa. Some of the young birds will return to the place of their birth in their second year, although for others it may be later and they may make the journey several times before being ready to breed.

Back on Fisher Lassie and heading away from The Rock, Easingwood has one final treat to complete this astonishing experience. He throws quantities of fish overboard in an exercise known as “chumming.” Suddenly, gannets surround me, and display their incredible aerial and underwater swimming skills. Leaving the Bass Rock behind I have no doubt that I have witnessed one of the world’s most amazing wildlife experiences on an ancient rock, which forms an important part of Scotland’s history.

Words and photos by Tom Langlands





"Creativity is the result of experience, observation and imagination, all working simultaneously. Much of my inspiration comes from compositions of cloths, fabrics, colour and texture and I can usually trace the origins of the inspiration."

"I increasingly see the benefits of using my Hebridean heritage to describe and explain my artistic signature."

"We, in Scotland, ought to concentrate on the ethereal qualities of our offerings, and on what the Bards described in Scottish poems and songs: qualities that tug at the heart strings."

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Cape Breton Island



From Shakespeare on the stage to James Bond on screen, Judi Dench has spent more than 50 years wowing audiences. And despite now approaching her ninth decade, the actress shows little sign of slowing down.

Dame Judi Dench

Her latest film, *Philomena*, a screenplay co-written by Steve Coogan (who also stars) is a true story set in Ireland. In it, the lead character undertakes a pilgrimage to discover the fate of the baby she was forced to give up for adoption five decades earlier, as an unmarried teenager working in one of the Irish Republic's penitential Magdalene laundries. The film packs an emotional punch, and features a typically Dench performance of effortless poise.

Born in December 1934 in York to an Irish mother (who met her father when he was studying medicine at Trinity College,

Dublin), Dench was able to sympathise with *Philomena*'s narrative arc. But before the film, how aware was she of the prevalence of such scenarios that were often played out in the Catholic Church?

"Well, because of the Magdalene Sisters – the film from 2002 – I was very aware, like we all were. There was a focus suddenly on it and everybody was aware it was happening. But as far as this story is concerned, in a way I think that's not so much what the film is about.

"For me, it's about a woman who comes to terms with that,

who can live with it, years and years on, and actually never tell anybody about her son for 40 years... not even her daughter. She then has to go through the search and then, on the other side of it, come out as a much stronger person who actually can turn around and say, 'I forgive you for what happened.' I don't think there are many people whose story could have gone that way."

Research for the film included more than re-watching a decade-old film, with Dench going to meet the real-life protagonist Philomena in order to fully appreciate the plot. "I met her before we started shooting and we had lunch. She's very funny and very Irish, just like my mother was. Not that she was like my mother in any way, but I have many Irish friends who I saw similarities in. Irish people are just so happy and optimistic, I have found, no matter what they go through. That's perhaps a generalisation, but anyway..."

Unlike her late actor husband Michael Williams, Catholicism never swayed Dench. She remained true to the Quakerism that attracted her so many years ago. "I am a Quaker. My husband, who died, was a Catholic, and I am a Quaker. And somebody said to us before we were married, 'You must convert.' But that's been the structure in me and is something that I can't do without - that was a personal decision for me for a long, long time ago and it's always been very important."

Talking to Dench, her positivity and good natured humour is as noticeable as it is welcoming - not that Dench has ever had any notions of diva behaviour or grand old Dame eccentricities. The only moment when conversation is anything less than joyful is when it turns to her late husband, who left a gaping hole in Dench's life upon his death in 2001. "Nothing compares. What you lack when you've been living with someone is the physical contact;

someone who will put their arm around you, or just hold you instinctively when you need it."

What was her coping mechanism? "Friends. My friends were and are everything, and they were staunchly supportive and there for me. And, I admit, I was also offered a lot of good jobs, and I threw myself into work."

This much is certainly true: for a woman of 78, her workload over the past decade has been unrelenting, both on stage and screen. Her most noticeable role is as M in six James Bond films, from *Tomorrow Never Dies* to *Skyfall*, in which she was dramatically killed off. Those 007 productions represented quite a shift from what previously she'd been renowned for: UK comedies, terrestrial dramas and stage work.

What was it about the role that appealed? "There were three reasons. The first is that they asked me. Secondly, it was the first time that M was a female.





And thirdly (and most importantly) Michael said to me 'I find it irresistible that I shall be living with a Bond girl'.

Subsequently, the Bond films introduced Dench to a whole new generation of cinema goers, and in the process she became something of a veteran pin-up among some young enough to be her grandson. It is a status she playfully embraces. "I have fans who are young men of my grandson's age, up to about middle to late teens, and that's wonderful. Imagine being a pin-up, at 73, to the teenage boy crowd? And you know what is even better – the fact that those lads might find out that I am also a stage actress, and that they then might be tempted to see what the theatre is all about. I admit it - Bond, for me, is a 'fishing trip' for live audiences."

This line is only half a quip: Dench's true work remains in the theatre, where she made her name. From her debut performance at the Liverpool Royal Court with the Old Vic Theatre in 1957 as Ophelia in Hamlet, Dench established herself as one of theatre's most significant actresses with the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. And, despite the late-career film flourish, the stage remains her calling.

"My only passion is the theatre - that's what I really, really love. You get the chance to have another go the next night and do it again – it may end up being worse, but definitely different, and always to a different audience. The audience informs you of absolutely everything. An American student said to me, 'Does an audience make any difference?' And I said, 'If an audience doesn't make any difference, I am staying at home. I am putting my feet up the chimney.'"

The burning desire that made her a success drives her still - "I cannot bear apathy, the 'I couldn't care less... whatever' attitude in anything. I like people who are wildly optimistic; that's the way I approach life and living. I am an unbounded optimist, even at nearly 80 years of age."

But after such a distinguished, eclectic and successful career, when she looks at herself in 2014, has Dench achieved everything she wanted to when she started out in 1957? "No. And I don't expect to. There are a few things next year," she laughs. "The other day someone said, 'What kind of play do you want to do?' And I said, 'I want to be in a play where I am an Afghan woman who learns to walk the tightrope and in the last act turns into a dragon.' I've not done that yet, so on we go..."





NEW LOOK, SAME AWARD WINNING TASTE



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Sir Anthony Hopkins is a true Welsh legend. In fact, Hopkins is a bona fide legend, full-stop: an Oscar-winning actor and star of screen, TV and stage who has worked with the best in the business. The 75-year-old is widely regarded as one of the greatest living actors. Here, Hopkins takes a look back at his career and Celtic Life International accompanies him.

Anthony Hopkins

Welsh Roots, Hollywood Legend

It's been some journey for Anthony Hopkins – from troubled Glamorgan child to troubled doctor Hannibal Lecter, the latter proving one of the highlights of an esteemed career that has seen the Welshman become one of Britain's best loved actors. He's someone capable of memorable and powerful performances that have won him Oscars, Emmys and BAFTAs galore.

Not that Hopkins seems in the least bit impressed with his achievements. His manner is of a man, perhaps in keeping with his heritage, who doesn't see himself as anything special; nor does he pay much attention to sentimentality and nostalgia. As he notes, "You're only as good as your last job."

Yet he is more than happy to recall

his early life in Port Talbot. He admits to difficult formative years: born in 1937, Hopkins was the son of a baker and experienced a typically Welsh upbringing during the war era, one of hardship that was made downcast by his alienation in the classroom.

"I was not a good child at school," he frowns. "I was seen as a child who had problems, but of course in those days nobody knew or cared if it was something like dyslexia. I would sit in class and not know what was going on, or really understand anything the teacher was saying. I was never at the top of the class, in fact I was always at the bottom, and because of that I was viewed to be trouble. And with that, the teachers made sure I suffered with it."

But despite his academic struggles, the detrimental treatment he endured had a profound effect on the young Hopkins, who decided to turn his feelings of neglect into the drive to make something of his life.

"Going into acting was never on the agenda," he says. "It wasn't a dream as such, but what school gave me was the idea that I wanted to prove people wrong. It made me angry, and I wanted to show them. I set out to be rich and famous, because I wanted to show them they were wrong."

"One day in 1947, I went to the local YMCA and they had an acting class on for amateurs. I am not entirely sure why I was there, or what I was trying to achieve because I didn't even think about acting as

a career. I just assumed I would be a baker like my dad. But I found myself there, and I found myself going back. I think I saw it as a way to get back at all the people, the kids included, who had made school a bit of a misery for me!"

Hopkins may have been out for revenge, but it was success that awaited him. His first professional appearance came on a stage production of *Have a Cigarette* in Swansea, before he was scouted for *The National Theatre*, London.

His move to the big screen followed in 1967, and he has never looked back, starring in dozens of films – probably the most famous of which, *Silence of the Lambs*, will forever remain his outstanding signature. Not one for looking back, does he nonetheless have a career highlight?

"Not particularly," he smiles. "I find that at my age now everything I've done blurs into one. Of course, the Oscar was very nice and you are honoured to receive it, but now all it does is sit on the sideboard near my television and rots away. I don't think you can take things like that too seriously. We are all going to die eventually. I thought about that when I went to JFK's grave a while back. All he achieved didn't matter to him when he is lying there. That has stayed with me."

For someone who seems a touch embarrassed about his ever-growing collection of awards, how did he feel about accepting the Knighthood? "I'm not sure why they gave me a Knighthood, in all honesty," he says. "I don't call myself 'sir.' I only really use the title in America, where they insist upon it. I have tried to get them to stop, but they get offended if I don't use it!"

If this makes Hopkins sound cranky and ungrateful, he certainly isn't, and he carries something of the Celtic grounded outlook about him. That is true of his actions as well: he may have moved to America many years ago, and currently lives in Malibu with his third wife, Stella; but his affection for his homeland is undiminished. Whenever he is back in the UK, he visits Wales at any given opportunity.

"Whenever I go back to England to film, my wife will try

to get back. Recently I went down to west Wales to St David's, because it's the cathedral capital of Wales. It's where St David is buried. It's beautiful; it's another world – a tiny village with this great cathedral that goes back 1,000 years.

"I will always try to go to Wales. I have a couple of friends there, friends of my mother's really. So I go to see them and we head out for dinner. I only go back if there's work, but I enjoy

it, I enjoy it very much. It's different and I like the weather. I love the weather here, but it's different!"

Hopkins says he enjoys a "nice life" in Malibu, and that he is more conscious of the need to look after himself as he reaches an advanced age. His battle with alcohol has been well documented, but nowadays a healthy body and mind are paramount.

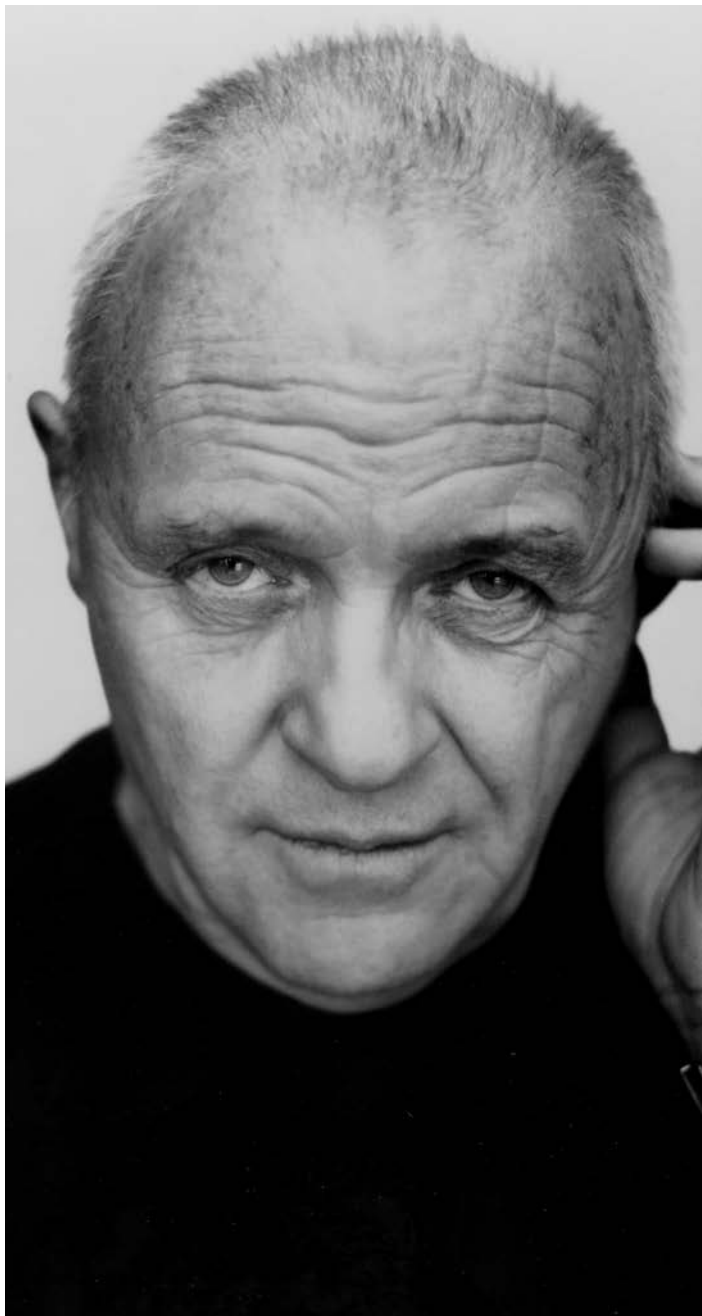
"I am very, very well," he grins. "I have to watch certain things that I eat. And I see people around me here in America, who are younger than me and who are grossly overweight. Through the years I had battles with weight, because I eat too much or I eat too fast and so I work out every day – cardiovascular stuff and weights and all that sort of thing. I go to bed early too."

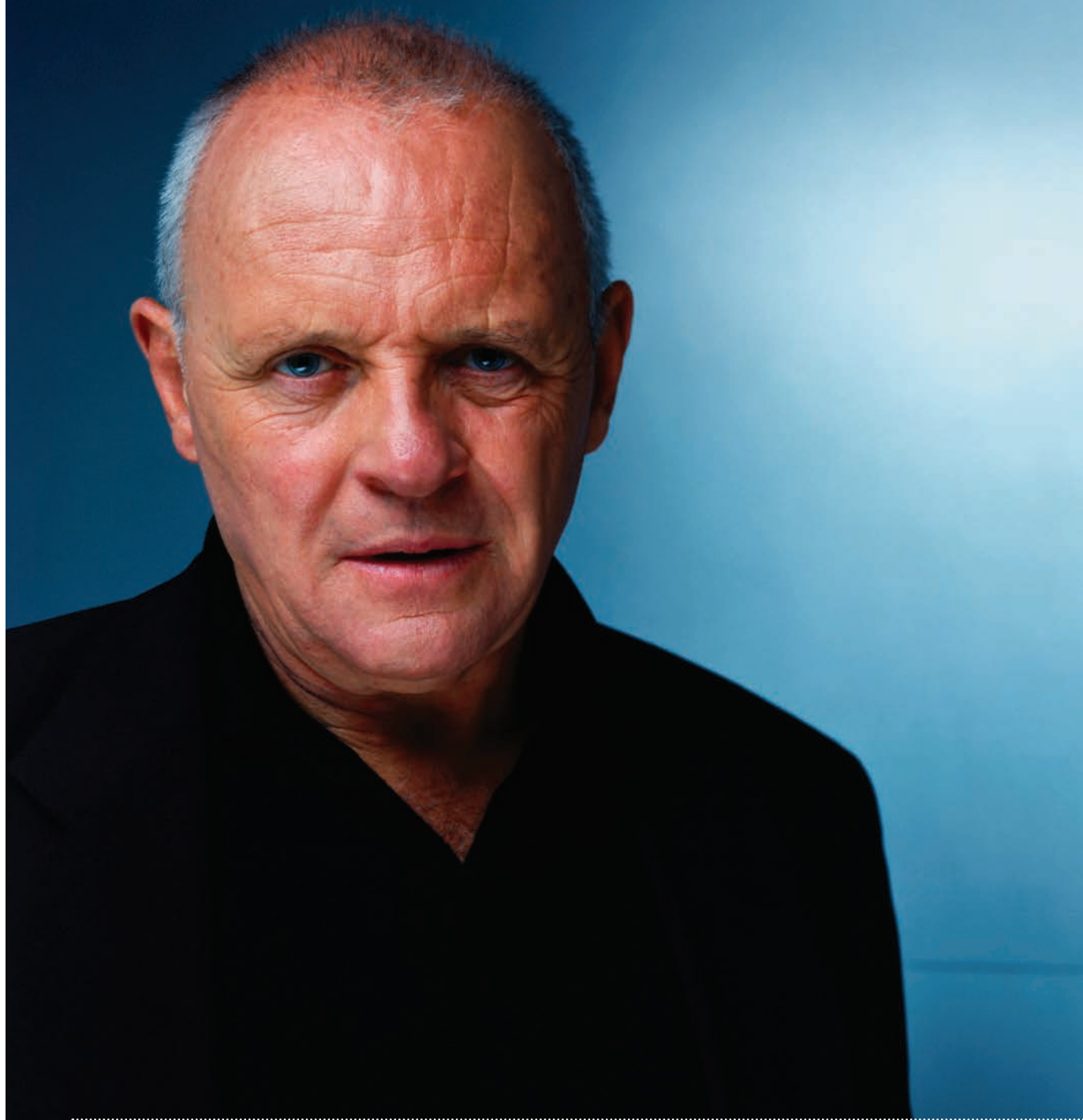
"Everything changes as you get older. I sleep in the afternoons, but I really take care of myself and I read a lot. It keeps the brain active. And I play the piano, which is a good activity for the brain. I learn poetry and I learn text, and that really keeps one alive."

Hopkins' continued work helps to keep him young too, and this year he can be seen in two films, *RED2* and *Thor: The Dark World*, in the latter reprising his role as Odin in the film based on the Marvel comics. What was it that moved him towards this film?

"Well, because they offered it to me!" he smiles. "Ken Branagh called me one day and said, 'Could we meet, and

would you like to play Odin?' That doesn't take courage because you think, 'Well why not?' You can't get too fussy about things. They say all these little things – look before you leap, be careful – but sometimes it's good not to be careful, to just leap off the ledge and do something. You never know how it's going to turn out. So you have to ask the question."





Despite reaching his mid-70s, Hopkins' unyielding workload shows no signs of stopping. And he still retains that same chameleonic skill that allows him to morph effortlessly between one of the screen's scariest serial killers of all time and real-life characters such as Alfred Hitchcock, Pablo Picasso and Richard Nixon.

Strong, believable performances in period pieces like *The Remains of the Day* and *Legends of the Fall* segue into the high fantasy of *Thor* and *Beowulf*, and out into action territory in the *RED* franchise. Certainly, few actors can match Hopkins' reach and range.

But is it nearly time to draw the final curtain on this astonishing career? "I don't want to slow down!" he protests, his eyes widening. "Why should I? Of course, there are times when I have to remember that I am not 30 years younger, but I want to work.

"I've come this far. I have had three marriages and various setbacks. Then there's my bout with booze, which damn near killed me. But I came through all that, and everything is testament to my life from the very start, all the way back to Port Talbot."



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THE HOMECOMING!

There's no place like home. A young girl from Kansas with her little dog may have intoned those immortal words in a now classic film, but they hold as true as ever today. For thousands of Scots scattered across the world, 2014 is the year to return to their homeland. Homecoming Scotland 2014 is a celebration, an opportunity for locals to celebrate their home, for those with links to Scotland to explore their heritage, and for those outside of the country to discover all Scotland has to offer.

Homecoming coincides with two very important events for the country. Scotland will host the 40th Ryder Cup, only the second time in history the renowned match tournament has been played in the country that is home to the game of golf. And Scotland is also host country for the XX Commonwealth Games. The international, multi-sport event involving 71 teams of athletes from the Commonwealth Nations will be held in Glasgow this year. The games will host 4,500 athletes and is expected to sell about one million tickets.

Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond, said earlier in the year: "We are already preparing to stage two of the largest sporting events on the planet during 2014. There really couldn't be a better time to plan a trip to Scotland and join in the fun." With around 50 million people in the world claiming Scottish heritage, diaspora and clan-related events form a key part of Homecoming. These encompass some 30 events to mark, including the celebrations to mark the 700th anniversary of the Battle

of Bannockburn, the Aboyne Highland Games, the Inverness Highland Meeting 2014, the 10th Clan Munro International Gathering, the Dunfermline Bruce Festival and Piping Live!

Homecoming 2014 follows the first ever Homecoming in 2009. That event was a tremendous success, influencing more than 95,000 visitors to travel to Scotland. Homecoming 2014 promises to be even more exciting than its predecessor with hundreds of events scheduled to take place over the course of the year. The events are grouped around five themes: active, food and drink, creative, natural and ancestry. New events for 2014 include the John Muir Festival across central Scotland to herald the opening of the John Muir coast-to-coast route, the Forth Bridges Festival to mark the 50th anniversary of the iconic bridge, a spectacular opening concert for the Ryder Cup, the Findhorn Bay Arts Festival in Moray, the World Sheepdog Trials in Tain and the European Festival of Brass in Perthshire.

Many existing events are adding new Homecoming components to their planned programs in 2014. These include the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival, the Edinburgh Mela Festival, the Royal National MOD, the East Neuk Festival, the Orkney Nature festival and the Tweedlove Bike Festival. In fact, the year is so chock-a-block with festivals that as part of its coverage Celtic Life International has put together its picks for some of the most intriguing events of the year.

Beyond all the festivals, one of the year's most important themes is ancestry. Scotland is especially well served with family research facilities, records and information of a very high standard.

With or without an ancestral connection, Scotland is a great place to explore historical and heritage themes and take in some of the locations where history has been made and where events have taken place that have shaped the lives of Scots at home and abroad. And while researching your Scottish ancestors can be very rewarding, nothing compares to experiencing first-hand the places they lived and worked. Retracing the footsteps of your ancestors can help bring the past alive and Scotland's array of rich genealogical resources will help in that regard.

Mike Cantlay, Chairman of Visit Scotland, says, "With the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles, the eyes of the world will be firmly on Scotland in 2014. The Homecoming will position our country as dynamic and creative with a rich history and culture. These exceptional events will celebrate everything that is great about Scotland and will ensure the world receives the most spectacular of welcomes in 2014."

To prepare you for Homecoming 2014, Celtic Life International has prepared a comprehensive package, acting as your guide to the major events and celebrations scheduled to take place in 2014. Special features take you inside the story behind the intensive preparations for 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn; and tell you what to watch for at the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup. We also provide you with our choices for the must-see festivals of this momentous year and event.





Thrilling Scotland

When it comes to ultimate adventure, Scotland may be one of the world's leading destinations. But don't take our word for it. A new book titled Lonely Planet's 1000 Ultimate Adventures prominently features Scotland; in fact, the country is cited for no less than 20 thrilling places, an almost disproportionate number given its size.

Is Scotland really that exciting? Is it one of the places adrenaline junkies should put high up on their bucket lists? Well, yes, as the answer turns out. Looking for a mountain bike mecca? Scotland's The Borders get the nod. Are you after the "ultimate train ride?" The Jacobite now immortalized in the Harry Potter films makes the grade. Those are but a couple of the varied Scottish adventures the book recommends.

Celtic Life International turned to Lonely Planet editor-at-large Emily Wolman to find out just what makes Scotland such an amazing place for adventure. "Of course, Scotland is one of the great adventure destinations," Wolman confirms. "It has incredible mountain scenery, over 11,500 miles of extraordinary coastline and more than 790 islands."

Yes the country isn't a wilderness in the same way as Arctic Canada, Wolman notes. Even though the Highlands are one of the least populated areas of Europe with just over nine people per square kilometre, the whole country has been explored from top to bottom. Wolman says development is what has helped transform the country into an adventure destination: transport links are good, distances relatively short and infrastructure in place throughout the country. "Add to that some of the most progressive access laws in the world, and it's easy to understand why Scotland has become such an adventure mecca," she says.

When it comes to Scotland, the book features some of the toughest and most dangerous challenges in the world, such as swimming across the Corryvreckan

Whirlpool at slack tide, to some of the easiest: riding the aforementioned Jacobite steam train. The book ranges across wild adventures (racing on foot, bike and kayak through the Hebridean Islands), to urban adventures (rock-climbing in Glasgow's suburbs at Dumbarton Rock). Asks Wolman rhetorically: "Given even that short selection, is it any wonder we featured Scotland so much?"

Nor is Scotland the only Celtic country in which to adventure. Ireland, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany are all included. "But as well as adventures in the original Celtic countries, we also feature many New World places with strong Celtic heritage, such as rafting the Franklin River in Tasmania, Australia; cycling the Confederation Trail across Prince Edward Island, Canada; or swimming the Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South American," Holman notes.

To put together the book, Lonely Planet drew upon the expertise of hundreds of their authors, in-house editors and dedicated travellers. From there, the book's editors cut them down to 1,000, ensuring that the mix included a diversity of adventures for all abilities, budgets, interests and locations. "You'll see our definition of adventure is wide," Holman says. "Soaking at Blue Lagoon in Iceland holds equal weight with an ultra-marathon in Utah. Adventures are not just intrepid trips or athletic feats; they enable you to discover that you're capable of more than you think."

Many of the authors who recommended adventures have experienced them first-hand, often while they're on the road for guidebook assignments. But Holman says while many of Lonely Planet's writers are true adventurers, others do their research with their four kids in tow and still others simply don't have time to ride their motorcycles across Africa. "Though they've done that!" Holman adds. "So while I can say that many of those adven-

tures have been experiences first-hand, I don't think we have anyone who's raced in the Iditarod – though now that I'm thinking about it, Iditarod Team Lonely Planet has a nice ring to it!"

Holman concedes that every inch of Scotland has definitely been explored, but that doesn't make it any less appealing as an adventure destination. "So you're not going to climb a virgin peak here, but that doesn't make the place any less special. In fact, its rich history is part of its appeal. Overall, in Scotland, or anywhere in the world, there are so many experiences you can't possibly do them in one lifetime.

"There's always something new to discover," Holman continues. "Individuals can spend a lifetime exploring the world and growing themselves. Travel is an essential part of that – and sometimes the most remarkable discoveries aren't as far from home as you think. It's easy to find something that's new to you, no matter how many times you've visited."

Lonely Planet's 1000 Ultimate Adventures. By the staff and contributors of Lonely Planet. Published by Lonely Planet; 352 pp; \$22.99

As much as the authors would have loved to include every adventure in the book, they had to draw the line at 1,000. Here's a few that didn't make it in, according to Lonely Planet editor-at-large Emily Wolman.

The Glen Nevis River Race, where entrants descend the white water of the river Nevis on just an airbed;

Bird-watching on Fair Isle, with its huge colonies of seabirds, including the puffin;

Going under the streets of Edinburgh to visit its long-forgotten vaults, abandoned in 1820.



Commonwealth Games

From July 23 to August 3, some 6,500 athletes from over 70 countries will compete in 17 sports in 14 venues at the XX Commonwealth Games in Glasgow

This will mark the third time Scotland has hosted the games; previously, Edinburgh held them in 1970 and 1986. Those times Scotland won medals in the men's and women's 10,000 metre track events respectively. As games ambassador Billy Connolly says: "Glaswegians are great partakers. Support is our sport."

As with all games, a number of legacy venues have been designed and built. The athletes' village in Glasgow's East End is on 35 hectares of land and after the games will add 700 new homes to the community. Adjacent to the village is the Emirates Arena and the adjoining Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome. The arena has a 200-metre, six-lane track, which is hydraulically operated, allowing other events such as badminton to be held. The velodrome with its 250-metre track is named for the UK's most successful gold-medal winning Olympian and Commonwealth Games champion.

One of the most exciting competitions at the games will likely be mountain biking, which will take place on the newly constructed Cathkin Braes Mountain Bike Trails. Located 15 minutes from the athletes' village, the trails are set against a backdrop of ancient woodlands, steep slopes and wide open spaces and offer a panoramic view of the city. Features like Brig O'Doom, Broken Biscuits and the Clyde Climb suggest the cyclists are in for a stern competition.

Perhaps one of the unique aspects of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow is the his-

toric venues where many of the competitions will take place. A number of the stadiums have been upgraded in preparation for the games, but bring their own sense of history with them. For example, Ibrox Stadium was built in 1899 and renovated in 1997. Host venue for the Rugby Sevens competi-

tion is the same stadium where King George V visited in 1917 to award honours, including knighthoods and war medals in an open air public investiture, the first time such an event had taken place in Scotland since 1603.

The first Commonwealth Games were held in Hamilton, Ontario in 1930. Eleven countries sent 400 athletes to compete in six sports and 59 events. Since then, the games have been held every four years, with the exceptions of 1942 and 1946 because of World War II. From 1930 to 1950, they were known as the British Empire Games and then subsequently as the British Empire and Commonwealth Games and then as the British Commonwealth Games. Ultimately it was in Edmonton, Alberta in 1978 that the competition gained its current name of the Commonwealth Games.

Often called the "Friendly

Beyond the track and field, swimming and diving, cycling and other sports, the Commonwealth Games also carries with it a significant cultural component. For 2014, Glasgow has divided the program into two separate strands. One is a Scotland-wide celebration titled Culture 2014; the other is a celebration running alongside the games in Glasgow called Festival 2014. The festivities include specially commissioned multimedia performances (one of which employs the talents of Cirque Du Soliel's technical director), films, exhibits and much more.

The patron of the Commonwealth Games Federation is the Queen, who long believed sport is a force for good and can be used to build communities and create harmony in society. A message from the Monarch has been read at every games and in 1958 the tradition of the Queen's Baton Relay was begun. At Buckingham Palace, the Queen's message is placed into a specially designed silver gilt baton, which is then carried to the host city for the games, first travelling around the world to all the countries participating in the event. According to Lord Seb Coe, the former athlete, "The games are the only cement common to all the Commonwealth countries."

Games," the sporting event opened up to para-athletes for the first time in Manchester in 2002. The other significant addition was in 2000 of the Youth Games, open to athletes 18 years of age and younger. Since the first games, the number of sports competed has increased. Today, each candidate city hoping to host a games must include a core of 10 sporting events and then include up to an additional seven from a list of optional sports. The games must also include a core list of four para-athletic sports with another three from an optional list.



First Commonwealth Games, Hamilton, Ontario, 1930. Those games featured 400 athletes from 11 countries competing in six sports.

Ryder CUP

Normally the Americans and the Europeans are allies, but that all changes when it comes to the game of golf. The Ryder Cup is the trophy that pits the U.S. against the Europeans in a battle for golf dominance. If that sounds a little over-stated, then consider the appellations some of the previously best-known and hard-won Ryder Cups have received: the War on the Shore in 1991; the Battle of Brookline in 1999; and the Miracle of Medinah in 2012.

Now the Ryder Cup is returning to the birthplace of golf, Scotland, for the first time in more than 40 years and only for the second time in its history. Not only that, but a pretty solid argument can be made that the cup competition actually had its beginnings in Scotland. In 1921, 20 men assembled at Gleneagles in Perthshire for an international challenge match between Great Britain and the United States. As noted on the website for the 2014 Ryder Cup, the 1921 match “had no name, no real fan-fare, and no trophy to play for – but it whetted the appetite and gave rise to the phenomenon of the Ryder Cup, first officially played six years later.”

The cup returns to Scotland as part of the Homecoming 2014 celebrations. The event is expected to inject 100-million English pounds into the economy and attract tens of thousands of spectators. In preparation for the cup, golf legend Jack Nicklaus returned to Gleneagles to visit the course he designed in the 1990s and approve modifications made for the cup. The biggest change that was made was to drop the 18th hole green five or six metres. Although the course was challenging to begin with, the decision was made to modify it because of how much golf technology in terms of equipment has improved in the last 20 years.

While all eyes will be on the Nicklaus course at Gleneagles, it's a small slice of August history for the golf course. Back in 1910, Donald Matheson, general manager of the Caledonian Railway Company, was so impressed with the lush valley his trains ran through that he envisioned a large country hotel and resort complete with golf courses for the entertainment of the guests. Matheson approached James Braid, winner of five Open Championships between 1901 and 1910, to design the King's and the Queen's courses.

A nine-hole course known as the Wee Course opened in 1928 and was extended to 18 holes in 1974 and renamed the Prince's. A fourth course, Glendevon, opened in 1980. Nicklaus designed his Monarch's course over the 18 holes of the Glendevon course and

a portion of the Prince's course (of which the remaining holes were converted into a new Wee Course). In 2001, the Monarch's Course was renamed the PGA Centenary Course to celebrate the Centenary year of the Professional Golfer's Association. It's on this course the 2014 Ryder Cup will be played out.

The first Ryder Cup took place at Worcester Country Club in Massachusetts on a course that Donald Ross, the legendary course architect from Dornoch, designed. The Americans won the first match. Over the intervening years the cup would see-saw back and forth between the Americans and the Europeans. In 1973, Muirfield in East Lothian became the first Scottish course to host the cup. For the first time, the Great Britain team became Great Britain and Ireland, but the Americans prevailed to win the 20th Ryder Cup. In 2012, Scotland's Paul Lawrie played a pivotal role in ensuring the cup stayed in European hands.

Alex Salmond, Scotland's first minister, said the events of the tournament will long outlast the week of play and be felt for many years to come. “As well as the lasting economic benefit, having the world's premier golf team event on our doorstep will allow thousands of young Scottish golfers the chance to see the very best the sport has to offer up close, giving them an experience they will never forget and inspiring them to achieve great things in the future.”

To be sure, some of the world's greatest golfers will compete against each other at the event. Tom Watson captains the American team. Watson has played in five Ryder Cups, leading one in 1993 to a win. As well, he has 39 PGA tour wins to his credit. On the European side, Paul McGinley will lead the team. The Irish man is famous for having sunk a 10-foot putt on the 18th hole in 2002 to win the Ryder Cup that year for the Europeans.



The Ryder Cup 2014

At the Gleneagles Resort, Perthshire. September 23-28

Tom Watson and his American team squares off against Paul McGinley and the Europeans. The last time the Ryder Cup was played in Scotland was in 1973.

During Homecoming 2014, Scotland will be bursting with festivals, literally more than anyone can hope to take in. Communities all across the country are hosting everything from music events to marathons. Visitors can choose to take in the World Sheepdog Trials; Piping Live!, the world's largest



Up Helly Aa

January 28, Lerwick, Shetland

Burn, baby, burn. Europe's largest festival of fire involves a series of marches and visitations, culminating in a torch-lit procession and the burning of a galley. The festival marks a tradition that began in the 1880s when soldiers and sailors came home to Lerwick for Yuletide, and showed their "rowdy habits and a taste for firearms." At some point the idea of dressing up like Vikings and adding a massive torch lit procession were added and the modern-day Up Helly Aa festival came into being. Today, expect to see a thousand strong marching with torches as they head toward the galley to light it on fire. After, the 45 different Viking squads head to 12 different halls where dancing commences until well into the next day.



St Anza: Scotland's International Poetry Festival

March 5-9, St. Andrews, Fife

UK's Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, appears at this year's festival alongside a number of top poets from the Netherlands, Croatia, the United States, and the UK. The festival features two themes. One is around the Commonwealth Games, also taking place during The Homecoming. Poets from India, South Africa, Botswana, Jamaica and Canada will share a "Common Wealth of Poetry." The festival's second theme is Words Under Fire, which will mark the centenary of the start of the First World War. The festival will look at how poets have responded to wars before and after 1914-1918 and a series of sessions entitled Past & Present will focus on war poets. In between, avid readers and listeners will find everything from poetry breakfasts to cabaret evenings, along with workshops, exhibitions, talks and cross-media performances.



Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art

April 4-21, Glasgow

Mingle with the art stars and feast your eyes on an unprecedented outpouring of imagination. The festival features more than 50 solo and group exhibitions by the best and upcoming Glaswegian, Scottish and international artists, with 90 per cent of the work new or previously unseen in the UK. Art is presented in a range of media and disciplines, including installation, sculpture, performance, film, stand-up comedy, collage, ceramics, photography and painting. Some of the highlighted artists at the festival are Serbian Aleksandra Domanovic, British artist Simon Martin, Canadian Gareth Moore, and American Anne Collier. Group shows include a pairing of British potter Lucie Rie's art alongside the photography of American George Platt Lynes.



UCI Mountain Bike World Cup

June 7-8, Fort William, Inverness-Shire

Feel the need for speed? You very well might after witnessing the thrilling and gruelling high-speed events when world cup mountain bike racing comes to Scotland. Hundreds of world-class riders from more than 35 countries with more than 15,000 spectators will come together in an idyllic highland setting. Bikers will battle it out for cup supremacy in the extremely demanding sports of downhill and 4-cross racing in what is going to be one of the premiere mountain bike events of the year. The downhill start list is likely to include a total of eight British world champions from the last six years who will race a full-on, flat-out, 555 metre descent down Aonach Mar, the ninth highest mountain in the UK.

- *► piping festival; numerous regional whisky festivals; all manner of Clan gatherings and Highland Games; and just about every kind of arts event imaginable. Celtic Life International put together a list below of some of the more intriguing events underway in the next year.*



Edinburgh Fringe Festival

August 1-25, Edinburgh

Edinburgh's is the original fringe theatre festival, bringing thousands of performers to the city to perform on a multitude of stages. From big names in the world of entertainment to unknown artists looking to build their career, the festival offers something for every taste. The festival dates back to 1947 when eight theatre groups turned up uninvited to perform at the then newly formed Edinburgh International Festival. More and more performers followed in the ensuing years and in 1958 the Edinburgh Fringe Society came into being. Now audiences can choose from hundreds of performances in theatre, comedy, dance, cabaret, opera, spoken word, musicals and more.



Forth Bridge Festival

September 4-13, North and South Queensferry

A 10-day event is lined up to celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of Scotland's most iconic landmarks. Everything on, about and around the bridge will take place during the celebration. The plans include an attempt to crack the Guinness World Record for a 1960s Scottish-themed outdoor lunch; a torch lit procession; a bike rally; and the Ultimate Bridge Experience. The latter is limited to 96 tickets and features a trip to the top of the bridge's tower a dizzying 12-metres up, a visit to inspect the anchorage underneath the bridge, lunch in a local restaurant, and a boat trip to see the road and rail bridges as well as the new Queensferry Bridge, opening in 2016.



Bloody Scotland Festival

September 19-21, Stirling, Stirlingshire

Was it Mr. Green with the lead pipe in the drawing room? You just might have the chance to find out at Scotland's only festival devoted to crime writing. The festival offers author events and readings, question and answer sessions, pitching sessions for new writings and discussions around the craft about such things as cutting-edge forensics, morality and the growing popularity of e-books. During the festival, organizers hand out awards for Crime Book of the Year and the Glengoyne Short Story Award. Although organizers haven't set this year's schedule yet, last year's events give a taste of what to expect: sessions on things like the New Nordic Noir, Keeping Secrets, Thrilling Tales and Psychological Twists, and Chasing Serial Killers.



Ayrshire Real Ale Festival

October 2-4, Troon

Scotland is famous for its whisky, but is no slouch when it comes to beer either. Last year, some 2,600 ale drinkers attended the Ayrshire Real Ale Festival, which showcases some 125 beers, over half of them sourced from Scottish breweries. The festival also features a large selection of cider and sherry as well as wine. Food is available at all the sessions and public transport offers good connections to the site as well. If you've ever wanted to try, say, a Black Isle Yellowhammer or a Highland Dark Munro, here's your chance.



Bannockburn

During the Wars of Independence, no fight was more singularly important than the Battle of Bannockburn. Robert Bruce, the King of Scots, faced down Edward II's English army in 1314. Over two days of fighting, the Scottish army repelled the English, employing vast units of spearmen against the English cavalry. Ultimately, Bruce's army trapped the English and the battle became one of the most potent symbols of Scottish independence. Now, 700 years later, 21st century technology is going to bring the battle to life again, as an unprecedented live recreation of the original rout.

Bannockburn will be a pivotal point of the Homecoming 2012 celebrations. In March, the new Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre will open. According to David McAllister, project director of the Battle of Bannockburn Project, the centre will make Stirling a key tourist destination, attracting some 80,000 visitors annually, an increase of 30 per cent over previous years. When the centre opens its doors, it will become the only place in the UK where "state-of-the-art 3D technology and medieval armies meet, and the first in the world where motion capture has been used to immerse visitors into an authentic 3D medieval battle," McAllister says.

This is the same technology that is famous for creating characters in film such as Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* and provides a degree of realism that could not be achieved using traditional filming methods. Stuntmen use replica weapons to engage in a real fight meant to provoke genuine reactions. Using digital enhancement, the swords and lances are shown striking and penetrating armour and flesh.

The experience is a collaboration between expert modellers at the Centre for Digital Documentation and Visualization, a partnership between the Glasgow School of Art's Digital Design Studio and Historic Scotland, and an academic advisory panel featuring some of the UK's top historians. Interpretation designers Bright White used the latest Hollywood-calibre techniques to bring full-on, life-size 3D to the retelling of the battle. "Bannockburn's 3D battle scenes and characters are as historically accurate as possible in their physical, verbal and psychological states,"

McAllister says.

A "battle master" will prepare visitors, who will then observe the battle as it occurred in 1314, with a focus on the tactics of both armies and how the battle was won. Visitors will see the brutal mechanics of medieval warcraft and witness warriors and armoured knights trying, sometimes in vain, to find a weakness in the opposing forces. The sights, sounds and emotions of realistic skirmishes will play out around visitors, who also have the chance to meet 12 characters from the events of 1314, who interact to tell their personal stories.

On the other end of the spectrum, for three days in June, one of the largest battle re-enactments ever will take place as hundreds of experienced re-enactors will bring the fight to life once again in tightly choreographed sequences. Within a specially created festival arena, spectators will see medieval warfare first-hand while an array of themed villages offer up the atmosphere of medieval and modern Scotland. Audience members won't be allowed to participate, but can watch the action from a safe viewing distance. Some 45,000 visitors from around the world are expected to attend the event.

In terms of the existing monuments at the site, they are being restored to the condition and appearance commensurate with the design, significance and quality of work their respective craftsmen, engineers, sculptors and architects originally created, McAllister says. The completed rotunda includes a number of works such as an installation to commemorate the location of the original Borestone, where Bruce is said to have planted his battle standard; and Scottish

poet Kathleen Jamie's inspirational text is inscribed to a replacement ringbeam, something architect Eric Stevenson originally intended. As well, repair works to the flagpole enable the site to once again fly the saltire with pride.

Other improvements include work to the iconic 1960s Pilkington Jackson statue of King Robert the Bruce. Originally unveiled by the Queen on the 650th anniversary of the battle, the statue has weathered over the decades, slowing turning green. Work to clean, repair and wax seal the statue has been carried out and after a series of conservation works the monument has been restored to its original bronze glory. Notes McAllister: "Bannockburn is one of the most significant sites in Scotland. The National Trust for Scotland takes pride in ensuring that the story of the battle is told accurately and compellingly, giving every visitor the chance to learn more about this critical point in history."

The 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn is marked in 2014.

A new state-of-the-art visitor centre with a 3D battle re-enactment opens in March, 2014.

In June 2014, several hundred people will carry out a live re-enactment of the battle.

Alongside the live re-enactment will be a program of music, Scottish food and drink, crafts, literature and outdoor activities.

Explorer, naturalist, geologist, botanist, inventor, author – John Muir is better known in the United States than in his homeland of Scotland. In the former, Muir is celebrated as the “Father of the National Parks.” While there are parks, glaciers, mountains named in his honour in the United States – and even a planet in the solar system – with a few notable exceptions Muir hasn’t attained the same recognition in Scotland. However, that’s all about to change. As part of the Homecoming 2014 a major festival will be held honouring the man his biographer called; one of the patron saints of twentieth-century American environmental activity.

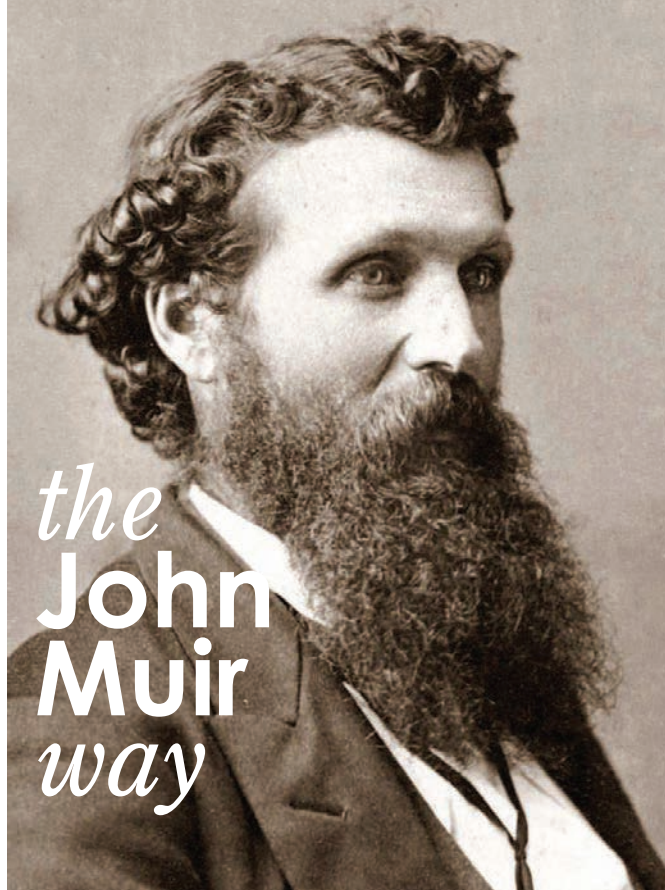
“We feel he should be known and celebrated throughout the land of his birth, and that will begin this year when the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond, officially opens a major new national pathway, the John Muir Way,” says Marion Mullholland, a spokesperson with Scottish Natural Heritage.

The route is scheduled to open on April 21, marking both Muir’s birthday and the centenary of his death. The 210 kilometre, coast-to-coast lowlands trail echoes Muir’s own personal journey growing up in Dunbar before he travelled to the west coast of Scotland to set sail for his remarkable life in America. The trail passes castles, historic towns and villages, beautiful coast scenery and Scotland’s first national park, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

“Despite the magnificent efforts of East Lothian Council (the region covering the town where Muir was born), the John Muir Trust and the John Muir Museum in Dunbar, Americans still tend to know more about him than Scots,” notes Keith Geddes, chair of the Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board, which developed the concept of the route. “This is why the new route is a fitting way to celebrate a man who throughout his life, writings and legacy could inspire a new generation of Scots to recognize the value of nature and the outdoors.”

The trail goes directly through Scotland’s Central Belt, the most populated part of the country. According to Mullholland, the idea is to encourage Scots to appreciate the beautiful scenery they have right in their backyards, as well as to encourage visitors to celebrate Muir and the places he loved. “John Muir had an influence world-wide,” Mullholland says. “His environmental campaigning helped change the way people view nature and the Earth’s finite natural resources. ‘All that the sun shines on is beautiful, so long as it is wild,’ he wrote. That’s a philosophy that I think many people in Scotland share.”

Leading up to the trail’s opening is a spectacular festival paying tribute to the naturalist. The program of events includes the opening of the sculpture The Kelpies in Falkirk. The latter consists of two 30-metre high horse heads rising out of the landscape above the Forth and Clyde Canal and are monuments to equine history and the lost industries of the Falkirk area and Scotland, according to the artist, Andy Scott. The festival itself will open with a night-time, outdoor arts event over two nights in the new Helix Park near Falkirk.



The celebrations include a lot of original programming. Ramblers and runners will be invited to carry along the length of the trail Muir-themed flags that local school-children have designed. A gang of bearded Muir look-alikes are going to provide photo opportunities even as they offer thought-provoking quotes from Muir’s writing. A stylized tree will be raised at the launch and finale in tribute to Muir’s enduring love of giant sequoias. And an American and a Scot will walk the length of the John Muir Way, planting native seeds and reciting poetry along the way.

On the morning of April 26 the festival will reach the end of John Muir Way in Helensburgh on the same Clyde coast that 11-year-old Muir and his family sailed en route to their new life in America. The festival will culminate that evening in a street ceilidh and firework finale at Loch Lomond National Park. “We’re hoping that people will be inspired to both explore and protect Scotland’s countryside,” Mullholland says. “John Muir was inspired by the wildlife and the beautiful scenery he grew up with as a young boy in Scotland, and we’re hoping plenty of other people – from both inside and outside of Scotland – will enjoy the trail and learn more about Muir’s beliefs.”

The festival takes place from April 17-26, 2014 and celebrates John Muir, Scots conservationist and founding father of national parks.

The festival includes the official opening of the new John Muir Way, a route stretching between Muir’s birthplace, Dunbar, and Helensburgh on Scotland’s west coast.

Scottish Natural Heritage in partnership with Creative Scotland and Homecoming Scotland are supporting the festival.

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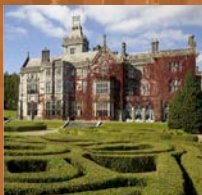
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the Celtic Traveler



Scotland

Population: 5,313,600

Capital: Edinburgh

Official Languages: English, Scots and Gaelic

Currency: Pound Sterling

Getting There:

By Air: Fly into international airports in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow Prestwick.

By Ferry: Regular direct ferry service between Northern Ireland and Scotland: between Belfast and Cairnryan, between Larne and Troon or between Larne and Cairnryan.

On Land: There are numerous train options from England and bus/coach options from both England and Wales. If you are driving, take the A1 from London to Edinburgh (for some gorgeous scenic views branch off onto the A68). Alternatively, take the M6 from Rugby to Carlisle.

Travel Documents:

Tourist visa and other document requirements vary by traveler. Visit the UK Border Agency website for more information: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Noteworthy Attractions:

- *The Royal Mile*
- *Edinburgh*
- *Walking route from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyrood House*
- *Scotland's Malt Whisky Trail*
- *Speyside*
- *Seven operational and historic distilleries, and the only working cooperage in the UK*
- *St. Andrews Links*
- *St. Andrews, Fife*
- *St. Andrews boasts one, nine-hole course and six 18-hole courses. Its Old Course is dubbed the "home of golf" with play dating back to 1400AD.*

Travel Tidbits:

For authentic cuisine, take advantage of Scotland's many farmers' markets and pubs - and don't forget to order mince 'n' tatties. Scotland is also home to a number of Michelin-star restaurants.

Globally, approximately 50 million people have ancestral ties to Scotland. While in Scotland, you can conduct genealogical research at Scotland's People Centre, the Scottish Genealogy Society in Edinburgh or at The Mitchell Library in Glasgow.



Ireland

Population: 1.8 million (Northern Ireland), 4.6 million

(Republic of Ireland)

Capital: Belfast (Northern Ireland), Dublin

(Republic of Ireland)

Official Languages: Northern Ireland: English, Gaelic and Ulster Scots, Republic of Ireland: English and Irish (Gaelic)

Currency: Pound Sterling (Northern Ireland), Euros (Republic of Ireland)

Getting There:

By Air: Book flights arriving at airports in Shannon, Dublin or Belfast.

By Ferry: Take a ferry (either as a foot passenger or by vehicle) to various ports around Ireland from the Isle of Man, Scotland, Wales and England.

Travel Documents:

Visa and passport requirements vary by nationality. Contact your local Irish Embassy (for the Republic of Ireland) or British Embassy (for Northern Ireland) for more information.

Noteworthy Attractions:

- *Giant's Causeway*
- *County Antrim*
- *UNESCO World Heritage Site and Northern Ireland's most popular visitors' attraction*
- *Boyne Valley*
- *County Meath*
- *Some of the most historical sites in all of Europe including The Hill of Slane, Loughcrew Cairns and the Newgrange Passage Tomb.*
- *O'Connell Street*
- *Dublin*
- *Known as Europe's widest urban street, it is perhaps Dublin's most vibrant thoroughfare. Intriguing architecture, monuments (including the tallest sculpture in the world) and business centre make a great walking tour.*

Travel Tidbits:

It is estimated that more than 80 million people around the world are connected to the Irish Diaspora.

For authentic Irish cuisine, visit the coast and countryside for fresh seafood. Local farmers' markets and small pubs are good bets also.

The best way to explore Ireland is by car.



Wales

Population: 3,074,067

Capital: Cardiff

Official Languages: Welsh and English

Currency: Pound Sterling

Getting There:

By Air: Fly direct to Cardiff International Airport or fly to England and drive/take the train into Wales. In the summertime, flights from Belfast and the Isle of Man arrive at Wales' Anglesey Airport.

By Ferry: Regular direct ferry service between Ireland and Wales.

On Land: There are several regular train and bus/coach options between England and Wales. If you are driving, there are numerous motor routes from England. Note that both the M4 and M48 have pay-tolls for crossing the Severn Bridges.

Travel Documents: Tourist visa and other document requirements vary by traveler. Visit the UK Border Agency website for more information: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Noteworthy Attractions:

- King Edward's Castles and Town Walls
- Gwynedd principle area
- A World Heritage Site featuring four castles and two fortified towns built during the late 13th century and early 14th century
- Snowdonia National Park
- North Wales
- The largest national park in Wales and home to Wales' highest mountain
- Cardiff Bay
- Cardiff
- Cardiff Bay hosts many attractions including the Wales Millennium Centre (home to the Welsh National Opera), the Doctor Who Experience, the Craft in the Bay gallery and the Goleulung 2000 Lightship.

Travel Tidbits:

Enjoy free admission to all National Museums. The best way to see Wales, including its most remote areas, is by car or motorcycle. For adrenaline seekers, try 'coasteering', a seaside adventure activity that was invented in Pembrokeshire.



Isle of Man

Population: 84,497

Capital: Douglas

Official Languages: English, Manx Gaelic

Currency: Manx Pounds

Getting There:

By Air: Most flights arrive at the Isle of Man Airport (Ronaldsway Airport) from England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland and the Channel Islands.

By Ferry: Regular ferry service is available between the Isle of Man and five different ports in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Travel Documents: The Isle of Man is part of the British Isles Common Travel Area. Passport and visa requirements vary by traveler's nationality and in some cases requirements may vary from travel into other British Isle destinations. The UK administers travel visas and such on the Isle of Man's behalf. Visit the UK Border Agency website for more information: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Noteworthy Attractions:

- Manx Stone Cross Collection
- Located in churches/churchyard all around the Isle
- The Isle of Man features a collection of about 200 headstones and crosses; the oldest ones feature Celtic designs or inscriptions.
- Peel Castle
- St. Patrick's Isle, Peel
- The town of Peel is situated in a gorgeous seaside location. Take the causeway to St. Patrick's Isle to explore Peel Castle where legends of a ghost dog, Vikings and monks are often told.
- Cregneash Village
- Mull Hill
- An interpretive village highlighting the Manx way of life (language, trade, farming, homes and craft) during the 19th and early 20th centuries

Travel Tidbits:

In 1990, UNESCO declared the Manx Gaelic language was extinct. However, it has rebounded and is now taught in schools and appears on everything from road signs to mobile apps.



Cornwall

Population: 532,300

Capital: Truro

Languages: English and Cornish

Currency: Pound Sterling

Getting There:

By Air: Fly into Newquay Cornwall Airport from major UK airports and some international locales.

By Ferry: There are more than 25 ferries (for foot passengers and cars) that service Cornwall.

On Land: Many people choose to drive to Cornwall as it is the most convenient way to explore the region, but you can also take the bus or train. Within Cornwall, there is an extensive bus network and a train line that connects many of the region's towns.

Travel Documents: Tourist visas and other document requirements vary by traveler. Visit the UK Border Agency website for more information: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Noteworthy Attractions:

- Penzance Cross
- Penzance
- One of the most famous Celtic crosses in the region located next to the Penlee House Gallery and Museum
- Penwith Peninsula
- Penzance, It boasts approximately 400 historical Celtic sites
- The Eden Project
- Near St. Austell
- The world's largest indoor rainforest

Travel Tidbits:

The Cornish language has experienced a resurgence since the early 1900s. Today, more than 500 residents speak Cornish as their first language.

Carshare Cornwall, a free travel service, is now available to travelers. Be sure to try Cornish pasties and cream teas.



Brittany

Population: 3,199,066
Capital: Rennes
Official Language: French
Currency: Euros

Getting There:

By Air: Fly to regional airports in Brittany (Brest, Dinard and Rennes) from Ireland, the UK and elsewhere in France.

By Ferry: Arrive at St-Malo or Roscoff via ferry (either with your vehicle or as a foot passenger) from Ireland or the UK.

On Land: You can easily drive to Brittany from elsewhere in France or via the Channel Ports from England. Brittany also has an excellent train network to explore the region and which extends to elsewhere in France.

Travel Documents: France, and thus Brittany, is a part of the Schengen Agreement (which dictates required visa/documents depending on nationality). www.schengenvisa.cc

Noteworthy Attractions:

- *Saint-Malo*
- *Ille-et-Vilaine*
- *A walled city since medieval times, as well as a Channel Port, oozing with historic charm, a lively hotel/restaurant/shopping scene, a beautiful beach and more!*
- *Dinan*
- *Côtes-d'Armor*
- *One of Brittany's most popular historic towns, with fortified towers and ramparts still intact, cobbled alleyways and creperies, the Jacobins Theatre, Château de Dinan, quaint boutiques and more.*
- *The Carnac Stones*
- *Carnac*
- *Over 3,000 standing stones erected as far back as 4,500 BC*

Travel Tidbits

Approximately one-quarter of Brittany's population can speak its Celtic language called Breton. Celtic culture is most preserved in the westerly part of Brittany and in the capital Rennes. Culinary specialties include cider, crepes, seafood and Kouign-amann cake.

A wonderful way to explore Brittany is by bicycle. The region boasts 1,000 km or more of bicycle paths (known as voie vertes or green ways).



Galicia

Population: 2,778,913
Capital: Santiago de Compostela
Official Languages: Galician and Spanish
Currency: Euros

Getting There:

By Air: Fly into one of Galicia's three international airports (Santiago, La Coruna and Vigo).

By Ferry: There are regular ferry services to Galicia from Santander or Bilbao in Spain and Portsmouth or Plymouth in England.

On Land: Drive or take the train or bus to Galicia from elsewhere in Spain, Portugal and beyond. The railway network offers high speed train service between Galician cities and on to Madrid. Within Galicia, you can hire a car or use the widespread taxi and bus services.

Travel Documents: Spain, and thus Galicia, is a part of the Schengen Agreement (which dictates required visa/documents depending on nationality). www.schengenvisa.cc

Noteworthy Attractions:

- *Roman Walls of Lugo*
- *Lugo*
- *Stretching more than two kilometers around Lugo's historic centre, the Roman Walls were built during the third century and are designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.*
- *Santiago de Compostela*
- *Galicia's capital is the endpoint of the famous pilgrimage route (Way of Saint James) where it is possible to marvel at the city's architecture, monuments, palaces, churches (including the renowned Santiago de Compostela Cathedral) and historic alleyways and squares.*
- *Castro de Barona*
- *A Coruña*
- *This archeological site, overlooking the gorgeous Ria de Muros and Noya, boasts famous Celtic ruins more than 2,000 years old.*

Travel Tidbits:

Galicia is characterized by a very low crime rate.

Galicia offers some true gems for beach vacations, as well as a number of awe-inspiring miradores (lookouts).

Increasingly, Galicians are reconnecting with their Celtic roots that date back 2,000 years or more. One example is the storytelling practice over a bowl of queimada that still takes place in traditional restaurants and hotels today.



Céad Míle **Faite!**

Ireland welcomed the world in 2013, kicking off the year of The Gathering with the largest New Year's Eve festivities in the country's history!

Over the past 12 months, the Emerald Isle hosted nearly 5,000 events, inviting its global Diaspora of 70 million - and others - to come home and celebrate their heritage.

As we look back upon the year that was The Gathering, we are grateful for so many memorable moments...



January

Dublin's Savoy Cinema was the vibrant scene for a Hollywood Gathering on January 20th. Daniel Day-Lewis hosted the European premiere of *Lincoln*. (A month later, he won the Best Actor Academy Award for the film, making him the only actor to win three such Oscars). Director Steven Spielberg and co-star Sally Field joined Day-Lewis for the special screening, as did Bono and the Edge from U2, among other celebrities. Proceeds from the star-studded event went to the Wicklow Hospice Foundation. Day-Lewis has been living in County Wicklow for 17 years. He grew up in London, but inherited the genetic and emotional ties to the Emerald Isle from his father, the late Poet Laureate Cecil Day-Lewis, who was born in Stradbally, County Laois. "What better moment than this, for all those with Irish roots and connections throughout the world, to visit and revisit Ireland," said Day-Lewis in support of the Gathering. "By answering that whisper in the blood and returning to the source, they shall also be investing in the future of this uniquely magnificent country."



February

The Lighthouse Counselling and Wellness Center, Inc., based in Eatontown, New Jersey, hosted a Sacred Ireland Tour from February 9th to the 15th. The purpose was to educationally explore some of the country's most symbolic ancient sites and archetypes. It was geared towards sand play therapy professionals (one of the Counselling Center's treatment specialties), spiritual seekers, travel enthusiasts and those with Irish heritage. Highlights included participating in a Ritual of Intention at the Saint Brendan's Wishing Tree; exploring nature as a "sacred vessel" at the Cliffs of Moher; drinking healing water from, and leaving offerings at, St. Brigid's Wells; hiking around the remains of St. Kevin's Monastery in Glendalough; and discovering the numerous mystical sites (such as Fairy Trees, Tara Hill, Newgrange and St. Ciaran's Holy Well) around County Meath. The trip ended with a dinner and traditional music and dance show at Johnnie Fox's Pub.



March

As the country's national holiday, St. Patrick's Day is always big in Ireland. But this year's multi-day festival added an exciting new element to its annual Dublin parade. In the spirit of the Gathering, nearly 6,000 people from 45 different countries participated, including several hundred Canadians. The visitors got to see sites like Trinity College and Dublin Castle as they enthusiastically walked in the parade-themed "Great Things Happen When We Get Together." Additionally, more than 3,500 performers participated in the holiday procession, including renowned Irish entertainer Nicky Byrne (who played the role of Grand Marshall), creative groups (like Inishowen Carnival Group and Buí Bolg) and musical ensembles from across Europe and North America (such as the Purdue All-American Marching Band along with their world's largest marching band drum). In all, nearly half a million spectators lined the Irish capital's streets to take in the international extravaganza!

www.ireland.com

14 Tribes gathered
at the Galway Oyster &
Seafood Festival

9 breeds participated
in Dublin's Wolfhound
Gathering

1,176 past and
present Roses of Tralee

100 Byrnes came
together from the US,
NZ, Germany & Ireland

April

When Tom Cruise was in Dublin for the Irish premiere of his film *Oblivion*, he also attended a very special ceremony. The morning of April 3rd, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore presented Cruise with a Certificate of Irish Heritage. Cruise had always known he had Irish roots, but on this visit, he learned his heritage extended much farther back than he previously thought. Meeting with Eneclann genealogists, Cruise discovered his Irish ties dated back to a 12th century knight. He also found out that his great-great-great grandfather, Patrick Russell Cruise, played a heroic role. After emigrating to America circa 1826, Russell Cruise heard families living on his land had been evicted, and so he returned to Ireland to see them restored to their homes. "It's a great honour for me and for my whole family – I can't wait to bring it back to them and enlighten them on their history," said Cruise upon receiving the Certificate of Irish Heritage. "I'm very proud to be Irish. There's a pride in America of being Irish."



May

Chefs from all around the world competed in the World Irish Stew Championships on May 1st and 2nd at St. Angela's College in Sligo. Gabriel McSharry, from Eala Bhan Restaurant in the town of Sligo, won the professional category with his traditional stew made from locally sourced lamb, potato, onion and leeks, topped with buttered cabbage. Caroline Maxwell, from the Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Killybegs, County Donegal, took home the student chef honours, while Belfast's Brendan Donnelly won the amateur chef prize. Professional chefs in teams of two also competed in a Mystery Basket challenge. Once mystery ingredients were revealed, they had 120 minutes to plan and execute a three-course Irish-inspired menu. Joe O'Flaherty and Sam Muholland from Braiserie On the Corner, Galway, triumphed in this particular competition with their smoked mackerel starter, braised shin of beef main and vanilla panacotta dessert. Those foodies not competing still got in on the action attending master classes, foraging treks and themed dinners.



June

In June 1963, less than five months before his assassination, President John F. Kennedy visited Ireland. "Kennedy himself referred to his Irish visit as 'the best four days of my life,'" states the website of Kennedy Homestead, a visitor centre opened on June 22, 2013 during JFK 50—The Homecoming. (The Homestead, located in County Wexford, was the birthplace of JFK's great-grandfather, Patrick Kennedy.) In addition to the visitor centre's official opening, the JFK 50 gathering included an all-day street party and the lighting of the eternal Emigrant Flame by Prime Minister Enda Kenny, JFK's sister Jean Kennedy Smith and his daughter Caroline. The source of the flame travelled, by air and sea, from the President's plot in Arlington National Cemetery. JFK's grandson also delivered a rousing speech to the more than 10,000-person crowd. "For Irish people, Kennedy was a hero, an idol; he embodied the ultimate Irish success story..." states the Kennedy Homestead website. "...Famine emigrant to the most powerful man in the world, all in just three generations."



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112,699
Facebook fans

36 *twin town
travelers from Brittany
to Ballydehob*

99 *Powers partied
at their Clan gathering*

63 *cm was the
length of the longest
beard at the Town of
1000 Beards Gathering*



July

Two major events kicked off on July 15th: the Galway Arts Festival and Riverdance-The Gathering. For the 36th year, Galway hosted Ireland's largest annual arts festival. Over two weeks, the city's streets and venues were filled with musicians, dancers, artists, actors, acrobats and arts enthusiasts. Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre's *Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka*, Olwen Fouéré's premiere of *riverrun* and Glen Hansard (star of *Once* and co-composer of the film's Oscar-winning song, *Falling Slowly*) were among the performance highlights. Meanwhile in Dublin, Riverdance invited aspiring Irish dance professionals, and supporters of the art form, to a week of master classes, céilís and other celebratory gatherings. On the last day, a world record was broken! Along the River Liffey, 1,693 people, from over 40 different countries, lined up and performed the iconic Riverdance. They were joined by Jean Butler (who performed with Riverdance when it first started in 1994) along with 100 other members of the dance company.



August

In 2010, the Irish Redhead Convention arose from Joleen Cronin and her brother Dennis joking around. They were planning Dennis' upcoming birthday party and playfully said they would only invite redheads. The joke turned into a reality and the Crosshaven-based Convention has been running ever since. This year was the biggest yet, boasting more eclectically rouge-themed events throughout the weekend. Irish actress Susan Boyle performed her play *A Wine Goose Chase*, and Bosco, perhaps Ireland's most famous red-headed puppet, delighted the kids. Jack Daly and Sarah Mullins were crowned King and Queen, while others competed in Carrot Toss competitions or the Ginger Chef Cook-off (participants earned one point for every red ingredient used). Awards were also given out for such categories as "Best Red Beard," "Longest Red Hair," "Most Freckles Per Square Inch" and "Furthest Travelled Redhead" (the latter went to New Zealander Gemma Storar). By the end of the weekend, the Convention, attended by redheads and non-redheads alike, had raised €7,106 for the Irish Cancer Society.



September

From September 13th to the 15th, Canadians with County Wicklow roots were invited to Coollattin House, formerly owned by the Earls Fitzwilliam, for an event called *Canada Come Home*. Guests participated in a number of events including a golf tournament, heritage presentations, tours of the historic home, guided walks around the villages Shillelagh and Tinahely, personal genealogy research and traditional performances. Canada's Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Loyola Hearn, launched the weekend at a Friday night reception. One stirring moment for many of the attendees was a re-enactment depicting the 6,000 people who, during the Assisted Clearances of 1847-1856, left Coollattin Estate for Canada. "It was the heart-wrenching time when people left and wouldn't see each other again...it resonates," said Irish-Canadian immigrant Eileen Noran of the performance (in a video on the Gathering Channel). Of her overall experience at *Canada Come Home*, Nolan added, "I've made a lot of new friends here, made new connections and see opportunities to maybe follow up on those connections when we get back to Canada."

www.ireland.com

16 international
hurling teams took
part in the Aer Lingus
Hurling Gathering

300 Gallaghers
gathered from around
the world

230,000
eyes were pinned to the
sky at Flightfest

1,693
Riverdancers from 43
countries broke a world
record

October

The City and County of Cork hosted a Gathering from October 14th to 20th. Cork Rebel Week included over 60 events (representing “all things Cork”) attended by more than 150,000 locals and visitors from across Ireland and the world. Eight marching bands from Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, the Czech Republic and the UK came to participate in the International Cork Parade and each was hosted by one of the County’s towns. They battled for the crown of Best International Marching Band which was awarded to Germany’s Spielmanns-und Fanfarenzug Hahn Nethen. Cork Rebel Week also included the International Naval Festival which featured a fleet review with war ships from Belgium, Russia, France and Britain. The next day, Seo Linn (an Irish language band and YouTube sensation) were joined by Cork musicians John Spillane, GMC Beats and Natural Gas as part of the country’s first Sail-In’ concert. In its first year, Cork Rebel Week was a huge success and made an impact on an area that normally sees little tourist traffic that time of year.



November

Tar Abhaile (‘Come Home’) is a TG4 six-week series which began airing on November 17th. The bilingual television show celebrates 12 members of the Diaspora who travelled to Ireland for the Gathering. For example, one episode features Australian Bryan Lynch who met a long lost cousin and visited the burial plot of his Irish ancestors. Lynch and his wife also renewed their vows in a church where his relatives had wed more than 150 years before. The 12 featured visitors were sought out and invited to the Emerald Isle by community volunteers with the guidance of Ireland Reaching Out (Ireland XO). Ireland XO is an organization that practices “reverse genealogy,” meaning it traces the routes of emigrants who left Ireland during the 1800 and 1900s to locate living descendants. “...they then track down their living descendants and reach out, inviting them back to their spiritual home, to share local knowledge, walk the land of their ancestors, show them their final resting places and where possible, introduce them to long-lost living relatives,” states the TG4 website.



December

As the year of The Gathering began, so it came to a close as hundreds of thousands raised a pint across the Emerald Isle to their past, present and future. The biggest celebrations again took place in Dublin, with many revelers drawn by Lonely Planet’s nod to the country’s capital as one of the top-ten places to be on NYE. The renowned guide also called Dublin one of the friendliest cities in Europe, a fitting tribute to both the place and its people who warmly welcomed thousands of visitors from around the world in 2013, forging new friendships and growing the global Irish family for generations to follow. That *Céad Míle Fáilte* will take centre stage again in 2014, with thousands events planned across Ireland. There’s truly never been a better time to come home!



Go raibh míle maith agat!

www.ireland.com

7 International
Marching Bands took
part in Cork Rebel Week

120 Crowleys
returned from overseas
for their Clan gathering

27,664
Twitter followers

Millions of
hugs, smiles, tears and
laughs



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USA-based Tenon Tours offers a variety of packages and itineraries for intrepid travelers



Set aside your preconceived notions of what an organized tour looks like and then you might begin to understand Tenon Tours.

"The inspiration to start Tenon Tours came from the sheer satisfaction that you receive when you're able to create lifelong memories for others through travel," says Bryan Lewis of his Stoneham, Ma company, which creates travel experiences to Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales and beyond. "When I look at how people's lives are impacted by visiting another country, experiencing the culture, learning the history, and developing an appreciation for the things they wouldn't necessarily ever encounter had they not taken the opportunity to travel, it really makes every trip worth planning."

Tenon Tours works with each client (whether traveling solo, with a companion or a group) to arrange a tour that strikes that traveler's ideal balance between independence, flexibility and structure. For example, Tenon's City Stay packages allow travelers to select a metropolis (such as Galway, Belfast, Glasgow, Edinburgh or London) as a home base. The package comes with accommodations, day trips to stunning sites outside the city and more. Or the Ireland Hoppers package enables guests to stay overnight in several Irish towns and cities, where Tenon arranges the transportation and accommodations, allowing clients to take advantage of optional activities or to create their own itinerary. Additionally, self-driven, personalized chauffeur tours and other customized trips can be arranged.

"The difference between Tenon Tours and traditional tour operators is that we

pride ourselves on creating tailor-made trips based on each customer's desires," Lewis says.

"While most companies offer a wide range of 'catalog tours' which have strict itineraries, we feel that each trip should be special. Every customer of Tenon works directly with a destination specialist who provides an exceptional amount of personal service until the itinerary is perfect."

Tenon also specializes in group travel, offering numerous preset theme tours, bringing those with similar interests together. Examples include Singles Week, Ages 50+ & Active, the upcoming Croke Park Classic, and the Irish Life Experience (specially designed for North American high school students). New for 2014, Tenon will host trips for Homecoming Scotland and a large scale event to "celebrate the traditional Irish Pub," Lewis notes.

Celtic Life International caught up with Shannon Simms before she set off for Scotland, her fourth trip arranged with Tenon. "I'm looking forward to some of the adventures, from the ghost tours in Edinburgh to walking on St Andrews golf course, from visiting castles and looking for Nessie in Loch Ness," Simms said before her December departure. "Tenon always does a superb job, so that I know we won't be disappointed!!"

Simms took Tenon's Irish Singles Tour in 2008 and 2011. Highlights included exploring Galway, the Aran Islands and Kylemore Abbey, horseback riding in Killarney National Park, and spending time in local pubs. She also became great friends with her tour mates. In 2009,

Simms traveled to the Czech Republic and Germany for Oktoberfest, another customized tour from Tenon.

"When I travel I like to get off the beaten path to try and find more of a local setting instead of a tourist place," Simms mentioned. "I love these tours because they are relaxed. You pick the excursions you want to go on, you can pick as many or none at all. Bottom line, it's a tour without the hustle and bustle of traditional tours."

Simms says she also continues to book with Tenon because of its quality staff. "I have dealt with several of them, but I deal a lot with Katie Fleming," Simms said. "She is prompt, cheerful, honest, helpful and always there when you need her. Bryan Lewis, the owner, is very approachable and is also always there if I need him."

Creating fulfilling travel experiences is what fuels Lewis and the rest of Tenon Tour team.

"The connection that people have with Ireland and the United Kingdom is something that is to be cherished and admired," he says. "I'm proud to be part of that community and even more proud of our team who provide an opportunity for others to explore their own roots through travel. I can't think of a more rewarding industry than travel and can truly say that I love coming to work every day."

www.tenontours.com

Tenon Tours covers the UK and a number of European countries, offering personalized tours for every taste. Theme tours include Singles Week, and the Irish Life Experience.



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Susie Vanden Boom of Milwaukee, Wisconsin recalls the best vacation of her life from the summer of 2013 when she visited Ireland for the first time. She and friend Molly Fiedler took the "10 Day Leisurely Ireland Tour" with CIE Tours International.

"Leisurely Ireland" felt like the right pace for us, plus it was extremely cost-effective for everything we were getting," says Vanden Boom. The two 30-something travel chums experienced a variety of Ireland's attractions, from visiting the Guinness Storehouse, the Cliffs of Moher and Blarney Castle to taking a jaunting car ride (horse-drawn carriage) in Killarney and a catamaran on Killary Fjord.

"My favorite attraction was the Dingle Peninsula," adds Vanden Boom. "That was what I had most anticipated visiting and it took my breath away."

"We offer more tours to Ireland than any other company on the planet," says Brian Stack, President of CIE Tours International, North America, and who is Irish born and bred. "We have 22 different tours of Ireland!"

In total, CIE offers more than 40 escorted coach tours where travellers (approximately 43,000 a year) choose Ireland or Scotland-only trips, or combine destinations throughout Ireland, Scotland, Wales or England. Additionally, CIE runs a number of tours to Eastern Europe and Italy.

Stack says for 2013, the Scotland-Ireland combined tours and the "Irish Spirit Tour" proved the most popular. "But you know nearly every one of our tours sells very well and that's why we have such a range of tours because we manage to fill them all," he notes, adding the variety allows travellers to select a package that fits their time allowance, budget and the places they wish to see.

One feature that makes CIE stand out from other companies is that travellers do not have to pay for extras. Breakfasts and most table d'hote dinners (often coupled with cultural entertainment), accommodations, airport transfers and daily sightseeing activities (including admission prices) are all included.

"We have a policy where we don't allow our tour guides to sell to anybody and everything is included in the one price our passengers pay," explains Stack. "So that's the difference."

"The meals and accommodations blew me away," says Vanden Boom. "I just assumed the food would be of middling quality,

since it was already 'paid for.' I could not have been more wrong. The meals were gourmet and probably some of the best food I've ever eaten in my life! I almost felt out of my element at a couple of the hotels, because they were so luxurious. But that was a good thing."

Browsing the Testimonials page on CIE's website, one apparent quality is the company's knowledgeable and jovial tour guides and coach drivers. "Dermot, our tour guide, was just absolutely hilarious," recalls Vanden Boom. "He told a lot of jokes and even sang songs while we were driving...He was also very professional and was always happy and friendly." Vanden Boom also commends coach driver Sean for making the group feel safe even when manoeuvring around narrow country roads and sheep-crossings, always with a smile on his face.

For more independent travellers, CIE also offers such options as self-drive or chauffeur-driven programs, where accommodations and transport are arranged and travelers have the choice as to whether or not they wish to follow a planned itinerary.

Now celebrating 82 years of service, Stack explains CIE dates its origins to 1932 when the Eucharistic Congress came to Dublin. The tour company (then known as Great Southern Railways) was hired to organize the travel needs for the one million visitors, which included renting cruise ships that docked in the capital's seaport to provide ample accommodations.

Today, CIE Tours is the number one producer of tours from America to Ireland," says Stack. "We're wired into knowing what Americans and Canadians want on their vacation!"

For Vanden Boom, it is this connection to people (both the "more laid-back," and "patient and friendly" locals she met in Ireland along with her fellow travellers) that made her trip most memorable. "As for my favorite experience in general, it was honestly meeting the people in my tour group," Vanden Boom says of her travel mates that ranged from their 30s to 70s. "In fact, I dare say some of them may have become our friends for life!"

www.cietours.com



Digging up roots

*Dr. Bruce Durie
explains why ancestral
tourism isn't just a thing
of the past.*

In 1810, Napoleon had been trampling all over Europe and Egypt for a decade. Apart from the minor inconvenience of having to fight wars in various places, the educated British upper classes suffered most from not being able to go on the Grand Tour. No longer could they swan about Italy, Greece and Egypt, sketching the architecture, painting the landscapes, brushing up their languages, buying anything old that wasn't bolted down (plus a few things that were) and generally sowing their wild oats as far away from their families and any consequences as possible.

How fortunate then, that Sir Walter Scott came along and invented Scottish tourism. The phenomenal success of *The Lady of the*

guaranteeing a stated room at a fixed price, travellers' cheques and more, and capitalised on the growth of the railways to get visitors quickly to their jumping-off points for tours of the landscapes of Scott and Burns.

By this time, the repeal of the post-1746 Act proscribing "playing of the bagpipe, wearing of the kilt, gathering together of the people, and the carrying of arms" under the penalty of deportation or death freed the Scots. By 1781 a number of Highland societies had formed, and in the first modern Gathering and Games was held at Falkirk.

Scott himself embedded the ideas of clans, tartans, bagpipes, kilts, claymore and all the rest by inviting King George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, resplendent in a Stewart tartan kilt (over pink tights!), and laying on Highland-themed entertainments. Much of Scotland was aghast – why was the King arrayed in what was then thought of as the costume of ill-educated, half-savage thieves and criminals? Many a Clan and Family Chief was caught out not possessing an "ancient tartan", and had to pick one from the counter-books of the cloth-weavers.

By the end of the 1820s games were once again being held throughout Scotland, and by 1857 the Highland Society of New York held the first Highland games in America, followed by San Francisco in 1865 and many others.

Albert and Victoria added to the mania for Scotland by buying the Balmoral estate with its "small but pretty" house, and building a new castle in the Scots Baronial (but German-influenced) style.

Now move forward 140 years or so. Highland games and gatherings are a fixture within the diaspora communities of North America, Australia, New Zealand and

Yet in their new homes they showed a still-undiminishing affection for the poetry of Burns, whisky, haggis, tartan and so on, and they joined Caledonian Clubs, St Andrews societies and pipe bands in ever-growing numbers. The 100 per cent brand-identity of Scotland is something any marketing person would kill for.

The explosive growth in genealogy opened up a new market – ancestral tourism. It has taken a long time for the various government and tourism bodies in Scotland to accept that this even exists and it is still not adequately supported, despite the 2009 Year of Homecoming and its wow-factor centrepiece, *The Gathering*. Everyone hopes that the 2014 Year of Homecoming, the Bannockburn celebrations and other events will drive this home (despite the lamentable absence of a Gathering this time).

A new breed of visitor has emerged – seeking local businesses which can provide an authentic ancestral experience based on surname and ancient heartland, culture, history, heritage and the ability to "touch the roots" in a very specific and individual way. Tie this in with the correct DNA tests, research in local and national archives not available online, access to local historians with specific regional knowledge and the re-creation of important events in the family's timeline – well, what's not to like? The right company can also construct a family chronicle as a lifelong memento.

This is a far cry from the pile-'em-high boiler-plate tours of the "Tourist Triangle" of Edinburgh, through Stirling up the Great Glen to Inverness and back via St Andrews, hardly pausing anywhere else. But where were your ancestors from, how did they live, what events did they take part in, when and



Lake (1810) and the subsequent *Waverley* novels (from 1814) made the Trossachs the must-see destination, populated with romantic noble-savage heroes like Rob Roy MacGregor; the number of carriages visiting Loch Katrine rose from 50 or so a year to hundreds overnight.

A new business – the tour operator – sprang up to fulfil the need for "fairly tales for adults." Though not first in the game, it was Thomas Cook who pioneered such tourism standards as the guidebook, hotel coupons



everywhere else the Scots find themselves, and are firmly based on the mid-19th Century model. Never mind that most Scots who left Scotland came from the Lowlands and Borders, that a minority had any link to the ancient Clan structure, that the vast majority left voluntarily, and were not herded off their land during "clearances" (which were numerically greater in the Lowlands anyway) or that most had never worn a kilt, tossed a caber, played the bagpipes or danced a Strathspey reel in their lives.



why did they move around in Scotland and beyond it? Now that's an Ancestral Tour.

After all, these aren't really visitors – they're Homecomers, and they deserve the very best. Welcome back.

Dr. Bruce Durie is the Chief Genealogist and Historian for MacDonald and Rees Ltd., who organize research-based ancestral heartland family chronicles.

www.macdonaldandrees.com



Tips for searching your Scottish ancestry

1. Decide what you want to achieve.

Every ancestor in all lines? One line and one surname only? A family story or legend? Start with that, and stick to it without diversions until you decide to pursue something else.

2. Talk to your oldest living relatives...

...but don't necessarily believe everything they say! Stories get spun, expanded, changed and in many cases suppressed. But it's a starting point, from which you can seek out actual evidence.

3. Never guess and trust nothing!

The ONLY worthwhile evidence is actual documents. Do not trust second-hand stories, published genealogies, websites, hearsay or family trees on the internet.

4. Start with someone who was alive around 1911.

Information is readily available, and it's close enough to be able to check within living memory.

5. Start from a census, if you can.

Work back from that snapshot of a family at one place and time to marriages, births and more.

6. Work backwards.

Someone born in 1700 may have 4,000 descendants - which lines would you chase forward?

7. Engage a properly-qualified genealogist with specific local knowledge...

Forget Ancestry, FamilySearch and the rest – local experts with access to resources can help break down brick walls.

8. Names are not fixed.

Surname spellings change from one generation to the next, and were not fixed until fairly recently. Don't fret over variants. In Scotland it's typical to call someone by a second or third forename, or by a diminutive - so "Sandy Brown" may have been christened "John Harold Alexander Brown."

9. Think laterally.

There is birth information in marriage and death records, and don't forget wills and testaments, land transfers, court records and so on.

10. Never despair!

You are at the bottom of a very tall mountain, and sometimes it's hard going. If you hit a log-jam, shelve it and work on another aspect, such as cousins or the female lines. You'll be amazed how often that one piece of vital information comes from an unexpected direction.



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Unable to jet to Ireland just this moment? Trek Ireland offers an energizing alternative: the company's walking videos allow you to get fit while exploring the Emerald Isle's gorgeous countryside.

Dubliner Jake MacManus decided to found Trek Ireland (which produces and distributes treadmill walking videos that evoke "a feeling, an emotional tie, a link to the past, a memory...") while hiking up County Wicklow's Djouce Mountain. "Looking around at that panoramic scene, and feeling on top of the world, that was something I wanted to share with others," he recalls.

Having a Master of Science in Interactive Multimedia, MacManus films the walking DVDs himself and selects the

trails. "I get into the van with my two dogs Benny and Scruff and go for a hike," he shares. "I'm always checking walking books, blogs and maps to find trails to explore. When I need to get a general overview of an area, I'll find a local guide and spend a few days walking and asking questions as there's a lot of reading and researching to do to discover how the past has adapted and shaped each trail."

Trek Ireland's walking videos are interactive (you can select the guide option to learn about the landscape's natural, historical and cultural features) and filmed from a first person point of view at an average walker's pace. Each DVD comes with three to four walks that allows you to see a variety of features, from waterfalls to lighthouses, wildflowers to ancient cairns and castles, the Cliffs of Moher to the Carrowmore Tombs; you can also take in the ambient sounds, like the lapping waves along Howth Head or songbirds inside Knocksink Wood.

"So far I am the only person producing walking videos around Ireland with an interactive guide that allows you to learn and explore Ireland's scenic and cultural landscape," says MacManus, who aims to create one DVD for each of Ireland's 32 counties. His videos may be ordered online and individual walks can be purchased for a number of mobile devices.

"In Ireland it seems like every stone or bump in the field has a story to tell," muses MacManus. "I fill each DVD with as much natural footage and cultural heritage as possible so that I like to think of them as almost hand-crafted products." He adds, "I welcome anyone who wants to join me on this journey of exploring Ireland's beautiful land and rich heritage!"

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with Andrew Ferguson

Of Scotland's more than 100 active malt distilleries Springbank is without doubt the most fascinating. One of Scotland's smallest distilleries, it is without question the most traditional. In an era when most Scottish distilleries are running flat out or aggressively expanding their production, Springbank is staying the course, which is both admirable and exasperating.

Springbank was established in 1828 in the town of Campbeltown on Scotland's west coast. Located near the bottom of the 100-mile-long Kintyre peninsula, it is built around the natural harbor of Campbeltown Loch. On the east side of the peninsula the port is well sheltered from the North Atlantic gales. Originally known as Kinlochkilkerran or the "head of the Loch of the Church of St. Kieran," the town was renamed Campbeltown after the Earl of Argyll, Archibald Campbell, who was granted the land in 1667.

At its height Campbeltown was the self-proclaimed "whisky capital of the world," best situated to quickly and easily ship whisky across the Atlantic to the Americas. Photos from the era show a port clogged with ships. At the peak of the herring and whisky boom in the late 1800s, 34 distilleries were in production and the whisky barons built stone mansions. For a few short years Campbeltown was per capita the most prosperous place in the United Kingdom, and quite possibly the world. The only institution more numerous than the distilleries was the church. People were not especially pious however; rather, distilleries felt they could keep the temperance movement at bay if they all sponsored a church.

Unfortunately, Campbeltown's fortunes were not to last. Most of the dis-

tilleries focused on quantity rather than quality. Respect for the town's whisky was already waning when prohibition and the Great Depression finished them off. Today Campbeltown is the smallest of Scotland's whisky regions with just three active distilleries. One of those, Glengyle, was only reopened by the owner of Springbank when the industry threatened to take away the region's designation.

Today Springbank is Scotland's oldest family-owned distillery, having been in the hands of the same family, the Wright/Mitchell's, for nearly 200 years. It is the only distillery in Scotland to malt 100 per cent of its own barley, which it does on site on a traditional malting floor. Much of the distillery's equipment is original, making it one of the few distilleries that does not employ any automation. Springbank was also at the head of the movement to bottle whiskies at 46 per cent without artificial colouring or chill filtering, and was the first to produce a range of whisky styles at the same distillery for bottling as distinct single malts. The distillery's namesake drink, Springbank, is lightly peated and two and a half times distilled. The second is a heavily peated, Islay style expression called Longrow, named for a lost Campbeltown distillery. The third and final whisky is Hazelburn, also named for a closed distillery, which is triple distilled and unpeated.

Because of its emphasis on tradition and doing everything on site, Springbank employs more people per liter of whisky produced than any other distillery in Scotland. The distillery is Campbeltown's largest employer and an important anchor of the local economy. Aware of this, Springbank's sixth generation owner, Hedley Wright, is loath to do anything to

jeopardize its future, and that of the town and its people. Without any heirs, Hedley plans to bequeath Springbank and its sister distillery Glengyle to a trust he's set up for the people of Campbeltown. The distillery is to remain independent, traditional and a cornerstone of the community. The little distillery that does things on its own terms is set to continue doing so for the foreseeable future.

Hazelburn 12 Year – Triple distilled and matured in ex-sherry casks. Rich notes of dark fruit and malt. - \$97.99

Springbank 15 Year – The distillery's flagship expression is too and a half times distilled, rich and spicy with a hint of peat. - \$92.99

Springbank 12 Year Gold Medal Marketing Cask – Bottled exclusively for Alberta at cask strength, with \$8.25/bottle being donated to Veterans charities. It has spicy dark fruit notes, but a lot more smoke and salt than the 15Yr. - \$104.99

Longrow 18 Year – Heavily peated and double distilled it is rich and earthy with soft peat oils and fruit cake. - \$156.49

Kilkerran Work in Progress 5 Year – The oldest release yet from the Glengyle distillery was recently named Lowland or Campbeltown Single Malt of 2013 by Whisky Advocate. Dark fruits, toffee, chocolate and caramel on the palate. - \$62.99



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The Kilberry Inn



The Kilbury Inn, which describes itself as a restaurant with rooms, is a couple of hours from Glasgow. But not everyone likes its location. "It's scandalous that this establishment remains open. It should be closed forthwith and re-open about 10 yards from my home!" That was one of the comments left in the inn's guestbook and it pretty much sums up how people feel about the award-winning spot. Another guest described their repast as "five-star food at three star prices."

In fact, this remote inn, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, was named Scottish restaurant of the year in 2009, and possesses a Michelin Bib Gourmand. To reach the inn midway between Lochgilphead and Tarbert in Argyll involves driving on the B8024, a single-track road that hugs the coast around the Knapdale peninsula overlooking Inner Hebrides. The journey doesn't prevent people from coming. The pull of the menu with mains like hand-dived Sound of Jura king scallops seared with puy lentils, pancetta, and salsa verde is too strong. And the inn advises: "We like to torment our wine supplier by frequently changing the list to suit what's on the menu...."

Clare Johnson, who owns the inn with David Wilson, describes it as a "wee croft," that in its previous incarnations was a post office, a shop, and a petrol station. It only became an inn 30 years ago. The original Kilberry Inn was a caravan across the road, where a woman served tea and scones. Johnson and Wilson owned a small restaurant in a nearby fishing village and were living in a rented cottage a few miles down the road. "We looked all over Scotland for a new business and couldn't find anything quite right," Johnson says. "Then we heard the Kilberry Inn was for sale and knew straight away it was perfect for us."

The inn comes with both its challenges and its rewards. Getting things delivered can be quite "interesting," according to Johnson, even though she says the inn isn't that far from civilization. She notes it's a 40-minute drive to the nearest shops, so she and Wilson have to be organized with their shopping lists. A bigger challenge is enticing staff to come work with them, but fortunately they have a lot of locals interested in working with the inn.

On the flip side, ask Johnson about the rewards and the first thing she replies is, "Living in Kilberry! People come here for their holidays, but we got to live here all the time. It's beautiful

and wild. We spend our days off at the beach. The water is pretty cold for swimming, but it's exhilarating." Johnson also appreciates her network of local suppliers. She deals with women who make bread for the inn and who bring eggs, "lovely berries," and things from their gardens. Then there's fellow who sells them lobsters and mackerel.

And beyond all that are the customers themselves. People come from around the world to stay at the inn. Johnson believes most find them through word-of-mouth and recommendations as the inn doesn't advertise much. Even social media is a hit and miss affair. Johnson uses Facebook to keep in touch with guests, but admits that she doesn't really have a handle on Twitter. But then that's not so important or in keeping with the atmosphere of the inn itself. People come to the inn to get away from the noise of social media, not to hear more of it. Johnson says guests can expect a warm welcome, good food and wine and a comfy bed. "We have no Wifi or mobile phone and even getting TV and radio can be a bit hit or miss. Kilberry is a place to relax and switch off from all that beeping!" Johnson declares.

For the winter, things become even more quiet than usual. At the time Celtic Life spoke with Johnson, she was just preparing to close the inn for the season. But even then, she and Wilson keep busy. "As usual, we have lots to do: painting, gardening, a new website, new carpets in the restaurant – we won't be bored in January!"

But that's part of what keeps Johnson and Wilson involved with running the inn. "It has to say interesting and challenging," Johnson says. "We started off with three rooms, now we have five, and every year we have a new project to improve something and make Kilberry better." That said, it's pretty hard to improve on something that sounds so darn perfect already.

Getting there: From Lochgilphead travel south along the A83 through Ardishaig and over the swing bridge of the Crinan Canal. After approximately three miles take the right turn posted Kilberry b8024. Drive through Achahois and Ormsary and after 16 miles you'll find the Kilberry Inn on the left, a white stone building with a red roof and a traditional red telephone box outside. www.kilberryinn.com

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Stoved Chicken



Christmas is behind us and we are settling into the real winter of short days and long nights. Hats, mittens and boots clog our entrance way as people come in or go outdoors in the wintry weather, as walking, skiing and skating help us to enjoy this season. I remember tobogganing as a child in Nova Scotia, a past-time that made our winters fun and festive. My brother and I share the same birthday, December

26, albeit two years apart. One year we each received a large toboggan for our special day. Each one could handle four people. We came from a family of 12, so, in retrospect, I can see the wisdom of the gift - it was ours in name only as everyone rode it. In fact it was more fun with everyone aboard. However, we were the bosses and got to ride in the front.

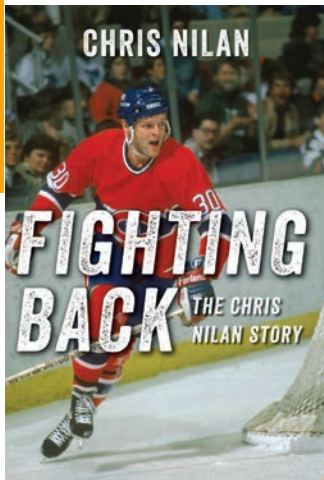
After those long days on the hill, there was nothing better than warming up with a scrumptious stoved chicken supper. The word "stoved" is to cook in a covered pot and originates from the time of the Franco/Scottish Alliance in the 17th Century. Instead of buying chicken joints, you can also choose either chicken thighs or chicken drum sticks.

INGREDIENTS PREPARATION

4 cups of potatoes cut into ¼ inch slices
2 large onions sliced thinly
2 tablespoons of chopped fresh chives
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon of sage
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
2 strips of bacon chopped
4 large pieces of chicken
1 bay leaf
2 ½ cups chicken stock
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 tablespoon of chopped ginger

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. Place a thick layer of potatoes on the bottom of a heavy covered baking dish. Place a layer of onion on top of the layer of potato. Sprinkle with half the chives, sage, salt, pepper and chopped ginger. Heat the butter and oil in a large frying pan and brown the bacon and chicken together. Transfer the meats to the baking dish reserving the fat. Place the bay leaf in between the chicken. Sprinkle the remaining chives, sage, salt, pepper and chopped ginger. Cover with a layer of remaining onion followed by a layer of remaining potato. Pour stock into the baking dish. Brush the top layer of potato with the reserved fat from the frying pan. Cover tightly and cook in the pre-heated oven until the chicken is cooked thoroughly. Approx. 2 hours. Pre-heat the broiler to high. Uncover and place under the grill until the first layer of potato browns and crisps. Serve hot. Serves four.

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



Fighting Back; the Chris Nilan Story

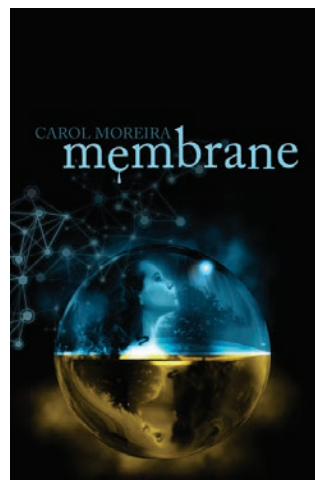
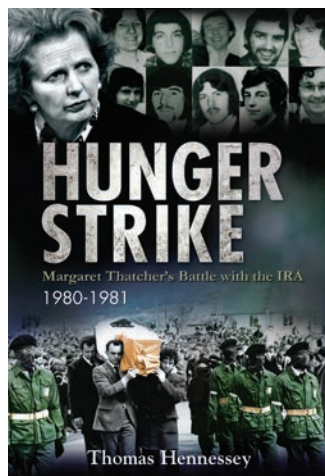
By Chris Nilan
HarperCollins /
336 pp / \$32.95

NHL enforcer Chris Nilan certainly earned his nickname “Knuckles” during his 13 seasons with the Montreal Canadiens, Boston Bruins and New York Rangers; his 222 on-ice fights and 2,248 penalty minutes still rank among the league’s highest. However, it is Nilan’s off-ice conflicts that are featured in this bruising biography. Born and bred in Beantown, the Irish-American enforcer’s roots eventually led him down the pathway of self-destruction. And while the book chronicles that descent, it is his road to recovery that reads so well, with redemption coming both personally and professionally in recent years. Unlike other salvation stories, however, *Fighting Back* is chock full o’ humility and gentle wisdom, endearing the tough-tender boy from Boston to readers. Even non-hockey fans will enjoy this spirited effort. ~ SPC

Hunger Strike

By Thomas Hennessey
Irish Academic Press /
496 pp / \$42.95

Subtitled Margaret Thatcher’s Battle with the IRA, and based on recently declassified documents, this gripping tome bears witness to the test of wills between the ‘Iron Lady’ and the ‘Provos’ during the tensions of 1980-81. Intrigue and suspense take centre stage, as backdoor deals and political posturing by both the British Government and the Bobby Sands-led H-Block hunger-strikers sought to sway the already divided communities of Northern Ireland. Particularly poignant are the details of Sands’ offer to end his stand in an effort to reach a deal that would see his fellow prisoners granted special status. More than an historical retrospective on ‘the troubles,’ *Hunger Strike* is an intimate study of time and place, and an insightful, informative and engaging examination of power and personality. ~ SPC



Membrane

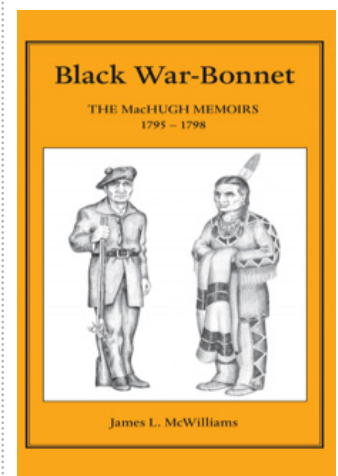
By Carol Moreira
Fierce Ink Press /
280 pp / \$11.99

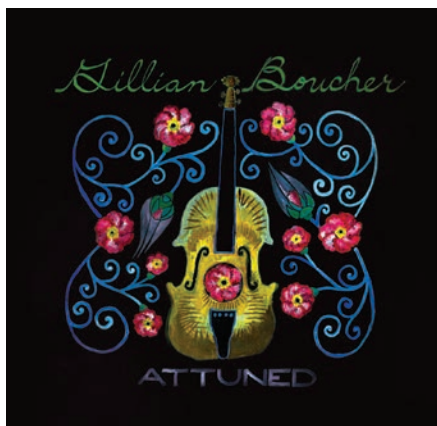
Nova Scotia author – and former Celtic Life International editor – Carol Moreira pieces together a ripping good Young Adult yarn with her sophomore effort *Membrane*. Dissatisfied with herself, sixteen year-old Tanya meets an alternative version of herself in a parallel universe. Themes of teen-angst, bullying, romance and insecurities come to the forefront, as the protagonist and her double – now confidently called P for Princess - wind their way through a series of sci-fi twists and turns. Moreira does well to keep the plot moving along at a good pace; solid dialoguing, strong characterization and a swift, smooth narrative arc ensure that readers of any age will be engaged and entertained. A terrific tale for young adults, and for parents looking to better understand their hormonal offspring. ~ SPC

The MacHugh Memoirs

By James L. McWilliams
Independent

History buffs and those interested in military records will want to pick-up the two volumes of creative non-fiction that make up this compelling collection; the *Fugitives* and *Black War Bonnet*. Canadian author, historian and piper James L. McWilliams fleshes out the daily details in the life of young Roderick Gaspard (Rory) MacHugh, from his days on the Canadian prairies to his service overseas in Egypt and Europe. En route, readers are treated to tidbits of hardship and glory, and a unique perspective on the impact of the Scottish Diaspora. Harkening back to an era when stories were passed down to younger generations by word of mouth, McWilliams leaves just enough space between the lines so that readers may fill in the blanks with their imagination. ~ SPC





Gillian Boucher

Attuned

Following up on the great critical and popular acclaim of her 2009 debut recording *Elemental*, Cape Breton fiddler Gillian Boucher hits home with *Attuned*, a terrific ten-track trip through traditional and contemporary musical territory. Accompanied by guitar virtuoso Seph Peters, toes will be tappin' with Feisty Farral O'Gara, Jigaroo and Reeling. The quieter Neil Gow's Lament and O'er the Moor Among the Heather showcase Boucher's subtle and supple finger-stylings, while Marnie Swanson is both plush and poised. The frolic of Gaelic Medley and Asturian Jig Set work well, harkening listeners back to a time when a fun, festive soiree meant sitting alongside friends and family in the parlour with a hot cuppa' tea and a dram of the good stuff. An excellent and inspired effort. ~ SPC



Franz Ferdinand

Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Actions

Scottish nerd-pop rockers Franz Ferdinand return with their fourth full-length studio recording, their first in four years. Ringing guitars, bopping beats, cheesy keys, hearty hooks and catchy choruses abound through all of the album's ten tracks. And that's the problem. While songs like Right Action, Love Illumination, Bullet and Brief Encounters each hold their own, there is a staleness here – like its 2005 all over again. Even the infectious Stand on the Horizon can't save the Glasgow quartet from sitting in the shadows of their indie peers, a pale imitation of Arcade Fire. As such, *Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Actions* is a wrong step for the band, and a prompt that, to the fickle musical ear, it is no longer hip to be square. ~ SPC



Chvrches

The Bones of What You Believe

At the other end of Glasgow's sonic spectrum, and on the cutting edge of nu-music, is Scottish synthpop trio Chvrches. Touches of Prince, Laurie Anderson, Kate Bush and the Cocteau Twins pepper the band's debut effort, by turns ethereal and energized. Outspoken and often controversial vocalist Lauren Mayberry soars like doves over an array of electronic drums and keyboards. The highlights here, among a sea of pleasant surprises, are slap-happy tracks The Mother We Share, Gun, Lungs, Strong Hand, and the uber-moody Tether and You Caught the Light. Make no mistake; *The Bones of What You Believe* isn't the latest round of re-hashed 80's re-takes – this is avant-garde pop at its finest, and the real deal for drinking, dancing or curling up on the couch. ~ SPC



Jasper Coal

Drowning the Shamrock

The deep South might not be the first place that comes to mind when considering Celtic music, but Birmingham, Alabama-based sextet Jasper Coal might have you thinking differently. The opening pipes of Big Jig Set, the rousing chorus of Crooked Jack and the rollicking fiddle of Jamie Raeburn highlight this ten-song effort with style and swagger. The banjo, acoustic guitars and tin whistles accentuate the positive on Gather Up the Pots, Step it Out Mary and The Foggy Dew, and the acapella Parting Glass is a fine way to ring out 2013. Interestingly, the band shows its southern roots with the faintest traces of blues, bluegrass and gospel. To that end, *Drowning the Shamrock* might signal a new hybrid in the ever-evolving Celtic musical canon. ~ SPC



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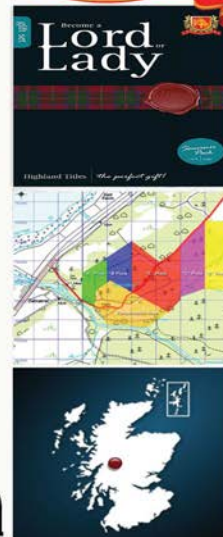
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Ellen MacPhee

Ellen MacPhee may be a small pipe player, but the 35-year-old chiropractor has a big personality. Ironically, it's the latter that made her find a fine fit with the Scottish small pipes. Asked if the instrument resonated with her character, MacPhee laughs. "Yeah, if you were to meet me, I have wild, crazy blonde hair. I'm always laughing and bubbly and dancing."

MacPhee found that same light-hearted sense of fun in the small pipes, which drew her toward them. She says she feels most like herself when she's sitting in with a group of musicians and able to play. "There's so much communication that happens inside the music that's non-verbal. It makes for really great friendships and relationships."

Although with two young children and a career, MacPhee's not as active playing as she once was, in the past she's headlined at the Piper's Gathering in Killington, Vermont, which bills itself as North America's most comprehensive, alternative piping event. And she's taught workshops and run concerts in Maine and Prince Edward Island, as well as at Nova Scotia's Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts. "That's pretty big stuff for a small piper," MacPhee notes.

MacPhee didn't always want to be a piper. Her interest in music sprang from her mother, a very musical woman, she says. According to MacPhee, her mother wanted her and her brother to become involved in a group music activity beyond music lessons, something more like a team. So she took the children to see a parade in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, MacPhee's home town. The pipe

band was there and her mother made a big deal out of them.

"Would you like to be in the pipe band?" she asked MacPhee and her brother. Both children enthusiastically replied in the affirmative, adding they wanted to be drummers! MacPhee laughs. "It wasn't exactly what she anticipated, but she was quick on her toes and said you can do drumming if you try piping for a year. So that was our agreement and we went ahead and started on the chanter with one of the more senior members."

Around that time P.E.I.'s world famous College of Piping began to form and MacPhee and her brother were at ground zero. They ended up working pretty much every single job the school had to offer with the exception of the executive positions. MacPhee enumerates her work at the school: in the gift shop, mowing the lawn, doing the tours around the museum playing bagpipes for the bus tours and teaching the younger students.

MacPhee ended up attending Nova Scotia's Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts and was introduced to the small pipes while there. For the last 15 years, she's played the small pipes almost exclusively, only picking up the Highland bagpipes on special request, usually for a friend's wedding or some such event.

MacPhee favours the small pipes for a number of reasons. She finds them easier to maintain. She says with the Highland bagpipes they must be played at least a couple of times weekly, if not every day, to maintain the sound quality and keep the reeds in order. In contrast, the small pipes rely on room temperature rather than the

air from the player's lungs, so they're not experiencing the fluctuations in humid and then dry air.

More to the point, though, MacPhee says the small pipes are also tuned to other concert instruments, whereas the Highland pipes are almost a full half-step higher. "That allows us to play with other musicians, not simply other pipers," she notes. "Also the volume allows you to play with other musicians as well, because to play Highland pipes next to a fiddler, you just totally drown them out. It's just so loud."

MacPhee grew up competing both in Highland bagpiping as well as in step dancing. At one point she practiced the latter for no less than two hours a day. But now to MacPhee the music is more about inspiring people to dance. "A lot of what I do now is playing in dance halls, concert venues, lots of house parties. The culture around Scottish small pipes is it's very much about having fun, enjoying the music and encouraging enjoyment of the music. It is about the dancing, the musicality, about creating community, about creating really fun, upbeat, uplifting kinds of emotions when you're listening to the music."

Ellen MacPhee

Scottish small pipe player

Age: 35

Profession: Chiropractor

Has taught at both the College of Piping and Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts

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Jim McKinney

Fiddler Jim McKinney isn't quick to claim Celtic ancestry despite his last name. He says on the McKinney side of the family the roots extend back to Virginia in 1750. On his mother's side, he's traced the family back to Virginia in 1762 and Pennsylvania in 1735. But while the 54-year-old fiddler believes he's American as...well, apple pie, it turns out his ancestry is even older than he thought; members of his family have traced the name back to Scotland in 1570 or so. Besides, McKinney's music comes with more than a dash of Gaelic.

McKinney's the first to tell you the fiddlers at the Ann Arbor bars in Michigan early on influenced his playing. McKinney hung out at joints with names like The Old Town Tavern, Kitty O'Shea's and Conor O'Neil's to hear the likes of Irish players like Mick Gavin and Marty Somberg. Today, McKinney says "all of those ornaments are a big part of my style. Even when playing non-Irish tunes, I prefer the way they sound and feel when I add in the Irish cuts and rolls."

Of course it comes as no surprise that the Celtic sound should find its way into McKinney's style. He lives in Huron Township, Michigan, a small community of about 425 people just 20 miles from Detroit and not far from the Canadian border. As McKinney points out, a lot of musical influence spilled across the border.

"Historically, the old recordings I've heard of early Michigan fiddlers remind me a lot of early recordings of the Scottish-influenced fiddlers," McKinney says. "Many Canadian fiddlers are influenced by Celtic traditions, so it only makes sense that some of our old-timers would sound like some of their old-timers."

As you might have guessed, McKinney knows a thing or two about the instrument – not to mention his way around it as well. For the past 21 years, he's played fiddle and guitar in The Golden Griffon Stringtet. The Stringtet is a family and friends affair. Wife Loretta plays the hammered dulcimer, while their 17-year-old son, Tommy, sometimes joins in on fiddle. Rounding out the group are friends Renzo Hutchinson on guitar and flute and Bob Ewald on the upright bass. Together, they've recorded four CDs of dance music and one of Christmas tunes.

On his own, McKinney's won an online fiddle contest and placed second and third a few times in the Michigan State Championship Old-Time Fiddler's Contest. He's won the Nebraska String Teacher's Association Fiddle Tune Composition Contest twice, one of his tunes was selected as a winner in the 2011 Strings Without Boundaries Composition Contest. In August 2013, he became the 30th and youngest member to become inducted into the Michigan Fiddlers' Association' Hall of Fame.

Outside of his playing, McKinney works hard to keep the fiddling culture alive. After Michigan fiddler Les Raber's death in 2000, McKinney transcribed 12 of his tunes and published a tune book with his daughter, Judy. The resultant *Come Dance With Me...Original Fiddle Compositions and Favorite Tunes of Les Raber* is now in its fifth printing. McKinney has also published transcriptions of several other old-time Michigan fiddlers and is currently working on a biography and transcription of another.

That's a hefty output for one man who didn't even pick up the instrument until he was 27 years old. McKinney began playing the guitar in 1978 when friends of his began and he didn't want to be left out. His grandfather offered to buy him a fiddle in 1987 and brought home a bright Chinese red violin, case and bow for \$100. "I figured it sounded bad because I didn't know how to play it," McKinney laughs. A couple of weeks later his father-in-law brought him home a proper fiddle from a thrift store and it sounded better. "I took one, 30-minute lesson at a festival in April, 1987, where I learned how to hold the bow," McKinney recalls. "After that, I was hooked."

Since then, McKinney plays anything and everything going in terms of style. He says he began playing with a hammered dulcimer club in southeast Michigan, so learned what they played: Irish Washerwoman, Liberty, Redwing, Chinese Breakdown, Ragtime Annie and more. He enjoyed it so much he began going to every music club and gathering he could find, where he picked up the aforementioned Irish fiddling along with New England contra dance tunes, French-Canadian fiddle music, and Southern Old-Time music. McKinney says he's not so good at separating the different styles. "So my Southern Old-Time tunes all have five-note rolls in them and my French-Canadian tunes all have a little Nashville shuffle. It's a mish-mash, but I have a lot of fun with it."

Jim McKinney, fiddler

Age: 54

Lives: Huron County, Michigan

Work: Forensic Security Officer for the State of Michigan

Plays: Irish fiddle music alongside New England contra dance tunes and others

His band: The Golden Griffon Stringtet includes his wife and son and two friends. They've recorded five CDs.

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Shelly van Gool



Africa brings many things to mind, but Highland dancing isn't one of them. Yet in the South African city of Johannesburg, the Celtic art form is alive and well. Since she was a young girl, South African Shelly van Gool has practiced Highland and Irish dancing. The 48-year-old comes by her skill honestly; her grandparents founded the Southern Caledonian Society, and her family stayed engaged with the group. "Being exposed to the Caledonian Society and all things Scottish, it was natural that I should take part in Highland dancing," van Gool said.

Africa, of course, has its own rich dance culture, but South Africa in particular boasts a diverse cross-cultural population, which has led van Gool to become an ambassador for and teacher of Highland and Irish dancing. South African children have a wide choice of extra-curricular activities, van Gool said, which means it can prove challenging to get the youth to commit to just one dance form; many do two of three types of dancing.

"My involvement today has become more of a passion to ensure that the dance form continues," she said. "Although I don't compete any more, I am amazed at the opportunities that I have been given through my involvement with dancing. If someone had told me when I was 15 years old and still competing that Highland dancing would take me around the world, I would have laughed at them. Being involved in Highland and Irish dancing has certainly made my world smaller."

Van Gool first began Highland dance classes at age five, but as a shy girl she didn't take to them at first. When her aunt moved to Johannesburg, van Gool, at that time eight years old, ended up in dance classes with her two cousins and the three of them formed the class at first. Van Gool successfully competed until age 22, at which point she took her associate exam and then her adjudicator's test in 1989.

"Living and dancing in Johannesburg had enough competitions for us to be competitive," van Gool recalled. "Travelling to dance overseas was restricted due to the political status of our country, but this was never an option for me during my competing years,

although there were a few South Africans who did get to compete overseas."

Van Gool doesn't attribute any particular influence to her dancing, only that she liked the idea of doing something different from everyone else. She originally did Irish dancing as well, but a lack of support for the form caused it to die out and become integrated into Highland dance. In the late 1990s, van Gool began Irish dancing again with her senior teacher. After standing in for the teacher while she was on holiday, van Gool decided that she really wanted to teach. In 2007, she completed her TCRG, certifying her to teach Irish dance. She now teaches both forms.

By virtue of the area in which she lives and teaches, van Gool is a member of the Gauteng Highland Dancing Association. She is the liaison for the OBHD (SA), which is the recognized governing body for Highland Dancing in South Africa. That group, in turn, is an affiliated member of the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing. Van Gool is currently involved in the planning of the 2014 Interprovincial Challenge. As well, she runs her own dance studio in Randpark Ridge, Johannesburg and is currently an active Highland Adjudicator.

Looking ahead, van Gool wishes to begin an outreach program into under-privileged areas in order to give children an opportunity to try something different. "Perhaps this may lead to an interest in taking up Celtic dancing as their preferred activity," she said. And if that's not enough, she's also involved in the Rhythm of Africa Highland Dance Company along with Carol Jones, who lives in Basel, Switzerland. That company has sent dancers to perform at the Basel Tattoo in 2008, 2010 and 2013, when the dancers also formed part of an international dance team with others from Canada and Scotland.

"The aim of the dance company is to bring Highland Dancers from all over the country together to perform in shows and Tattoos. The company is open to both competing and non-competing dancers," van Gool said. "Many dancers do not want to carry on competing after a certain age, but are still good dancers and want to continue with this amazing dance art. The dance company gives these dancers the chance to do so."

Added van Gool: "Our dancing community, like many others around the world, has shrunk, but we continue to keep the dancing alive."



EVENTS

JANUARY

Edinburgh's Hogmanay
December 31-January 1
www.edinburghshogmanay.org

Waipu Highland Games
January 1
www.waipugames.co.nz

Maryborough Highland Gathering
January 1
www.maryboroughhighlandsociety.com

Upper Potomac Fiddle Retreat
January 3-5
www.upperpotomacmusic.info/fiddleretreat/index.html

Boston's Celtic Music Fest
January 10-11
www.clubpassim.org/BCMFest

Florida Keys Celtic Festival
January 10-11
www.celticheritageproductions.com/keys.htm

Winter Storm Weekend
January 10-12
www.winterstorm.net

The Shannonside Winter Music Weekend
January 16-20
www.wmw.ie

Celtic Connections
January 16-February 2
www.celticconnections.com

Upper Potomac Piper's Weekend
January 17-19
www.upperpotomacmusic.info/squeezethebag/index.html

Central Florida Scottish Highland Games
January 18-19
www.flascot.com

Feis in the Desert
January 18-19
www.brackenirishdance.com/fitd

Temble Bar TradFest
January 22-26
www.templebartrad.com

Caloosahatchee Celtic Festival Weekend
January 25
www.celticheritageproductions.com/caloosahatchee.htm

Turakina Highland Games
January 25
www.turakinahighlandgames.co.nz

Music for Galway Midwinter Festival
January 25-27
www.musicforgalway.ie

Up Helly Aa
January 28
www.uphellyaa.org

FEBRUARY

Sarasota Highland Games and Celtic Festival
February 1
www.sarasotahighlandgames.com

Celtic Family Jamboree
February 7-8
www.celticheritageproductions.com/fj.htm

Paeroa Highland Games & Tattoo
February 8
www.paeroahighlandgames.co.nz

Cheltenham Folk Festival
February 14-16
www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk/whats-on/festivals/cheltenham-folk-festival/

Mid-Winter Scottish & Irish Music Festival and Fair
February 14-16
www.eohebrides.com

Savannah Irish Festival
February 14-16
www.savannahirish.org

Queen Mary Scottish Festival
February 15-16
www.queenmary.com/ScotsFestival/

Mount Barker Highland Gathering
February 16
www.gathering.mtbarkerscots.org

The Gathering Festival
February 19-23
www.thegathering.ie

Scoil Cheoil an Earraigh
February 19-23
www.scoilcheoil.com

Northeast Florida Scottish Games and Festival
February 22
www.neflgames.com

North Texas Irish Festival
February 28-March 2
www.ntif.org



Donald Shaw has the distinct pleasure of playing at his own music festival, something not too many people can say. But Shaw, artistic director of Glasgow's Celtic Connections Festival, is also a founding member of and keyboardist and accordion player for the exceedingly well-known Scottish folk group, Capercaillie. They're just one of the many bands performing at the 21st edition of Celtic Connections, January 16 to February 2, 2014.

This year over 2,000 musicians from every corner of the globe in the genres of traditional and roots music, world, indie, jazz, folk, soul and Americana will converge on Glasgow to play at the festival. Any single artist could be a headliner in their own right, but together the names add up to a who's who of music appearing at the festival. Bands playing over the two-week period include Bobby Womack, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Manu Dibango, Shawn Colvin, Suzanne Vega, Boban Markovic Orchestra, Lloyd Cole and the Leopards and Tim Finn, to name but a few.

Altogether, the musicians will perform in 300 events spread over 20 venues. Shaw says the biggest stage slots go to the musicians who might be brave enough to put aside their usual touring show and instead work with others to create unique and one-off collaborations. "Headline artists leave their egos at the airport and engage with the defining character of Celtic music traditions," Shaw says. "Well in excess of a million people have now experienced the festival, and in doing so have witnessed the development of brand new musical bonds."

Scotland on Sunday last year has this to say of the event: "An insistence on quality has continued to underpin Celtic Connections' remarkable success. In providing such myriad opportunities for musicians from different countries, cultures and generations to communicate in the language they all know best, the festival consistently replenishes as well as reflects the teeming worldwide hive of roots-based creativity."

The festival got its start in January 1994 when it attracted 35,000 people to see 13 bands, including the Chieftains and Kate and Anna McGarrigle. The first festival featured music, modern Celtic art, talks, a number of ceildhs and a fashion show. Everything else has survived to this day but, for reasons unknown, the fashion show. In 1996, then festival director Colin Hynd declared: "It seems inconceivable that three years ago Celtic Connections did not exist." To be sure, the event was attracting top-drawer talent, that year featuring the talents of, among others, Van Morrison, June Tabor, Janis Ian, Natalie MacMaster and Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys.

By 1997, the festival was also gaining a reputation for commissioning works of music for the event. The opening piece that year was by Phil Cunningham. Titled *The Highlands and Islands Suite*, the work combined classic and contemporary elements and featured a performance involving a 73-piece orchestra, a 40-member choir, 30 highland fiddlers and a number of leading musicians. In the same way, in 1998, the introduction of "New Voices," gave musicians a chance to compose something new and play with their peers.

In 2003, the festival loaded on the big names to celebrate its 10th anniversary. That year performers included Bob Geldof, The Waterboys, The Dubliners, Billy Bragg and Sinead O'Connor. Shaw joined the festival in 2007 as its artistic director. By 2008, major artists were using the festival to kick off world tours, notably Steve Earle and k.d. lang. By 2009 and 2010, the festival's international flavour was becoming markedly noticeable. Global acts like Trilok Gurtu and Angelique Kidjo were headlining and musicians from different cultures were jamming together during shows. In 2013 the festival celebrated its 20th year, hosting over 100,000 fans, who came to hear music from all around the globe. *The Sunday Herald* said the 20th edition of the event "reflects the international scale of this dynamic winter festival."

In no small part, the festival has helped revive and shape interest in Celtic music across the UK. "The perception of traditional music in Scotland has changed beyond recognition," Shaw says. "Thanks to a number of factors, there is now a new generation who have a love and respect for their country's culture." Shaw says part of that new-found respect comes from the grassroots level in schools and workshops across Scotland, in particular the Feisean movement. "The micro festival format of the feis – a traditional arts and culture festival – has transformed children with little more than a second-hand instrument and a gentle family push, into stars of festivals like Celtic Connections today."

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the Clan Gregor

Tradition traces the Clan Gregor back to King Alpin, King of the Picts and, according to legend, first King of the Scots. But the first historical figure the clan knows is Ian Carn MacGregor, who died in 1390. The clan's origins may be ancient, but the society has used modern technology to trace its lineage. Richard McGregor, the chairman of the Scotland's Clan Gregor Society, created a McGregor clan DNA project in 2002 to trace the clan's history.

All MacGregors supposedly descend from Ian Carn MacGregor, McGregor says. But according to the DNA project, about 53 per cent of those who bear the name do and 47 per cent don't, so McGregor says the name must have been adopted for other purposes. In 1603, the name was banned after the clan lost its lands around Loch Awe to the Campbells. McGregor says over the next 10 years nearly 100 male MacGregors were slain in a concerted effort to purge the clan out of existence.

"After a brief respite in 1690-93, the name was again proscribed for supporting the Stuart family pretensions to the throne of the U.K. and the name was reinstated in 1774," McGregor says. Nonetheless, many people with different surnames that were adopted at the time of the ban never took the original name back. The DNA project has identified a number of those, including Stirling, Drummond and Bain. The project has also found different lines of MacGregors, much smaller in size from Ireland, Rosshire and Perthshire.

The Gregor Clan Society began in 1822 as the third clan society in Scotland. For 190-plus years, the society has encouraged preservation of culture and artifacts and the dissemination of knowledge about the clan and its history and genealogy. The Scottish society boasts a membership of about 700 and a council of 14 members. Members come from around the world, but mainly from the former British Commonwealth and the United States and Canada.

The latter's chapter is relatively new, having been formed and recognized in September 2012. Before that, an independent Canadian Clan Gregor had existed since the 1980s. Wayne MacGregor Parker, chairman of the Clan Gregor Society Canada Chapter, says they are currently exploring the benefits of merging the two organizations. "Under the umbrella of the society, Canadian MacGregors can now participate more fully in bringing the history, heritage and expanded resources of the society to life as part of this larger community."

Parker notes that one of the driving forces behind the formation of the Canadian chapter is to highlight the contributions – past and present – of Gregors in their new country. "Canada has a higher percentage of people of direct Scottish descent than any other nation," Parker proudly says. He is quick to cite some of the MacGregors who have distinguished themselves in Canada. They include James D. MacGregor, a pioneer in agriculture and stock breeding; historian and popular author James G. MacGregor; and Roy MacGregor, columnist and popular author of over 30 books.

"Without questions, many unsung MacGregors figured prominently in Canadian history and we need to understand and honour their achievements both modest and bold," Parker says. "It is for this reason that we have formed a Canadian chapter." Currently, the Canadian chapter has active members in seven provinces, as well as two expatriates living in the United States. Parker notes that organizations the world over struggle to keep members and relevance in modern society, especially with young people. "We are committed to working hard to further those important objectives through participation in the Highland Games and building social and organizational contacts and connections."

In the United States, the American Clan Gregor Society formed in 1909 in Charlottesville, Virginia when a small number of MacGregors met together.



All in the family

According to Lois Ann Garlitz, chieftain of the society, most members have joined through word-of-mouth or because of family connections. These days, many find the society through Google searches on the Internet. Currently, the American society numbers around 700 members.

In 2014 the big event for all the clans, of course, is The Homecoming. The society in Scotland is hosting a world-wide gathering of MacGregors in Stirling in July as part of the anniversary celebrations of Bannockburn. Says Parker: "In Clan Gregor Society, it's more than just wearing the kilt or sporting some MacGregor tartan. We believe in and count upon strong participation. Membership has its privileges, not the least of which is doing one's part in keeping the flame of Gregor alive and moving forward."

Clan Gregor Society

Started in 1822 as the third clan society in Scotland Traces roots back to Ian Carn MacGregor, died 1390 in Glenstrae. MacGregor clan DNA project begun in 2002 has over 800 members world-wide

Scottish society numbers about 700 members, American society about 700 members and Canadian society about 23.



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Steve Cochran, Vice President
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Diana Kay Stell, President
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E: douglassecretary@comcast.net
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E: the_shaws@sympatico.ca
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1620 Johnson Ave. Klamath Falls, Oregon, USA 97601
P: 541-281-8420
E: berfert1@msn.com
Allan Bremner, Membership
P: 509-448-8321
E: farqmemsvc@gmail.com
www.clanfarquharson.org



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Donald Graham, Commissioner
P: 705-778-1739
E: donnancg@aol.com
Bill Richardson, U.E., VP and Member-at-Large, Canada
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Mark Henderson, FSA Scot, Membership
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www.clanlamont.ca



Clan Lamont Society of North America

David Patton, President
P: 214-505-3470
E: david@clsna.us
Please send mail to:
Frank C. Brown, Secretary/Treasurer
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P: 757-279-0812
E: clsnatreasurer@gmail.com
www.clsna.us



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Tom Little, Steuart (President)
E: steuart@ClanLittleSNA.com
Jim Little, Secratu/Membership
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James C. Logan, VP
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Membership
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James McCallum, President
E: jamesmccallum@netzero.net
Fred McCallum, Secretary/Treasurer
1318 Land Harbor Newland, North Carolina, USA
28657
P: 919-698-3860
E: fred.mccallum.jr@gmail.com
www.clan-maccallum-malcolm.org



Clan MacDougall Society of North America

P.O. Box 8714 Reston, Virginia, USA 20195
Peter Clepper, President
E: president@macdougall.org
Nancy Van Valkenburgh, V.P. for Membership
E: info@macdougall.org
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Gerald J. MacGillivray, President
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Services
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P: 231-861-6453
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Membership Secretary, Carolyn Jackson
E: Carolyn.Jackson@themackinnon.com
Clan McKinnon Society website;
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Chief Niall Livingstone of Bachuil
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P: 517-974-0092
E: commissioner@clanlivingstone.com
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George V. Maclean, President
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www.clanmacleanatlantic.org



Clan MacLellan

Nancy MacLellan Sears, President
P. O. Box 150, Simpsonville, Kentucky, USA 40067-
0150
E: nancy.sears@shelbybb.net
www.clanmaclellan.net



Clan MacLeod Societies of Canada

Judy Tipple, Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 111, Saturna Island, British Columbia,
Canada VoN 2Y0
P: 250-539-5475
E: leodvoice@gmail.com
E: jmtipple@gmail.com
Jim MacLeod, President
338 Riverwood Drive, Woodlawn, Ontario, Canada
K0A 3M0
P: 613-832-3045
E: glenelg.macleod@gmail.com
www.clanmacleod-canada.com



Clan MacLeod

Anne L. MacLeod, Membership Secretary
E: annemacleod@comcast.net
PO Box 70928, West Valley City, Utah, USA 84120
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www.clanmacleodusa.org



Clan MacNab Society of North America

2835 Frisco Peaks Dr., Prescott, Arizona, USA
86301
David McNabb, President
P: 928-771-1218
E: mcnabbprescott@aol.com
www.clanmacnab.org

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Clan Macneil Association of America

Robert A Neill, President
183 Pheasant Walk Way, Vilas, North Carolina, USA
28692-8371
E: raneill@juno.com
Rhonwyn Darby McNeill, VP Membership
PO Box 230693, Montgomery, Alabama, USA 36123-0693,
E: rdmatmgm@aol.com
Gwen McNeill, Quartermaster & Webmaster
4351 Bridle Path Court, Tucker, Georgia, USA
30084-6432
E: qtrmstr-cmaa@comcast.net
www.clanmacneilusa.us



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89128-3339
Scott Medlin, President
Rosemary Maitland Thom, Secretary
E: rthomnvprdcn@aol.com
www.clanmaitlandna.org



Clan Matheson Society of Canada

88 Beaumont Drive
Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, Canada B4C 1V6
Al Matheson, Chief's Lieutenant
P: 902-865-5735
E: al@familymatheson.com
www.clanmatheson.org



Clan Moffat Society

Roger Moffat, Commander, North America
E: commander@clanmoffat.org
Joseph T "Joey" Moffitt Jr., President
E: president@clanmoffat.org
www.clanmoffat.org



Clan Munro Association of Canada

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Jo Ann Munro Tuskin
P: 416-492-1623
E: jmtuskin@sympatico.ca
www.clanmunro.ca



Clan Rose Society of North America

Mick Rose, CRSA President
11055 Mystery Mountain Rd. Valley Center,
California, USA 92082
P: 213-400-9717
E: mick.clan.rose@hotmail.com
Colleen R. Jones, CRSA Secretary
18704 John Connor Rd, Cornelius, North Carolina,
USA 28031
P: 704-302-1462
Patrice May, CRSA Membership Chair
1188 Cragmont Ave, Berkeley, California, USA
94708
P: 510-848-1188
E: patriceandrobina@gmail.com
www.clanrose.org



Clan Scott Society

PO Box 13021, Austin, Texas, USA 78711-3021
David Scott, Membership Secretary
E: membership@clanscottsociety.org
www.clanscottsociety.org



Clan Sinclair Association of Canada

3621 - 156A St., Surrey, British Columbia, Canada
V3S 0L4
Jim Sinclair, National President
P: 604-542-2703
E: jim@clansinclair.ca
Roger Sinclair, Nova Scotia President
88 Slayter Street, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada
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www.clansinclair.ca



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1665 Rickman Monterey Hwy
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E: Tom@clanthompson.org
Vice President: Cheryll Thompson
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Turnbull Clan Association

29 Freemont St., Tonawanda, New York, USA 14120
E: president@turnbullclan.com
E: secretary@turnbullclan.com
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Clan Wallace Society Worldwide

4634 Beechwood Drive, Macon, Georgia, USA
31210-2304
Karen Wallace, Executive
E: membership@clanwallace.org
Dorothy Wallace Knight, advisory director for
Canada
E: dknight@gosfieldtel.com
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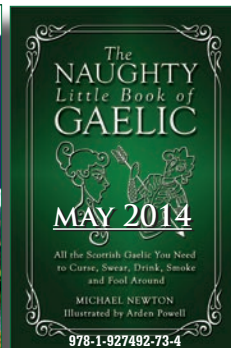
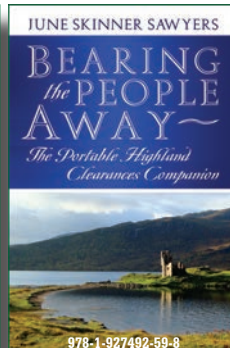
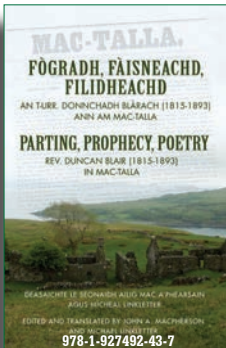
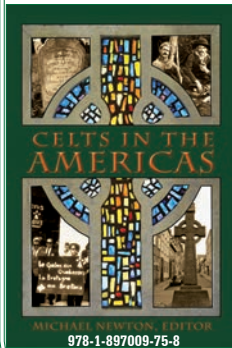


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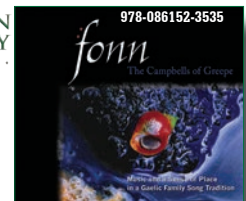
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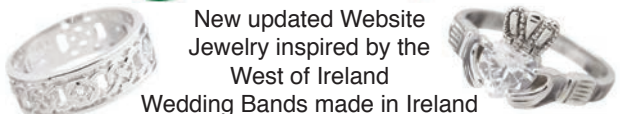


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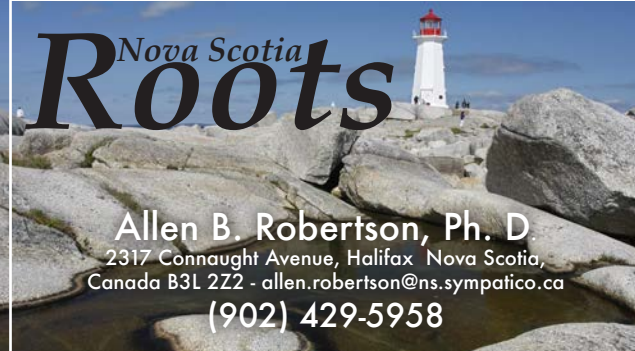
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Philip Chevron

When Philip Chevron joined the Irish punk band The Pogues in 1985, he took over from the band's former banjo player even though he couldn't play a lick of banjo.

Such details never stopped Chevron, who went on to become The Pogues' guitar player during the height of their success with two of their recordings reaching the Top 5 in the U.K. and the song Fairytale of New York (recorded with Kirsty McColl) ending up being voted Best Christmas Song of All Time between 2004-06 by VH1 UK listeners. With their driving reels, reeling songs and punked-up mix of politics, The Pogues – and by inference, Chevron – influenced any number of hard playing Celtic bands today, including Flogging Molly, The Dropkick Murphys and The Stanfields.

"The Pogues thing was weird because I had never played banjo in my life, but I found myself volunteering to play it for two weeks while Jem [Finer, the band's banjo player] was on paternity leave. It never occurred to me for a second that it was going to be a long-term arrangement," Chevron told the influential Irish blog Come Here to Me! in an interview. "I loved the Pogues as a fan first and foremost. I loved going to see them and thought they were the greatest live gig in London. I got through the two weeks by playing the banjo as a guitar. It was only after a few months that I realized I wasn't going to be leaving."

Chevron, who would end up briefly playing alongside Joe Strummer of the Clash when the latter filled in with The Pogues for a short time, died at age 56 in late October from throat cancer. He'd originally been diagnosed with the disease in 2006, but went into remission after a hard bout of chemotherapy. Last August, his oncologist informed Chevron that the cancer had returned and was inoperable this time. "The hole that his death has left will be huge," his band mates wrote on the group's website about the guitarist and songwriter. "He was a remarkable and fantastically talented colleague, but most of all a friend."

Born June 17, 1957 in Dublin, Ireland, the son of an actor and theatre producer, Chevron at an early age grew interested in show music; to be sure, the guitarist – whose real last name was Ryan – is believed

to have taken his adopted name from the Chevron Records label, which was home to singers like Bing Crosby, Judy Garland and Sarah Vaughn. But if the young lad loved show tunes as a boy, as a teen, punk music galvanized Chevron like so many of his generation.

According to his biography on The Pogues' website, Chevron became a founding member of The Radiators from Space, one of Ireland's first punk bands, releasing a debut single, Television Screen, that rose to number 17 on the country's charts. But when the fledgling band organized a punk music festival in Dublin, lack of security led to the death of an audience member and soon promoters avoided the group. The band moved to London, shortened their name to The Radiators and recorded a sophomore album. The record and subsequent reviews arrived so late that the band broke up before it could enjoy success.

At the Radiator's first gig in London, Chevron met founding Pogues' member Shane MacGowan, according to an interview with the guitarist in The Irish Mail. From 1985 through to 1991, the two worked alongside each other in the highly successful band until MacGowan's hard-living lifestyle saw him leave the group. At that point, Strummer joined for a year, but was also replaced. In 1993, The Pogues reached their zenith with the recording Waiting for Herb, which yielded another hit, Tuesday Morning. But shortly after, several members departed the group, including Chevron, who was suffering from severe liver disease from alcoholism and who underwent two life-saving operations for the same.

After The Pogues, Chevron appeared on projects like a tribute album to Thin Lizzy singer Phil Lynott and performing a duet with Mary Coughlan for a 1990 charity album. He also completed two compilation albums of Radiators' material.

In the 2000s, Chevron sparked the revival of The Pogues, remastering their entire CD catalogue and assisting with the band's annual reunion tours. The Irish Independent reported that at a tribute concert honouring Chevron in 2013, authors Roddy Doyle and Joseph O'Connor were among those who showed. Said the latter: "To any Irish person of my age who loves music, Philip is nothing less than a hero."





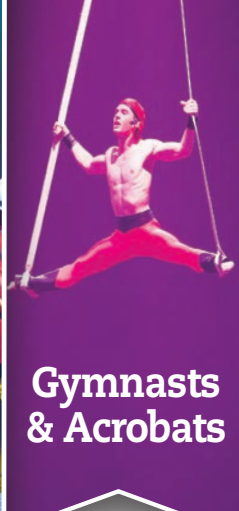
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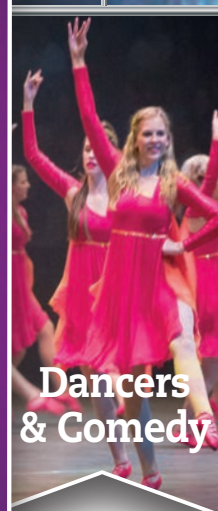
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