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Fáilte!

West of the River Shannon

It was the Spring of 2003 when my wife Cabrini and I spent an enjoyable afternoon immersing ourselves in local history at the Louisiana State Museum. I had recently read an article about English governance and Irish Slavery in the 1650s that I found quite revealing and unsettling. However, it was another piece - detailing the history of the Louisiana canal and the contribution by the Irish - that gave me a new perspective on hardship.

It also brought me back to the 1985 Shamrock Summit in Ottawa, where the late US President Ronald Reagan and former Prime Minister of Canada Brian Mulroney joined together in song for a rousing rendition of When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.

How, I wondered, can Irish eyes ever smile with such a gruesome, painful past?

The Irish slave trade is history conveniently forgotten, as if it never happened. It began under Elizabeth I, and continued with James II and Charles I, before taking on extreme measures under Oliver Cromwell. Tens of thousands of Irish families were torn apart as men, women and children were sold into slavery and sent to all parts of the globe. In 1657, under the Act for the Attainder of the Rebels in Ireland, Cromwell banished the Irish to the west of the River Shannon to what was then "uninhabitable" land. The law stated that those who failed to transport themselves shall be attained of high treason and banished to America or parts beyond the high seas.

In the New World, hardships continued. The New Basin Canal system in New Orleans, which began construction in 1832, was built primarily upon the backs of Irish immigrants. Working conditions were dreadful; the canal was developed through swamp - where yellow fever, cholera, malaria and other diseases ravaged - and the Irish died in great numbers.

Fearing loss of a job, men worked while sick. Many fell and died where they laboured, simply pushed to the side and buried on the spot. In 1990, a Celtic cross was dedicated to the memory of the Irish immigrants who perished, a number estimated at between 8,000 and 20,000!

So why, after such persistent hardship - slavery, famine, poverty and bigotry - are Irish eyes still smiling?

The Irish are a spirited people, deeply proud of their heritage. They celebrate that passion for life in conversation, stories, poetry, laughter and song. Their rich Celtic past, and the ability to overcome hardship through strength, sacrifice and faith, gifted them with a unique sense of adaptability, humor and perseverance. They flourished around the world in business, politics, sports and the arts. They worked hard, but also raised their glasses with gratitude, humility, and a hope that tomorrow will bring an abundance of blessings - plentiful food, healthy children, peace, happiness and closeness to God.

In this issue, we invite you to join our Managing Editor, Stephen Patrick Clare, as he travels west of the River Shannon to visit the rugged Wild Atlantic Way and its resilient people.

Enjoy and May God Bless
Angus M. Maquarrie, Publisher



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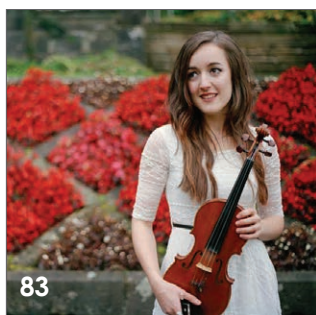
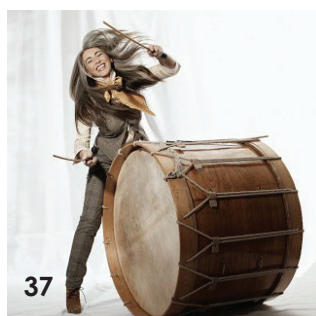
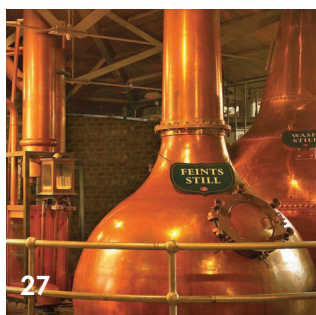
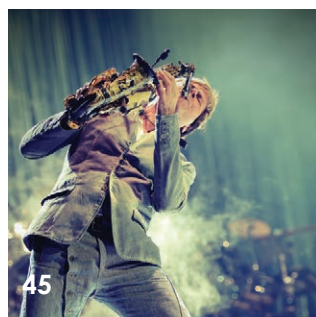
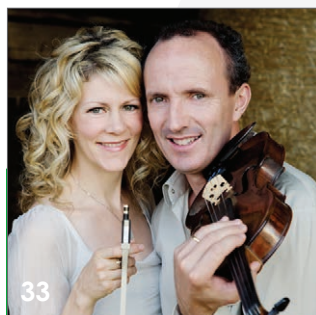
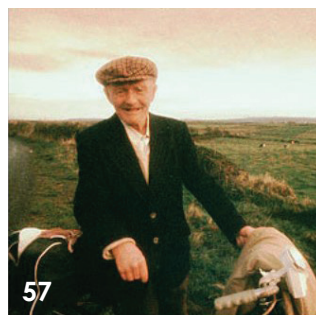
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Our May/June cover shot features a Connemara pony from Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way



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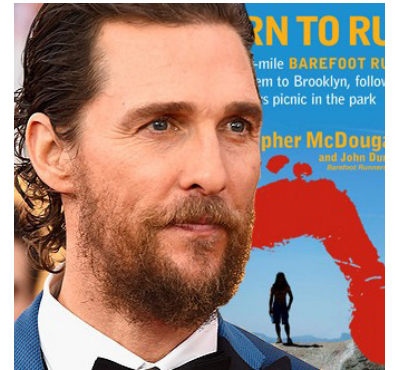


Edinburgh ranks on list of world's most beautiful cities

More beautiful than Vancouver, Venice or London: Rough Guide's readers have voted Edinburgh the fourth most beautiful city in the world. The only municipalities ahead of the Scottish centre were Rome, Florence and Paris. The Scotsman reported that the travel guide hailed Edinburgh for the view from Arthur's Seat, the 823-foot dormant volcano overlooking the city. The guide advised visitors to take in the view "and you won't question why it's been voted the fourth most beautiful city in the world." Rome was cited for its 1,000-year-old buildings, beautiful piazzas, and world class art, while tribute to Florence was paid for its cathedral dome dominating the city skyline and the River Arno cutting through the city center. Paris, according to the paper, was described as "the paragon of style and the most glamorous city in Europe." Rounding out the top ten cities were London, Prague, Venice, Brisbane, Kyoto and Rio de Janeiro.

Matthew McConaughey is off and running

Don't be surprised if you see Scottish-Irish actor Matthew McConaughey running around. He's been tapped for a major role in the movie adaptation of Christopher McDougall's best-selling book, *Born to Run*. The novel recounts McDougall's travels to Mexico where he found a tribe of natives who could run effortlessly for hours on end in their bare feet. The book is widely acknowledged to have sparked the minimalist shoe craze. Sub-titled *A Hidden Tribe, Super Athletes, and The Greatest Race the World has Never Seen*, the book spent 178 weeks on The New York Times' bestseller list and is still selling 10,000 copies a month, according to the entertainment website *deadline.com*, which also noted that *Born to Run* has sold some two million copies. There is no word yet on the role McConaughey will play. His past films include *Dallas Buyers Club* and *Killer Joe*, as well as a featured part in HBO's *True Detective*.

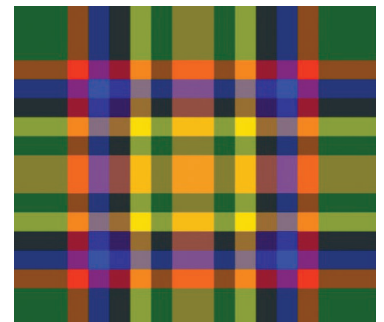


Famed Japanese whisky distiller dies at age 90

Master distiller Takeshi Taketsuru died in December at the age of 90. A twist of fate brought Taketsuru to the whisky business when his uncle Masataka adopted the young man, who was 19 at the time. Masataka had married a Scottish woman, Rita, and was himself saluted as the man who introduced Scotch to the land of sake, according to an obituary in *The Financial Times*. Masataka learned the art of distilling at the University of Glasgow; the first Japanese student to do so. He built his own distillery and company, Nikka, in Japan in 1934. Taketsuru was, according to *The Financial Times*, "groomed as heir and business successor" who helped increase whisky sales in Japan and, later, globally. Taketsuru became the president of Nikka (which the firm Asahi now owns) and in 2005 acquired Scotland's Ben Nevis distillery. The Times noted that in 2001, Nikka's Yoichi 10 Years Single Cast became the first non-Scotch to win "best of the best" from *Whisky Magazine*.

Tartan in a test tube

After sending away his saliva in a test tube, and receiving the results of his DNA test back, a Scottish artist created his own colourful tartan based on his genetics. The Scotsman reports that Jim Pattison, an honorary research fellow at the University of Dundee, based his tartan on the colour-coded strips used to describe genetic markers. According to the paper, Pattison sent away to an American company, 23andMe, and received back reports on more than 100 health and personal traits as well as information on the raw code of his genome. Pattison told the paper that he drew on his mother Margaret's experience with kilt-making and wanted to investigate a new way to make a tartan. His work will go on show in June and September in Glasgow and Galashiels respectively.



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

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first word

In the third instalment of a year-long, six-part series examining Celtic culture, Dr. Sorcha Mairead Nic Lochlainn, professor of Modern Irish at the University College Cork, shares her perspective on what it means to be Celtic today.

If I were to ask a broad selection of Irish people today what word they most associate with the idea of Celtic, I would hazard a guess that a high percentage of them would respond with the word “Tiger” – a reference to the ill-fated economic boom which crashed in spectacular fashion in 2008. The after-effects of the crash are still being profoundly felt throughout Ireland today; those in their 20s and 30s are perhaps worst affected, and emigration is at a level which has not been seen for many years.

Aside from the Celtic Tiger (and aside from Glasgow’s Celtic Football Club, pronounced with a soft “C” and ardently followed by many Irish soccer fans), it doesn’t seem to me that the word Celtic has any real contemporary resonance for many Irish people. It is, I think, most commonly regarded as a term relating to our heritage: Celtic art is popular in jewellery design; Celtic myths and legends can still fire the imaginations of children and adults alike, and the idea of Celtic spirituality is the focus of great interest among many of those who visit sites such as the ancient monastic cells on the island of Skellig Michael.

In the contemporary world, however, my feeling is that much of what makes our culture distinctive – traditional music, Gaelic football, hurling, sean-nós singing – is generally regarded as Irish or Gaelic in the first instance, with Celtic a distant

second. A widespread sense of Celtic kinship, I think, is lacking. No doubt many Irish people would support our Celtic cousins in Scotland and Wales when they undertake sporting clashes with England, but that probably has more to do with a shared postcolonial context than with any lingering sense of Celtic solidarity. Certainly I have not observed any great sense of kinship with our fellow Celts on the Isle of Man, in Cornwall, in Brittany or in Galicia.

“Celtic myths and legends can still fire the imaginations of children and adults alike, and the idea of Celtic spirituality is the focus of great interest among many...”

Perhaps the most visible aspect of our Celtic heritage is the Irish language, also known as Gaelic, variants of which are spoken in Scotland and on the Isle of Man.

Celtic is a term which, as scholars frequently remind us, refers to a linguistic and cultural heritage rather than a genetic one. Certainly it seems that Irish Gaelic speakers often possess a heightened awareness of the existence of other Celtic languages and cultures; and, in my experience, they also take an avid interest in the shared challenges facing the Celtic languages, which have been under threat for generations.

Despite the endangered status of Celtic languages, however, it is most encouraging to see that there are people who – despite often being far away from the traditional homelands of the Celtic languages – have been able to create vigorous new communities based around speaking and learning Gaelic, Welsh or any of the other Celtic languages. In this, of course, they are frequently aided by members of Diaspora communities who in many cases have done extraordinary work in keeping their languages alive. Likewise, scholarly work on the Celtic languages is by no means confined to academic institutions in the so-called “Celtic fringe” of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany; Celtic scholarship is thriving, and its community of academics is very much an international one.

What, then, does it mean to be Celtic today? Certainly for the most part I feel that it’s considered a term which refers to our heritage rather than our contemporary culture. There are aspects of Irish culture, however, which strongly reflect our Celtic history and identity, most particularly the Irish language. It connects us with other Celts both in terms of linguistic heritage and in terms of its status as a language, which relatively small communities of activists are working hard to keep alive.

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UPFRONT

Politics is often seen as a thankless job, but Heather Humphreys, Ireland's Minister of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, views it differently

"Ibelieve politics is a positive medium for change," asserts Humphreys.

She points to the current state of Ireland as proof, noting that when the current Irish government took office in 2011, the country was in a "perilous" state; public finances were in disarray and Ireland was locked out of international markets. "The outlook was very uncertain," she acknowledges.

Today, the Emerald Isle has the fastest growing economy in Europe. Humphreys says that more jobs are created every month, and living standards are improving. "It is very rewarding to see the huge progress this country has made over the last four years."

Within her own portfolio, Humphreys is restoring funding to an arts sector that was decimated during the economic crisis, pointing out that many of the country's national cultural institutions, such as the National Library and the National Museum, faced serious challenges. Thanks to Eire's recent economic growth, however, cuts to the arts have come to an end.

"There are many smaller arts venues across the country still badly in need of additional funding," she continues. "I have a huge appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the people who run these venues, and I hope we will be in a position to gradually restore and improve funding in the years ahead."

"I am a firm believer in rolling up my sleeves and getting on with the job."

Humphreys grew up in a rural area of County Monaghan, close to the border with Northern Ireland. She is Presbyterian, and considers herself both a proud Ulsterwoman and a proud Irishwoman. After a number of years working for a bank in Dublin, she returned to Monaghan to raise her family. She's married to a local farmer and has two daughters.

"Growing up on the border gave me a particular appreciation for the need to respect the differing traditions on the island," she observes. "We have come such a long way over the last few decades, both socially and economically."

She says it might sound like a cliché, but her primary motivation for becoming involved in politics was the desire to serve

her local community. "A former politician who I knew and trusted approached me to see if I would be interested in replacing him on the local council," she recalls. "I had never been involved with politics or with any political party up to that point, but I saw it as a positive opportunity and I didn't think I could pass it up."

Humphreys served on the Monaghan County Council, beginning in 2003. She was re-elected in 2004 and 2009 and then served as the mayor of the town of Monaghan, before being elected to the national parliament in 2011. She became the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2014.

"I come from a business and financial background, which has served me well in politics," she explains. "I am a firm believer in rolling up my sleeves and getting on with the job."

Getting on with the job means completing work on an Arts in Education Charter, which will embed the arts in the school curriculum. "I am particularly keen to get young people involved in the arts in communities across the country," says Humphreys.

She also supports the notion of collaboration, and declares that funding for the arts must become more diversified. "Philanthropy is used successfully in other countries, and I am considering ways to increase the level of philanthropic giving to the arts sector in Ireland. If you look at the major cultural institutions in the U.K., for example, they receive only a third of their funding from the British government. The rest comes from revenue and a mixture of other sources."

Humphreys declares her top priority for the year ahead is the 2016 commemorations, when the country will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising, the pivotal event which laid the foundation for Ireland's independence. It is her responsibility to lead the government's plan for the commemorations, and she wants as many people as possible involved.

"We'll be reaching out to the Irish community overseas through our embassy network, and a range of events and festivals are already planned in major cities internationally," she says. "It promises to be a hugely exciting year when we remember the events of 1916, celebrate Ireland's achievements over the last 100 years, and look ambitiously to our future."

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SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

Dublin-born Tanya Warren is a publicity and marketing executive for Tourism Ireland in Canada. Recently she answered our Seven Celtic Questions.

What are your own Celtic roots?

I'm Irish but the Warren family name actually originated in France. In the late 1600s, William of Orange came to Ireland to fight James II for the throne of England. King Louis XVI sent troops to aid James, one of which was a Monsieur Warrenne. This conflict eventually ended in the Battle of the Boyne, one of the most famous events in Irish history. The tale of the gallant soldier Warrenne is a great anecdote, but I believe I'm more influenced by my family's recent history. We're Dubliners. "True Blue" as my grandfather would say. He was born in a tenement house in Dublin's inner city on Good Friday, 1916 - the beginning of the Easter Rising, and both my parents were born and lived their childhood in inner city Dublin too. They were poor and working class. It means a lot to see them so proud of how far we've come.

Why are those roots important to you?

When we find ourselves dispersed and far from family it's valuable to remember where we've come from. It's a string that ties your heart to home. Emigration stories pepper my family history and my grandfather worked in England for a number of years during World War II. In the early '70s my parents moved to a small Australian outback town north of Perth where my Dad worked as a miner - it was here where my two older sisters and I were born. Deciding to move home to Ireland in the early '80s, with the country into a deep recession, was probably not the easiest decision for my parents to make - but they were certain they wanted to raise their family in Ireland and their children connected to our Irish roots. I was about six months old when I first touched Irish soil.

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

My father often talks about his first day in Australia, walking into the Irish Club in Perth. He recalls how he was immediately welcomed and made connections that helped him settle into life Down Under. My uncles, aunts, cousins and even my younger brother are now in Australia having followed in his footsteps. Bucking this trend, I'm the first of our clan in Canada and I've been living in Toronto for just over two years. As a recent emigrant, with no immediate family connections here, a sense of heritage gives you a common link to local people and a community. When you say you're Irish it strikes a chord. With over five million Canadians claiming Irish ancestry, and I've met quite a few on my travels for Tourism Ireland, it's nice to have that shared bond. And it never fails to start a fun conversation!

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

Working with Tourism Ireland we are very active in the Celtic community across North America. The organization proudly supports a number of events, festivals and special projects that involve the Irish Diaspora and it is a great way to reach Celtic communities. In addition to the lure of Ireland's people, beautiful landscape and outstanding hospitality, ancestry is one of the major influencing factors for North Americans traveling to the island of Ireland - getting involved in the Celtic community is an ideal way to share inspirational news about travel to Ireland.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

Personally I love history and cultural diversity. All cultures are important and it's essential we work to sustain cultural activities and ensure future generations will benefit from these as much as we have done. Celtic culture - from art, music, sport, food and language - is

beautiful and certainly worth our every effort to preserve. Speaking and learning the Irish language, learning GAA sports and Irish musical instruments is becoming increasingly popular in Ireland. Visitors from abroad love the authenticity found in the Gaeltacht areas along the Wild Atlantic Way and learning a "cupla focal" or how to play a bodhrán is a thoroughly enjoyable way to spend an afternoon.

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

Generally I think Irish culture is quite strong in terms of longevity, but we must not be complacent. Irish music is one aspect that endures particularly well and it's enjoyed by people all over the world. There are some outstanding Trad musicians playing in Ireland today - you'll find these performing in a range of venues, from large auditoriums to small country pubs. The Trad music festivals in Ireland are terrific. Take Fleadh Cheoil in the summer or the Temple Bar TradFest in late January for example - these events showcase the talents of new and traditional artists, helping to keep the music alive.

What can we be doing better?

Resources will always be a challenge. There are so many people across North America who give time to Celtic culture, volunteering in local communities and organizations. Their passion and commitment is immeasurable and their love for Celtic culture is what keeps the momentum going. The Irish government has recently announced a Diaspora policy in order to connect with Irish emigrants around the world - cultural projects celebrating Irish sport, music, dance, language and literature will continue to be supported through the Emigrant Support Program which is very positive news.

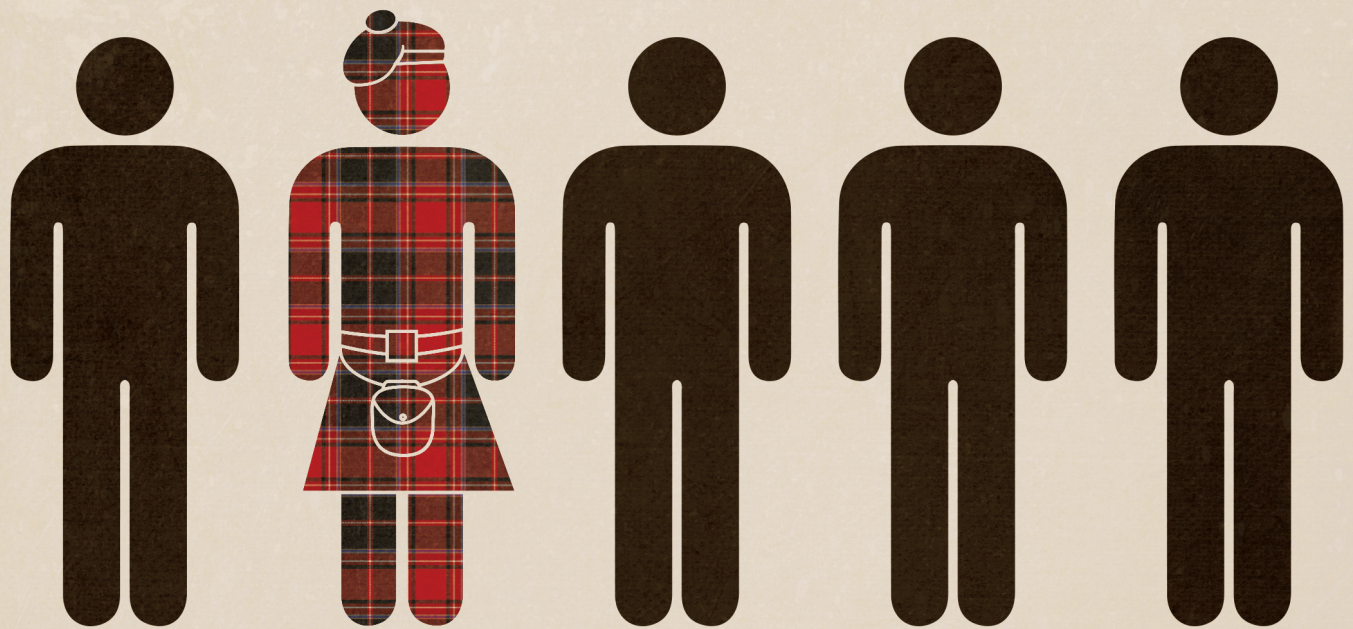
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Liz Madden

Irish singer Liz Madden insists music is in her blood

“Music has always been a part of my life,” says Liz Madden. “Both my parents are highly musical; the traditional music from Dad’s side and the folk-pop from Mam’s side. We spent so much of our life listening to music and being involved in music that it was a very natural progression for me to want to pursue it professionally.”

That she did. Born and raised in Dublin, Madden first performed musical theatre and pop before studying classical. Along the way she became interested in Celtic music and founded the Irish twosome, RUA, performing for eight years. After the duo disbanded, Madden embarked on a solo career, recording numerous albums and performing worldwide.

Her latest recording is *Legacy*, released in March 2015. Working with Jon Birge at Valley Records, Madden put together a rough track list and then began creating demos, which went back and forth between her and producer, Fionan De Barra. Once the pair decided how each song should play out, they began laying the music down.

“The Irish chants and Fionan’s guitar playing form the backbone of most of the songs, so getting those vocals nailed was so important,” she recalls of the recording process. “I wrote the chants reflecting the story-lyrics in the songs and then Fionan would ensure everything worked where it needed to.”

“I tend to add lots of extras,” she explains further, “which gave him plenty to play with, removing some stuff that he felt didn’t work. We are delighted with the final result and are currently working on new pieces, and continuing to develop this unique sound.”

It sounds like Madden’s not the only one pleased with the finished product. The singer says response to the album has been fantastic. She relates that many people she spoke with were initially taken aback with the recording because of the unique arrangement of the songs. “For example, the *Night Visiting Song* is usually recorded at a much slower tempo, but we gave it a completely new perspective. The *Joan Baez song, Diamonds and Rust*, seems to be a real favourite. And, again, applying our arrangement to the song with the Irish lyrics has worked beautifully.”

That said, Madden is unable to single out one track on the album as a particular favourite, instead noting that each song has its own merit. Certain songs she likes for unique reasons. For instance, *Banks of the Lee* is a song her father sings, and having her cousin Joanie Madden – to whom her father is very close – play on

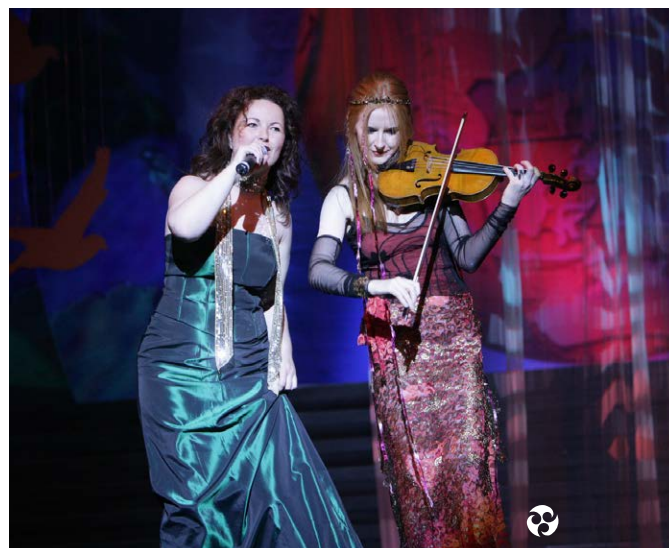
that track among others was a special moment. By the same token, *Boulder to Birmingham* is a song Madden’s mother taught her, so that piece is dedicated to her.

A good song really depends on the listener and the moments he or she associates with the song, but for Madden she cites a tune with a good melody and lyrics, tells a story and takes you on a journey. “Top that with a good, honest delivery by the singer and I am happy,” she states. “I am not a lover of vocal gymnastics at all and I think the best song can be ruined by a bad or over-the-top delivery.”

For the rest of 2015, Madden is nothing if not busy. She’s just finished three songs for her record label, Valley Entertainment, which will be featured on one of their compilations this year. Late last year, she recorded a track for the forthcoming album, *Stay Calm and Salute the Beatles*, which includes the likes of Heart’s Ann Wilson and the late Jack Bruce. She has five album releases pending in Korea over the next year, and she’s writing songs for her next solo album, and for several other artists as well.

“In the middle of all this,” she smiles, “I am relocating to the east coast and looking forward to that.”

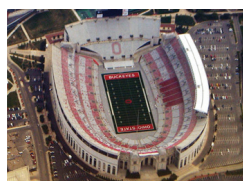
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2015 North American Festival of Wales Columbus, OH - September 3-6

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- National Welsh-American Foundation Grand Banquet featuring an awards ceremony and winner from the National Eisteddfod in Wales, Meinir Wyn Roberts
- Saturday's Grand Concert features well known and acclaimed Welsh male voice choir, Cor Y Penrhyn, directed by Owain Arwel and joined by guests Gwawr Edwards, John Ogwen and Glain Dafydd.
- The weekend finishes Sunday with the 84th National Gymanfa Ganu, held at the historic Southern Theatre. Gymanfa Ganu literally means 'singing meeting' and it is at the heart of maintaining Welsh culture in North America.



For additional information visit:

www.nafow.org or call **607-279-7402**

Organized by the Welsh North American Association, to become a member, visit www.thewnaa.org

National Welsh-American Foundation Sefydliad Cenedlaethol Cymru-America

NWAF is a nonprofit membership organization formed to provide a link between Welsh-Americans in North America and Wales who share a common interest in their culture, heritage, and the preservation of the Welsh language.

Now accepting applications for two scholarships:

- 2015 Exchange Scholarship provides an opportunity for North Americans to apply for a \$5000 award to study in Wales.
- 2015 Lloyd Family Scholarship provides an opportunity to apply for an award of up to \$1000 to cover travel-related expenses to Wales in undertaking studies related to Welsh-American history & culture.

Application deadline is June 15, 2015

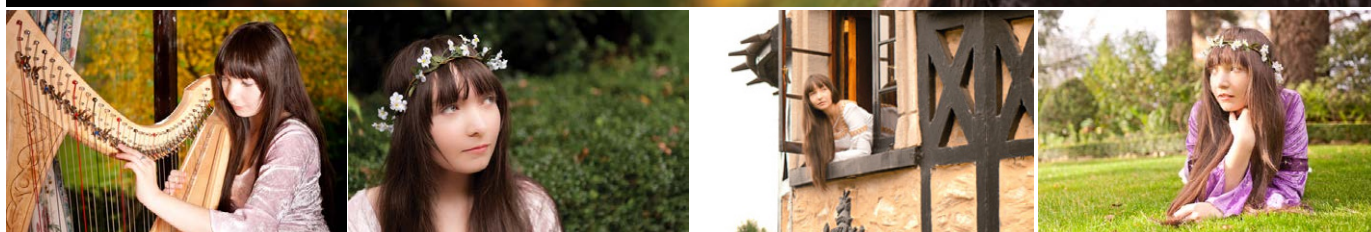
Contact NWAF office, Philip Davies- Secretary
email nwafcymru@gmail.com Phone **908-889-4942**

NWAF is a proud sponsor of the 2015 North American Festival of Wales.



Siobhan Owen

Singer and harpist Siobhan Owen may have lived in Australia since the age of two, but there is no denying her Celtic heritage



In fact, with a Welsh father, and an Irish mother from County Galway, Owen is as Celtic as it comes. The twenty-something musician was born in the town of – better take a long breath for this one – Llanfair-pwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch, on the Isle of Anglesey in Wales.

It is understandable, then, that one of her career highlights was singing the Welsh national anthem to a packed stadium at the Australia versus Wales rugby test match in Sydney in 2012. The performance was broadcast worldwide – not bad for someone who once suffered from severe performance anxiety.

“I still do to a small extent,” she admits, “but it’s getting easier.”

Performing the anthem wasn’t Owen’s only feat; the Celtic-classical crossover artist has been earning accolades far and wide for her work, which includes four independent recordings.

And, earlier this year, she flew to Siberia where she performed as the voice of Yseult in the Russian version of Tristan & Yseult, a role she first took on in 2014. The producer of the Franco - Celtic rock ballet, Alan Simon, discovered her on YouTube.

As well, Owen recently performed a series of concerts in Wales and England as part of her Celtic Roots Tour, and will likely add shows in Ireland and Scotland as well.

“I love it when I can see my performance has been appreciated and has moved people...”

She began studying classical singing at age nine, before one of her teachers introduced her to Irish music a short time later.

“It seemed to suit my voice, so I decided to learn more Celtic songs,” she shares.

She sang at her first Celtic festival when she was 14, and soon after was asked to perform at the Adelaide Fringe festival with French singer-harpist Cecile Corbel.

“She accompanied me on her harp, and I loved it so much, it inspired me to learn harp to accompany myself.”

Owen completed her Bachelor of Music in Classical Voice, Performance and Pedagogy at Adelaide University in Australia late last year.

“The time I spent at university has given me the discipline to practise and learn new music for my repertoire,” she asserts. “The classical training has also helped me develop my Celtic style of singing in a way that won’t damage my voice, and will help to sustain it for a long time.”

When it comes to composition, Owen says she has an idea of how she wants a song to sound, noting that sometimes it works and other times it doesn’t.

“A number of factors make a good song,” she explains. “It could be the tune; it could be the harmonies; it could be the words that have special meaning to me or to others.”

As for Celtic culture, Owen believes that, thanks to popular music and movies, it is enjoying a new-found popularity. And while Welsh is quite widely spoken in Wales and compulsory in Welsh schools, she suggests that more could be done to revive some of the endangered Celtic languages, such as Cornish and Manx.

“I would love to learn more about all the Celtic nations. Celtic festivals can certainly help to educate people more about the history and heritage.”

Owen has just returned to Australia to attend her university graduation ceremony, and to perform at the Australian Celtic Festival in Glen Innes. En route back to the UK, she will stop to perform at the Kansai Celtic Music Festival in Osaka, Japan.

“I love it when I can see my performance has been appreciated and has moved people,” she declares. “My mum always says if one person in the audience cries, then I’ve done my job.”

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Plaid is never out of fashion, says Lisa Risley, because it is never out of style

Preppy plaid is making a comeback this year, according to fashion magazines, and New York runways are ablaze with big square plaids of all colours. Plaid pyjamas and boxers have long been *de rigueur* in the comfy, cozy market, but look for plaid in sweeping evening gowns, dramatic pieced skirts, flared pants and accessories galore.

It is exciting news for Nova Scotia businesswoman Lisa Risley. However, as owner of The Plaid Place, a specialty shop in Halifax, she takes the ebb and flow of international fashion in stride.

"We're always very glad to hear when plaid is on the upswing on the runways," she notes. "Here at The Plaid Place, plaid is always in fashion and always in demand."

Located in a hotel in Halifax's Barrington Street shopping district, The Plaid Place has been around for almost half a century, providing traditional woolens, plaids and tartan clothing, as well as giftware, jewelry, music and books. With its tin ceiling and polished barn board floors, it is a welcoming space packed with traditional and unexpected items, all reflecting the Celtic heritage.

"We've done quite a bit of renovating because we wanted an open, comfortable space where people can come in, look around and ask questions," explains Risley. "Customer service and repeat business are critical to a specialty business. We find even our online customers will call and want to talk with a human before purchasing."

Risley, who grew up in Halifax, took over the store 15 years ago. "My father approached me and told me he'd been offered a business deal but he was only interested if I'd go in with him," she says.

At the time, Risley was selling advertising and not enjoying it. "I grew up in a business family, in the restaurant business, specifically, so going into business was not completely new to me. This sounded like a dream opportunity and I didn't give it a lot of thought. I just jumped in."

In her early days her entrepreneurial spirit may have been stronger than her passion for Celtic history, but she credits a knowledgeable staff for educating her.

"My father's middle name is Campbell and he has Robertsons in his family, and my mother's clan is MacNichol. So you could say I had the background, but I had a lot to learn in the first few years."

"Plaid is always in fashion and always in demand."

Not surprisingly kilts are a big part of the business – custom-made formal kilts, but also less expensive versions of the traditional dress suitable for kilted golf tournaments and more casual events.

"We recognized a need for something that was not going to be ruined if you spilled beer down the front of it," says Risley. "Along with kilts, we have the Prince Charlies (traditional black, silver-buttoned jackets) and vests, but we also provide a lot of tartan cummerbunds, bow ties, scarves and sashes for people who don't

want to go the full kilt but still want something authentically Celtic."

Risley once ordered a Nova Scotia tartan kilt from Scotland and shipped it to a customer in New Zealand. "Some of our kilts have really gotten around but we think that one holds the record for most miles."

Perhaps more surprising is the volume of dog fashions she sells. "That market has grown incredibly in the last 15 years," she notes. "People think dogs and tartans are a great match. We sell raincoats, warm coats, cool coats and tons of kerchiefs for dogs of all shapes and sizes."

As she gained experience, Risley eliminated some products and brought in others until she was satisfied with her vision of the store. "We've got key items that people want such as clan giftware, but also beautiful wool and cashmere capes for ladies. Irish and Scottish sweaters for ladies and gents have also become very popular."

About 90 per cent of what she sells at The Plaid Place is imported so she pays close attention to exchange rates and shipping costs.

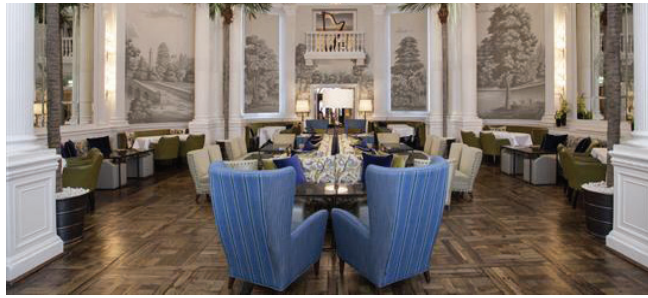
"We attend international trade shows in Scotland and Ireland to see what's available and we try to match that to what people will want to buy in the store, the cruise ship pavilion or at the Celtic festivals we attend during the summer. The festivals attract people from all over and are a great place for making friends and customers."

www.plaidplace.com



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Protecting Scotland's Treasures from across the pond

A bull named Diùc was perhaps one of the more unusual heritage projects the National Trust for Scotland sponsored. Helen Sayles, CBE, and her husband had the privilege of naming him because they had donated funds to the non-profit organization to purchase the animal. The bull went on to revitalize the cattle population on Canna..

“It was a bit of a fun thing to do,” laughs Sayles. “In his first year, Diùc sired something like 38 calves, so he was very productive. Sadly, he has since gone to the great cattle heaven in the sky, but he did a great job while he was here!”

Canna is one of the islands that the National Trust for Scotland cares for. In fact, the largest conservation charity in Scotland protects 129 heritage properties, ranging from castles and croft houses to gardens and battlefields. That includes 76,000 hectares of countryside and wild lands, as well as a vast collection of artifacts, archives and other significant historical pieces.

Since 2000, the association's American branch - The National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA (NTSUSA) - has raised over \$7 million for the Scottish charity's projects.

Sayles, who is Chair of the Board of Trustees for the NTSUSA, says it can sometimes be difficult to fundraise for something that is thousands of miles away.

“One of the things we have gotten better at is asking Scotland to give us a range of projects, with a range of prices, they would like to get done every year.”

Contributors can choose to support

something that resonates with them. Priority projects range from repairs to Scotland's largest dovecoat - Finavon Doocot - and monitoring seabirds at St. Kilda, to a traditional stonemasonry education program, preservation research at Falkland Palace, a bursary for an archaeology internship or refurbishment at Leith Hall.

*“There are all sorts of ways
people can participate...”*

“The Burns Memorial in Alloway is probably the one I feel most passionate about,” adds Sayles, who - like the famed poet - grew up in Ayrshire. “Of course Robert Burns is someone who appeals to people the world over. Obviously he's known for his love songs and poetry, but he was also very passionate about social justice. That is manifested in poems like A Man's a Man For A' That, which is appealing to people of all generations.”

Anyone can contribute to the Burns monument - which is the NTSUSA's annual appeal project - or other National Trust initiatives, by making a specified donation through the NTSUSA. People can also assist by making a general donation or becoming an NTUSA member, which comes

with benefits such as free admission to heritage properties in Scotland and elsewhere.

“There are all sorts of ways people can participate, and it doesn't need to be a major donation,” says Sayles. “Of course they can give directly through the UK Foundation, but as we're a 501(c)(3), if Americans give to the USA Foundation, any donation they make would be tax deductible to the extent that's allowed by the IRS. So it's a very tax efficient way for American donors to give money back to Scotland.”

Every year, four million people visit the natural, cultural and historical places owned or protected by the National Trust for Scotland.

“For those of us who love the country, preserving Scotland's past is very important because it is a wonderful past, and unless you take care of those properties, they will fall into disrepair,” shares Sayles. “When you've got islands and castles and country houses and all sorts of things like that, it takes a lot of money to keep those in good condition so that people can enjoy seeing them and participating in the kinds of activities they provide.”

www.ntsusa.org





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TATTOO

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The NY Tattoo brings music and magic together this May

Something magical can happen when a large group of musicians get together to play. Magnus Orr has not only witnessed this numerous times, he's been instrumental in producing some of the most memorable massed pipe band events around the world, including, most recently, the New York Tattoo.

Growing up in Golspie in the Northern Highlands of Scotland, Orr began playing the pipes when he was a Primary 5 student. Apparently, his lessons went well.

"Magnus Orr is one of the top pipers in the world today," writes broadcaster, author and actor, Daniel B. Region. "When Magnus plays you realize that if Eric Clapton played the bagpipes, then that's pretty much what he'd sound like. Magnus is that good. And, he is a friendly, outgoing man who loves a good laugh."

Now based in Edinburgh with his wife and their three children, Orr has a knack for bringing hundreds or thousands together to do the same. One time, 1,000 pipers and drummers paraded in Perth, Scotland for the Diamond Jubilee; the same number marched in a parade to welcome Pope Benedict XVI to Edinburgh on St. Ninian's Day, 2010.

He's been the driving force behind numerous other events also, including the 2010 Pipefest Global Challenge when bands played in Edinburgh, New York City, Ottawa, Hong Kong, Tintagel, England and Coffs Harbour, Australia to raise funds for charity. Another highlight was the 2004 U.S. Grand Prix parade, led by three-time Formula 1 world champion, Sir Jackie Stewart. Orr remembers Stewart as "the nicest guy ever."

“The pipe band world is one big community.”

When New York's Tartan Day Parade moved to 6th avenue for the first time in 2002, Orr was the event's producer, gathering more than 7,000 pipers and drummers for the event. Many travelled to the Big Apple "to show their support after 9/11," recalls Orr. When Sean Connery's agent asked if the Academy Award-winning actor could be Grand Marshal, Orr thought someone was

playing a prank on him until Connery showed up in his kilt on parade day.

That gathering 13 years ago set another idea into motion, "to have a Tattoo, inspired by the Edinburgh Tattoo, in New York," says Orr.

"I have a great affinity with New York," he explains. "Perhaps it was due to the great reception we had when we organized the 2002 Tartan Day Parade. There are also a huge number of pipe bands in and around New York. The pipe band world is one big community, and it has been great working with a number of local pipe bands on this event."

With an audience of over 700 - and impressive acts such as the West Point Hellcats - last year's inaugural tattoo was a smash success.

This year, three performances will take place on May 22 and 23. The event is moving to a bigger venue; a national historic landmark that is better equipped to highlight the large-scale production of military and massed pipe bands, Highland and Irish dancers and precision drill routines.

"When the opportunity came up to host the event at the 69th Armory, home to 'The Fighting 69th,' New York's official Irish Regiment, I jumped at the chance," shares Orr.

"Built in 1906, the main hall is over 200 by 160 feet and the arched ceiling is over 100 feet high. The Grand Finale, when all the bands play together will be spectacular! This year we hope to have over 100 pipers and drummers inside!"

Orr invites all to come enjoy the New York Tattoo, a showcase of Celtic and military traditions from Scotland, Ireland and North America. "I think the great thing about a Tattoo is it can present music and dance elements in a more formal environment with proper lighting and sound, so there is much more focus on the performance," he muses.

"Our aim is to present a fast-paced show - indeed a musical journey back to Scotland and Ireland."

www.nymilitarytattoo.com





malad valley welsh festival

June 26th - June 28th 2015 • Malad City, Idaho



The residents of Malad Valley would like to invite everyone to the Malad Valley Welsh Festival this year. We are celebrating the rich Welsh heritage that has contributed to the quality of life in the settlement of this beautiful valley.

Welsh pioneers were the first to settle in the Malad Valley in the 1860s. One of their many Welsh traditions was an annual cultural arts event called an eisteddfod, with roots going back 900 years. This event was held locally for many years until it was discontinued before World War 1.

Today, Malad Valley has the largest per capita concentration of people of Welsh ancestry outside the country of Wales itself. For that reason, many residents of the Valley wanted to reestablish their Welsh roots. In 2005, after a 90 year break, this annual cultural event, now called the Malad Valley Welsh Festival, once again became a reality.

For more info visit

www.welshfestival.com

The Malad Valley Welsh Festival would like to give a special thanks to:



IFFT Foundation





Malad Valley Welsh Festival

Idaho's best kept Celtic secret, Malad Valley, is as Welsh as it gets in the USA

Interestingly, it was a Scottish-Canadian, Donald Mackenzie, who gave the community – one of Idaho's oldest – its name in 1864 while passing through. The town itself began as a Welsh Mormon settlement, and remains fiercely proud of its roots. Each year the Malad Valley Welsh Festival pays tribute to the present that is its past.

Festival Chair Jean Thomas says that, according to researchers at Brigham Young University, Malad has the largest percentage of people per capita of Welsh descent of any city outside of Wales.

"Although it is changing, the phone book (and the cemetery) is still dominated by Jones, Williams, Evans, Thomas, Davis, Pierce and Edwards' names. We should have started the festival a generation ago when the ties to those who immigrated to Malad Valley were stronger," she declares.

Still, in 2014, more than 1,200 people from 15 states and three foreign countries attended the festival. Most of the attendees came from Idaho and Utah, although this year people from Texas, California and Colorado have been asking after the gathering, which takes place June 26 to 28.

The events include everything from Welsh music and dance to displays of Welsh folk costumes, exhibits on the first 25 families to settle in Malad Valley (all of them Welsh), a quilt show, wagon rides to historic sites in Malad, and authentic Welsh food.

According to Thomas, one of the most

popular activities at the festival is the educational presentations on Welsh history and culture. This year those include lectures on the role of the harp in Welsh culture, learning Welsh through folk songs, as well as discussions about Owen Glyndwr, the last real prince of Wales.

"All four sets of my grandparents emigrated to the U.S. from the Merthyr Tydfil area of Wales in the middle 1800s for both economic and religious reasons," she says. "I look like a typical Welsh woman – short, stocky with very dark hair and eyes."

“We all need to support the events and activities that are held in the United States and elsewhere to celebrate Celtic heritage...”

Thomas has been involved with the Welsh Festival almost from the beginning. After hearing about a Welsh society organizing, she attended one of the first meetings. Her family background helped: her sister has written extensively about the Welsh and Welsh literature, and her father was the last person in Malad who knew how to speak the language. When the festival was first proposed, Thomas was a natural to act as co-chair, later becoming chair of the event.

She believes a revival of interest in

Welsh heritage is taking place, though there are still a number of challenges.

"Like all heritage movements, I am not sure the younger generations are that interested, primarily because they are more likely to marry someone with a different background and think of themselves and their children as Americans rather than of the legacy of their grandparents and great-grandparents."

However, Thomas notes that the research that Malad Middle School history students are doing under the direction of their Welsh teacher is helping to introduce younger people to both their heritage and the history of their hometown.

She suggests that the Scots and Irish seem to be better recognized and organized, likely because they began putting together events a couple of generations earlier.

"We all need to support the events and activities that are held in the United States and elsewhere to celebrate Celtic heritage," she concludes. "That support could be financial but, more importantly, attendance at events. I am looking forward to retirement so that I can travel to festivals and events. Publications like this one are important to letting people all over the world know about our Celtic heritage and that there are a lot of us interested in our heritage."

www.welshfestival.com



IRISH TRUE

GLASSES UP TO THE SONG AND THE STORM

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Heidi Donlon and Ireland's Whiskey Trail

What started as a labour of love for one woman has taken on a life of its own

There are nearly as many different types of pubs on Ireland's Whiskey Trail as there are shades of green on the island, according to Heidi Donlon. She should know.

After all, Donlon created the trail in the first place. A highlight of any visit to Ireland for lovers of a wee dram, the trail is a free travel itinerary to the country's best distilleries and whiskey pubs. It has no starting or finishing points, no departure dates and no tour guides.

For that matter, Donlon notes that the trail isn't just about sampling a shot of the good stuff; each of the distilleries and museums on the trail - the Old Jameson Distillery, the Kilbeggan Distillery, the Tullamore D.E.W. Visitor Centre, the Jameson Experience in Midleton and the Dingle Distillery - open the doors to the country's rich distilling history and heritage.

"They initiate the whiskey amateur into the realms of mashing, fermenting, distilling and cask maturation," she says. "They are also the perfect places to discover the brands which made these distilleries famous, as all offer either a whiskey tasting or a glass of whiskey at the end of the tour."

In the same way, Donlon reasons, no trip to Ireland would be complete without time spent in an Irish pub. Therefore, an integral part of the trail is the great bars and inns scattered across the country.

Her criteria for choosing the pubs were simple: they either had to have an excellent whiskey selection, or they had to be linked in some way to Ireland's distilling heritage. "But crucially they all had to be great Irish pubs in their own right," she says.

Among some of the classic Emerald Isle establishments are old Victorian pubs, such as O'Neill's in Dublin and Dylan's Whiskey Bar in Kilkenny; pubs that specialize in Irish music, like the Folk House in Kinsale; and even businesses that have a uniquely Irish twist, such as Mooney's in Monasterevin, which contains a pub, shop and funeral parlour.

Most of the spots, Donlon points out, are off the beaten tourist track; she was determined the trail would not only lead visitors to Irish whiskey, but also to local residents. "The Irish are prob-

ably one of the friendliest, funniest and most talkative people on earth. One mention that you are following the Whiskey Trail will inevitably lead to conversation with whoever happens to be sitting next to you."

She jokes that if you're in one of the Whiskey Trail pubs, and you want to keep to yourself, that you best keep your mouth shut. "But then again, if you intend to keep to yourself, you probably shouldn't be on the Whiskey Trail in the first place - or in Ireland for that matter!"

From 1992 to 2001, Donlon worked for Irish Distillers in international sales and marketing in Dublin. During that time, she developed an understanding and appreciation for Irish whiskey, and especially for the culture surrounding it. When she moved to Kerry, she repositioned herself as an independent Irish whiskey expert.

After visiting Scotland, and working at many international trade shows, she realized Ireland was missing out on the huge potential of whiskey tourism.

"What struck me was how well Scotland promoted whisky and their distilleries to visiting tourists. It was clear that no tourist would leave Scotland without having had at least one wee dram. In Ireland, it was mostly Guinness that captured all the tourists' imaginations. It bothered me that Ireland, which supposedly invented whiskey, wasn't telling its story fully to those five million visitors coming to our green shores every year."

Today, the trail is firmly established, and the website, with its free touring maps and app available in English, French and German, now attracts more than 200,000 online visitors annually.

In 2008, she created the Ireland Whiskey Trail, modelled after Scotland's Malt Whisky Trail. It took the better part of two years for the project to become a reality. "I went into more pubs in the space of 12 months than I had done in the previous 12 years, all with the aim of finding those perfect whiskey experiences," she explains.

Today, the trail is firmly established, and the website, with its free touring maps and app available in English, French and German, now attracts more than 200,000 online visitors annually.

www.irelandwhiskeytrail.com





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IRISHFEST.COM





Belfast Days



*The teenage years can be troubling no matter where one grows up. For journalist and author Eimear O'Callaghan, coming of age in Belfast in the early 1970s brought more than its share of Troubles. Recently we spoke with her about her first book, *Belfast Days*.*

What are your own roots?

I was born into a very ordinary, happy, Catholic family in nationalist West Belfast — the eldest of five children and an only daughter. Andersonstown, where I was reared, was — and still is — a huge, sprawling, and predominantly nationalist district of the city. Because of Belfast's segregated, divided and troubled nature in the '60s and '70s, I grew up without knowing a single Protestant until I went to university. My parents, relatives and neighbours were all Catholics as were my friends and teachers at the school I attended, St Dominic's Grammar School on the Falls Road.

What inspired you to become a writer?

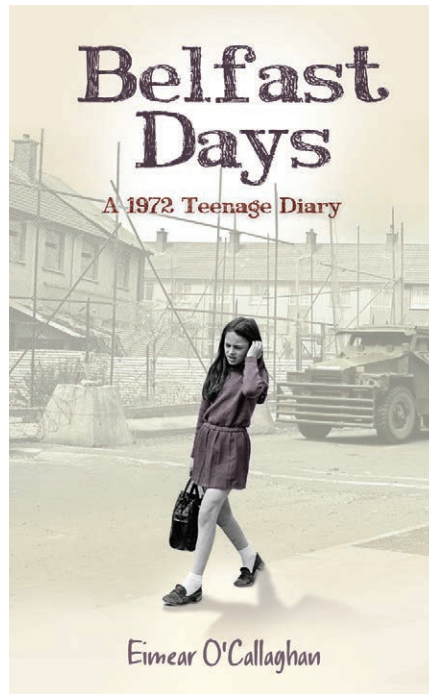
My father, Jim, instilled in me, from an early age, a passion for the written word; reading to me when I wasn't old enough to do so myself, reciting his favourite poems, sharing his love of literature and encouraging me to read newspapers. I also inherited from him an abiding interest in news and current affairs. I began to devour books as soon as I could read but as a teenager, I was more of a reader than a writer. It was only when I was studying at Queen's University, when violence and mayhem convulsed Northern Ireland, that I knew journalism was the career I wanted. Now, looking back at the diary I wrote when I was 16 — and seeing my precocious obsession with the North's deteriorating political and security situation — it's obvious I was destined to be a journalist. I just didn't realize it at that time.

Are they the same reasons you do it today?

Since leaving my job at the BBC five years ago, I've taken a step back from news journalism to concentrate instead on feature writing and more recently, on my first book, *Belfast Days*. But the motivation is still the same: to share a story, paint pictures, stimulate debate, challenge old ideas and encourage fresh thinking.

How have you grown as a writer over time?

I regard them as two distinct phases in my working life. I began my newspaper career as an absolute greenhorn — having never set foot in a courtroom or a council chamber, let alone report from the scene



of shooting or an explosion. It was initially daunting but tremendously exciting. Transferring to radio and television broadcasting in Dublin a few years later brought new challenges — more advanced technology, tighter deadlines, working with the spoken rather than the written word, and the thrilling adrenaline rush of live broadcasting. That broadcasting buzz sustained me through nearly two decades at the BBC before I moved into editorial management: shaping output, molding staff and balancing budgets. Throughout my career, though, a voice urged me to write a book and refused to be silenced. Now, freed from the relentless pressure of broadcasting deadlines, and armed with knowledge and confidence garnered over decades, I can indulge my love of the written word without the restraints of journalistic objectivity and impartiality.

What motivated you to write *Belfast Days*?

Finding my 1972 teenage diary and reading it for the first time in nearly 40 years set in motion a train of events that eventually compelled me to write *Belfast Days*. The book, which I certainly hadn't planned, took on a life of its own after I submitted a feature to *The Irish Times* based on a short excerpt from the diary. That extract recorded my shocked, heartbroken schoolgirl reaction to the events of Bloody Sunday when British soldiers shot dead 13 innocent civilians taking part in

an anti-internment march in Derry. The paper printed my article on June 15, 2010 — the day the British Prime Minister David Cameron apologized for the killings, declaring them to be 'unjustified and unjustifiable.' I was amazed by the response that the newspaper article and subsequent radio interviews elicited at home and as far away as the west coast of America. Complete strangers, including a radio producer and a writer in Seattle, urged me to publish the diary. I gradually realized that I had a story to tell about what 'ordinary' everyday life was like for an unexceptional Catholic schoolgirl and her family in 1972 — the worst year of the Troubles — when almost 500 people were killed. Making the decision to proceed with the book wasn't easy. The diary's contents were often harrowing, shocking, disturbing and uncomfortable for me to read. It was also funny and embarrassing at times, with its recollections of the rough-and-tumble of ordinary family life and flashes of my teenage tantrums and angst. I'm a very private person by nature, and I never intended my diary to be seen by eyes other than my own. I was nervous about sharing my innermost dreams, fears and prejudices and was also apprehensive about how I might be perceived by people not only within my own community but within the unionist community as well. Ultimately, though, I decided I'd no choice but to write the book — even if only for my own children. I wanted to remind people, at home and abroad, how much we have forgotten; to show how easily two god-fearing communities plummeted to near civil war; to warn against the danger of taking the current peace in Northern Ireland for granted, and to celebrate the better place we're in today.

What did you learn during the process?

I learned more than anything that time doesn't necessarily heal but it certainly blurs details and softens pain. I appreciated for the first time the resilience of 'ordinary' people — men and women like my parents — who struggled in the most difficult, life-threatening circumstances to preserve family life. And I realized how easily adults and young people in situations of conflict — schoolchildren like me — can become inured to violence and death. I learned too that if Northern Ireland is to deal effectively with its tragic past, people must be encouraged to share their individual stories; more importantly, we must all be prepared to listen to them.

I wanted to remind people, at home and abroad, how much we have forgotten; to show how easily two God-fearing communities plummeted to near civil war; to warn against the danger of taking the current peace in Northern Ireland for granted, and to celebrate the better place we're in today.

How did you feel when the book was completed?

I found it very difficult to let go and were it not for the publisher's deadlines, I'd probably still be re-writing every line and paragraph; in that sense, 'completion' was an anti-climax. By contrast, the excitement of having a brown cardboard box, carrying the first copies of *Belfast Days*, delivered to my door was comparable only to seeing my new-born children for the first time. Quite by chance, my husband Paul was at home when the postman called and was there to witness me ripping off the sealing tape, scattering the protective packaging and holding and smelling my 'real' book for the first time. As a feeling of completion, achievement and pride engulfed me, tears weren't far away.

What has the response been like so far from those that have read it?

It's been overwhelmingly positive. Reviewers have praised the insight the book provides and, more importantly, my honesty and fair-mindedness. Readers in Britain and in the Republic, as well as many young people, have told me they'd 'no idea what it was like.' On a personal level, *Belfast Days* has re-ignited friendships with girls I haven't seen or spoken to since we were at school 40 years ago. Many of them, as well as total strangers, have got in touch to thank me for writing about that time — for evoking a mixture of happy and sad times, including memories they'd unconsciously buried. What's been most gratifying for me is the response from members of the Protestant and unionist community who've spoken about what they've learned from *Belfast Days* — both about themselves, and also about the nationalist experience of the Troubles. Strangers have tracked me down via the internet — have even called to my door — to talk about the light it has thrown on our shared past and the views it has challenged. The Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams, generously described the book as an 'insightful, evocative and important reminder of teenage days in war-torn Belfast.' At the opposite end of the political spectrum, a former



leader of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland urged his congregations to 'read this diary. In the process you may smile, you may be shocked, you may even see your own reflection.' Such responses are immensely humbling.

What did your family think of the book?

The book churned up a lot of memories, happy and sad, for my mother and my four brothers who all still live in Belfast. It introduced my son and two daughters to a violent and unrecognizable past — in the city where they've recently studied, worked and socialized — that both shocked and disturbed them. But without exception, they're all extremely proud. Unfortunately, my father didn't live long enough to see my book published but I know that he, as someone who always dreamed of writing a book about the North, would have been equally proud.

What makes a good book?

Empathetic characters and lyrical writing. A good plot or story line helps but for me it isn't essential. Give me a writer whose love of words is immediately obvious, who introduces me to fully formed, three dimensional characters and I'll happily immerse myself in his or her book. I love books that explore the workings of the psyche as it deals with the darker but ever present aspects of life - change, loneliness, exclusion, ageing and loss.

What are your thoughts on the state of Irish literature today?

It's going through the most exciting phase that I've ever witnessed - almost a renaissance. Ireland is changing and the old

'dependables' - the religious, political and financial institutions - are being shaken to their foundations; it experienced unparalleled growth during the Celtic Tiger era and then wilted under an economic recession. While all this was happening — and possibly because of it — there's been a great burst of literary activity with exciting writers, young and old, coming to the fore, including people like Colm Toibin, Sebastian Barry, Emma Donoghue, David Park, Colum McCann, Eimear McBride and my latest discovery, Sara Baume.

Have you read other literary efforts about the Troubles?

I don't seek out books about the Troubles. Too many of them feed into the propaganda of one side or the other, even though the writer mightn't consciously have set out to do so. Others fictionalize and glamourize what was a dark, painful period in our very recent history. I prefer to give such books a wide berth.



What's next on your creative agenda?

Since rediscovering my teenage diary and delving into its pages, I've been fascinated by the idea of memory: what we remember and, more importantly, how we remember. I'd love to have a go at fiction next, building on what I've learnt about how the passage of time softens, blurs, distorts and even obliterates events from our pasts. It's still very much at the exploratory stage but who knows what the coming months might bring.

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Donnell *Leahy*
Natalie *MacMaster*



As Celtic Life International editor Charles Mandel explains, husband and wife Donnell Leahy and Natalie MacMaster are making beautiful music together

Donnell Leahy knows who wears the pants in the family.

"I'll put you over to Her Majesty," chuckles the Cape Breton fiddler on the phone from Davis, Florida.

No, the Queen of England isn't wintering in Florida; rather, it's a very down-home, low-key Natalie MacMaster who picks up the line on the other end.

"Donnell just called you Her Majesty," I note. "Do I refer to you that way as well?"

"Absolutely," comes the drop-dead reply in a distinctly Cape Breton accent. "No, no," she then laughs, with a touch of mischief.

Yet, you could make the argument that MacMaster is indeed royalty: Queen of the Celtic fiddler players, who began recording at age 16 with her debut album - *Four on the Floor* - and who now has three decades of experience, 11 recordings, and thousands of shows behind her.

She even has the family pedigree of royalty: her Uncle Buddy, who passed away at the age of 89 last summer, is considered the King of the Cape Breton fiddlers, while cousin Ashley is a firebrand Prince who married traditional island fid-

dling with rock music and took it to New York City's Carnegie Hall.

MacMaster and her husband - himself a renowned fiddler, and frontman for the very successful band of siblings Leahy - are currently on a 60-city tour. Though they are not actually playing at being Canadian snowbirds down south, Donnell jokes that they are trying to delay their departure from the Sunshine State as long as possible.

"We understand you folks are fighting the fight out there," he comments, referring to the record amount of snowfall that's blanketed Nova Scotia, including Cape Breton, this winter. Clearly, he and MacMaster are thankful to have missed the ice and cold as they tour in support of their new recording, *One*.

“Writing music with one another has been great...”

The title *One* is nothing if not apropos. It's the first time MacMaster and Leahy have recorded together, something the latter said they had planned on doing

since getting married 12 years ago. For one reason or another the occasion kept getting put off. He attributes the delay to different schedules and, jokingly, "the fact that there's a baby born every day now in the family," a reference to the couple's six children.

Although the pair has frequently performed together, it didn't always add up to a harmonious sound - the fiddlers' styles are different, according to Leahy, and sometimes they cancel out one another's nuances.

What they did learn was that when they arranged tunes together, they ended up at something more equitable. "Writing music with one another has been great," Leahy notes, "because naturally, from the beginning of the song, you're not stepping on each other's toes."

"Of course, we have played together a lot; on tour, at house parties, and elsewhere. And, after 12 years of living together, I think we have figured it out."

MacMaster elaborates on the recording sessions for *One*. "There wasn't a lot of struggle, and things came together pretty easily. There were a number of tunes that

we had been playing live for a while, and of course all the little kinks just sort themselves out after playing them on stage for years.”

Leahy agrees, dismissing any idea of marital stress while in the studio. “Not recording, no. Wall-papering, yes, but not recording,” he jokes.

“After 12 years of living together, I think we have figured it out...”

In fact, the fiddler notes that the studio sessions marked the first time in years the couple was able to leave their children for a week-and-a-half and concentrate on making music. “We were able to really focus and create, so there was no stress at all. We had also learned, earlier on in our relationship, that we have similar taste in music, and we sort of hear it in the same way. We like what the other one likes. That made a big difference.”

More than marking the first time the couple has recorded an album together, *One* boasts another first: veteran music producer Bob Ezrin was at the controls, shaping the final sounds. The Canadian music producer is famed for having worked with the likes of Lou Reed, Alice Cooper, Kiss, Pink Floyd, Peter Dinklage and Phish, among many others.

Ezrin will also produce a Christmas album that MacMaster will start recording in June.

“Bob brings an immediate reaction, and it’s the right reaction [to the music],” she asserts. “He’s efficient and confident and he knows how to make things happen. He is wonderful to work with and I trust his musical sensibility.”

Ezrin isn’t the only big name on board these days; producer Justin Cortelyou also worked on the new CD. Cortelyou’s credits include Taylor Swift, Ke\$ha and Alan Jackson.

Clearly, MacMaster and Leahy had fun making the recording. For the very first time, she sings on a song, the vocal lament titled *Cagaran Gaolach*. On Fiddler’s Despair, she takes a page from her cousin Ashley, with a couple of up-tempo distorted guitars driving the song’s momentum. And two players share one piano

on Pastiche for Anne. Just to round things out, the tune Joyous Waltz features a drum set made out of a cardboard box and paint cans.

MacMaster says *One* is definitely a rockin’ record, but points out that most of the same basic elements can be found in her past works. “It’s both a continuation and an evolution of sorts, really...maybe just a higher quality version.”

According to Leahy, the couple didn’t plan to create an album that specifically sounded contemporary or traditional. In fact, they really didn’t have any particular genre in mind. Instead, the pair brought their individual musical tastes and interests, and let the music dictate what came about, organically. “It is diverse, and I think that reflects our playing styles,” he says. “We didn’t take the approach that, oh, we need another fast tune or there’s not enough slow stuff on there. We just



picked the material, and it was all quite honest and natural.”

It goes without saying that MacMaster also chose to pay tribute to her uncle Buddy on the recording with a couple of different songs. Of one tune, she says, “That was the easiest, simplest, most fluid track we did. We just gathered a bunch of people to sit there and play tunes for Buddy. We didn’t even know what we were playing.”

“We put it together in the studio and we got it in one take. It came together so quickly that we said, ‘Well, we’ve only been playing for five minutes. Some guys drove two hours to be here, we might as well put something else down.’ So we threw some more tunes together and – boom! – first take.”

She notes that they didn’t intend to

keep both tracks originally, each of which featured six fiddlers, but ended up including one as a bonus song on the record. “I’m sure the spirit of Buddy was there with us,” she recalls of the Cape Breton sessions.

Now, deep in the southern United States, Cape Breton seems a long way away. However, as they often do, the couple have practically brought their home with them on the road. All six kids are along for the tour, which began in Akron, Ohio and will continue through to California. “We’ve traveled a lot separately in the past,” Leahy notes, “but to be on tour with the whole brood, we have home with us, so it’s wonderful. We’re not missing the kids or worried about them. It’s all good.”

On the road, the kids are home-schooled, as they always have been, and the family eats at restaurants, although MacMaster does the cooking when they’re home. It is quite a challenge to balance touring, composing music, lessons, family life and more, and MacMaster concedes it’s a handful. “People say, It’s pandemonium, but that’s just our reality. But that just our reality and I’m used to it, and this is our life and we just do it and don’t think about it.”

To be sure, she wouldn’t have it any other way. Her husband and children are the best and biggest part of her life these days, and the only things more important to her than her music. She notes her recordings normally come about two years apart, but this one took three.

“My life is different right now because my music is not my baby. My children are my baby, so it just takes longer.”

MacMaster acknowledges that she’s not as efficient as she once was, and doesn’t pump things out as easily or quickly as she once did. “It takes more effort, for sure, just by nature of being a mother of six and running a home. I don’t have 24 hours in a day to dedicate toward music anymore; I have 24 hours in a day to do laundry, help with lessons, juggle meals, all that stuff. I mean, there is only so much a person can do in one day. Still, somehow we always manage to find time each day to make some beautiful music together.”

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Evelyn Glennie

*Despite the sky-high accolades and accomplishments,
Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie keeps her feet on the ground.*

You might say that winning the Swedish Polar Music Prize is a bit of a big deal. Past recipients include Chuck Berry, Yo-Yo Ma, Patti Smith, Björk, Peter Gabriel, Pink Floyd, Led Zepelin, Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, Joni Mitchell, Bruce Springsteen and Quincy Jones, among many others. This year the prize goes to folk singer Emmylou Harris and Dame Evelyn Glennie.

Glennie is a percussionist, but not just any percussionist. She is a triple Grammy award winner, who has recorded over 30 solo CDs. She has garnered more than 80 awards for her long-time career as a solo percussionist. In awarding her the prize, the Polar Music committee said, "Evelyn Glennie shows us that the body is a resonance chamber and that we live in a universe of sound."

taking place all over the globe," Glennie notes.

This is all pretty heady stuff for a woman who grew up on a family farm approximately 25 miles north-west of Aberdeen in Scotland. If that sounds like the unlikely place to make a world class percussionist, then Glennie insists that it helped prepare her to be accountable at a very young age.

"Looking back on my childhood, I realize that being born into a farming family brought responsibility," she recalls. "From a very young age, I helped to wean the young lambs and take care of those whose mothers rejected them. Helping the family as part of a team, chores were the order of the day for me and my two brothers."

Farm life wasn't without music. Both Glennie's parents possessed a musical background, and the percussionist says music



According to Glennie, she was "hugely humbled and inspired" to learn that she'd won the prize. "To be chosen from so many deserving people, from all genres of music, only makes me want to work harder, to make a difference and rise to the occasion. Accepting the Polar Music Prize is a great honour, for which I am extremely grateful."

It's certainly a favourable start to Glennie's 50th year, one for which she has planned a number of special events to mark the occasion, each designed to celebrate the journey she's taken and her career to date.

"To kick-start the festivities, I asked 50 composers from around the world to write 50 bars of music for solo percussion, which is the biggest commissioning exercise I've ever undertaken," she enthuses.

Throughout the year, she'll collaborate with a variety of other artists, working on several shows and scores, including one with Mark Knopfler and Hugh Hudson for a film titled *Altamira*. "Overall, it will be a busy year, with several world premieres of concertos

always formed a large part of her life. "My father played accordion in a dance band. My mother played the piano at home and although she was not an organist, she played hymns on the organ at the local village church. I would sit on the hard wooden pew and absorb the church paintings as she played."

Glennie points out that she was fortunate to be brought up in a time when family get-togethers were spent singing, dancing and telling stories. Poetry was even recited in the Doric or Buchan tongue, the dialect spoken in the north-east.

"We actually enjoyed power cuts in the winter time," she laughs. "They added further excitement to our creative processes - when the lights went out and we just had candles to see by."

"Engaging with people is still an important thing for me," adds Glennie. "It helps me connect with audiences and other performers and therefore with the music as well."

Her school offered music education and she began to play piano at the age of eight, followed by the clarinet at age 10. After seeing the school orchestra play, she focused her attention on per-

cussion. "I was so impressed and enraptured by the sound of percussion instruments that I immediately wanted to be part of it," she recalls.

By the age of 12, she had lost 90 per cent of her hearing, but that didn't stop her from setting her sights on becoming a solo percussionist. "After all, I thought the world was full of them!" she exclaims. "I learned several things along the way, not least through encounters with many kinds of prejudice. When people told me I would not become a musician, I felt the need to prove them wrong, which has taken me on a very interesting journey."

Glennie asserts that every time she performs now she may be inspiring others in the same way she found inspiration years ago. "To me, planting the seeds of curiosity is a very important thing," she says. "Obviously that's perhaps easiest to achieve with percussion playing – sparking peoples' interest in music making. However, my personal journey has taught me more than how to play percussion. I have other seeds I can plant. More and more, I'm investing in my vision to teach the world to listen."

When it comes to composition, she draws on virtually everything and anything for inspiration. She says she's able to find ideas in the form of a fresh spring day or from a warm fire on a winter's evening. The percussionist says she enjoys trying new ways of striking an instrument or creating sounds. As a child Glennie recalls running a stick along a railing and listening to the variation in sound as she went along. She says that same childlike curiosity remains with her today.

Overall, she asserts that music is a very personal experience. "In general, I would say that a piece of music should create an emo-

tional reaction in an audience. It doesn't matter whether the reaction is positive or negative. The very fact that people have felt that connection means the music has done its job well. After all, the purpose of music is to ignite a feeling, an emotion, whatever that may be."

As with any profession, Glennie's comes with its own challenges. They include keeping things fresh and constantly updating her repertoire, and maintaining a good level of motivation along with a level head. "It's easy to get sucked into a rather false landscape, either a negative one painted by your critics or an over-positive one, if you're susceptible to adulation," she notes. "In the end, learn to say 'no' occasionally. It doesn't come easily to me, but sometimes it has to be done."

By turns, the rewards of the job are great. Glennie calls the sharing of experiences between artists and audiences magical and profound. "I've been told I've provided enjoyment to some people and made a real difference to others. That's an incredibly rewarding thing to hear.

"I'm constantly fascinated and heartened by the unique ways people make the most of their situations," she continues. "This is especially true of children in difficult circumstances. In fact, working with charities is often very humbling, and being able to do that – to have made a difference to people in worse situations than my own – is perhaps the best reward of all."

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the Sound of Arisaig

Tom Langlands visits the Sound of Arisaig and celebrates Scotland's bio-diversity



I am approaching Genuig along the shoreline of Loch Ailort on the west coast of Scotland. This area is part of the Morar, Moidart and Ardnamurchan National Scenic Area, and it is not difficult to see why. The rugged hills around me, with the beautiful blue waters of the Sound of Arisaig stretching across to Rum, Eigg and Muck before me, are precisely why I love this part of Scotland. It does something for the soul.

Standing on the edge of Genuig Bay, a golden eagle circles overhead and a lone red deer stag monitors my presence as several sheep wander idly by. A few isolated boats float calmly in the bay, and a coastal otter plays in the seaweed along the rocky shoreline. Nearby, a statuesque heron surveys the scene, and a goldeneye

bobs on the gentle waves. My presence sends a black-throated diver and red-breasted merganser into their hunting ground below the surface.

The tide is receding, leaving behind only the smell of salt-laden air and an uneven carpet of sand, rock-pools, shells and slippery, brown seaweed. Local communities once harvested this seaweed on behalf of landowners, who could make significant profits from its sale because of its use in soap and glass production. Sadly, the collapse of income from seaweed, along with the introduction of sheep farming, were both significant factors in the Highland Clearances. At various locations along this coastline the crumbling ruins of old cottages from those times can still be found, and the poignancy of the scene before me

is not lost as I watch the sheep skirt the seaweed-covered foreshore.

Another kind of seaweed – maerl – may be found in the waters offshore, and it is this form of coralline algae which makes this place ecologically important. Maerl does not anchor itself to the seabed or rocks like other types of seaweed, but instead spreads out in flat sprawling beds along the sandy sea floor. It has a hard, chalk-like skeleton built up of lime deposits, and it grows as small round nodules or “twigs” covering the sea floor. When alive, it is a beautiful reddish pink colour, and when dead it turns white.

New maerl will overlay some of the dead maerl as it breaks down. Many of the stunning, sparkling white beaches found on the west coast of Scotland, including

those at nearby Arisaig, are not made solely of crushed seashells nor of coral, as many assume, but instead derive their tropical island appearance from dead maerl deposits that have been abraded, crushed and washed up on the shore. There, the broken pieces of seaweed continue to bleach under the rays of the sun.

Maerl is only found in a few places in Europe and relies upon pollution-free water. It needs sunlight in order to grow, and can only survive in clear water to a depth of around 20 metres. Although its calcareous structure renders it hard, it is also brittle and can only survive where tidal movements and currents are not too strong. Gentle tidal movement keeps the maerl washed free of sandy deposits, but more severe movement will cause it to break.

In some places where the tidal movement is not so strong as to cause serious damage, the maerl will form rippling patterns over the seabed as it adapts to the shifting sands. A number of areas around Scotland (and Ireland) host conditions which are perfect for maerl to grow.

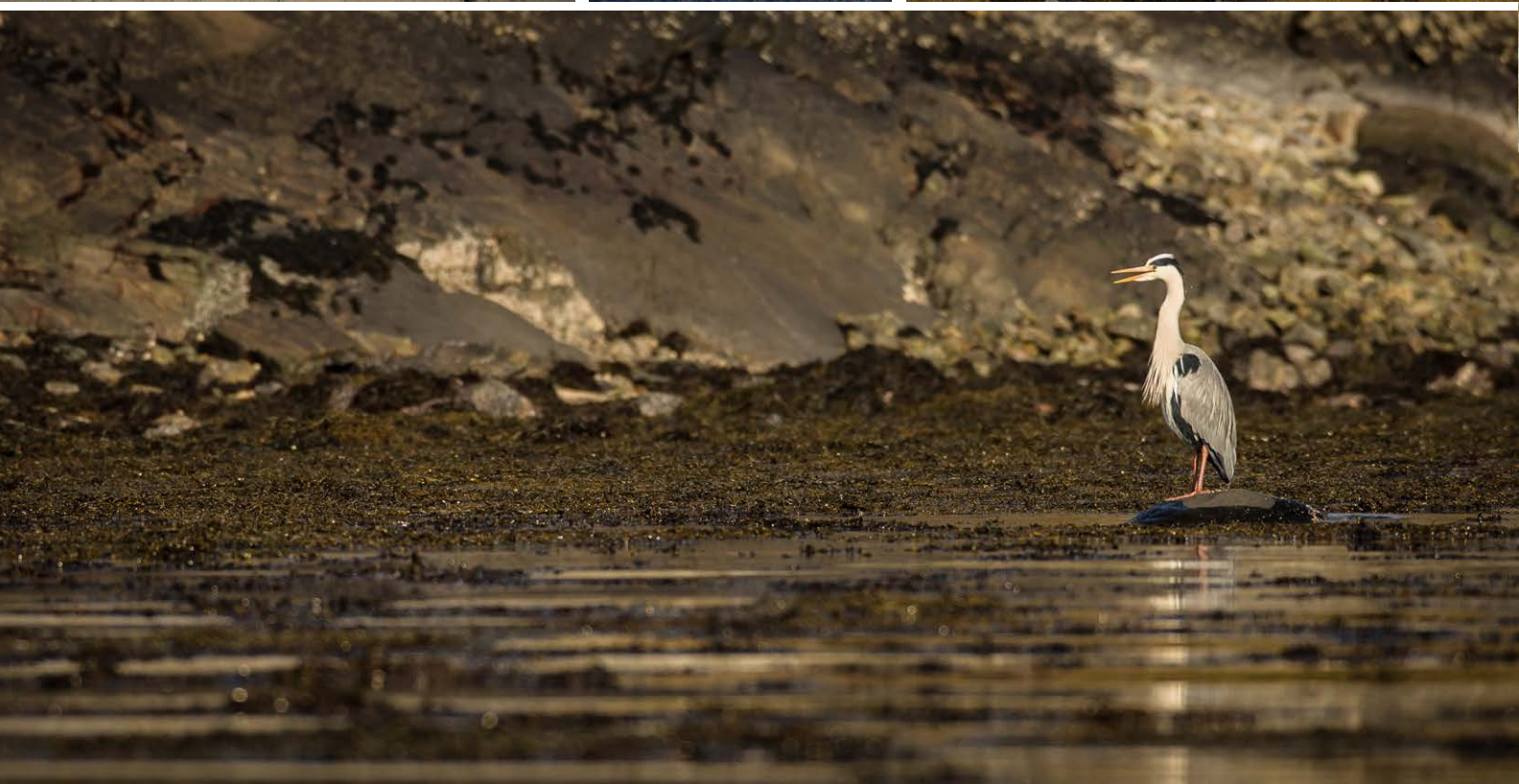
Following a four-year study of Scottish sea lochs, commissioned by the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee, it was discovered that some of those adjoining the Sound of Arisaig had the richest maerl beds found in Scotland. For this reason a large area of sea between the Ardnish and Ardnamurchan peninsulas

and west of Glenuig is designated as a marine Special Area of Conservation (mSAC).

Peter Tevendale is the former Project Officer for the Sound of Arisaig mSAC and also Loch Sunart SAC. He has a marine biology degree from St. Andrews University, has worked in the fish farming (mussels and salmon) and tourism industries, and wrote the management strategy for the Sound of Arisaig mSAC. The key objectives of the management plan are to protect the maerl beds while also ensuring that existing communities, some of which rely upon the sea, do not suffer as a consequence.

"Maerl is extremely slow growing," Tevendale explained. "Beds of maerl are found in abundance in the Sound of Arisaig at over a metre depth. These maerl beds are extremely delicate and have been growing since the last Ice Age, 12,000 years ago, and they won't grow back for another 12,000 years if we destroy them."

Human activity poses the greatest danger to the maerl beds. Changes to water quality - such as chemical, effluent or sediment run-off from land, as well as scallop dredging, benthic (bottom) trawling, drilling or other operations that disturb the seabed - can all have serious consequences. Little evidence exists that marine-based tourism activities such as kayaking, diving and sailing have





any significant impact upon the maerl beds. However, dragging boat anchors over these fragile seaweed beds can result in damage that will take years to repair.

In some places maerl is extracted in order to use its calcium-rich skeleton as a fertilizer for spreading over fields. It was a practice crofters once carried out, but continues on an industrial scale in other parts of the world. Maerl is also used in the treatment of osteoporosis, and for assisting in the filtration of water and as a supplement in animal feed. While fertilizing the land with maerl may assist some land-based crops to grow, the harvesting of living maerl has a devastating effect upon the ecology of the marine environment.

Maerl is not only a living organism; the maerl beds are a key living space for certain marine species. "They are an important habitat because they form a nursery matrix for many other species." Tevendale notes. "The Sound of Arisaig also happens to

be at the southernmost limit of many northern species and the northernmost limit of southern species. In its overlap area you find huge biodiversity."

The maerl beds in the Sound of Arisaig are home to specific types of starfish, crabs and anemones as well as other invertebrates and algae that cannot be found anywhere else.

The good news is that new maerl beds are coming to light, including the recent discovery of some extensive ones in the waters of Wester Ross. However, this news must be balanced against the news that beds known to have existed previously can no longer be found, serving to reinforce why it is necessary to protect the valuable maerl beds in the sea lochs around the Sound of Arisaig.

Words and photos by Tom Langlands
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Steve Norman
(Spandau Ballet)

Iain McDonagh

In 2013, Iain McDonagh decided life was short and took a leap of faith. He left his job in I.T. as a software analyst and programmer at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland's northeast and set out to become a photographer. Within a year he'd racked up an enviable list of clients, shooting images for a number of local, regional and national newspapers as well as for some of the UK's leading music magazines.





David A. Immerglück
(Counting Crows)



Ben Haenow

Clearly, McDonagh has a natural aptitude for photography since the Glasgow-born shutterbug's original degree is in computer studies. The photographer also has an adventurous streak. In his 20s and 30s, contract work allowed him to travel and backpack around the world. He visited most of central and eastern Europe and went to Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand several times. He went so far as to secure a full immigration visa to Australia, but ultimately couldn't bear to leave his native Scotland.

While McDonagh had always been interested in visual arts and music – the bulk of his photography are concert shots – from a young age, he confessed he'd never had the skill to become an artist.

"Drawing and painting is not one of my strong points, unless people like matchstick men," he jokes. "I always seemed to see a good photo, but never knew anything about the technical side of photography and never had a good enough camera

to take my photography seriously. It was just very much a typical thing everyone enjoys doing now and then."

Now McDonagh says his passion is gig photography, which allows him to indulge his love of analyzing people, their expressions and movements.

"I hope I capture this through my photography," he states.

McDonagh certainly has no regrets about switching careers.

"The rewards are huge for me," he enthuses. "I live a very happy life. I was never truly happy in office jobs, so I am living life the way I want to, able to express myself through my photography and hired by some amazing gigs and festivals."

But the job is not without its challenges either. In fact, the latter are many and complex. In a time of iPhones and people generally taking more photographs, photography has become trendy and everyone believes they are a photographer, McDonagh notes.

"It has become very hard to make a full-time living off photography due to the fact that so many people take photos and send them to people," McDonagh observes.

It has led to amateur photos showing up in publications as newspapers and magazines look to cut costs.

"There has been a big trend of publications knowing they will get free photos from either photography students or the general public," McDonagh points out.

People don't seem to want high-quality photos anymore, says McDonagh. Rather, he says, they are a generation used to accepting low-quality shots in order to cut costs and because "it's only a photo," they think they shouldn't pay for it.

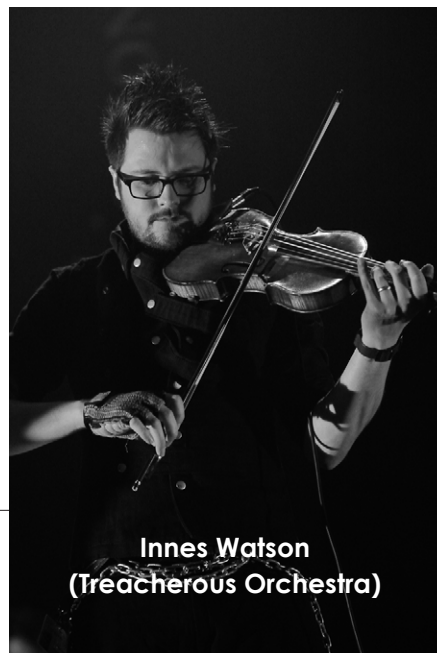
"Plus the most frustrating thing of all is people who give their photos away for free. What they don't realize is that they are both adding to the mindset of free photos, but also devaluing photography as a professional industry."



Luke Pritchard
(The Kooks)



Tommy Emmanuel



Innes Watson
(Treacherous Orchestra)



Kris Drever



Angus Grant
(Shooglenifty)

McDonagh says a publication, website or a newspaper without photos is nothing, yet notes that the latter expect people to own thousands of pounds worth of professional photography equipment, laptops, and software, along with the skills necessary to take the photo.

“As I say to many people, a credit and a link to my website does not pay my bills,” McDonagh wryly says.

At the same time, technology also makes it easier for McDonagh to get his work out across the numerous social media sites and he cites advances such as 4G mobile networks, which allows him to take his laptop to gigs and quickly edit and send images to newspapers and magazines within minutes of a gig finishing up.

Ask McDonagh what makes a good picture, and he replies: “That’s a hard question to answer. It depends on the subject, in my opinion.”

The photographer notes that for an event picture it’s more than just a matter

of pointing a camera and pressing the button. Rather, McDonagh says it’s up to the photographer to capture the feeling of the artist, the atmosphere of the venue and the energy from the subject. He says all kinds of factors are involved, including the mood of the lighting, what kind of music is being played and the feel of the band.

“You want to capture all that, when the lighting is constantly changing and subjects constantly moving,” McDonagh suggests. “Personally, I like expressions and body movement. I seem to be doing a lot of gigs in black and white, so they must be sharp, clear and the subject frozen, not over or under-exposed.”

His own favourite images from his work change weekly. McDonagh chalks it up either to the mood he’s in, or the fact that he is overly critical of his own work and always wants to do better. He even brushes off compliments about his work, instead focusing on his ideal of becoming recognized as one of the best gig and

event photographers in both Glasgow and Scotland.

On a broader note, McDonagh says Scotland is a terrific place to work, booming with an array of talented individuals.

“We are blessed with very creative people in Scotland and passionate people about what they do. It is a great country in which to live for that.”

Looking ahead, McDonagh says he’s going to dedicate himself to continual improvement, while encouraging more people to view his work.

“As a business, it’s important to deliver great service to clients. This way I have the best chance of repeat business and to build on the business relationship, as trust is vitally important in both my professional and personal life.”

www.iammcdonagh.com



Martin Green
(Lau)



Fleur East



Ian Carr

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Charlotte Easton

Charlotte Easton is in the business of making people look good on the Isle of Man and beyond...

*Photo Credit: Jewell Photography
Model: Natacha Le Moignan*

Charlotte Easton makes people look good. No, she is not a public relations specialist, but rather a make-up artist with an extensive portfolio, who has also taught a course on her profession at the Isle of Man College.

“From a young age, I had a love of colour and expression and became interested in fashion,” she says. “Art and photography were by far my favourite subjects and I also had the opportunity to do some theatre makeup while I was at school for my Drama AS level.”

Makeup as a career only piqued her interest the first time she enjoyed a makeover from a professional artist.

“I was absolutely amazed at what she did, and I decided it was something that I might like to pursue,” she recalls.

Easton got her start in the industry in 2003, training and working for Clarins, Paris, while still studying at university. In 2009 she began her own beauty blog featuring different make-up looks that she had created, and writing reviews on makeup and skin care products. In 2011, she started working with a celebrity makeup artist, and made inroads into the lucrative wedding-beauty industry.

Initially, she juggled makeup work after-hours with a full-time day gig in marketing. But by 2013, she was ready for a lifestyle change and plunged into her dream job, working on numerous commercials, fashion campaigns, films and music videos on the Isle of Man.

“I undertook advanced training with one of the UK’s top makeup artists and developed my own unique style of artistry,” she shares.

The work is varied; today, her clients range from flower girls to grandmothers at wedding parties, young teenagers preparing for prom, and male and female models of all ages and ethnicities.

“Sometimes the client will be a designer, production house or a photographer,” Easton adds. “As most of my work is bridal, these clients have one thing in common: they want to look

“*There’s so much creative talent on the Isle of Man and lots of hidden gems when it comes to fashion.*”





glamorous and natural for their special day.”

The fashion industry at home is flourishing, she adds. “There’s so much creative talent on the Isle of Man and lots of hidden gems when it comes to fashion. I enjoy being part of it all, working with professional designers, models, stylists, hairstylists and photographers.”

Like any profession, Easton’s comes with its own challenges. The makeup artist needs to stay on top of time management, as popular wedding dates quickly become booked up.

“It’s always sad to have to turn away brides who have their heart set on me being their bridal makeup artist.”

As well, Easton says that freelance makeup artists have experienced exploitation within the fashion industry for a long time. That is due to change, however, as the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union is currently working with freelancers to help them negotiate rates, among other things.

“We believe that this will send a strong message to the fashion industry, and help stop the blatant exploitation,” she notes. “Equally important is that makeup artists seek professional qualifications, value the quality of the service they provide, do not undercharge, stick together and stand by their rates to avoid this problem from escalating.”

Looking ahead, Easton wants to continue to build on her good reputation and attract more clients, build up the training and teaching side of her business and explore more personal projects, including exposing her work to a wider audience through her blog and new social media channels.

“Having my own business means I’m constantly challenging myself to grow and develop my skill set, which I also find a really satisfying process.”

www.charlotteeastonmua.com



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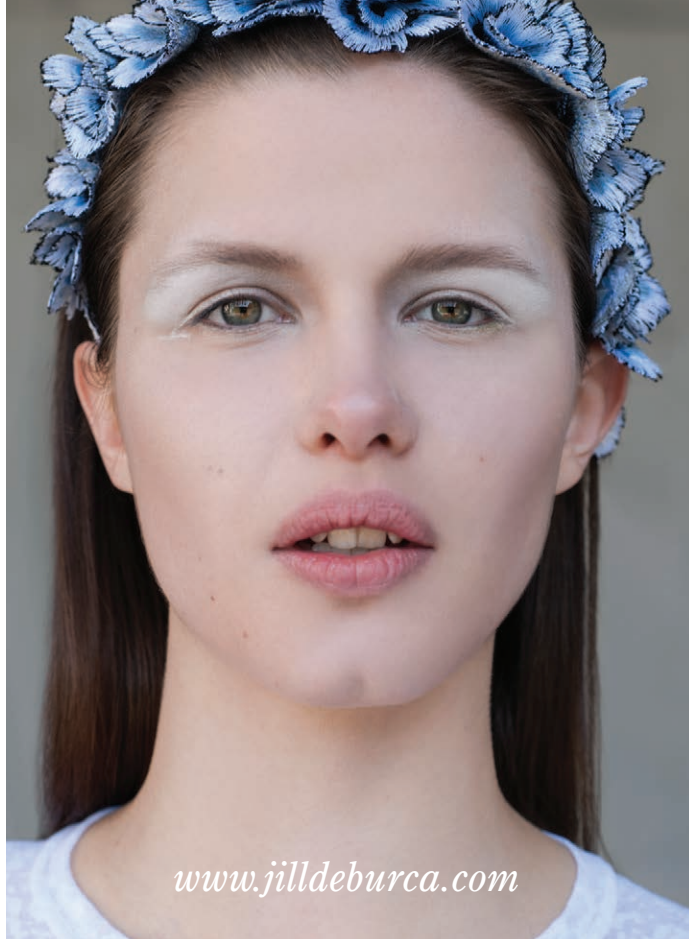
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Jill De Búrca

As a child I was a bit of a magpie - I still am I suppose - always collecting and drawing patterns and textures.

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I grew up in Saggart, Co. Dublin which was a rural village at the time. My mother is from Ahascragh in Co. Galway, so I spent a lot of my summers there as a child. My mother was a big

influence and she always made dresses for us and for herself.

A lot of the embroidery I design is produced on a 70-year-old Irish Singer embroidery machine. Irish Singers are

manual machines used for freehand embroidery. It's a little bit like driving a car; a pedal for speed, a knee bar that determines the width of the stitch, and then I'm also moving an embroidery



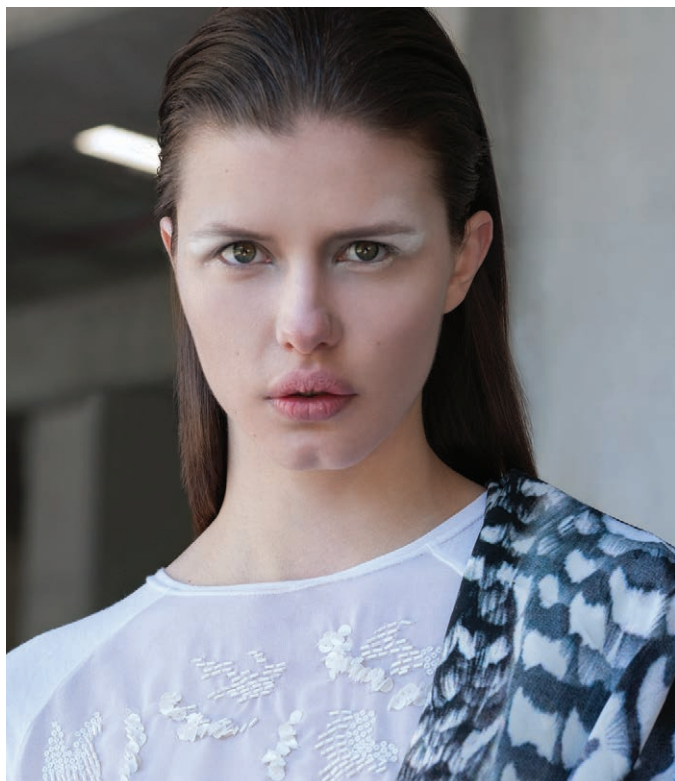


hoop around at the same time. I basically draw with stitch, and the size and detail of each piece is entirely down to the embroiderer's skill, not the machine's capabilities.

What makes my work unique is the combination of fabric and texture, along with my use of embroidery and embellishment, on very wearable clothing. My clients are women, aged

25 to 45, looking for bespoke, chic, wearable pieces. My clothing is sports luxury with a dark edge; beautiful but not too pretty.

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Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way

The rugged majesty of Ireland's 2500-kilometer Wild Atlantic Way might only be surpassed by its warm and welcoming people. If the journey is the destination, then it is best enjoyed in the company of the witty and wise. In that regard, the Irish are wonderful hosts, particularly on the west coast, where residents take Céad Míle Fáilte to heart. Celtic Life International's Managing Editor Stephen Patrick Clare takes us home...

A Sort of Homecoming

*And you know it's time to go
Through the sleet and driving snow
Across the fields of mourning to a light that's in the distance...*

The power and passion of U2's *A Sort of Homecoming* washes over me as my bus weaves and winds its way through downtown Dublin. The anthemic opening track of the Irish supergroup's landmark 1984 album *The Unforgettable Fire* is a stirring soundtrack for my return to the Emerald Isle, a year to the day since touching down in Belfast (see our May/June 2014 edition).

*And you hunger for the time
Time to heal, 'desire' time
And your earth moves beneath your own dream landscape...*

Escaping the bitter Canadian winter, my skin isn't quite sure what to do here. I have no complaints, however; given the choice, I will take an overcast 10°C to the cold and snow anytime. And though the skies may be grey atop the Irish capital city on this day, the mood of its people is forty shades of great.

*On borderland we run
I'll be there, I'll be there
tonight
A high-road, a high-road out
from here...*

Leaving Dublin, we roll west. The bus is packed with young people. Bottles of Guinness and whiskey make their way up and down the aisles, back and forth from seat to seat. Everyone is in high spirits and very respectful of one another.

*The city walls are all come down
The dust a smoke screen all around
See faces ploughed like fields that once
Gave no resistance...*

One older couple is returning home to Galway, after visiting with family in Dublin. They are warm, witty, wise and wonderful. Brendan, 83, has lived on the country's west coast all of his life. Raised on a small farm, and the eldest of 11 brothers and sisters, he married Marie at 27 (she was 22) and together they raised four boys and one girl. Brendan never attended school, teaching himself to read and write by the time he was 30 as a promise to his bride and future children.

*And we live by the side of the road
On the side of a hill as the valleys explode
Dislocated, suffocated
The land grows weary of its own...*



When Brendan's parent's passed on in the late 1970s, the couple inherited the family farm, tilling it through good times and bad. The days were long, and sometimes the profits were small, but the couple and their children always made due. They had the land, and they had each other, and that, Brendan tells me, made him a rich man. Six years ago, they passed the property over to their oldest son and his family.

*O com-away, o com-away, o-com, o com-away, I say
O com-away, o com-away, o-com, o com-away, I say...*

As Marie slips off to sleep, Brendan regales me with memories of family picnics, county fairs, bicycle trips, currach boat rides across Galway Bay, and of working the farm aside his younger siblings. He loves to travel, though has only ventured off the island twice; once, thirty years ago, to visit an ailing brother in Vermont, and again, more recently to see another brother near Ottawa. Each invited him and Marie to relocate, but he will not leave the land he loves. His roots, he says, run deep.

*The wind will crack in winter time
This bomb-blast lightning waltz.
No spoken words, just a scream...*

Of the 11 siblings, only 4 are still alive; Brendan, his two brothers in North America, and one sister who lives an hour away in Roscommon. He buried two brothers by the time he was 15; one died of cholera, the other by drowning. Two sisters passed away of cancer – both in their 50s – and another died during childbirth. In the last 5 years he has buried both a brother and a sister – each lost to time, he sighs.

*Tonight we'll build a bridge
across the sea and land
See the sky, the burning rain
She will die and live again tonight...*

Brendan tells me it takes a special kind of man to live on the country's west coast; rugged, resilient, resolute. He speaks of the region's famine years, poverty, the struggle for independence, and the endless adversities of weather. He shares of the rewards of hard work and deep faith. He leans close to tell me that without family, however, a man is nothing. I answer that I have family roots along the west coast. He smiles and replies, "Ah, you're one of us..."

*And your heart beats so slow
Through the rain and fallen snow
Across the fields of mourning to a light that's in the distance
Oh, don't sorrow, no don't weep
For tonight at last I am coming home.
I am coming home...*

Wide Open Spaces

*The land of beauty and of mystery, this
ancient land I love*

*A land of history and tragedy, this is the
land I love*

*Land of beauty and tranquility, of our music
and our songs*

*A land of mystery and tragedy, this is the
land I love*

~ The Wolfe Tones

As I await my driver outside of the Park House Hotel in Galway, I speak with several young French, Spanish and Italian cyclists who have come to western Ireland to train for this summer's Tour de France.

Interestingly, though our timelines differ – they are gone a week, while myself just the day – their intended route is identical to mine; down to the the Burren, over to the Cliffs of Moher, up along the coastline through Doolin, Lisdoonvarna, Ballyvaghan and Kinvara, before returning to Galway.

The conditions here are ideal, they tell me; fresh air, hilly climbs, long scenic stretches of road, and an assortment of weather.

My guide, Joe Donoghue, arrives. I ask him about our itinerary for the day. “Fresh air, hilly climbs, long scenic stretches of road, and an assortment of weather,” he smiles.

Minutes out of the city, grey gives way to green as rich and lush countryside fills the gaps between the quaint communities of Oranmore, Clarinbridge and Kilcolgan. Herds of tour buses

rumble along tiny two-lane roads, stopping only to allow travelers time to take in the gorgeous landscapes and gentlemen's farms.

“Tourism is our number one industry in Ireland,” shares Donaghue, whose own firm picked up the country's Coach Tour Company of the Year Award in 2014. “All this traffic is great for these communities.”

Indeed, centuries-old villages are popular stops, with many pubs open early for visitors looking to prop-up the day with a fresh pint. The townspeople simply smile when asked to pose for photos, sometimes answering questions about local family names and lore.

And western Ireland has more than its fair share of lore and legend; the land and the people here are one, forever enmeshed in myth and mystique.

An hour south of Galway, over the border into County Clare, sits the Burren. Taken from the Irish ‘Bioreann,’ meaning rocky place, the 100 square-miles of weathered landscape has inspired poets, painters, photographers, and artists of all disciplines for hundreds of years.

“It isn't good for much else,” laughs Donaghue, adding that the rugged terrain is void of usable topsoil. “A man can own 300 acres of land here, and the only thing of any value will be his house.”

Sure enough, aside from the grazing of some livestock, there is little or no activity on any of the homesteads we pass. However, the area is ripe for outdoor enthusiasts, with a number of good walking trails open almost year round, as well as excellent hiking opportunities across the rollicking hills. A nearby Geo Park is also a great option for those looking for greater detail on the area's unique ecosystems. Thankfully, due to its status as a National Park, the region's raw physical beauty will remain unspoiled for generations.

West of the Burren, by the beaches of Lahinch, an array of adventure awaits; surfing, swimming, sailing, sea kayaking, deep sea fishing, and dolphin watching are just a few of the wonderful outdoor activities available to both locals and visitors.



"The water can be a wee bit cold," admits Donoghue, "but that doesn't seem to stop anyone from jumping in."

Sure enough, the craggy coastline is packed with beach goers and ocean lovers looking to bathe themselves in sun, sand and surf. "It's quite refreshing, actually," he adds, pointing out a multitude of colourful cottages and summer homes close by. "The hard part is getting into the water, taking that first step. Once you're in, you're in, and you'll be fine."

Nearby in Liscannor, a small fishing vessel comes in from a morning run. A boatload of American sportsmen returns with a well-measured haul of shark, pollack, ling, ray, and mackerel. Cameras come out, and pictures, along with bragging rights, are posted to Facebook for the folks back home.

Ireland's most popular outdoor attraction – the Cliffs of Moher – is a mosaic of culture. With over 1 million visitors annually, accents are abundant; Irish, American, Canadian, and Australian of course, but also German, Japanese, Brazilian, Senegalese, Israeli and more.

"It's sort of a United Nations without the politics," cracks Donoghue, always quick with the wit, "or a Mecca without the religion."

My guide is only half-kidding; today, with unusually warm weather and clear skies, busloads of young and old climb one of two sets of stairs to the summit. Atop the bluff, against a breathtaking backdrop of sheer rock, spindrift and swirling gulls, couples, friends and families pose for selfies.

The immensity of the 8 kilometer panorama is almost indescribable. The salt air is cool with a gentle mist, the deep blue and green of the sea seems to go on forever, with the visage of the three Aran Islands – Inisheer, Inishmaan and Inishmore – just visible to the naked eye upon the horizon. The main attraction, of course, is the cliffs themselves; majestic, grand and glorious. A few meters up, just past the stately O'Brien's Castle, hundreds of hikers hug the precipice along the Burren Way, a coastal walking trail that offers up awe-inspiring views from different directions. And all the while, there is the eternal crashing of waves against the shore, both sensational and soothing at once.

The mandatory exhibit center and gift shops do brisk business, with visitors lining up to take a piece of the experience home with them. Donoghue and I are content with coffee, however, climbing back into the car for our coastal drive back to Galway amidst fresh air, hilly climbs, long scenic stretches of road, and an assortment of weather.

Spirit of the West

Man seems - Spirit is

Man dreams - Spirit lives

Man is tethered - Spirit is free

What spirit is man can be

~ The Waterboys

While Galway may be the creative capital of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, the country's west coast is a cornucopia of Celtic-inspired arts.

A walking tour of Galway should be mandatory for any visitor. From above, the small maze of streets hasn't strayed much from its original medieval - era design. Down on the ground, however,



the city of 75,000 has become a treasure trove of art studios, craft shops, theatres, music halls, jewelry stores, restaurants, museums, and cinemas.

Boasting more than 25 festivals annually, and drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world to its shores, the area is the heart, soul and economic engine of the Emerald Isle's thriving west coast.

That inspiration, it appears, is infectious, as smaller communities up and down the coastline continue to expand their cultural offerings, evolving into more than a mere cottage industry.

Fifteen minutes northwest of Galway bay, the Farlane Art Gallery in Moycullen features the work of local artist Mary Holan. Working mostly in oils, Holan draws inspiration from the Irish sea and sky, transforming physical landscapes into timeless abstract expressions. Her small gallery is one of dozens that colour communities across the west.

The language arts are well represented here also, with schools – public and private – devoted to the promotion and preservation of spoken and written Gaelic. While much of western Ireland counts the ancient idiom as its mother tongue, there has been a strong push in recent years to make it real and relevant to younger people; classes are now mandatory for students throughout the region, and libraries, bookshops and reading festivals have received extra government funding over the last decade to keep the language from languishing.

Southwest, near Spiddal, Charlie and Dearbhail Troy are doing their part to keep Celtic customs alive with their refurbished 17th century Connemara-hill village called Cnoc Suain. The multi-building facility hosts a number of creative day experiences and immersive residential programs that focus on area history and culture. The couple is fluent in Gaelic, proactive with political issues, and work tirelessly to support and safeguard the region's economy, ecology, and arts.

An hour up the coast in Roundstone, the country's master Bodhrán maker Malachy Kearns plies his trade for folk musicians, young and old, near and far. Set within the walls of an ancient Franciscan monastery, Kearns' workshop is a shrine to the distinct Celtic drum; old photos and newspaper clippings line the walls, videos and music pound out rhythms day and night, and wood and skins are draped across desks and drawing boards. A visit to his shop is more than a stop for the curious - it is a trip through time, and a lesson in local legend and lore.

Celtic lore is at the core of O' Dalaigh's Jewelry in Clifden. The family-owned and operated business designs and manufactures an array of rings, necklaces bracelets, bangles, brooches, pendants, earrings and more, all of which speak to the region's past and present. Like traditional music, the art of metal-smiths has been infused in everyday life here for centuries, and now en-

joys world-renown for its craftsmanship and quality.

And, of course, everywhere there is music; fiddles, guitars, bodhrans, tin whistles, and the ever-present resonance of the Irish voice. Traditional tunes abound in western Ireland, and melodies spill out from pubs, clubs, hotels and homes across the region, day and night, rain or shine.

Interestingly, where creative communities in other parts of the world - Europe and North America in particular - might foster a competitive atmosphere amongst artists, musicians, painters, poets, photographers, dancers, sculptors, chefs and others across the Wild Atlantic Way are cooperative and supportive of each other's endeavours.

That collective resourcefulness and resolve in the arts is more than a habitual necessity, however; it is a testament to the area's true enduring legacy - the heart and soul of its Celtic people.

Time Stands Still

*While I'm sitting here
The waves of the sea are lapping
Against the wild shores of Connemara
The sky breaks, dazzling light pierces through
Down to the water
Giving forth a thousand reflections of silver
~ Fiddler's Green, traditional*

The past permeates the present across Ireland; the country's people and places are woven together in history, and millions of travelers explore Eire's heritage and natural beauty each year.

Interestingly, though the northwest counties of Mayo, Sligo and Donegal are rich with rugged landscapes and coastlines, they don't enjoy the same number of annual visitors as other parts of the Wild Atlantic Way.

"The south gets most of the attention," admits my tour guide John Carew, a Sligo native. "You can actually draw a line from Dublin to Galway, and everything under that line seems to do very well, all year round."

Carew explains the discrepancy. "Behind Dublin and Belfast, Cork is the largest city in the country, with many shops and activities, and there is the Titanic connection as well. In Clare, you have the Cliffs of Moher, and the Burren, and in the southwest there is the Ring of Kerry - all of these are known around the world.

"The thing is," he continues, "Mayo, Sligo and Donegal have just as much to offer in terms of scenery and sheer experience as anywhere on the island. In fact, there are parts of those counties that are even more beautiful than the south; undiscovered spots where time stands still."

Sure enough, leaving Clifden and winding our way north through Connemara, we are welcomed by gentle rolling hills, pristine ponds, and babbling brooks. We stop the car every few hundred meters to take photographs.

A rainbow arcs over the region's most famous structure, Kylemore Abbey. The extravagance and opulence of the 1920s-era palace is matched only by its spectacular surroundings of dense forest and a clear lake. The heather is rich and full, and the birds carry melodies through the woodlands.

Minutes later, we pass through petite, picturesque fishing villages along the Connemara loop. The inlet's surf is still, shading light blue and green. The tide is receding, leaving boats of all shapes and sizes stranded on the strand.

There is little traffic along route N59 - almost too good to be true.

"It does get a bit busier in the summer months," says Carew. "There are more tour buses, campers, RVs, cars and motorcycles. We get visitors from America, Canada and Australia, but in recent years we have seen many more Germans and Dutch. A lot of people prefer this part of Ireland because it is quieter."

That sense of serenity is evident en route; fields of green sit silently, with homes and cottages few and far between. The only signs of life are stray sheep, and white wisps of peat smoke billowing from house chimneys. The scent is unmistakable, harking back to bygone eras.

"Not much changes up this way," shares Carew. "The land is as it has been for centuries. Even some of the older stone structures that lay derelict have been sitting there for generations."

In nearby Maam, it was recently announced that the thatched-roofed cottage used in the 1951 cinematic classic *The Quiet Man* - starring Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne - will be refurbished. Also close is Gaynor's Bar, setting for the pub scenes in the Richard Harris film *The Field*. Both movies do well to capture and convey the area's rural roots, says Carew.

Past the quaint villages of Westport and Newport is Mulranny, a seaside town on the shores of the Clew Bay. From here I rent a touring bicycle, peddling 13 kilometers to Achill Sound. The tailored trail is flat and well-marked, and the experience is exhilarating; with mountains and ocean on both sides, and a big sky overhead, I am embraced by the crisp salt air.

At trail's end I re-connect with Carew, and we cross over to Achill Island and the Atlantic Drive - 25 miles of timeless terrain. To the right, abandoned famine-era ruins and aged Celtic crosses pepper fields of bog. Left, along the shoreline, the sea plays hide and seek as we ascend the cliffs. The rocky bluff offers up breathtaking views of the area. We are at one of the most westerly points of the island, at the edge of Europe, on the ledge of the Wild Atlantic Way.

"Not many people make it this far out," muses Carew, almost breathless. "They really don't know what they're missing. Mind you, maybe the people here prefer it this way. After all, they might have the best kept secret in Ireland."



Land of our Fathers

The land is the only thing in the world worth working for, worth fighting for, worth dying for, because it's the only thing that lasts...

~ Gerald O'Hara

It is said in Ireland that a man is nothing without land, and that true wealth is measured not in money, but in acres.

And while pockets of the Emerald Isle enjoy the fruits of rich and fertile terrain, much of the country is covered with bog, or turf topsoil. In particular, the western coastline, from Galway to Mayo, is matted in marsh.

Wikipedia defines bog as "a mire that accumulates peat, a deposit of dead plant material - often mosses, and in a majority of cases, sphagnum moss. It is one of the four main types of wetlands. Other names for bogs include mire, quagmire and muskeg. Bogs occur where the water at the ground surface is acidic and low in nutrients. In some cases, the water is derived entirely from precipitation. In general, the low fertility and cool climate results in relatively slow plant growth, but decay is even slower owing to the saturated soil. Hence peat accumulates. Large areas of landscape can be covered many meters deep in peat."

Ever the survivalists, the Irish were early adapters of bog; bricks were cut and dried, and used like logs in the fire to heat homes and stables - a process still used today.

Across the country's western counties, farmers now employ huge diggers to tear up swaths of soil, later dicing them into smaller bits for transport. It is not unusual to see massive mounds of peat protected from the elements under plastic tarps.

The smell of burning peat is familiar to Irish around the world, bringing back memories of cool autumn nights around the family hearth. Again, the practice is still in use today, and as my guide and I leave the western outport of Achill Island and weave our way north along the country's stunning shoreline, small puffs of peat smoke can be seen coming from almost every homestead chimney. The sweet scent blends beautifully with the sea salt air and fine mist - some call it the Emerald perfume.

At the very upper tip of County Mayo, near the tiny town of Ballycastle, are the Ceide Fields, home to the most extensive Stone Age monument in the world. The 5,500 year-old archeological site - which consists of field systems, dwelling areas and megalithic tombs - was discovered by local schoolteacher Patrick Caulfield in the 1930s. Four decades later, his son Seamus began unearthing the artifacts, long buried under blankets of bog. The bog is so dense here that sonar devices used to determine the site's depth are ineffective.

A few miles northeast in County Sligo, the bog gives way to greener, more arable land. Trees and brush grow wild across the hills, and farmers work the fields for more than just peat and hay. Vegetable stands and flower shops spring up along the roadsides, and meat markets showcase an abundance of local beef.

Interestingly, trees had virtually disappeared from Ireland until 1980, when public reforestation projects took root. Beginning with the Norman conquest in the 1100s, and through the ensuing centuries of British rule, native forests of alder, ash, birch, rowan, pine, willows and others were chopped down and exported. The mythical tree of Celtic lore, the oak, suffered a similar fate.

Deforestation took a terrible toll on the country's soil, particularly along the west coast, rendering it virtually infertile for hundreds of years. The appearance of woodlands in recent times is more than aesthetic ambition, however, it is an attempt to rebuild an ecosystem, restore the soil, and reclaim the land.



The Scribe of Sligo

*The trees are in their autumn beauty
The woodland paths are dry
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky*

~ William Butler Yeats

This year, Sligo will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of its most famous bard – William Butler Yeats – with a series of literary and musical festivals, theatre performances, exhibits, seminars, lectures, workshops, walking tours, and more.

Though born in Dublin, Yeats spent his childhood summers in Sligo, along the Emerald Isle's craggy northwest coastline. There, he explored the region's rolling hills, running rivers, stirring seaside, and lush landscape. Rich in flora, fauna, and wildlife, the area is both idyllic and inspirational.

Home to the Yeats Society, and a popular summer school dedicated to studying his life and work, Sligo hopes to host another 50,000 literary lovers over the coming months. Some are sure to visit his ancestral summer home, while others will stop by his small, simple grave at nearby Drumhill, where he is buried alongside his wife George Hyde-Lees.

Interestingly, though Yeats married Hyde-Lees when he was 52, she was not the love of his life.

In 1889, at the age of 24, Yeats met Maud Gonne, a young heiress and Nationalist. Instantly infatuated with her intelligence and beauty, he proposed marriage on three occasions. When Gonne wed another man, Yeats sought solace with pen and paper.

*And who could play it well enough
If deaf and dumb and blind with love?
He that made this knows all the cost,
For he gave all his heart and lost*

Over the next decade in Dublin, riding the wave of republican sentiment, he turned his attention to reforming the Irish Literary Society, and co-founding Ireland's National Theatre (later renamed the Abbey Theatre). Yeats also tried his hand at playwriting, producing a series of dramatic, well-received works.

While Protestant by birth, the scribe identified with the country's emerging Nationalist movement – likely brought about by his love for Gonne – even joining the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a militant forerunner of the terrorist IRA.

*Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born*

Though twice named a Senator following Irish independence in 1922, the rhymester lost interest in the cause, preferring his full time duties as a wordsmith. The following year he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, cementing his place forever in the annals of Irish lore.

With his health failing over the next decade and a half, Yeats refocused his efforts on poetry, revising his style, and working with his peers to usher in the discipline's modernist era until his death in 1939.

*Now that my ladder's gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart*

And while he lived and worked in Dublin and London, and travelled extensively to the European continent in attendance of his duties, Yeats often returned to Sligo in search of familiar comforts. There, he would retrace the steps of his childhood, revisiting innocence, and reigniting his interest in the occult and Celtic legends.

Perhaps fittingly, he composed his own epitaph just before his passing, the last three lines of which are etched for eternity on his gravestone.

*Under bare Ben Bulbin's head
In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid.
An ancestor was rector there
Long years ago, a church stands near,
By the road an ancient cross.
No marble, no conventional phrase;
On limestone quarried near the spot
By his command these words are cut:
Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!*



Food for Thought

*We're gathered round the table
We're real friends through and through
We're gathered round the table
To eat Ma's Irish stew
~ Traditional*

"It won't get any fresher than that."

Skipper Brian serves up a plate of pan-fried mackerel, which, only 15 minutes prior, was swimming deep below the surface of Donegal Bay. We are aboard his fishing vessel, 3 kilometers from shore. As the waves rise and fall, I wedge two fillets into a locally baked baguette.

"Here," he continues with a thick Killybegs drawl, "try a little sauce on that." Sure enough, the fish is delicious. "That's how we've been doing it here for years; me, my father before me, and his father before him."

While Eire's fishing industry has softened in recent years, with moratoriums in effect on several stocks, mackerel have been steady game for generations.



"We make do with what we've been given," says Skipper Brian. "That's just the way it is, the way it's always been here."

That Irish resolve and resourcefulness is also evident at the Burren Smokehouse, four hours south in Lisdoonvarna.

"We smoke the salmon right here on site," says Birgitta Curtin, who along with her wise-cracking husband Peter own and operate both the facility and the Roadside Tavern next door.

The couple set up shop in 1989, inspired by their surroundings.

"Ireland has never really been industrialized," she explains. "Because of that, the water and soil here are still relatively pure."

As members of EcoTourism Ireland, Good Food Ireland, and other local and national community organizations, the Curtins understand the importance of preserving the island's natural habitat. "A clean environment makes for better tasting and more nutritious options right across the entire food spectrum," notes Curtin.

Jessica Murphy agrees.

"We only source the freshest local produce," shares the co-owner of the Kai Café in Galway. "And the west coast of Ireland is abundant with fresh produce."

With an array of unique meat, fish, cheese and vegetable dishes on the menu, Murphy and her husband David are pioneers of the Emerald Isle's Slow Food movement.



"It's kind of a philosophic throwback to older times, when the planning, preparation and eating of a meal was an all-day event to be shared by family, friends and acquaintances. It's a healthier process, and you can really taste the difference."

Ireland's Slow Food movement has gained serious momentum in recent years, with local chapters putting on more events each season to promote the region's burgeoning food sector. All up and down the country's west coast, eateries of all shapes and sizes are now combining contemporary cuisine with classic cookery, creating a unique culinary culture.

In Donegal, Chef Philipp holds court at the luxurious Lough Eske Castle Hotel.

"The entire food industry has changed here over the last twenty years," he says. "A large part of that is because customers are now much more aware and picky about what they will put into their bodies."

"As a result we have had to re-examine what and how we prepare and serve food. It is no longer merely about feeding people, it is about creating an experience."

That experience includes education, engagement, entertainment and more.

"Food tours have become extremely popular," says Andrew Pelham-Burn of award-winning Carrowholly Cheese near Westport in County Mayo. "Whether it is a walking tour through Galway, a bus excursion, or a personalized car hire, people want to be involved at all levels of the process."

"And the Wild Atlantic Way is quite ideal for that," he adds. "There are lots of opportunities for some really great food adventures here. Some of them can be quite rugged too."



Back in Donegal Bay, Skipper Brian is pan-frying up a second round of mackerel.

"I prefer them done well," he shares out loud, a spatula in one hand, and a cold beer in the other. "That's how we've been doing it here for years; me, my father before me, and his father before him."

You have to be here out on the water, he says, to get the full flavor, the real meal.

"And let me tell you, laddie, it won't get any fresher than that."

The Parting Glass

*Oh, if I had money enough to spend and
leisure time to sit awhile
There is a fair maid in this town that sorely
has my heart beguiled
Her rosey cheeks and ruby lips, she alone
has my heart in thrall
So fill me to the parting glass, goodnight
and joy be with you all*

~ The Parting Glass, traditional

Back in Dublin, I share a pint with Ellen Redmond of Fáilte Ireland, the country's National Tourism Development Authority. We are discussing my week-long sojourn along the Wild Atlantic Way.

I tell her of my time at the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher in Clare; of exploring the galleries and museums of Galway; of driving through the quiet landscapes of Connemara and Mayo; of visiting Yeats' gravesite in Sligo; of shopping at Magees in Donegal Town; of all that I have seen and heard and touched and tasted and felt over the past seven days.

The Wild Atlantic Way, she shares, is greater than the sum of those parts. It is the spirit in between those spaces – the rugged, resilient spirit of a people – that make the experience.



"You see," says Redmond, "yes, the Irish people have had to be resolute, but we are gentle and generous by nature."

"We are also curious," she continues. "And because of that, we are genuinely interested in getting to know the people who visit with us here. So we will take the time to talk, share a spot of tea and a scone, or perhaps raise a pint, and make the connection. Most of us here have relations abroad, so we are like long-lost cousins to a lot of visitors. As Yeats once wrote, 'There are no strangers here, only friends you haven't met yet.'"

"Having that sense of familiarity - of family, really - makes all the difference in the world along the journey..."

~ Stephen Patrick Clare



— Wild Atlantic Way

..... Ferry Route to Island

..... Flight Route to Island

● Signature Discovery Point

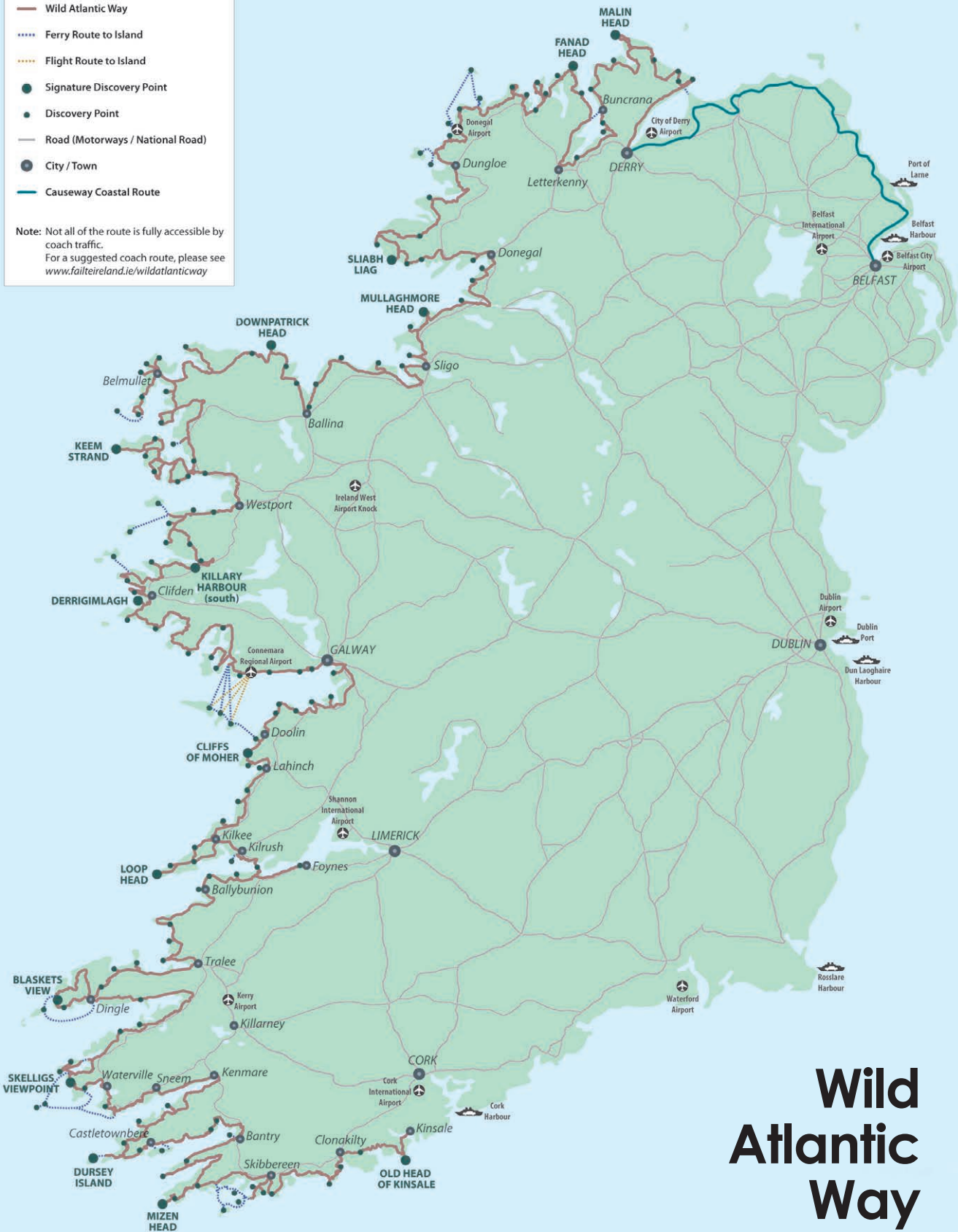
● Discovery Point

— Road (Motorways / National Road)

● City / Town

— Causeway Coastal Route

Note: Not all of the route is fully accessible by coach traffic.
For a suggested coach route, please see www.failteireland.ie/wildatlanticway





Wild Atlantic Wit

As Celtic Life International contributor Claire Fullerton tells us, residents along Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way are batty for banter

Once, I spent a year living on the western coast of Ireland. As an American, it took awhile to become accustomed to the Gaeltacht of Connemara's shores. As such, my acclimation to the culture came in curious increments, comprised of chance encounters in unexpected places, but each gave me valuable insight into the social mores of the friendliest lot on earth.

I worked in Galway and lived 13 miles up the road in the village of Inverin, near the village of Spiddal, an area famous for its Irish traditional music. At night, Spiddal can seem like a ghost town, as most of its activity lies behind closed doors. There are but a few buildings lining the coastal main street, and what little is there stands closely together. Most prominent is a boutique hotel in the middle. Across the street is a popular music venue called the Cruiscin Lan, which means "little jug of whisky" in the Irish language. It was at the Cruiscin on a cool autumn eve that a chance encounter gave me my first glimpse into the charm and character of the rural Irish people.

My friend Leigh and I were only inside the bar for a few minutes before two salt-of-the-earth men started chatting us up. They'd been unabashedly watching us from the moment we walked through the door. They were "on the piss," as the locals call it when one intentionally sets out to get

drunk. Suddenly one of the men reached out and grabbed my arm as Leigh and I passed by. It's funny how things hit you at different times in different places. In most cases, an unwarranted gesture like that would be scary or offensive, but because it was rural Ireland, I only saw the humor. They may have been "on the piss," but intuitively I knew they were harmless.

"What brings a lovely thing like you here this night?" one of them asked - the one who was holding my arm.

"We're just passing through," I said, turning to face him.

"Are you long here?" he asked, emphasizing the word long.

Am I long where? I thought. Am I long at the Cruiscin? Am I long in Spiddal? Am I long in Ireland? This is no doubt a translation issue, I thought. Anyway, does he mean have I been here long, or do I intend to stay here long?

There are many idioms flying around Connemara that have their origin in the Irish language. I'm pretty sure "Are you long here?" is one of them, and I couldn't help but think when translated into English, something is missing. My mind was racing. It wasn't the first time I'd been asked this question in Ireland, it seemed to be part and parcel to an Irish introduction, something commonly asked after the ex-

tension of "Nice to meet you." Rather than risking embarrassment by asking what the question meant, I was in the habit of bluffing my way through the answer, hoping to appear as if I understood.

"I live here," I returned, "I live in Inverin." I had the feeling if you see someone once in Spiddal, you're going to see them repeatedly, so I might as well tell the truth.

"What is it that brings you to Inverin?" he asked, finally releasing my arm.

"I'm working for the Galway Music Centre," I said, "and I'm working on a book. I'm a writer and a poet."

"Ah, aren't we all," he laughed, winking at me and raising his pint.

It was then I realized the Irish have a natural way of wielding the perfect retort. It's more than a gift for the snappy comeback, it's the art of banter in its highest form. My suspicion is the Irish employ it as a way of revealing themselves, as a way of saying that they don't take themselves too seriously, that life is a party, and you're welcome to a seat by the fire. When such a line is delivered, they expect you to match their eye-twinkling wit. It's a cultural way of inclusion, a way of saying you're welcome in their midst, which explains why they have the reputation of being the friendliest lot on earth.



Ten Great Experiences Along the Wild Atlantic Way

Whether you are an outdoor enthusiast, or just looking to get a little fresh air and exercise, there is something for everyone along Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way.



Cycling the Inishowen Peninsula

Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal is filled with an array of amazing natural and cultural opportunities. The ruggedly gorgeous Malin Head (the most northerly point of Ireland), the historic Grianán of Aileach ring fort, and some of Europe's highest sand dunes are just a few of the many great activities available on the peninsula. For a more intimate and energizing experience, a number of area companies rent out bicycles and offer guided tours. Trips range from a gentle off-road route in a wildfowl reserve, to a moderate historical-themed tour, to the challenging Malin Head adventure and even the mighty 100-mile, scenic "Inishowen 100."

www.cycleinishowen.com



Deep Sea Fishing on Donegal Bay

Last year, at least 32 species of fish and marine life were caught with Donegal County's An Duanai Mara Charters. Arrange to go deep sea fishing on a scenic boat tour around Donegal Bay with Skipper Colin Campbell at the helm. For some, the highlight is catching a giant pollock, while others are simply thrilled to see the seals, seabirds and whales. Soak in the views of Sliabh Liag, Europe's highest accessible sea cliff, where forts and lookout towers from the Napoleonic wars still cling to the edge. And, of course, savour the crashing sound of the ocean, the lonely call of seabirds, and the occasional nod from a pod of dolphins. www.duanaimaracharters.com



Surfing in Strandhill

Northwestern Ireland's Atlantic Ocean swells are known to be some of the most consistent for surfers in all of Europe, and the beach in Strandhill, County Sligo is one of the best for "hanging ten." The sandy stretch is lengthy, and the currents are so strong that swimming is prohibited – surfing is more than encouraged however. A number of instructional facilities are located in the village, including the beachfront Strandhill Surf School, which offers lessons and gear for beginners of all ages.

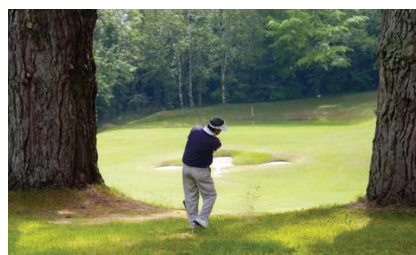
www.strandhillsurfschool.com



Exploring Beaches and Islands on Horseback

Imagine galloping down a sunny stretch of sand, the wind blowing through your hair, with the sounds of waves and seabirds filling your ears as you breathe in the fresh, County Sligo air. You stop to look at the Classiebawn Castle on the hill, travel back in time to explore ancient mound graves, and enjoy a picnic lunch outside. Imagine no longer; the family-run Island View Riding Stables, based in Grange, offers a variety of horseback treks on beaches and bogs - and even on multiple islands, including their own private islet - to riders of all levels. The company also operates both a riding school and horse drawn carriage rides through the poetic pastures of Yeats country.

www.islandviewridingstables.com



Golfing at Ballinrobe Golf Club

Some of the best golf courses in Ireland are along the Wild Atlantic Way. Last year, Golf Digest magazine ranked at least three of them among the "World's 100 Greatest Golf Courses." It is also well worth giving County Mayo's Ballinrobe Golf Club a swing. The club was voted Best Parkland Course in Connacht in 2013 and 2015, and native Dubliner – and PGA Champion - Pádraig Harrington provided quite the endorsement, calling Ballinrobe "the finest championship golf course in the West of Ireland."

www.ballinrobegolfclub.com



Coasteering on Clare Island

County Mayo's Clare Island oozes with ecological, archaeological and mythological significance. Best known for being the former stomping grounds of the "Pirate Queen" Grace O'Malley, it is a haven for hill-walkers and seabird colonies as well, and is the final resting place for a bevy of Bronze Age and Neolithic remains. It is also prime coasteering territory, and Clare Island Adventures is happy to introduce you to this exciting new water sport. "It combines rock-scrambling with cliff jumping and adventure swimming," the company explains. Clare Island Adventures also offers accommodations, a bar, restaurant, and other activities, including snorkelling and abseiling.

www.clareislandadventures.ie



Shipwreck Scuba Diving

In 1998, a 30-metre supply ship sank off the west coast of Ireland. Called the Julia T, it still sits upright 27 metres below the surface. The intact shipwreck is covered by a bio-diverse community of anemones, and is frequented by schools of fish. Ultimate Dive Destinations named the Julia T among the "100 Essential Wreck Dives" in the world, and County Galway's Scubadive West regularly arranges trips to the wreck. The company also offers a variety of other dive experiences around the area's islands, reefs, caves and walls.

www.scubadivewest.com



Walking the Aran Islands

The Aran Islands - Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr - are renowned for their rich traditional and cultural expression, where native dwellers continue to speak Irish Gaelic. The three islands in Galway Bay are also noted for their striking land and seascapes, carved by both nature and man. There are ample opportunities to explore the islands on foot, either independently or on a tour, and visitors can experience castles, ancient fortresses, religious ruins, or simply enjoy the breathtaking views from the cliffs of Dún Aonghasa, on the beach, and along the network of ancient stonewalls. The islands also boast several national loop walk trails.

www.aranwalkingtours.com



Sea Kayaking in County Clare

County Clare is home to the famous Cliffs of Moher, the distinctive stony landscape of the Burren, and a rich range of wildlife both on land and sea. Get the full effect with the North Clare Sea Kayaking Tour Company. New and experienced kayakers can choose from a wide variety of options, including island exploration, cliff and cave discovery, a breeze-by the Burren, a quieter sunset paddle, and an enchanted lake and river tour. The Doolin-based company also offers mountain biking adventures.

www.northclareseakayaking.com



Trekking to Skellig Michael

Skellig Michael, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that George Bernard Shaw once described as "part of our dream world," is one of the "50 Secrets of the Wild Atlantic Way." It is home to an intriguing 1,300-year-old monastic site, 600 feet high atop a steep, stone staircase. Located in County Kerry, eight miles from the mainland, it can be quite an adventure just to reach the holy site. A number of boats travel to Skellig Michael each day, but there is a restriction on the number of daily visitors allowed to the site. Be sure to call ahead and check, as trips can be cancelled if the weather gets treacherous.

www.worldheritageireland.ie/skellig-michael





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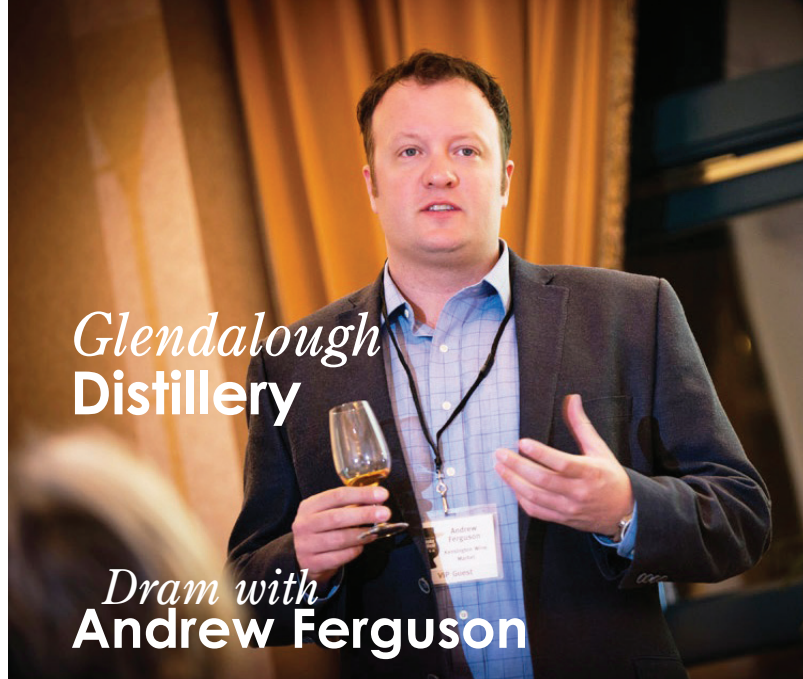
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Glendalough Distillery

Dram with
Andrew Ferguson



On the steps of a sixth century monastery near Dublin, the Glendalough Distillery brings spirits to life...

The Irish whiskey industry was already in decline in the early 20th century before a combination of World War I, the War of Independence and American prohibition felled it completely. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Irish whiskey was considered the finest in the world, and was the most popular in the United States; 24 large commercial distilleries and a number of smaller ones were in production. By the mid-1970s, however, just two distilleries were left in the whole of Ireland; one in Northern Ireland and one in the Republic.

In 1987, John Teeling opened the Cooley Distillery. He bought and converted an old government-owned potato ethanol plant. Cooley then went on to reopen Kilbeggan distillery in 2007, Ireland's oldest bricks "and" mortar distillery, which was originally founded in 1757. Since then, a further eight distilleries have opened, with at least a half dozen others in various stages of planning. Interest in Irish whiskey is surging, and the industry is approaching a Renaissance on the Emerald Isle.

Out of this maelstrom of activity comes the new Glendalough Distillery, established in a glacial valley south of Dublin, with which it shares its name. Five friends from Dublin founded the business, coming together to create a craft distillery, which is a testament to the hundreds of small scale distilleries that dotted the Irish landscape in the 1800s.

Glendalough was established as a monastic community by St. Kevin in the early sixth century. The name translates as the "Glen of the Two Lakes," and would have

been a very secluded place in the Saint's day. Reputedly born in 498, St. Kevin was part of the Irish Celtic church which flourished throughout the early Middle Ages. He is said to have taken refuge from his followers in the remote valley, living in a Bronze Age tomb/cave known as St. Kevin's Bed. He spent seven years in the wilderness, which inspired him to build his City of Seven Churches at Glendalough.

Most legends attribute the creation of whisk(e)y to the Irish. As a new distillery, Glendalough is producing Irish whiskey, though most of its own production is still very young. In the interim, the distillery has sourced whiskies from another Irish distiller for bottling. **Glendalough Double Barrel (\$62)** is a four year old Irish Single Grain whiskey matured in Bourbon and finished in Oloroso Sherry. The whiskey is soft, fruity and very easy drinking.

The core of the current range is the **Glendalough 7 Year Single Malt Irish Whiskey (\$79)**, which is bottled at 46 per cent without chill-filtering. The whiskies, though currently sourced from another distillery, will eventually all be produced in-house and bottled with the local Wicklow Mountain water. Matured in American oak, the whiskey is very creamy, with citrus, spice and soft barley. It sees seven seasons before bottling, and the bottle itself, as with all of Glendalough's, features St. Kevin on the label.

Top of the line at present is the **Glendalough 13 Year Single Malt Irish Whiskey (\$140)**. Only a very limited amount of this mature whiskey has found its way to North America. Like the seven

year, it is matured exclusively in American oak and bottled without chill-filtering at 46 per cent. The 13 year is intensely fruity, decadent and creamy with some firmer spices.

Glendalough's whiskies are superb, but that's not all the distillery produces. It also has a gin, as well as a native Irish spirit that predates even whiskey, Poitin. Poitin was born in tandem with the arrival of Christianity and the knowledge of distillation sometime after the sixth century. A medicinal moonshine, the spirit was outlawed in 1661, driving it into the forests and glens. Glendalough produces Poitin from a mix of malted barley and sugar beet, using unique distillation techniques and maturation in Irish oak. The range currently consists of **Premium Poitin (\$53)**, **Mountain Strength (\$59)** and **Sherry Cask (\$60)**. These will almost certainly be hot with mixologists looking for unique cocktail ingredients.

Glendalough is just one of a number of new and reborn Irish distillers, and an encouraging sign of what's to come. Its whiskies are beautiful, and the Poitin is very interesting; while the former are elegant and sophisticated, the latter is a bit of an acquired taste. The original water of life, Poitin might just have helped St. Kevin live such a long and commendable life. According to legend, he lived for 120 years, passing away in 618. If longevity is Poitin's gift, plenty of time exists to acquire a taste!

www.fergusonwhisky.com



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www.dragon-tours.com



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For visitors with Welsh ancestry Dragon Tours offers a service to help you trace your family tree in Wales. Mike has helped numerous clients in this way and can even provide a genealogy tracing service prior to your arrival and can assist in your use of libraries, record offices and archives when you are here. We have helped many people find 'the old family home' and even long-lost relatives! We can plan your tour around places where your Welsh ancestors lived and/or combine a general tour of Wales with visits to places of family interest.

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a Little Piece of France in Wales



I recently revisited one of my favourite places: the cellar of my old friend and neighbour, Dr. Dunn. It is now in the care of his son-in-law, Lawrence Duffy. Originally from Athlone, Ireland, Duffy now lives in our little village in Wales. He has a passion for wine - he is especially fond of New Zealand Pinot Noir - and rugby (the main religion in these parts.) Alas, we are never at a loss for conversation.

I was delighted to see that the centerpiece of the cellar was still there; a whole section devoted to Jaboulet's La Chapelle Hermitage, with vintages going back to the 1960s. At a tasting of Rhone wines many years ago, Dr. Dunn showed Monsieur Jaboulet a photograph of his collection. The great winemaker exclaimed that he knew there was a Hill of Hermitage in France, but had no idea there was a Wall of Hermitage in Wales.

The name of this incredible wine owes its existence to the travails of a crusading knight, Gaspard de Stérinberg, wounded on the Albigensian Crusade in 1224. He secured permission from the French Queen to build a hermitage in which to recuperate. In 1235 he established the little chapel, dedicated to Saint Christopher, near the summit of an impressive landmark, the famous Hill of Hermitage above the town of Tain-l'Hermitage in the northern Rhone Valley. The steep granite slopes are planted with vines that form the basis of some of the finest wines in the world.

Wine from this part of France has been praised and prized since the earliest times. In 77 AD, Pliny the Elder extolled its virtues, and it is possible that Syrah, the red grape known as Shiraz outside of France, has been grown in the northern Rhone for 2000 years or longer. This area of France is certainly the spiritual home of Syrah. When the great Australian wine maker, Penfold, started to produce what

was to become that country's most celebrated red wine, Penfolds Grange, they originally called it Grange Hermitage.

Although most Hermitage produced today is red, the area also produces a wonderful white from the Marsanne and Roussanne grapes. In the 1600s, red and white Hermitage became celebrated throughout the royal courts of Europe. In 1787 Thomas Jefferson visited Tain-



l'Hermitage and purchased 550 bottles, describing white Hermitage as "the first wine in the world without a single exception," and praising red Hermitage for its exquisite flavour. In the 1800s, Syrah from Hermitage was sent to Bordeaux to add colour and body to the wines there. Today this would be seen as a travesty, however back then adding Hermitage to Claret was a selling point, with those wines being described as hermitagé.

For many years the wines of the northern Rhone were the premier wines in France. In more recent times, they have become somewhat overshadowed, at least in terms of price and prestige, by Bordeaux and Burgundy. For "Rhôneaholics" (like myself) this has been something of a bonus as it means we can get the most wonderful wines at prices that are much more affordable than their counterparts.

That said, a bottle of 1961 La Chapelle Hermitage currently commands prices in excess of \$10,000 USD. A good way to experience the wines of the area without breaking the bank is to check out smaller producers, and the wonderful co-operative Cave de Tain-l'Hermitage.

I have been lucky enough to have made a number of pilgrimages to the Hill of Hermitage. Unfortunately, it is an 800-mile journey from where I live in Wales. The nearest thing that I have to the Hill in my area (apart from Dr. Dunn's Wall) is the Sugar Loaf Mountain that dominates the historic market town of Abergavenny and offers splendid views of the beautiful Usk Valley. On the south facing foothills is the Sugar Loaf Vineyard, a five-acre site where they grow seven different varieties of grapes in a beautiful setting. The climate of Wales is very different to that of southern France and the style and quality of the wines are therefore very different, but I feel blessed that I have a local place of pilgrimage where I can enjoy a picnic amongst the vines and raise a toast to Dr. Dunn and Gaspard.

Dr. Michael Davies is an author, historian and wine expert in Wales.

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The Venue

Strandhill, Co. Sligo, Ireland

You have to love a pub that has no fixed street address, only the promise that you are sure to stumble upon it when visiting the charming Sligo suburb of Strandhill. Open the door to Ireland of yore in the front-end bar, where time stands still with good draught from the taps and real-deal pub grub. In the back-end restaurant, enjoy the ocean view while you savour the scrumptious Atlantic seafood chowder, oven baked salmon, fish cakes, fresh claw crabs, sea bass, and a host of other maritime



delights. The house specialty, however, is the Lissadore Mussels Marniere, savoury and succulent. Be sure to sample the prawns as well, reputed to be the best on the Emerald Isle's west coast. If all that weren't enough, The Venue offers up live entertainment on weekends, and lucky patrons may be treated to an old-school seisiún until the wee hours. The friendly vibe and personable service is as authentic as it gets along the Wild Atlantic Way, and a big reason why the eatery is well loved by both locals and those passing through, especially during the summer months when a long after-dinner walk along the beach makes for an idyllic Irish experience.

Dillon's

Ballina, Co. Mayo, Ireland

Another hidden gem along Eire's Wild Atlantic Way, Dillon's Bar and Restaurant is a welcome respite for weary travelers looking for a quiet, quaint and cozy corner to take a load off their fatigued feet. Owner Paul Regan and his crew have done a wonderful job revamping this traditional riverside gaol into a contemporary gastro pub, where classic Irish cuisine has been retooled for current culinary tastes. The homemade Killala Bay seafood chowder is to die for, as is the warm Chuillcoil goat's cheese



tartlet. Everyone will love the baby pork belly ribs, and don't leave without diving into the deep-fried brie. The more ambitious will want to chomp on the pan seared lamb chump, or the char-grilled sirloin of McHales Irish beef. Diners with a fondness for fowl must taste-test the Duck Two Ways; char siu roasted duck breast, accompanied by basmati rice, duck parcel, and chilli-infused vegetables. The real treat here, however, is the ambience; both the interior décor, as well as the outdoor courtyard, are cool and relaxed, ideal for an afternoon tea, a cold pint, or a delicious dinner date. Those hoping to explore the area can take advantage of the facility's affordable accommodations also.

Leo's Tavern Meenaleck, Crolly, Co. Donegal, Ireland

World famous as the home-base and birthing ground for Irish musical superstars Enya, Clannad and Moya Brennan, this family owned and operated saloon still does out the live music seven nights a week; patrons are treated to talented pool of local "trad" players, and are often invited to partake in one of the impromptu, after-hours sessions. The craic, as they say, is brilliant. So is the Guinness, which, on most nights, is proudly - and perhaps painstakingly - poured to perfection by proprietor Bartley Brennan, youngest son of the inn's namesake founder. Your pint can be accompanied by a bevy of time-honored



pub-grub options, including excellent fish 'n' chips, seafood chowder and home-made bread, cold and smoked salmon, curry chicken, beef stew and the region's finest lamb shanks. Whilst

in Meenaleck, set up your tent at nearby Sleepy Hollows, or take a room at Bunbeg Cottage, and enjoy some of the lushest landscapes found on the Wild Atlantic Way; the fine fresh air will take your breath away, as will the soft, rolling hills and fields. Strike up a chat with one of the locals, and chances are you will end up back at Leo's before the day is done.



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Cabrini's Kitchen

Pan *Fried* Trout

I like to go fishing from time to time and catch my own trout.

One spring morning my blood began to stir with the warmer spring breeze, and I decided to take out my rod and reel. It was a terrible day and I caught nothing. The little flies that were not in season had decided to come out early to bite me.

On my way home, I stopped at the fish-

monger and ordered four rainbow trout. I told him "Pick four large ones out and throw them at me, will you?"

"Why do you want me to throw them at you?" asked the merchant. I replied, "So that I am able to tell my husband, in all honesty, that I caught them."

This recipe does justice to these very trout. It was passed down to me by my

Irish-born mother, who swore she kissed the blarney stone.

The delicate sweet flesh contrasts nicely with the crispy skin. Make sure the pan is hot when you place the fish down. If it is not hot, you will not get the crispy results. Serve this with Irish soda bread and polish it off with a cup of Irish coffee, and you will be as happy as a leprechaun.

INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary

4 trout fillets

¼ cup cornmeal

½ teaspoon salt, plus more to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

1/4 cup butter

6 cherry tomatoes

1 cup white wine

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon drained capers

INSTRUCTIONS

Press 1/2 teaspoon of the rosemary needles into the flesh of each trout fillet. Combine the cornmeal, 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Coat the fillets in the seasoned flour.

Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the trout and sauté until cooked through (about 2 1/2 minutes per side). Remove the trout from the pan and place on warmed plates.

Add the tomatoes to the skillet and cook for 1 minute. Pour in the wine and reduce to 1/3 cup (about 5 minutes). Stir in the lemon juice, capers and remaining rosemary and remove from the heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon the sauce over the trout and serve immediately.

Ith do shàth! Cabrini

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





Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way

By Carsten Krieger
O'Brien Press
160 pp / €12.99

Carsten Krieger may well be the busiest and best known photographer in Ireland today. His stunning images appear in just about every magazine and calendar on the island. And there's good reason for that; his work is exceptional, exhilarating and engaging. Krieger's latest effort, *The Wild Atlantic Way* – his fifth collection for O'Brien Press – again goes above and beyond the camera eye to shine a new light upon a rugged land and it's resilient people. Divided into four sections, and traversing the 2,500 kilometer trek along the country's western coastline, the work succeeds at showcasing the sea, soil, soul and spirit of both a people and place. If pictures are worth a thousand words, then *The Wild Atlantic Way* is a poem of epic proportion.

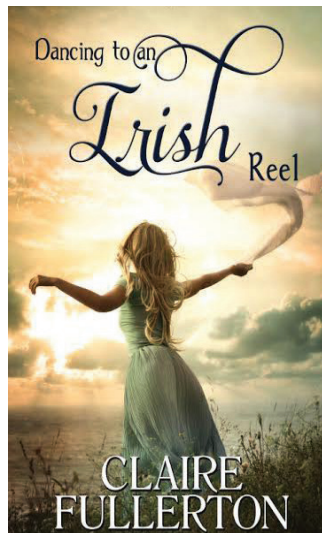
~ SPC

The Best of Irish Country Cooking

By Nuala Cullen
Interlink
176 pp / \$35

I gave a copy of this collection to my mom as an early Mother's Day gift. A proud Newfoundlander of Irish descent (Dunphy, Magee), she took to it immediately, calling me daily with updates from the kitchen. "It is laid-out beautifully," she told me. "The landscape and food photos are fantastic, and the recipes are a good mix of traditional and modern cooking." I asked her what she liked best about the book. "The little tidbits of history are fascinating," she noted, "but I really love how there is something for everyone and for every season here." I asked her what's for supper. "Spring green soup, and baked salmon with herbs," she replied with a grin. Good enough for my mom, good enough for you.

~ SPC



Dancing to an Irish Reel

By Claire Fullerton
Vinspire Press
237 pp / \$13.99

Almost like Eire itself, there is something magical, lyrical and whimsical about Claire Fullerton's simple and satisfying story of an American woman's (Hailey) romantic adventure with an Irish musician. A fairy tale of sorts, *Dancing to an Irish Reel* transports readers from the hustle and bustle of modern-day Los Angeles to the wilds of western Ireland, where time stands still. En route, our protagonist falls for Liam (the musician), discovers newfound friendships, and falls in love with the music, language and landscape of her lineage. The author's own time in Ireland has paid dividends here; mood, setting and tone are true to life, as is the quirky cast of characters. A strong narrative arc will keep readers turning the pages, and hoping for a sequel.

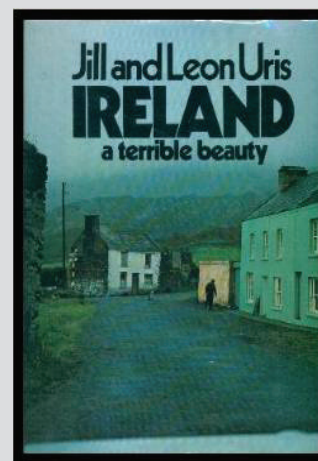
~ SPC

Ireland; A Terrible Beauty

By Jill & Leon Uris
Bantam
224 pp / \$95

Though first published 40 years ago, and still extremely difficult to track down since having been discontinued for more than a decade, husband and wife Leon and Jill Uris' photographic pilgrimage through Ireland is nonetheless a must-have for those with a passionate eye for the Emerald Isle. Hot on the heels of his bold, bestselling *Trinity*, Leon honeymooned his new bride across Eire. The result was a series of colour and black and white images, peppered with telling text, that brilliantly capture and convey the "terrible beauty" that is both the battle-weary North and the history-wary Republic. More than a mere coffee-table memento, however, the work is both a tribute to the Irish heartland, and a testament to the two hearts that travelled there.

~ SPC





Liz Madden

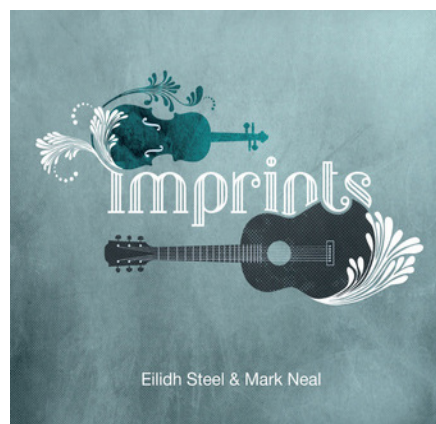
Legacy

One of the brightest lights on the contemporary Celtic music scene, vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, actor and activist Liz Madden cements her standing among the giants of the genre with *Legacy*, 14 terrific tracks produced by Fionan de Barra, and featuring guest appearances by Joanie Madden and Éamonn De Barra. The result is a heartfelt homage to her homeland; you can almost smell the turf-fire with the Irish-infused Banks of the Lee, and Paddy's Green Shamrock Shore. The AmeriCelt presence is prominent also, with covers of Joan Baez, Emmylou Harris and Shannon Worrell songs. With years of experience both on the road and in the studio, working with an array of established artists, Madden has at last arrived in her own right with this superb solo effort. ~ SPC

Eilidh Steel & Mark Neal

Imprints

There is something to be said for sonic simplicity; with so much Celtic music over-orchestrated these days, these 13 tracks from Scottish duo Eilidh Steel and Mark Neal are a refreshing return to rural roots. From the opening notes of Pipe Major Bobby to the closing chords of Glasgow Willie's Welcome to Helensburgh, the stripped-down arrangements of guitar, fiddle and vocals allow the back-to-basic song structures to shine. In particular, Means of Escape, The King's Shilling, and Tíree Girls showcase the sound architecture of harmony and melody - permitting the pieces to breathe - and highlighting the twosome's terrific talents. That said, *Imprints* is contemporary "trad" in the most traditional sense; folksy, rustic airs that will leave you yearning to return to ye' ould country. ~ SPC



The Waterboys

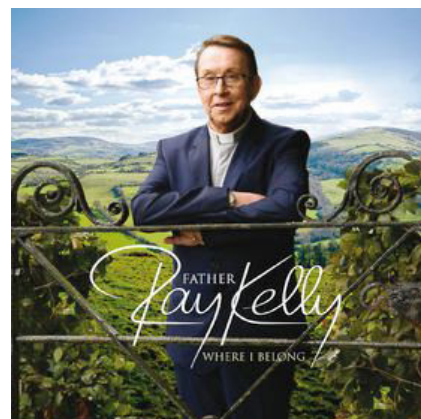
Modern Blues

He may be pompous and arrogant, but Waterboys frontman Mike Scott has a penchant for penning a good tune; 1988's *Fisherman's Blues* was a masterpiece of Celtic pop-rock, showcasing the Scottish songsmith's savvy for marrying melody and harmony. Subsequent recordings, though at times inconsistent, revealed an astute artist willing to experiment and evolve. Sadly, that isn't the case with his latest effort, *Modern Blues*. Of the album's nine tracks, only November Tale hits the mark. The remaining songs sputter along, bland and contrived, like haphazardly pieced together bits of leftover B-sides and outtakes. Unlike his idols Bob Dylan and Van Morrison, Scott isn't cut out for "Dad-Rock" (yes, it's a genre) – instead, that ego would be better served earning its stripes on the cutting edge. ~ SPC

Father Ray Kelly

Where I Belong

Only in Ireland can a local parish priest become an internationally renowned rock star. After a YouTube audience of millions applauded his spontaneous rendition of Leonard Cohen's hallowed Hallelujah, Father Ray Kelly has followed-up with his first full-length recording. He might not be Bono, but there's no denying the good padre can carry a tune in the finest Irish tradition; guitar, fiddle, uilleann pipes, and harp accompany the talented second tenor on classics Galway Bay, Isle of Hope, and Oh Danny Boy. More surprising, and equally stirring, are Kelly's soaring takes on REM's Everybody Hurts, and Eric Clapton's Tears in Heaven, bravely bridging the gap between spiritual and secular. Sure it's all schmaltz, but the blue-haired groupies from the church bake sale won't be disappointed. ~ SPC



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Iain MacDonald

Iain MacDonald marks his 50th anniversary as a piper in 2015, an amazing journey that began in boyhood

Photo credit: Ryan MacDonald Photography, centre photo credit: Derek Maxwell

Iain MacDonald was inspired to begin piping by his mother. Originally, she had wanted to play as a child herself, but at that time the Regina Pipe Band wouldn't allow girls to learn the instrument.

"So I got hauled down instead," MacDonald recalls with a smile, "and I just loved it right from the start."

He must have, as even with 50 years of piping under his belt, the Saskatchewan native shows no signs of slowing down. He notes that his City of Regina Pipe Band's season is already well underway, with shows booked at Highland games in three Canadian provinces. As well, the Conservatory of Performing Arts Pipe Band – a youth band MacDonald teaches – is scheduled to hit the road this summer. To make things even busier, the band leader is also organizing a piping summer camp in Regina, where he still resides.

"There are still a lot of tunes to learn and they all need to be better, so there's no reason to stop just yet...."

With such a lengthy career, MacDonald is bound to have a few good memories. Among them, he counts sharing the stage with both Sir Paul McCartney and The Chieftains as highlights, but equally important are the many smaller gigs performed alongside numerous pipe and folk bands. He cites several other memorable experiences also, including living in Glasgow, gigging in the Babcock-Renfrew Band and, over the years, playing solos at games in Scotland and North America.

"The really outstanding highlight for me, over all this time, is being able to play

in the bands with my wife, Barbara – who is an excellent piper," he declares with pride, "and then with our children, Eilidh, Ruaridh and Duncan."

MacDonald says that one of the benefits of enjoying a long career is having the good fortune to meet and work with so many great pipers. He reminisces about learning a great deal at summer schools, and during his time in Scotland in the late 1970s and early '80s.



"I had weekly lessons with Pipe Major Donald MacLeod (MBE), and I also played under Pipe Major Iain McLeod, a five-time world champion and elite solo piper."

MacDonald plays a set of David Ather-ton pipes, as well as reel pipes made by Fred Morrison, and Uilleann pipes made by the late Chris Langan of Toronto.

But when asked if he's a traditional piper in terms of style and sound, he hedges his bets, calling "traditional" a loaded term these days.

"What is traditional?" he questions. "Lots would argue the standard tunes and styles that many of us grew up with are not actually traditional, but a military style reflecting non-traditional perspectives on Gaelic culture. I'd say that the last 30 years have broadened the stylistic choices for

pipers and I personally am happy to play different ways to suit occasions or formats."

Are kids still as interested in piping, as he once was 50 years ago? MacDonald considers the question, pointing out that people's daily lives have changed greatly since he took up piping, and that today's children have a lot of things competing for their attention.

"Most families have both parents working away from the home. Kids are scheduled into activities after school and evenings, and large-screen TVs and the ever-present mobile devices are a constant call. Despite this, when piping is fun, challenging and rewarding, kids will respond like they always have. It's harder than ever to get kids to commit to regular practice and to develop real skill and passion, but it can be done."

To ensure youngsters remain engaged, he recommends involving them in piping groups and bands at an early age, and making certain that the experience is both fun and social. "One thing we could all be doing better is communicating with a wider public audience about what piping offers, and work to have it recognized as a serious instrument."

As for himself, MacDonald continues to play because he loves the music and everything to do with piping.

"There are still a lot of tunes to learn and they all need to be better, so there's no reason to stop just yet. I enjoy playing pipes solo, and I also play and teach in bands, so there's always a reason to keep going."

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Catriona Price

Catriona Price, the fiddler half of the musical duo Twelfth Day, says the idea to pick up the instrument first came to her in her sleep when she was a child.

“It sounds cheesy,” the Orkney Island native notes, “but I had a dream! Both my aunts in Germany play violin and when I was about five-years-old I dreamt that I asked one of them if I could have a go, and she said no. I woke up crying.”

Price also awoke determined, and from that point on she became obsessed with the idea of having a fiddle of her own.

“I remember we had one in the house, but I wasn’t allowed to play it until I’d had my first lesson,” she recalls. “When my folks weren’t looking, I climbed up on a chair and got it down from the top of the dresser, took it into my room and started trying to figure it out. My first lesson could not come soon enough.”

Explaining her passion for the instrument, Price believes it was the sound of the fiddle that intrigued her; every time she heard someone play she was desperate to join in and became frustrated when she couldn’t pull the proper notes out of the instrument.

“That made me practice,” she shares, adding that she began lessons at school when she was seven years old. “Music excited me more than anything else in school, and by the age of 12 I’d declared, ‘I am going to be a professional musician.’”

Initially, folk music attracted Price as a kind of rebellion. At home her father, whom she describes as a “huge music geek,” played classical albums, owned every single Bach cantata recorded and kept backdated issues of BBC Music Magazine.

“You get the picture. But because this was what my parents were into, it definite-

ly was not cool, and I only wanted to play folk music.”

However, her first teacher in Orkney, Douglas Montgomery, broadened her mind and persuaded her that other forms of music were every bit as cool as folk. Under his influence, she auditioned for St. Mary’s Music School in Edinburgh and spent her final two school years there.

“Being around like-minded kids who had been in specialist music education for years really pushed me to up my game,” Price comments.

“Music excited me more than anything else in school...”

She pursued her undergraduate training at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, and then took her post-graduate work at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

“I am really glad that I chose to study at these ‘classical’ institutions,” she enthuses. “People often ask if having this formal training takes away from the rawness of your folk roots, but I think when you grow up steeped in a powerful music tradition such as that of Orkney, it’s not going to go anywhere.”

Her partner in Twelfth Day is harpist Esther Swift. Their newest recording is titled *The Devil Makes Three*.

“The writing process was entirely collaborative, both musically and lyrically” Price states, “and was inspired by a huge number of things. But at the end of it all,



we found common themes of the beautiful landscape that surround us here in Scotland, the sea, and stories of brave and cool ladies.”

This year promises to be busier than ever. Twelfth Day is touring in Germany followed by a month on the road in Mongolia. A Twelfth Day extended play release will come out by summer, and the band will head back to the studio in the autumn to record a new full-length album. As well, Price is working with a new fiddle band, Fara, which will record a CD this year. And, as if all that were not enough, she is also involved in creating an online space for sharing and learning Orkney tunes called the Orkney Tune Cloud.

“It’s difficult to say exactly how I’ve evolved as an artist since I started playing, as I feel like a new little piece of that evolution happened every day and continues to happen,” she concludes. “There’s too much to pinpoint. I just try to listen to everything and be inspired by everything.”

www.catrionaprice.com



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Becky & Laura Chapman Nickerson

Becky Chapman and Laura Nickerson keep their love of Irish dance by giving it away

In fact, the two Nova Scotia women are so passionate about Irish dancing that they have made it their business to popularize the form – literally – opening Rising Tide Dance Academy in Halifax this past January.

“Compared to many mainstream styles of dance – like ballet or contemporary – Irish dance is relatively unknown,” says Nickerson. “That’s our biggest challenge; Irish dance offers so much and can be so rewarding, but it hasn’t earned the same popularity as other styles yet. Part of our mission is to elevate its profile and bring more awareness to the activity.”

Currently, the new school caters to both beginners as well as competitive dancers, some of whom have been involved in the form for a decade or more. Chapman notes that many of their students began because of a connection to Ireland, while others are trying it out, in the process discovering a fun, physical, dance style. “And everyone is welcome,” she says, “regardless of whether you’re Irish or not.”

For those who become involved, the rewards are substantial; participants can take the form in a number of directions, including competition, recreational dancing, performing as a soloist or in a team, or dancing in hard shoes with taps, or soft shoes such as leather slippers.

“Irish dance teaches dancers about

Irish culture from the dancing, to the music, to the history, but it also teaches them about discipline, sportsmanship and confidence,” Chapman explains. “Being able to offer students an activity that includes all of that, plus fitness, is rewarding as a teacher.”

Both women know more than a bit about discipline, sportsmanship and confidence.

Chapman took her first dance lesson at age 12. She attributes her late start to the fact that she’d been living in Kuwait with her family for the previous two years. Upon returning to Nova Scotia, she simply wanted to try any type of dance. “I enrolled in a city recreation program for Irish dance and was hooked.”

She went on to study Irish dancing in Dublin, and to perform in productions like the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo and the Polizeishow in Hamburg, Germany. However, one of her greatest accomplishments was earning her Irish dance teacher’s certification in 2013 – the exam was so demanding that it took her a couple of attempts to pass it.

For her part, Nickerson has loved to dance since she was three. When she was eight, she accompanied a friend to an Irish dance class, and has been devoted ever since.

She has studied dance in Toronto, Nova

Scotia and Northern Ireland, and has competed locally, nationally and internationally. “One accomplishment I’m particularly proud of is getting to compete at the World Championships in Belfast and in Philadelphia,” she shares, “something only a small number of dancers get to do.”

For Chapman, what began as interest in dance has grown into an obsession. “I couldn’t imagine my life without dancing, which is part of why I got into teaching, because it allows me to keep Irish dance in my life every day. Irish dance has also brought me so much love for Ireland and Celtic culture in general. Being from Nova Scotia, we’re exposed to Celtic culture already, but the connection I feel to Ireland is strong – and it’s because of dancing I consider myself very much an ‘Irish wannabe.’”

Nickerson reveals that as she has grown older, what interests her in dance has changed. When she first began, she loved how different Irish dance was from ballet – the fast feet, the jumps and the new skills. “Now that I’m a teacher, I love getting to share my love of all things Irish with my students. Celtic culture is a way of life in Nova Scotia. I like that I have a role in shaping and inspiring a love of that culture in others.”

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Saskatchewan Highland Gathering & Celtic Festival

May 16 & 17, 2015, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

As the premier Scottish event in the “Land of the Living Skies,” the Saskatchewan Highland Gathering & Celtic Festival is a major meeting place for competitors, enthusiasts and spectators from across Western Canada and beyond. The annual gathering takes place each long weekend in May, welcoming people of all ages and roots. This year’s festival includes pipes and drums competitions, highland dancing and heavy athletics - one of the event’s chairs is multiple Canadian Scottish Athletic Federation champion, Jason Johnston - as well as a marketplace, children’s activities and a beer tent featuring live music. Additional activities include the Prairie Piping Invitational, where competitors play a medley of their

choice and the audience selects the winner. Also popular is the heavy events clinic, where beginners can try their hand at the stone putt, caber toss and hammer throw. As part of the organizers’ efforts to foster emerging talent and promote Scottish culture, the games awards two scholarships for “The Most Promising Piper and Drummer” to attend a summer school featuring internationally renowned instructors. www.saskhighland.ca

Rio Grande Valley Celtic Festival

May 16 & 17, 2015, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

With an abundance of Irish and Scottish shops, pubs, restaurants, organizations, clans, pipe bands, sports groups and dance schools, Albuquerque, New Mexico enjoys a strong Celtic presence.

The city’s Rio Grande Valley Celtic Festival celebrates that influence again this Spring. “The Rio Grande Valley Celtic Festival and Highland Games brings to New Mexico a celebration of the lifeways, traditions, cultural heritage and contributions of the Celtic nations to our American life,”

states the festival’s website. This year marks the 27th edition of the event, and offers patrons an array of great music, food, drink, gifts, a clan village, as well as competitions for dance, pipe, drum, harp and heavy athletics. At last year’s festival, two-time IHGF world champion Dan McKim momentarily set a new hammer throw world record, which had stood since 1997. The Albuquerque event features some distinct elements also, including the annual Celtic 7s Rugby Tournament, a British classic car show, and Celtic quests for the kids. www.celtfestabq.com

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Greenville Scottish Games

May 22 & 23, 2015, Greenville, South Carolina, USA

This year, the Greenville Scottish Games in South Carolina is celebrating its 10th anniversary. “Greenville is nestled in arguably the highest concentration of Scots-Irish descent in the country,” states the Games’ website. “The legacy left to us resonates throughout the Upstate in our place names, our attitude toward family, our sense of humor, and our love of country.” The 2015 edition of the gathering is dedicated to both the American and Scottish armed forces. Members of the Royal Highland Fusiliers (Second Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland) will serve as the two-day event’s Honour Guard and will march in the Great Scot! Parade, which promises to be “more more more” this year; pipe bands, Scottish chiefs, faeries, archers, Braveheart, Miss Greenville Scottish Games, and a host of others will be participating in the Friday night march. Saturday will be a fun-filled day of piping, heavy athletics, border-collie competitions, and live concerts featuring the bands Albannach, Lissakeole and Cleghorn, as well as a “Celtic Jam.” Also, patrons can expect a surplus of demonstrations, from medieval sword fighting and raptor bird flying, to Scottish weaving, country dancing, Celtic fiddle and harp. A British car and motorcycle show, and Wee Scotland - an entire Scottish village for the young lads and lasses – are also on the weekend agenda. www.gallabrae.com



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Clan Munro

The Clan Munro's reputation is fierce; while the origins of the clan are lost in the past, tradition holds that they were 11th century mercenary soldiers from Ireland who were granted lands at Ross after helping the Scottish King repulse the Viking invaders. The clan was well established by the middle of the 14th century, holding land as servants of the powerful Earl of Ross. The group's website notes, "In general, a law abiding and peaceful clan, nevertheless when needs arose they stoutly defended their interests against more powerful neighbours."

More recently, the clan continued its long tradition of military service by providing the British government with fighting troops through the Highland regiments.

According to Jo Ann Tuskin, current secretary of the organization, the Clan Munro Association of Canada got its start in 1974 with the late C.C. "Bud" Munroe, under the approval of the late chief, Captain Patrick Munro of Foulis. The founding group consisted of 58 members and the first general meeting took place in 1975 in Kemptville, Ontario.



Since then the Canadian clan association has held steady at a membership of 60.

Tuskin joined the clan in 1975 and has also served as its editor, genealogist, librarian and historian. She says she was inspired to become involved while working on her family tree, through which she'd hoped to find information about relatives.

Clan members are spread across Canada from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. Most discover the organization through the clan's website.

Tuskin says the group tends to be more active online, also using Facebook alongside its website. The association accepts memberships through online payment and issues its newsletter digitally.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the society. Tuskin hopes to receive and publish pictures of clan activities from across the country to commemorate the date. As well, she wants to set up a booth at Highland games to attract attention to the association.

www.clanmunro.ca



Clan Macquarrie

Although the Clan Macquarrie is currently without a chief, in the past it has boasted as a leader no less than the man known as the "father of Australia" - Major General Lachlan Macquarrie. According to current clan historian, Frank Fisher, Macquarrie died in 1818 at the age of 103, and left no replacement. A direct line descendant was located in England, but expressed no interest in claiming the title of chief.

The clan itself hails from the Isle of Ulva, which the group owned from about 949 until the chief was forced to sell it in 1776. The clearances swept the island, and most went to Nova Scotia, Canada. One of the present-day Macquarries in that Canadian province publishes a little magazine called Celtic Life International.

Fisher's great-grandmother was a Macquarrie, leading him to an interest in the clan. For several years Fisher and his wife attended the Highland games in New Hampshire, but failed to see a Macquarrie clan society in attendance. Fisher told his wife in 2006 that if he didn't see one again, he'd begin the society.



"There was none, of course," Fisher says wryly.

In 2007, the society began with five members. Now in its eighth year, the society has more than 100 members. Most are in the United States, but there are also members living in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and England.

Despite its small numbers, the society is very active. It has donated to the restoration of a statue of the poet Robert Burns, and sends money to Ulva every year to help maintain the Macquarrie cemetery. As well, the clan has established a scholarship fund in memory of one of the contributors of the current society, and will provide funds for clansmen wishing to take any classes having to do with Scottish heritage.

The plan for 2015, Fisher says, is the continued growth of the society in terms of both members and chapters.

"We are planning to have a society gathering this summer, but the location has not been decided as of yet."

www.clanmacquarrie.org





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26

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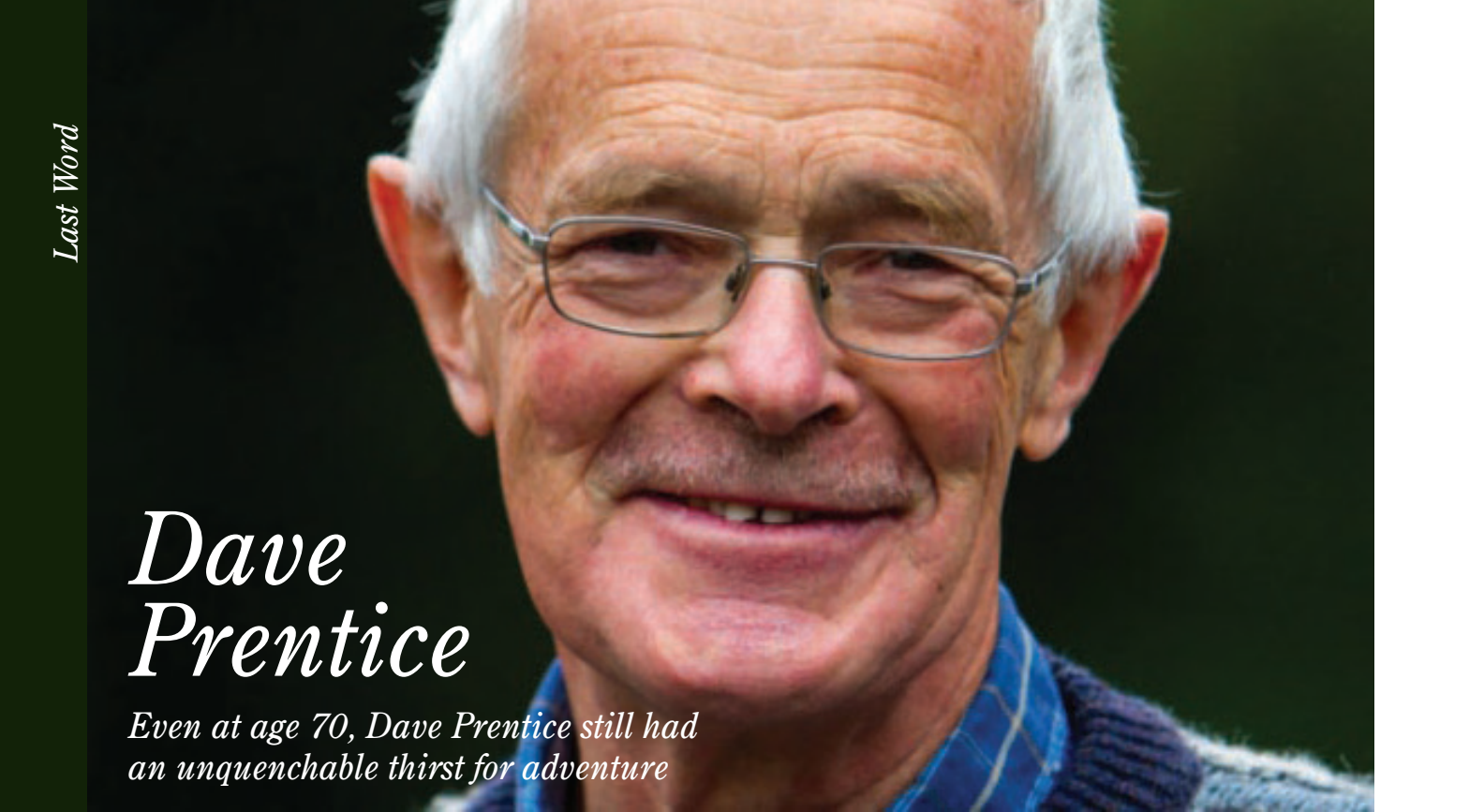


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Dave Prentice

Even at age 70, Dave Prentice still had an unquenchable thirst for adventure

The Scottish systems analyst, and avid outdoor enthusiast, had previously climbed Mount Elgon - a 14,177-foot peak in Uganda - several times. But in January 2015 the mountaineer was camped at 11,000 feet when he began to experience breathing difficulties. Guides carried him down the peak on a stretcher, but to no avail: the long-time adventurer succumbed.

The Scottish orienteering community greeted Prentice's death with shock, grief and disbelief.

"Dave will be missed for everything he brought to orienteering, his enthusiasm and ideas, his contribution to mapping as well as his long-term involvement with schools," read a statement on the Scottish Orienteering Association's website.

The association's president, Roger Scrutton, recalled the climber's devotion to inspiring school kids with a love for the sport. About 10 years ago, Prentice received funding to map the grounds of virtually every primary school in Perth and Kinross, putting in place the foundation for a successful, annual orienteering schools festival.

Scrutton further recollected, "In 2014 Dave asked if I would come along to Scone Palace to present a memento to the 10,000th participant in the festival. I think there were 100 teams of three at this final and what a heart-warming sight it was

to see them scattered across the Scone Palace grounds, working in their teams, map reading, communication, decision-making...that is a fantastic legacy for school pupils in Perth and Kinross."

Born in Nottingham in 1944, Prentice was known as "Mr. Orienteering." The Daily Record reported that 28 years ago he and former world champion orienteer Steve Hale helped form the Tayside Orienteers. Prentice helped organize many of the major international orienteering events which took place in Perthshire over the last three decades, according to the paper.

His own love of travel dates back to the 1950s, when his parents took him on family holidays to the Alps, Norway and Denmark, among other destinations. According to his obituary in The Scotsman, complications with his tonsils as a young lad resulted in an operation that had part of his lung removed.

Yet that never hampered Prentice. He attended Birmingham University, studying commerce while joining the local climbing clubs. After completing his degree he became a computer and systems analyst, but The Scotsman shared that his working life remained secondary to his love of the wild outdoors.

"Constantly planning his next adventure, his urge to explore took him to many far-flung places of the world,"

the paper noted. "Trekking, camping and climbing in the Alps, the Dolomites, the Pyrenees, the Rockies, Sierras and the Himalayas."

He was passionate about his home country also; in 2013, Prentice undertook "bagging the Munros," - a term used to describe the feat of having climbed all 283 peaks of the Munro mountains in Scotland, each a height of over 3,000 feet.

Along with ascending five of Mount Elgon's six peaks in Uganda, Prentice had been involved with the local guides, helping them fundraise so they could develop a viable climbing tourism business in the region.

In the Daily Record, Councillor Bob Ellis praised Prentice for his devotion to the sport of orienteering.

"Dave's work allowed orienteering to become family-oriented, helping a new generation of people get into the sport," Ellis told the paper.

Donald Grassie, a past president of the Scottish Orienteering Association, awarded Prentice with the organization's President's Medal in 2009 for his services to Scottish Orienteering.

"His enthusiasm was immense," Grassie said. "Dave would seek you out to chat about his latest plan, introduce you to a local councillor or landowner or just to natter. We will all miss his enthusiasm and passion for our sport."





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