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INTERNATIONAL

Loreena McKennitt *Return of the Celtic Queen*

INSIDE!

*The Alarm, Glass Tiger, Summer Style
Stick Fighting, Welsh Gold, Highland Terriers
Summer Reading Guide, Celts For Cancer*



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Fáilte!

The Power of Books

Each year, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) hosts a literary competition called "Canada Reads" where national celebrities argue the merits of a particular novel. This year's winner was the compelling *Forgiveness* by Mark Sakamoto, the true-life tale of racism and brutality in the days, weeks and months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

I received a copy of *Forgiveness* as an Easter gift this year, and could not put it down.

I am passionate about books of an historical nature, especially those with relevance to my own culture and heritage. In particular, both *Set Adrift Upon the World: The Sutherland Clearances* by James Hunter, and John Prebble's *The Highland Clearances* left a lasting impact upon me for their honest and accurate portrayal of the cultural genocide that took place in Scotland in the 18th century.

These were books about my people - Highlanders - who were forced from their homeland through vicious and unimaginable acts of violence.

Brutality isn't confined to any particular geography or demographic, however, and - sadly - it remains an ongoing issue everywhere to this very day.

Recently, my wife Cabrini and I attended a conference on digital publishing in Berlin, Germany. Not surprisingly, there was considerable attention paid to online propaganda and recent trends in "fake news." I was encouraged by emerging efforts to create new publishing models aimed at keeping journalism transparent.

A short distance from the conference, we visited the Berlin Story Museum, showcasing 800 years of the city's history. Within the facility was an exhibit entitled "Hitler - How Could It Happen?" detailing the rise and fall of the Third Reich, including the events leading up to the Führer's suicide in 1945.

The irony of the experience was not lost on me; I was in Berlin to attend an event about protecting the freedom of the press, and yet here I stood, just down the street, reading about the evening of May 10, 1933, when Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels ordered that all books written by Jews, liberals, leftists, pacifists and foreigners be burned.

As our history books show us, while these atrocities might be forgiven, they will never be forgotten.

And, as Sakamoto's award-winning narrative reminds us, true forgiveness is not just about letting go; it is also about holding on to the darker moments of our history, and keeping those mistakes fresh in our memories so that we are not doomed to repeat them; it is about overcoming hatred and prejudice; it is about courage - not an absence of fear, but a resistance to it.

Learning to love and the love of learning go hand-in-hand - such is the power of books. To that end, our Summer Reading Guide will inspire and encourage you to read for enrichment, engagement, entertainment, education, and mostly, for enjoyment.

Enjoy and may God Bless!

Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher

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Celts For Cancer

In the third installment of a six-part series to raise funding and awareness for cancer research, prevention, treatment and services, Celtic Life International shines the spotlight on the Wales Cancer Bank

While the front lines in the war on cancer make most of the headlines - think Pink Ribbon campaigns, celebrity shout-outs, marathons, etc - the lesser known, behind-the-scenes soldiers deserve equal recognition.

Since 2004, the Wales Cancer Bank has been facilitating cancer research through the supply of well-annotated, fit-for-purpose biosamples to cancer researchers globally, benefitting patients around the world.

The biobank is the brainchild of three professors; Malcolm Mason (clinical oncologist), Julian Sampson (medical geneticist) and David Griffiths (histopathologist).

"I have been involved since its inception," says Dr. Alison Parry-Jones, Manager of the Wales Cancer Bank. "I have the operational responsibility for the day-to-day functioning of the biobank within all the collection centres around Wales.

"I also deal with the ethical and legal operation of the organization as Chief Investigator on the ethics approval from the Wales Research Ethics Committee. And, I am the Designated Individual on the licence we hold from the Human Tissue Authority - which allows us to store human tissue for research under the U.K. Human Tissue Act. This means I have overall responsibility for governance as well as operational matters. My job is sometimes akin to herding cats!"

The Wales Cancer Bank currently has eight employees in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, including patient-facing staff, who discuss donation and consent with patients; laboratory staff, who process and store the biosamples; administrative and IT staff, and liaison personnel, who interact with researchers and manage the sample application and supply process.

The organization's core 'clients' are cancer researchers from around the world, working in any sector, who can access samples and data for use in their cancer-related research.

"We often undertake bespoke collections for researchers if the samples they require are not available in the archive collection," explains Parry-Jones. "Our website has an online search facility that they can access to see if their requirements can be met."

The challenges of the vocation, she notes, are many.

"Data collation is definitely an issue. We don't have a single clinical informatics system or electronic patient record in Wales, so an awful lot of time is taken up finding and transcribing information from multiple electronic and/or paper notes. Another challenge is keeping up-to-date with advances and good practices around the sector, and tailoring those to the resources and facilities we have available."

She shares that, like her organization, biobanks around the world are struggling with sustainability.

"Biobanking is not a short-term effort. The outcomes from large sample collections may take 10 or 15 years to start to show, and funders typically have a 3 or 5 year funding program, after which time they expect tangible results.

"Personalized or stratified medicine is gaining momentum and only by using these large biosample collections will we be able to identify better ways to treat patients based on the molecular make-up, the genetic mutations, present in their particular tumour. Not all tumours are the same - even when you look at them through a microscope and give two tumours the same grade/stage and diagnosis, the mutations could be completely different. So, while a diagnosis may be similar, a particular treatment may work well for one patient, though perhaps not for another.

"I would love to see biobanking being incorporated into routine clinical practice and become part of the hospital journey for patients."

"As long as it is viewed as simply a research project it will suffer from the vagaries of funding."

As such, Parry-Jones says that ongoing public support is essential.

"Raising awareness is always hugely helpful. The more people who are aware of the biobank and its aims can help to influence its success. And, of course, we always welcome financial aid; research funding is increasingly difficult to come by, both to support the infrastructure and the research itself."

Although Wales Cancer Bank does not have charitable status, they are hosted by Cardiff University, which is a registered charity. Those interested in contributing may do so via the educational institution, which will signpost donations to the biobank.

Despite the difficulties, Parry-Jones believes the rewards of the organization's efforts are immeasurable.

"The satisfaction we feel when a patient thanks us for doing our job is incredible. They appreciate that the time is being taken to try and maximize the use of samples, and although there is no promise of advances and certainty, they still understand the value in the activity. They don't want their children or grandchildren to go through what they are going through, and any little way that they can help to prevent or to change the future cancer landscape is important to them."

www.walescancerbank.com

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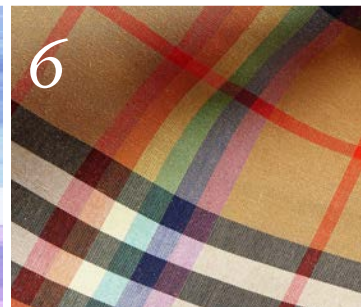
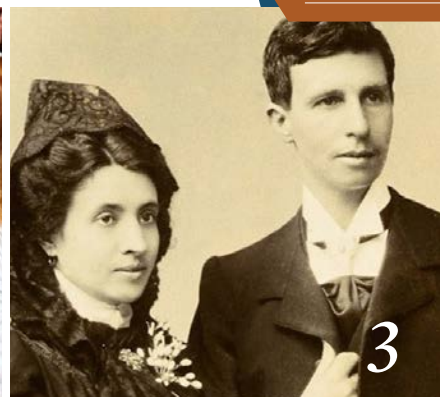
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one

Cornish or English?

The debate as to whether people born in Cornwall should identify themselves as Cornish or English is not new, but the conversation has recently been revived since west Cornwall MP Derek Thomas asked his Facebook followers if they agree with Cornwall Council's request to have a "Cornish" tick-box included with the 2021 Census. According to Cornwall Live, 13.8 percent of people self-identified as Cornish in the 2011 Census by ticking the "Other" box and writing it in. Since then, Council has held multiple discussions with senior officials at the Office for National Statistics on the matter.

two

Red Love

Redhead Day is a Dutch summer festival and gathering of people with natural ginger locks. The celebration has taken place almost every year in the city of Breda since 2005. Since then, redhead festivals have taken place in multiple European countries, including England, Scotland and Ireland - but never France...until now. Brittany is set to host the country's first festival of redheads on August 25 in the city of Châteaugiron. The gathering - titled Red Love - is the brainchild of French photographer Pascal Sacleux, who is, of course, a redhead himself. That said, you need not be a redhead to attend.

three

Secret Marriage

In 1901, Marcela Gracia Ibeas and Elisa Sánchez Loriga were in the midst of a forbidden romance. The two women managed to get married right under the nose of a Galician Catholic church more than a century before same-sex marriage became legal in Spain. In order to wed Ibeas, Loriga disguised herself as a man, adopting the alias Mario Sánchez when the two arrived at the parish church of St. Jorge. At the time, the priests were none the wiser, but a Galician newspaper exposed the couple's deception after the wedding. Ibeas and Loriga spent the rest of their lives on the run.

four

Minor Details

It is the thought that counts, right? A Chesterfield man named Duncan Robb thought he'd found a great deal on tickets when he came upon tickets for a Red Hot Chili Peppers concert in Belfast, which he purchased for himself and his girlfriend. It wasn't until the pair tried to look up the opening band that Robb realized his mistake: The Chili Peppers weren't playing in Belfast at all. In fact, he'd bought tickets to see The Red Hot Chili Pipers, a bagpipe cover band. The story has a happy ending, however. The couple reportedly attended the concert anyway and had a grand time.

five

Manx Archeological Find

In December of last year, the Isle of Man mourned the loss of Roy Kennaugh, a key figure in Manx language and culture. This March, however, the Michael Heritage Trust published the news of a gift Kennaugh left behind. Before he passed away, Kennaugh unearthed a Manx cross slab, which could be anywhere up to 1,500 years old. The slab was found at what may be a previously uncovered keeil (chapel) site in Kirk Michael. According to Manx Radio, 35 ancient keeil sites have been identified on the isle so far.

six

LGBT Tartan

British fashion company Burberry recently unveiled a special design for a good cause. Creative director Christopher Bailey (who is stepping down from the company after 17 years) designed a rainbow tartan as part of his final Burberry collection, which he is dedicating to the "best and brightest organisations supporting LGBTQ+ youth around the world." This tartan was debuted in February during London fashion week and the company announced donations to charities such as the Trevor Project, the Albert Kennedy Trust and The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.

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

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Val Feld

The late Val Feld, who was once the Labour Assembly Member for Swansea East in Wales, has been honoured with the country's first-ever purple plaque. The award was commissioned by Sue Essex, Julie Morgan and Jane Hutt to celebrate the achievements of exceptional women. The overwhelming majority of the existing blue plaque awards commemorate the work of men. "Val was a remarkable woman. She had such an influence in the setting up of the Assembly, leading up to devolution. She was passionate about social justice and equality," Hutt told WalesOnline recently, noting that Feld always went the extra mile. "In terms of devolution, she saw the opportunity to have equality embedded in this institution. She put herself forward, along with other women, and had worked for years so that happened." Feld died of cancer in 2001, but she continues to be remembered as an advocate for women and other marginalized groups. She worked as a journalist, and then a social worker in England before returning to her home country of Wales. In addition to her political career, Feld founded Shelter Cymru. The charity provides advocacy, advice and legal support for those facing housing issues or homelessness.



Adam Chapman

A Cornish firefighter is heading to London in order to participate in the 2018 Virgin London Marathon while raising money for charity. Adam Chapman works part-time for the Launceston Fire Station. He is also the Tri-Service Safety Officer for the town of Bude. The 24-year-old is running for the Cornish charity Front Line Emergency Equipment Trust (FLEET) with the goal of raising £3,000. "I signed up because of FLEET. They had a place available for someone in the emergency services to represent them at the London Marathon and it was essentially the perfect opportunity within my Tri-Service role to represent the emergency services at such a big event," Chapman recently told The Cornish & Devon Post. "There was an email sent out at work and I considered it for a couple of days and thought I'd apply." Soon after, he got a reply saying he was the first to respond, so he could have the spot. FLEET provides equipment to the emergency teams in Cornwall, 999 ambulances, Coast Guards and helicopters. Its most recent project is to install public access defibrillators across the nation.



Judy Arnold and Cruse Bereavement Care

Judy Arnold is a long-standing volunteer of Cruse Bereavement Care's Isle of Man Branch, having been awarded a British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2014. Arnold has been volunteering for almost as long as the charity - which recently celebrated its 30-year anniversary - has been in existence. "As a charity, we do rely heavily on those who give their time for free," Chairman Sam Skelton said at the anniversary gathering in February, as reported by IOM Today. "Whether those people have suffered a loss in the past and wish to help others in the same situation, or simply just want to give something back to the community, our door is open to anyone who would like to get involved." Cruse Bereavement Care Isle of Man provides free support to people living with grief, including one-on-one sessions with trained volunteers as well as support groups. Ten years ago, the organization also started including services focused specifically on children and youths, such as conducting awareness sessions in high schools. According to IOM Today, "over the last eight years the charity has helped more than 700 children through one-to-one support and other bereavement support activities."

Smoky Mountain Scottish Festival & Games

May 19-20, 2018, Maryville, TN

www.smokymountaingames.org

The Smoky Mountain Scottish Festival and Games might be the perfect place to celebrate the region's strong Scottish/Irish roots. Established in 1981, the annual gathering is one of North America's oldest celebrations of Celtic heritage. This year, the 2-day event kicks into high-gear from the get-go with the Ben Reekie Feis celebration, shining a light on Scottish music and Highland dancing. As always, athletics take center-stage in Maryville, and attendees are encouraged to participate in traditional activities like the caber toss, the Stone Put, and the Scottish Hammer Throw. The more adventurous are welcome to tighten their laces for either the 5K or half-marathon run. Music will set the mood all weekend, with Albannach, Tannahill Weavers, Four Leaf Peat, Colin Grant-Adams and 8 pipe and drum bands from across the region sure to keep toes-a-tappin'. Other great activities on tap include sheepdog tournaments, Scotch seminars, dance competitions, and loads of fun stuff for the wee ones. Be sure to wander the festival grounds and browse the vendor booths for authentic Scottish fare, clothing, jewelry, and other memorabilia.



Taste of Scotland Festival

June 14-17, 2018, Franklin, NC

www.tasteofscotlandfestival.org

Few events showcase the true spirit of "ye 'ould country" each year like the Taste of Scotland Festival in Franklin, North Carolina. The four-day gathering celebrates all things Scottish through music, food, fashion, and more. Start things off in style with a scrumptious opening-night Clan Dinner - an evening of hearty Scottish fare and traditional Celtic music. Friday, take in one of the festival's free movies, including Disney's blockbuster Brave, or stroll through one of the many vendor areas, where lads and lassies show off their finest wares. An evening Ceilidh, complete with a full meal and a pint (or two!) is sure to kick things into high gear, with Irish-American folk rockers De Leprechaun setting the soiree's soundtrack. Saturday, visitors will enjoy an array of activities, including pipe bands, an honour guard, re-enactments, and the annual Little Miss Tartan contest. As is tradition, the Taste of Scotland Festival will again honor a clan as part of their commitment to promoting and preserving cultural unity - this year's deserving recipient is Clan Buchanan. Close out the weekend with a customary Kirkin' of the Tartan on Sunday morning at Franklin's First Presbyterian Church.



Chicago Scottish Festival and Highland Games

June 15-16, 2018, Aye-Tasca, IL

www.chicagoscots.org

Chicago Scots - one of the world's largest Scottish cultural organizations - is hosting its 32nd annual Scottish Festival and Highland Games this summer. The two-day event kicks-off with an afternoon of piping solos, perfect for patrons looking to jump right into the spirit of the weekend. The gathering's Highland Games component will include many traditional athletic displays, including the Caber Toss and the Clachneart Stone (stone of strength.) This year, the Heather Queen Contest will again appoint one young woman as honorary Heather Queen - a noble title of genealogy and goodwill. Clan members will be in full regalia for the ever-popular Parade of Tartans. Another must-see event is the always-amazing Haggis Eating Competition, where contestants must "down a pound" of the popular Scottish delicacy - without using their hands! Animal lovers will enjoy both the Scottish Dog Show, and an on-site petting zoo. As always, this is a family-friendly occasion with loads of great activities for the wee ones, including a mini-Highland Games!





Mid-Maryland Celtic Festival

June 16, 2018, Mt. Airy, MD

www.midmarylandcelticfestival.com

The Saint Andrew's Society of Mid-Maryland brings the fun for all ages again this June with its 18th annual Mid-Maryland Celtic Festival. This one-day event will showcase all things Celtic, including beer and whisky tastings, a short bread bake-off, rugby games, athletics, vendors, and much more. Music abounds, with two stages running all day; the Guinness Pub stage will feature the high-octane Celtic folk-rock of Rathkeltair, while an acoustic-only stage will showcase traditional music of the Appalachian region with the likes of Craggy Island, Capital Celtic, and Emily Martin. Those looking to kick up their heels will enjoy the dancing stage, where the Highland Dancers will show off their skills. Eight Pipes and Drum bands will be on hand this year, so don't miss the always-popular "Cheers4Beers" pipe competition, or the British Car Show! The gathering will also be honoring the nation's veterans by partnering with Hero Dogs - a non-profit organization that pairs highly trained service canines with those who served their country.



Embro Highland Games

July 1, 2018, Woodstock, ON

www.embrohighlandgames.ca

The 81st Embro Highland Games will be held July 1, 2018, with one significant change; the gathering will be relocating to Canada's Outdoor Park just north east of Woodstock. Although the geography will be new, visitors will enjoy the same great day of events including a Highland dance competition, Ontario Heavy Event Championships, Tug of War, sheep herding demonstrations and agility dogs. New events include a Rugby Sevens tournament, kilted yoga, Scottish livestock, and a refreshment garden with a local craft-brew flavour. Celtic culture will, of course, be front and center, with solo piping, drumming and band competitions planned along with Clan booths and Celtic concessions. Patrons will not want to miss the stirring Mass-Band performances at mid-day and again at day's end. The popular road races (2 km, 5 km and 10 km) will remain in Embro on familiar roots and routes. Make a day of it at Ontario's oldest Highland Games!



Colorado Irish Festival

July 13-15, 2018, Littleton, CO

www.coloradoirishfestival.com

The Colorado Irish Festival celebrates its 24th anniversary in 2018. The three-day event - highlighting Irish history and heritage - will again be held in beautiful Clement Park, against the stunning backdrop of the Rocky Mountain Highlands. Music, dance and vendors are at the forefront of this year's activities. The annual Feis brings together hundreds of dancers, of all ages and levels, to perform and compete. The event's Cultural Village - a celebration of the journey the Irish made to Colorado - is open to all, and includes a variety of demonstrations, vendors, and more. The heart of the festival is, of course, the music, with some of the best Irish-flavoured talent on tap, including the Elders, the Screaming Orphans, Jig Jam, the Australian group Go Set and Atlantic Canadian siblings Cassie and Maggie MacDonald. Other musical activities include solo pipe and drum contests, as well as grade 2, 3 and 4 pipe-band competitions. Sheep-herding and a traditional Hibernian Mass are also on the weekend agenda.

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Celtic Complexion

A pale-skinned American of Scottish descent, Jennifer Devlin Waller founded her company after finding mainstream cosmetics didn't suit her

As someone afflicted with roacea - a condition that gives the face a flushed appearance - Jennifer Devlin Waller started her company Celtic Complexion in 2011 after discovering that natural oils benefited her skin.

It was a sea change for the Raleigh, North Carolina resident, who grew up in Miami and had spent over 20 years in the prestige cosmetic industry after jumping into the beauty business in high school.

"I became a makeup artist simply because I was so self-conscious of my rosacea and wanted to learn how to cover it up," she says. "I worked my way up the cosmetic food chain to become a Beauty Director for Nordstrom.

"Ironically, what started off as a genetic condition - people with a Celtic heritage suffer most from rosacea - was made worse by the toxin-laden cosmetics I would pile on my skin every day."

Waller explains that it wasn't until she met a holistic esthetician that she made the connection between the products she was using and the condition of her skin.

The esthetician advised her to use only natural oils. Waller took her advice and, within two weeks, her skin looked better than it ever had.

Waller was then torn between the career she had spent years building and exploring a holistic approach. She eventually quit her job and returned to school to become an esthetician.

Over the next five years, she read widely about ingredients and holistic remedies and started making her own products, which she used on her clients, friends, and family.

She also made her first visit to Ireland. When she stepped off the plane, she felt as if she was looking in a mirror.

"There were pale skins and rosy cheeks everywhere," she chuckles. "Growing up in Miami, everyone was tanned and always wanted to be at the beach - but when all your skin does is burn, it's no fun."

That trip to Ireland gave her the idea of helping others with the same skin type, so she formed Celtic Complexion. The company's core clients are women over the age of 35, of Celtic heritage, and who are concerned about the signs of aging.

"We are the only brand that focuses entirely on those with a Celtic heritage, which means every ingredient we use will benefit Celtic skin in some way. I purposely avoid ingredients that are known irritants for sensitive skin."

Her products are also used by celebrity makeup artists and women of other ethnicities who want an effective anti-aging solution for their sensitive skins.

Waller notes that Celtic Complexion, which she runs with her husband Steve, offers a "small but mighty" collection, including cleansers, serums, moisturizers, sunscreen and body products.

Their most popular products include the Calming Serum, which soothes rosacea, their moisturizing Celtic Complexion Crème, and a chemical-free sunscreen, which is 25 per cent zinc oxide.

Some of her products have been rated "excellent" by America's Environmental Working Group (EWG), and all are made fresh with minimal processing.

"Our sunscreen is the highest rated for safety. People search the EWG database to verify safe ingredients for their skin and then come visit our website to learn more."

The company's products have received many awards - including one from the Indie Business Association, which named one of Celtic Complexion's moisturizers Indie Beauty Product-of-the-Year.

As company CEO, Waller is a typical entrepreneur in that she does a little bit of everything, including research and development, marketing, and customer service.

Building a business is a process. When she started her company, she gained exposure by asking beauty bloggers for reviews. These days, she prioritizes social media which is especially important for an online store such as hers. She also sponsors high-profile events such as The Miss Mayo Ball and the Boston Irish Film Festival.

Waller has noticed that people are keen to make a connection to their heritage and support specialist businesses. She intends to launch a men's line in June in time for Father's Day, which will include a beard oil, shaving crème, bar soap and face balm moisturizer.

Furthermore, life as an entrepreneur is an adventure that has given her greater insight into her own heritage.

"And the good news," she smiles, "is that I look better now at almost 50 than I did in my early 30s."

www.celticcomplexion.com/celticlife



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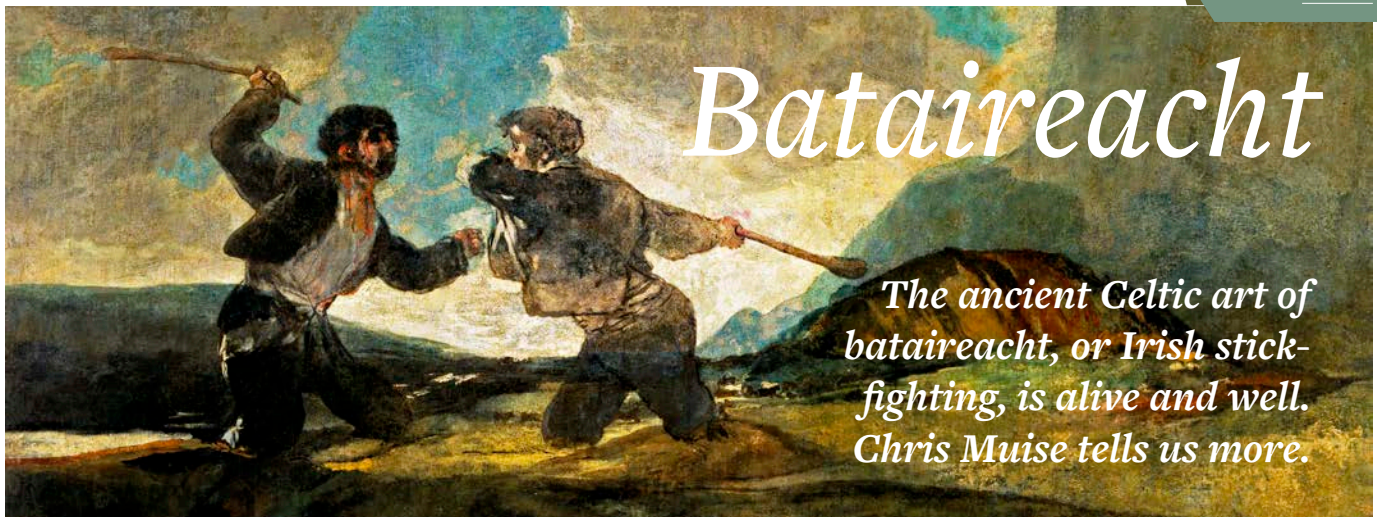
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Bataireacht

The ancient Celtic art of bataireacht, or Irish stick-fighting, is alive and well. Chris Muise tells us more.



Roger Stone

If asked to name a martial art, most of us would probably fall back on one of the popular eastern styles, like Karate or Taekwondo. Or perhaps the more esoteric forms of Brazilian Jujitsu or Judo.

The Celtic people have a traditional martial art of their own, too - although it is not surprising to its practitioners when someone hasn't heard of it.

Glen Doyle is trained in the art of bataireacht, or Irish stick-fighting. Knowledge of this particular set of skills was, for generations, the exclusive domain of those in the Doyle clan.

"If you didn't have the surname 'Doyle,' you didn't learn it - my dad was really strict on that," he shares over the phone from his home in Ontario. "I teach what my dad taught me - it is a family tradition, passed on from my dad to me, and my dad learned it from my granddad, who learned from my great granddad, etc... we are five or six generations here in Canada."

Doyle's training began in 1972, at the age of seven. His father, Gregory Doyle, was a boxer and a veteran with the Canadian Armed Forces, who often said stick-fighting saved his life during the Korean War on more than one occasion. It is not surprising that Gregory and his four brothers were all soldiers, according to Doyle - Irish stick fighting

evolved from techniques that their ancestors perfected in combat.

"The stick fighting that I was taught was born on a battlefield. If a technique didn't work, you had your head bashed in. The techniques that did work during the faction fights were the ones that got passed on."

Doyle is the first in his lineage to teach the Doyle stick-fighting style outside of the family. He only does so because he convinced his father, who passed away in 1998, to let him share the tradition, lest the form end with him.

"I was his only son," notes Doyle, who was itching to share his experience with others. "I said to him, 'Dad, if I'm walking across the street one day and I get hit by a car, the system is done.'"

But Doyle is careful to teach to the letter of tradition, even though it limits his ability to expand the style into an actual sport.

"If you want to be a successful martial arts businessman, and you want your stick system out there, you're going to have to contemporize."

"I had to make the choice; do I keep the integrity of our system, or do I try to modernize it, open it up, or try to get it expanded at the cost of lineage and technique? I didn't want to do that, because it wouldn't be the way to honour my dad's memory."

Doyle's isn't the only stick-fighting style out there, though. Other forms have been passed down through generations. Some are similarly guarded with their family skills, while the keepers of others are doing their best to get more sticks in hands, knowing full-well that it means modernizing the art.



Glen Doyle

"What we do is 'in the style of' - not the father-to-son style that I claim was passed down to me," says Roger Stone, the founder of the Celtic Stick-Fighting Society in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Stone teaches a year-long, multi-discipline course, which includes Irish stick-fighting skills. He has contemporized some of the traditional techniques in order to make them more accessible and useful to a modern practitioner.

"If you do a style that was from 1820, how's that going to help you in a phone booth? You've got to modify your stuff as time goes on."

While Doyle still teaches the traditional style passed down along his bloodline, he has made peace with the fact that teaching outside the family means that it will be merged with other forms.

"Trying to keep the system from being integrated with other systems is impossible," he acknowledges, likening the world of modern martial arts to a salad bar, where people mix the techniques they like together. "If you are going to put the style out there, it is going to get adapted into other things. The identity still remains - it is just being blended."

"I have basically done what I wanted to do with it - the style will survive."

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The College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts enters a new stage

If all the world's a stage, then a whole new world of possibilities is opening up for the students and faculty of The College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts in Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

James MacHattie, the college's director of education, says that the school has been teaching the Celtic performing arts like piping, drumming, and highland dancing for nearly 30 years.

"And we have just introduced fiddle to our program offerings this year," he adds.

Imparting those skills is the college's primary mission - that's why the college has maintained a tuition that is affordable to students from around the world.

"Like most piping institutions, we are an educational facility, and it is often difficult to make ends meet through tuition alone," says MacHattie, noting that public and private support alone doesn't cover all the bills. "To supplement that, we have traditionally staged a production called Highland Storm each summer."

Highland Storm is a popular event for the school and the community, and does help bridge the financial gaps. However, for years the school has been limited by their venue.

"Our old stage was an outdoor theatre that we had to put up every year. We could only use it in the summer months."

On top of that, use of the stage was subject to the elements; bad weather sometimes forced the cancellation of a show. Even the quality of the performances - designed to give students an opportunity to develop hands-on skills and stage presence - might suffer from exposure.

"We always had to tune up in a little shed in the back, and if the temperature dropped, the pitch of the pipes changed," explains Ma-



cHattie, "never mind the damn mosquitos!"

An enclosed facility for stage performances has long been on the college's wish list. Thanks to generous grants awarded by Heritage Canada and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, that wish is about to be granted.

The final touches on their brand new, state-of-the-art indoor theatre facility - The Celtic Performing Arts Centre - are just being completed, in advance of the facility's grand opening in July.

"We will have total control," says MacHattie. "There are greater opportunities for lighting displays - we have a projector now, so we can have all sorts of textures and colours - and even the bagpipes are going to work and sound better in the new facility."

July's grand opening will feature a newly-revamped version of their annual summer show, "Great Scot!" The production will be managed by acclaimed, multiple-award-winning director Sheila O'Brien.

The boon to the college - and indeed, the community - goes beyond optimizing the summer show.

An indoor, climate-controlled performing arts facility means utilizing the space year-round for all sorts of fundraising opportunities.

For that, MacHattie explains, they need some outside expertise.

"I teach bagpipes. I don't know a thing about running a theatre."

Enter Jennifer Campbell, the college's new executive director. She was brought in due to her extensive experience and connections in the Atlantic Canadian music scene.

"One of the reasons I was hired on is to make sure that the theatre is used, and that it is bringing in steady revenue for the college," says Campbell, who has worked for the East Coast Music Association and the Small Halls Festival. "I am no stranger to programming shows, in all areas of the island, with all genres of music."

While the primary users of the 300-seat theatre will be students, Campbell will help oversee partnerships with other cultural bodies in Summerside, across the province, as well as acts from afar. With a dance hall, meeting areas, and even a basement recording studio, there are plenty of potential uses for the new space.

"We are going to be programming anything and everything we think that Summerside should hear," she continues. "We want something happening every single day, in every single one of the different spaces that we offer."

"As one of our benefactors has called it, we are entering College 3.0," adds MacHattie, who says the new venue will help keep tuition affordable.

"Our mission statement remains education-based, but we are also going to be producing our own shows. With a theatre that is going to be used for all sorts of fundraising events, we are now entering a very new stage."

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Award-winning Irish author Liz Nugent packs a lot of punch

The past decade has seen the birth of a new breed of crime fiction. Better known as ‘grip lit,’ these psychological thrillers pivot on the internal - and often unpredictable - thoughts and moods of the book’s protagonists.

Irish author Liz Nugent brought this genre to the Emerald Isle in 2014.

“I was doing administrative work on a TV soap opera within the story department,” she recalls. “I was involved a bit in the creation of the story, but I was not allowed to actually write it - which was quite frustrating for me. I started writing short stories for competitions with a small degree of success and thought ‘If I work really hard at this, I could actually do this as a career.’ I wrote a six-part animation series for children, a TV drama for another broadcaster, a radio play, and several more short stories. Eventually I decided to develop one of those short stories into a novel. I needed to just do it.”

The result was her award-winning debut novel, *Unraveling Oliver*.

“When my agent had pitched it two years earlier, editors loved it, but marketing teams could not get on board. It didn’t fit into one of their boxes - it was not “crime” enough to be a traditional crime novel, and not high-concept literary enough to be considered literature. When I eventually did get a book deal, it was marketed as ‘accessible lit.’”

Despite being but 240 pages, *Unraveling Oliver* packs a lot of punch - quite literally; the story opens with the main character, Oliver, musing, “I expected more of a reaction the first time I hit her.” By the end of the first chapter, readers are shocked to learn that he has beaten his wife into a coma.

Nugent admits that she surprised even herself with the work.

*“I did not set out to write a specific genre.
I just wrote the story that I had in me.”*

“It was not until *Unraveling Oliver* won Best Crime Novel at the Bord Gais Energy Irish Book Awards in 2014 that I realized I had written a crime novel. I think that because of the success of books like *Gone Girl* and *Girl on a Train*, psychological thrillers were suddenly in vogue and my book fit quite nicely into that domestic noir niche.”

With that in mind, the scribe started digging deeper.

“I have also always been interested in the darker characters with mysterious pasts. Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* was a big influence. These characters are intriguing and compelling. I enjoy getting to know these people. I had to get into the mind of a sociopath, I needed to understand his mindset. A lot of people say that Oliver is a horrible person - and, of course, I don’t agree with a lot of his actions - but in a lot of ways I understand him, because I was him while I was writing his character.”

Nugent digs even deeper with her follow-up narrative, *Lying in Wait*, which is scheduled for release this summer.

“This is the story of a murder and a cover up. It looks at the consequences for both the murderer and victims’ families and how they intersect. Both books are “whydunnits,” rather than “whodunnits”. As we already know who did it, we are really trying to figure out the ‘why.’”

Writing each novel, she notes, has not been without its challenges and steep learning curves.

“When I was young I had an accident resulting in a brain injury, and developed dystonia, a neurological movement disorder. I had to switch from right hand to left hand writing. I can only type with one hand, which presents difficulties. I am very economical with my words and try not to waste any. I have learned a lot about structure from my editor. I used to write very long chapters and she suggested that I chop them up into shorter pieces and interweave them with other narratives.”

She believes that Irish literature today is in a good place, especially amongst female writers.

“Women are writing a lot of contemporary Irish crime fiction. Literary fiction is doing really well too in that regard. Ireland used to be such a patriarchal place, but women have now found their voices, and we will no longer be silenced. Irish male writers are now coming out with some really great stories, both for and about women. By and large, 70 per cent of fiction readers are women, so we need to be more mindful of our market.”

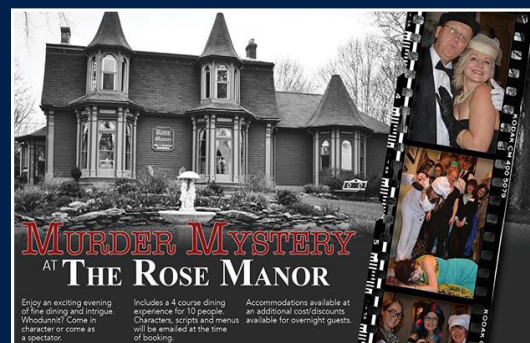
With that in mind, Nugent is busier than ever.

“I have just finished writing a short film script. I have also been commissioned to write a full-length stage play. And I have just started writing my next novel.”

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WILD ROSE

Author Nicole Slaunwhite takes a twist on a traditional Irish folktale



Nicole Slaunwhite's love for reading and writing started when she was young, but she didn't consider pursuing it professionally until her university years.

While studying English at Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador, Slaunwhite took a creative writing course.

"At the time, I was writing a lot of (not very good) poetry and short stories," says the scribe, who now resides in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "However, I didn't feel like I had enough life experience to write a novel.

"I started my first novel when I was in my last year of law school, as a way to do something creative and fun when I needed a break from studying."

The initial draft was completed while she studied for the bar exam - no small feat - although the work later went through multiple revisions.

These days, Slaunwhite is known to her readers as Nicola R. White, the pen name under which she has published more than a dozen novels and short story collections. She's recently made the jump to comic writing, and was putting the finishing touches on the first issue of Wild Rose (a six-issue miniseries) when she spoke to Celtic Life International via email at the end of March.

Wild Rose takes place in 1790s Ireland, inspired by the Irish folktale of Eliza Day. In the folktale, Eliza is murdered by her lover.

Slaunwhite discovered the story as she was researching murder ballads, "a traditional form of poetry or music related to historic crimes," she explains. "After I came across musician Nick Cave's album *Murder Ballads*, I became even more interested in the Eliza Day story. The album includes a duet with Kylie Minogue called 'Where the Wild Roses Grow,' which is based on the legend, and is very haunting and atmospheric."

In Slaunwhite's version of the story, Eliza survives and enlists the help of a witch to get



revenge against the man who betrayed her. She chose the year 1790 because she wanted to explore the social issues going on at the time, such as changes to class structure and racial attitudes.

"Writing in a historical setting requires a great deal of research and I always have a fear that I'm getting something wrong.

"I am a bit nervous to adapt an Irish folktale, because Ireland has such a rich, fascinating culture and history, and I really want to do it justice."

Of course, comic writing differs from writing novels, with the most obvious difference being the need for artists. Slaunwhite met Kara Brauen through Women Who Draw - an online directory of female illustrators - and hired her as the penciller/inker. As such, Brauen does the black and white line drawings while Jono Doiron, the colourist,

takes care of the colouring and cover art. "We connected online as well," Slaunwhite says of Doiron, "although we have actually known each other for years - we are both originally from Halifax and became friends after attending the same yoga studio. The publishing/arts community in Canada really is a small world." Maria Nguyen contributed line art for the first six pages of issue one, but she later had to pull out of the project due to scheduling issues.

Another key aspect of comic writing is the length of the script, which is much shorter than a novel, "so the pacing has to be tighter and your story needs to move more quickly," shares Slaunwhite. "That said, you still need to focus on building suspense and remember to include smaller moments or details that show your characters' emotions and give the reader clues about what might be going unsaid or unseen."

The first issue of Wild Rose was successfully crowdfunded through Kickstarter.

"In the end, we raised more than our goal and it was incredibly exciting to know that so many people believe in Wild Rose. Everyone who backed our crowdfunding campaign will be the first to see the issue in its entirety."

The print issue will be available for purchase at various events that Slaunwhite and her co-creators will be attending this year, including a launch party at the Good Robot Brewing Company in Halifax.

"I'm still open to working with a publisher if the right opportunity comes along, but if I end up producing all six issues of the miniseries independently, the long-term plan is to release digital versions of each issue as well as a trade paperback collection of the whole series."

www.nicolarwhite.com

www.wildrosecomic.wordpress.com



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Cécile Corbel

Cécile Corbel brings Bretagne to the world

Cécile Corbel started playing the guitar at age 10. By the time she was a teenager, however, she knew her musical destiny lay elsewhere.

"I loved the guitar, but - to be honest - I wasn't very good at it," she chuckles over the phone from the Celtic nation of Bretagne. "However, when I discovered the Celtic harp, I just fell in love with it right away. The instrument is magical. Even the shape of it is magical. It makes me think of fairy tales."

Corbel was born and bred in Finistère, near the "pointe du raz" on the far west coast of Bretagne. She still resides there today, with her husband and son.

The 37 year-old songstress honed her harping skills in her 20s, performing live in Paris with other Breton musicians, at nightly sessions in Irish pubs, and as a street busker. In 2006, she released her first album, *Songbook Vol. 1*, and has since recorded six more.

These days, she shares her time between her seaside home and an old barn near Chartres in Eure et Loir that she, along with her husband and musical partner Simon Caby, retrofitted into a modern recording studio. There, she crafts her unique brand of harp music, inspired by both the distinctive Celtic culture of her homeland, and her own love of fairy tales and Arthurian folklore.

"Arthurian mythology is shared between Great Britain and Bretagne. We have a lot of art here about Arthurian tales. It is still very alive in our minds - we are aware of its cultural significance, and we try to keep it alive through music, literature, and more."

Traditional Celtic music in Bretagne is a

bit different from its sonic counterparts in Ireland and Scotland.

"Our dances, in particular, are quite unique," says Corbel, whose music has something of an ethereal quality to it - well-suited to songs about faerie kings and selkies.

"The rhythms we have in Bretagne are more connected to the earth - very deep and melancholic. Many of our songs are long and sad."

Corbel's big break came in 2008 when the Japanese animation house, Studio Ghibli, invited her to score music for *The Borrower Arriety* - a colourful, contemporary take on *The Borrowers*, a series of classic English children's novels about a family of tiny people.

"I am a huge fan of Ghibli," she notes. "I sent a CD with a little postcard to their studio, saying 'I love your movies'. The CD arrived at the correct address, and it arrived on (producer) Toshio Suzuki's desk."

Her handwritten note caught his eye.

"By chance, he listened to it. I don't know why he listened to mine. He loved it, and after that he contacted me. Initially I was only commissioned to write the title song... and then two songs, and three, and then the whole soundtrack. It was my first time composing an entire score for a film, and it is simply incredible that it was for one of the biggest animation studios in the world, and one of my all-time favourites!"

Corbel is, to date, the only non-Japanese composer to score a Studio Ghibli film. Within weeks of the picture's formal release, her audience grew exponentially, especially in Japan and its neighbouring countries.

"I travelled to China recently as well," she shares. "I really had no idea just how popular the film had become there. I mean, people even knew my name. In China, they don't have social media sites like Facebook or YouTube, and so it was impossible for me to know that I had Chinese fans."

"Celtic music is surprisingly popular in Japan," she continues. "I am there often because of my ongoing commitment to work with Ghibli. To the Japanese people, Bretagne is a lesser-known part of the Celtic story, and I really take great pride in raising awareness about my country's cultural contributions to the world. In fact, I feel like an ambassador for my homeland wherever I travel."

Corbel is currently spending much of her time at her studio, working on the songs that will comprise her 8th studio recording.

"If everything goes well, the album will be released in 2019."

She also hopes to tour North America.

"I have never really been on the road in either Canada or the United States, so that is certainly on my musical agenda. My Japanese and Chinese language skills may leave a bit to be desired, but I have a pretty good grasp of English and French."

www.cecile-corbel.com



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Fiona Kennedy

Fiona Kennedy's new album found its origins in a simple question...



Fiona Kennedy's creative process has always been inspirational, and the Scottish singer recognized the question - Who Would Have Thought? - as the perfect starting point for a song she longed to write; one that celebrated her 30th wedding anniversary.

"I wanted to write something for my husband, and this was the first line that came to me," she shares from her home in Abder-deenshire, where she resides with her husband Francis Clark.

Soon after, she asked Nashville-based singer-songwriter Beth Nielsen Chapman to help her develop the piece.

"I flew out there to work on it and we were delighted to come up with a lovely tune in a single afternoon."

The track is featured on Kennedy's new album, *Time To Fly*.

"Every song on the record is a story which, I hope, will mean something to someone," notes the vocalist. "But for me, Who Would Have Thought? is particularly special."

Other tunes on the recent recording include *Weaver of Dreams*, which was inspired by a book about Maria Callas, and *The Crossing Over*, which imagines how emigrants must have felt leaving their loved ones behind to build a new life in the New World.

Time To Fly is the latest offering in Kennedy's long and illustrious career; one that has also earned her recognition both as a broadcaster and as a producer of stage and TV productions.

Her passion and profession were seeded in the home of her parents, singers Calum Kennedy and Anne Gillies, both well-known holders of the prestigious Mod Gold Medal. Her father also won The World Ballad Championship in Moscow in 1955.

Music in her childhood home ranged from traditional, folk and classical, to the



sonic stylings of Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams and Ella Fitzgerald. Her grandfather, John Gillies, was a collector of Gaelic songs, many of which are now archived.

Her parents were always rehearsing for concerts and tours, which was exciting for Kennedy and her four sisters, especially when their father involved them in his television shows.

"Musicians came in and out of the house all the time," she recalls with a smile. "Some never seemed to leave. I have stepped over a few on my way to school. There were lots of family get-togethers and ceilidhs and everyone had to do something, so my sisters and I all sang together from a very early age."

Along with that early influence, Kennedy has found inspiration in the works of Bonnie Raitt, Linda Ronstadt and James Taylor - so much so, in fact, that she describes her latest effort as 'Celtic Americana.'

"I am not keen to pigeonhole myself - I just hope the songs are enjoyed. I have been lucky enough to collaborate with some amazing artists, and have co-written six tracks for this record with some wonderful singers and songwriters."

Her collaborators on *Time To Fly* included Marcus Hummon and Calum Mac-

Coll. Kennedy also recorded a cover of Always On My Mind - a song made famous by Willie Nelson and Elvis Presley - with Ross Wilson, aka Blue Rose Code.

"Calum Malcolm is a wizard in the studio as a producer, and has guided me all the way. We had great fun, and I am hugely in-debted to everyone involved."

Still, the act of creation is never smooth and, for Kennedy, the challenge lies in "not letting the quiet voices in your head sabotage your work." Instinct is important, and recognition of a good song resembles recognition of the right partner.

"You know a good song when you hear it; it speaks to you, it connects."

"The story melds with the music. Often a good song is not too predictable - an unexpected chord perhaps. Good songs touch your soul if they are meant to. Or, if it is upbeat, it makes you feel happy and great, and lifts the spirit."

While the singer is impressed with the diverse young musical talent coming up in Scotland, and believes a lot is being done to preserve and promote her country's culture, she feels that more can still be done.

"It is a real shame that music and drama often suffer cutbacks in schools. Being creative gives kids confidence, and is a great collective experience."

"I am not sure how much Scottish-Celtic culture features in the school curriculum any more. Sadly, I suspect not very much. So often people have to move away to another country to appreciate our culture and the importance of preserving it in all its forms..."

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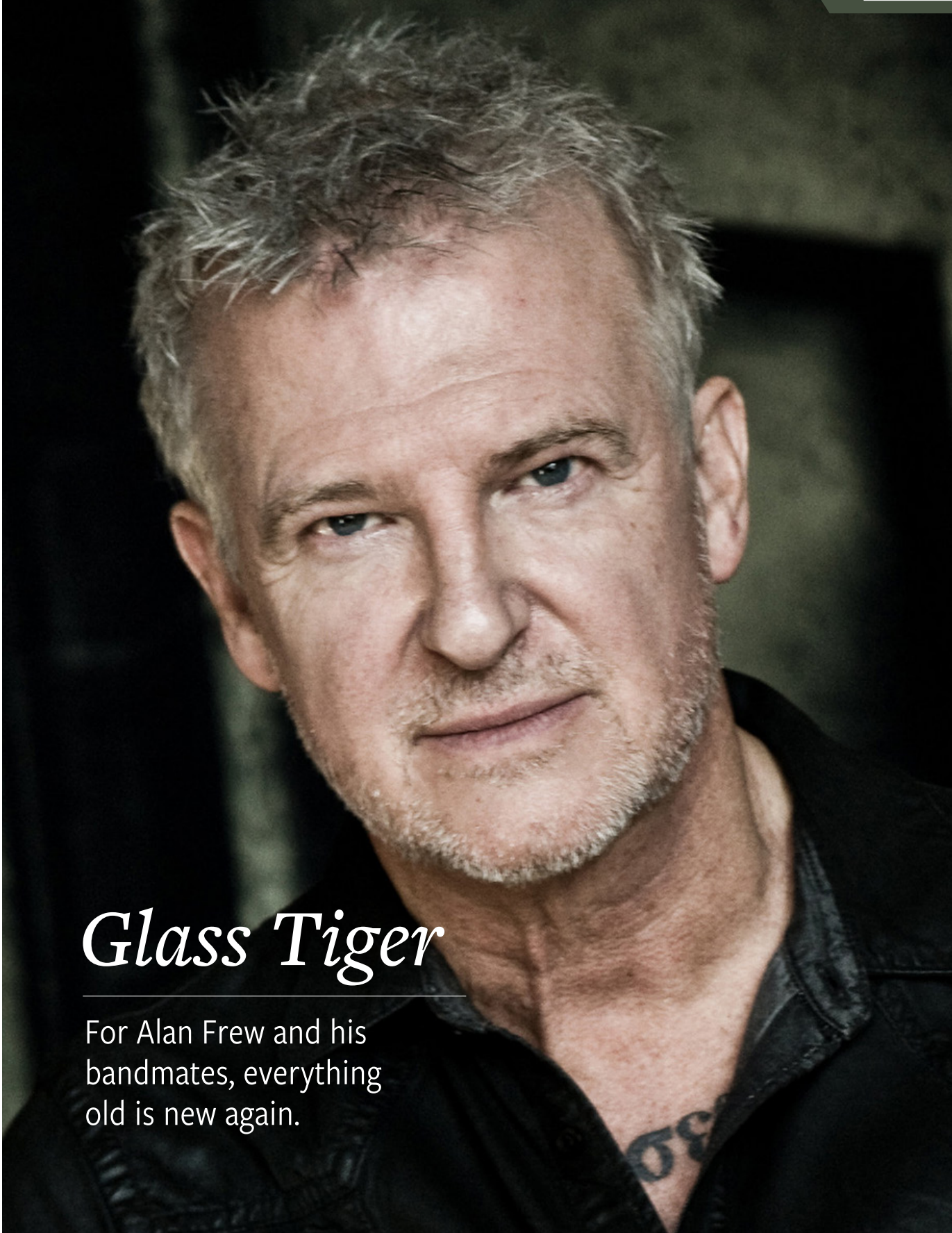
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Glass Tiger

For Alan Frew and his
bandmates, everything
old is new again.



More than three decades after Glass Tiger's chart-topping single "Don't Forget Me (When I'm Gone)," the band's biggest fans have not forgotten them.

The Canadian pop-rockers have never given them that chance, however, as they have never really been gone.

"We did go through a hiatus when I toddled off and did a couple of solo projects in the late 1990s and early 2000s," says the band's lead singer and principal songwriter Alan Frew over the phone from his home in Toronto. "But there was never any breakup - we were just stretching our legs."

The Scottish-born Frew was never able to escape the allure of music, even when he tried.

After gigging Toronto-area pubs in the late 1970s, he shifted career gears.

"I decided I needed a real job, so I got involved in medicine. I had this dream of becoming a doctor. I was focusing on that when another young local band called me up. I said, 'no no no no, I don't want to be in a band anymore - I'm going to be a doctor.'"

Frew eventually relented, agreeing to one rehearsal, and then another, and another...

"That was about 35 years ago," he laughs, "and it is all I have done ever since then."



It wasn't long before the five young musicians were on the top of the charts, and on top of the world.

"We became really good, really quickly," recalls Frew. "It became obvious that there was the full package here, and we were offered an international record deal with Capitol."

Fans know the rest of the story; Glass Tiger released their debut album, *The Thin Red Line*, in 1986, featuring some of their

most memorable hits, including the title track, *Someday*, and the radio-friendly *Don't Forget Me (When I'm Gone)*.

It was the first of three full-length studio recordings that the band would release over the next half-decade.

In the mid-1990s, Glass Tiger went on extended hiatus, as band members sought to stretch-out artistically and explore new musical possibilities.

"You can only imagine what might have happened had we done albums number four, and five, and six - who knows?"

Frew filled that empty space with a busy solo career, which included more recordings, acting, an autobiography, speaking engagements, as well as composing the theme song for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver - *I Believe/J'imagine*. He also found the time to team up with a number of other musicians, including Canadian superstar - and fellow Scottish ex-pat - Johnny Reid.

"The very first time I met Alan was in St. John's, Newfoundland," remembers Reid,



who relocated to Canada from Glasgow as a teenager in the late 1980s. "We started talking about moving to Canada, his experience and my experience. You get two guys that grew up in Scotland, got taken out of Scotland at a young age, and brought to Canada and living this Canadian dream - it is a parallel story, you know?"

Frew helped his new-found friend write *Fire It Up* - Reid's 2012 smash single.

When Frew suffered a stroke in 2015, Reid returned the support.

"Johnny and I chatted a lot about life, and the important things - friendship and family, kindness and love."

With renewed perspective, and fully recovered from his condition, Frew put *Glass Tiger* back on the road.

"We thought it was going to be insane, but it turned out to be one of the best tours we ever undertook."

"Our relationship with our fans is incredible - like a bond of friendship which has grown stronger through 30-some years together."

Long dissatisfied with past compilations - *Air Time: The Best of Glass Tiger* (1993), *No Turning Back* (2005), and *Then, Now, Next* (2012) - the band opted to revisit their back-catalogue in a new manner.

The result is the recently-released "best of" anthology, *31*, which includes special guest contributions from the likes of Julian Lennon, Alan Doyle, Véronic DiCaire, and Susan Aglukark.

Frew likens it to a long-overdue visit from an old friend who has

new stories to tell.

"The songs on *31* are completely different animals, and yet there is still something uniquely recognizable about all of them. We deliberately sat back and said, 'okay, we want to make these songs sound like a gathering of friends around the fire.'"

Again, Frew reached out to a familiar voice for support.

"Alan called me and asked me if I would produce the album," says Johnny Reid. "I was honoured, and it was truly a humbling experience."

Reid was particularly pleased that the band had decided to add a touch of Celtic spice to a number of their classic hits.

"I have always had a great and deep appreciation for Celtic music - it lurks within my bones," notes Reid. "I am really happy with how the album turned out - taking a Celtic approach to the songs, bringing in some great Celtic musicians, using Celtic instruments. Re-imagining the material proved the old adage that a great song is a great song is a great song - no matter how it is formatted, arranged, or produced."

While he acknowledges that there will be those who might question recording new versions of older songs, Frew is confident that most fans, young and old, will appreciate the band's efforts.

And, he adds, the addition of an all-new track on *31* - *Wae Yer Family* (which features Reid) - opens the door to moving forward with new original material.

"We are already talking about it."

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Love. Hope. Strength.

Mike Peters sounds the alarm on a deadly disease



Despite a series of serious health issues in recent years, Welsh rocker Mike Peters continues to carry the creative flame, influencing fellow musicians around the world and inspiring a new generation of followers with his philanthropic efforts in the fight against cancer. Recently we spoke with the 59-year-old frontman for The Alarm from his home in Dyserth, North Wales, where he has been enjoying some down time with his family.

Let's start with a question you likely get all the time - how's your health?

Ha. Yes, that one does seem to come up. I feel great, thank you; strong, healthy, happy... never better actually. I have my off-days here and there for sure, but that is to be expected. I am very fortunate, however, to have great people around me who crack the whip and keep me on track, and so long as I follow their direction I am in good hands.

You've had quite the journey.

It's been something of a wild ride for sure. In 1995, I was diagnosed with lymph cancer, went through treatment, and survived. Ten years later - almost to the day - I was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. And then, as if all of that wasn't enough, my wife Jules was diagnosed with breast cancer in the spring of 2016.

That is a lot to handle.

It has been a little overwhelming at times, yes. Inevitably there are going to be those moments of self-pity, when you ask yourself 'why is this happening' or 'why me?' But, gratefully, those moments are just that - mo-

ments. The miracle has been in understanding that the cancer journey has been a blessing of sorts, not a curse. Not that I would wish it upon anyone - surely there are easier ways to enlightenment - only that I wouldn't be the person I am today without having gone through these experiences. To be truthful, Jules has dealt with all of this far better than I have - she has been solid as a rock, and a shining example of strength, dignity and grace.

How have those experiences changed your perspective on life?

Well, it really changes everything doesn't it? Very suddenly, the things that once mattered to me don't seem to matter all that much anymore. The parts of my life that I perhaps once took for granted - my life, my health, my family, my friends, my career - I have utmost appreciation for these days. That sense of mortality, something that we don't necessarily have in our younger years, becomes an ever-present reality. Knowing that you could be gone at anytime allows you - or perhaps drives you - to live each day to the absolute fullest, as if it were your last. This may all sound a bit cliché, however I am sure that most people who have been through some sort of life-threatening illness or situation will say the same.

And your decision to get involved, to give back, arose from where?

Gratitude - gratitude for being alive, gratitude for my health, gratitude for the incredible people I have around me...and gratitude for being in a position to be able to give something back.

Along with fundraising, how much of an educational component is involved with your efforts?

It is a huge part of what we do. In fact, I would go so far as to say it is at the very core of our mandate. One of the biggest issues we face in the fight against cancer is the sheer volume of disinformation that is out there. Cancer gets a lot of visibility, in large part because so many people are touched by it - we all know someone that has been affected by the disease in some capacity, be it a family member, a friend, an acquaintance or a co-worker. There has never been more dialogue on the topic than there is today, and much of that discussion - as with everything now - takes place online. A simple Google search brings up, literally, millions of pages dedicated to cancer; definitions, causes, treatments, fundraising opportunities, holistic options...there is so much to sift through. And because our understanding of cancer is still very much in its infancy, our knowledge of the disease is constantly changing, evolving. What was important and relevant one day may no longer be so the next day, so it is vital that everyone involved - medical teams, researchers, fundraisers, and especially patients and their family members - stay as informed and up-to-date as possible.

Part of the problem, I imagine, has to do with public perception?

Very much so. There is this huge stigma surrounding cancer. When many people hear the "C" word they just assume it is an automatic death sentence. And, in the past, perhaps they had good reason to think that. However, that is simply not the case anymore; today, there is massive amounts of



money being put into cancer research, education for prevention, better technologies for treatment, more holistic options, stronger aftercare and support programs, and greater resources generally. Because of that, survival rates have risen steadily in recent years, and more and more survivors are enjoying longer and healthier lives. But, again, all of that starts and ends with individual responsibility; people need to be proactive with their health, and a large part of that is sifting through the available information.

How can everyday people, perhaps those not affected by the disease, best get involved?

There are so many opportunities these days that it might be somewhat confusing as to where to begin. My suggestion would be to look at getting involved with something in your local community - perhaps an area fundraising event, or support visitations with those who are presently undergoing treatment. The important thing to remember here is that every little bit counts, and it all adds up to make a big difference. We are winning the war on cancer - I am living proof of that.

And you are a living example of someone making a difference.

First and foremost, I am very fortunate to have lived to tell my tale, and I am very lucky to have both the means and the mediums to do so. The concerts, the tours, the documentaries, the hikes, the interviews, the speaking engagements...it is all a bit of a whirlwind actually. The best part of it all, and I say this with great humility and earnestness, is meeting and talking with individuals who are go-

ing through treatment, those who have survived, and those who will not survive. The rewards of those one-on-one encounters are mostly intangible, and they are immeasurable.

Do you ever get tired of it?

No. I mean, it can certainly be exhausting at times, especially the heartbreaking stories - they cut right to my soul. And the travel can be tiring. There are some days that I simply don't want to be that guy - I would rather just be at home being a normal husband and dad. I have to constantly remind myself that my experiences with cancer are not my life and identity, that they are merely a part of my story, in much the same way that being a musician is only a piece of who I am.

Let's talk rock 'n' roll. You still love what you do obviously.

Best career move I ever made. Actually, it's the only career move I ever made. Ha. Yes, I still love doing what I do. That fire is still burning bright.

Are the reasons you keep going the same as why you started in the first place?

Yes and no. Obviously my cancer experiences have pushed me in new directions, but fundamentally there remains something inside of me that seeks some sort of creative expression. Music has been an outlet for as long as I can remember. As most artists will tell you, I didn't choose music - it chose me. The benefit of coming-of-age in the U.K. in the mid-to-late 1970s was coming under the spell of punk rock. All of these great bands - the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Jam - had a

huge influence on me, both stylistically and philosophically. The whole DIY ethos of the punk and new-wave movement inspired me in that, if these people could just get out there and make it happen, then so could I. And I still have that approach when it comes to certain areas of my musical life, particularly with regard to writing songs.

That ethos is still a part of your makeup today.

It is, yes. The old adage that 'if you want something done then do it yourself' has served me well over the years, in all areas of my life. The difference now is that I no longer have that youthful angst and the 'me against the world' mentality. Perhaps some wisdom has crept through the cracks over time. Today, my attitude is much more 'we are all in this together' - whether that pertains to music, my foundation, and especially my family and friends.

What's next on your agenda?

It's shaping up to be another busy year. We just released a new mini album for World Record Store Day, called Where The Two Rivers Meet. The Alarm will be on the road through the spring across Europe and the USA. Some of the American shows are a part of The Gathering series, an audio/visual celebration that brings the band's fans together from around the world. And, always, there is the ongoing work with my foundation. So the proverbial plate is full. Right now, however, I am content to simply enjoy some down time with my family.

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Welsh Gold

Our award-winning photojournalist
Tom Langlands pans for precious Welsh gold

PHOTO CREDIT - CHRIS KERNIC



When Prince Harry weds Meghan Markle on May 19 at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, her wedding dress will no doubt garner much attention. But it is the bride's wedding ring that is already the focus of speculation. It is reported that she is likely to continue a century-old, royal tradition by having the marital band made of rare Welsh gold.

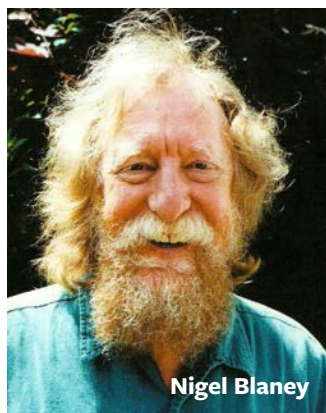
It was the coronet, rod, sword and ring used during the investiture of the Prince of Wales - later to become Edward VIII - in 1911 that first connected the royal family with Welsh gold, as these objects incorporated gold mined in Wales. In 1923, when the Queen Mother chose to have her wedding ring made from a gift of Welsh gold, it started a tradition that has seen the rings of Her Majesty The Queen, Princess Margaret, the Princess Royal, Princess Diana, Camilla Parker Bowles and the Duchess of Cambridge fashioned from the precious Welsh metal.

Historically there are two distinct areas in Wales where gold was mined. Towards the south in Carmarthenshire lie the Dolaucothi mines, the ancient mines, that dating back to 70AD Rome. Prior to the arrival of the Romans in 48AD the indigenous Celts were using gold panned from rivers in the production of jewellery and other artefacts. But it was the advanced techniques of mineral extraction brought by the Romans that enabled them to increase yield and maximize profit for their expanding empire. To the north in Gwynedd lies the Dolgellau gold belt with its plethora of small mines being the scene of several gold rushes during the 19th century. It is the Dolgellau gold belt that has produced more gold - 131,000 troy ounces - than anywhere else in the UK. More than half of this was obtained from the now-abandoned Clogau St. David's mine. It was a gift of gold from this mine to the Queen Mother that started the royal tradition of Welsh gold wedding rings.

Today there are no longer any working gold mines in Wales. The difficulty in finding Welsh gold, and the high cost of extraction, led to the closure of the mines.

Because of its scarcity, and the interest sparked by the royal connection, the price of Welsh gold is high. In November, 2017, ten lots of Clogau gold harvested prior to the closure of the mine were auctioned at Colwyn Bay. They had been estimated to fetch £9,000 but sold for £44,000.

Although underground mining for gold produces the highest yields, it is the gravel beds of gleaming mountain streams and rivers that are the domain of the gold panner. Vincent Thurkettle was president of the World Goldpanning Association for seven years and was captain of the British team that won the 2007 World Goldpanning Championships in Canada. He attributes much of his



Nigel Blaney



skill and knowledge to a childhood spent in Wales. Thurkettle was born near Yeovil, Somerset, in the U.K., but his father was in the Royal Navy and a new posting found the family relocating to Wales. During his formative years the young Thurkettle found himself in the inspirational landscapes of Pembrokeshire, the Rhondda Valley, and Glamorgan. It was a childhood of cycle rides to the coast, fishing, birding and exploring the great outdoors. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he trained to be a forest manager before developing an interest in geology and mineralogy. But it was a chance meeting with a gold prospector in England's Lake District in 1978 that would change his life. The prospector showed him several pieces of panned gold set in paperweights. From that moment Thurkettle was fascinated with gold. With youthful exuberance he got some dustbin lids and, with a friend, hitchhiked to Snowdonia to try his hand at panning. He found six specks of gold and has been passionate about this rare mineral ever since.

In the months that followed he read every book on the subject he could find. The Internet had yet to be invented, and so he relied upon libraries and obtaining books from abroad. He bought proper gold pans and spent years in the Welsh wilderness perfecting his knowledge of the subject and the skills that would see him become one of the top panners in the world. In 1988 he first tried his hand at the World Championship Gold Panning Competition in France and placed seventh in the world. He has since attended nineteen world championships.

Gold is usually found as veins within quartz deposits. The natural process of erosion breaks up the quartz, washing it into waterways where it is eventually reduced to sand with the granules of gold breaking free. Because gold is heavy it sinks into riverbeds with lighter materials forming a covering of sand over it.

It takes great patience to sift through layers of sediment in the hope of finding a few flakes of gold.

With an enthusiasm that shows no signs of abating, Thurkettle describes panning for gold as "Nature's treasure hunt with gold as the buried treasure."

With environmental and legal concerns now restricting panning opportunities in Wales, he switched his interest to a shipwreck off the Anglesey coast. In 1859, the Royal Charter - carrying gold from the Australian goldfields back to Britain - sank in a storm. Thurkettle has spent seven summers exploring the seabed around the wreck, finding the largest gold nugget ever discovered in Britain. When he isn't searching for gold he is running courses and giving talks about panning.

Nigel Blaney is a jeweller who creates stunning pieces with Welsh

gold. He can trace his family name back to the Celtic warlord Brochfael Ysgythrog of Powys. With his flowing red hair and bushy beard he epitomises the image of the wild, free-spirited Celt. In the late 1960s he gained a degree in modern history from St Pauls College, Cheltenham before heading off around the world on his motorbike. He was badly injured in an accident in Italy and when he got back to Britain he decided to make something for the girl who had nursed him. While at college he had used the metal workshops for fixing his bikes and he had made friends with several jewellery students there. Picking their brains and learning as he went, he created a silver wire plaited ring, a bangle and a crucifix.

Although the 'Swinging Sixties' brought big changes to the fashion industry, main street jewellers were slow to respond. The young generation sought to break away from the sameness of the standard High Street offerings and to create their own sense of identity. Blaney saw a gap in the market and used his newfound skills to create more unusual, hand-made pieces. Working from his basement flat in Cheltenham, he launched Aardvark Jewellery Ltd. Initially, sales were by word of mouth or through small gift shops. He began crafting modern pieces in gold, and through a friend acquired a stall at the International Spring Fair, which at that time was held in Blackpool. It was a huge success, and with orders flowing in from around the world he began experimenting with different metals and their effect upon the colour of gold jewellery. Because gold is a soft metal it is usually alloyed - mixed with other metals - to make it more durable. Pure Welsh gold is bright yellow, and the use of different metals and mixes affects the colour of the end product. Blaney started working with Welsh gold in 1995 and now almost exclusively creates his pieces in Welsh gold in order to, "Retain a unique angle on the market and to provide a quality product away from the foreign imports and wares of the commercial firms." Cymru Gold is the trading name of Aardvark Jewellery Ltd., and all of Blaney's Welsh gold pieces carry the company's 'CYM' hallmark and the Dragon stamp symbolizing Welsh gold. Although he still has a stock of gold from the Welsh mines, the raw material is becoming rarer and latterly he bought additional supplies from the Welsh panners, including Thurkettle. It was at one of Thurkettle's workshops that the two men first met, and they have retained a friendship and a mutual passion for Welsh gold ever since.

When Prince Harry places the wedding ring on Meghan Markle's finger in May he may perpetuate a royal tradition that is - literally - embedded in the landscape of a nation.

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Wales at the Southern Tip of Africa

Celtic Life International correspondent Gerald Herter
discovers Celtic culture in the most unlikely of places



On a recent business trip to Cape Town, South Africa, the name of a picturesque coastal suburb caught my eye, as I passed by en route to the nearby Cape of Good Hope. Now it is rare that I remember names of big city suburbs on my travels, but for a lover of all things Celtic, this one was hard to miss: Llandudno.

To the Welsh, Llandudno is the name of the beautiful seaside city on the northern coast of Wales, named after the sixth century patron saint, Saint Tudno. Tudno was known to have founded the first church in the Llandudno area. But what has that to do with far off South Africa?

Immediately, my mind started to conjure up the prospects of a hearty group of Welsh pioneers braving a long, arduous sea voyage hundreds of years ago to settle here. Returning home, I dove into South African history with expectant excitement at what might turn up.

Sadly, my colorful fantasies were dashed. The real story was only too mundane. As it turns out, a South African vacationer to Wales in 1903 was struck by the similar look of the beautiful shoreline at Llandudno, to that of her homeland locale. Upon returning to South Africa, she saw to it that her newly

incorporated township was given the same name.

A strictly residential community of upscale homes, South Africa's Llandudno does not even have a shopping center.

Indeed, its most famous feature is a secluded nude beach, nestled among granite boulders off a short sandy trail from the side of the town.

Disappointed, but with my interest piqued, I delved further to determine what real Celtic history might emerge from this distant land. I knew of the British impact on South Africa, as so vividly portrayed by my favorite author, James Michener, in his monumental work, *The Covenant*. The British became influential at the beginning of the nineteenth century, replacing the Dutch who had settled there a couple of centuries earlier.

One well-known missionary of this era, David Livingstone, was a Scotsman. Though better known for his explorations further north, he got his start in South Africa, arriving in Cape Town in 1841. He would later write a book of his early time there, titled *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*.

Of special pertinence to the current discussion of the Welsh, some may be surprised

to learn of a connection when Livingstone was thought to have been lost in deepest Africa.

In the late 1860's, while searching for the source of the Nile River, he had not been heard from in a long time. American journalist, Henry Stanley, a native Welshman born and raised in Wales before immigrating to the United States at the age of 18, was commissioned in 1869 to locate Livingstone. When he finally found the renowned missionary in 1871 in what is now Tanzania, he purportedly uttered the famous words, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" Stanley was also known for explorations and mapping of sections of Africa, as well as for some controversy surrounding his service to Belgian King Leopold in the Congo, where his harsh treatment of Africans was questioned.

Welsh missionaries were also known to be assigned to South Africa in the mid-1800s.

Thomas Philipps, son of a clergyman from Pembrokeshire, led an early Welsh party to South Africa in 1820. Philipps had been a partner in the Milford and Pembrokeshire Bank which failed in 1810. Subsequently, when the British Government passed the Cape Emigration Scheme in 1819 to encourage emigration to South Africa, Philipps started a new life, leading a group sailing on





the Kennersley Castle. They settled in a place he named Lampeter after the family's home in Wales.

Later, the storied Royal Welsh Fusiliers, one of the oldest infantry units of the British Army, saw commendable service in the south of Africa during the Second Boer War from 1899 to 1902. They fought alongside the Royal Scots Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Fusiliers, together forming the 6th Brigade. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers had a colorful history with action in many conflicts, including the Battle of the Boyne, the American Revolution and the Battle of Waterloo, to name but a few.

The leaders of the British Army's 6th Brigade, Field Marshals Roberts and Kitchener, and General Buller, used the Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town as a headquarters. Roberts was Irish and Scotch, while Kitchener was born in Ireland, and Buller was of Cornish descent.

The Mount Nelson, the stately grande dame of Cape Town, is serenely situated in the shadow of Table Mountain which inspired its name, along with that of British naval hero, Lord Nelson. Privileged to stay at the Mount Nelson during my business meetings, I soaked up the colonial elegance that still characterizes this iconic structure, whose rosy-pink aura gave rise to its own unique shade of paint, the "Mount Nelson's Blush."

Welsh miners have been emigrating from Wales to many parts of the world for centuries looking for a better life, and mineral-rich South Africa was no exception.

During the mid-nineteenth century, the discovery of gold there brought even more miners hoping to find riches.

Diamonds are the mineral for which South Africa is best known. A Welshman gained fame for discovering the largest rough-cut diamond ever found. In 1905, at the Premier mine, Welsh miner Thomas Evan Powell unearthed the 3,106 carat Cullinan diamond and turned it over to his mine superintendent, Frederick Wells. The value of the many diamonds cut from the Cullinan are considered to be worth two billion dollars today.

Many of them are found among the British crown jewels.

One of the most lasting Welsh influences in South Africa relates to the country's national anthem. In 1897, a hymn, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, was composed in the Xhosa language by Enoch Sontonga, a Xhosa Methodist missionary. In English, the title translates as God Bless Africa. Sontonga set the hymn lyrics to Welshman Joseph Perry's treasured Welsh hymn tune, Aberystwyth, which was also immortalized in the well-known Charles Wesley composition, Jesus, Lover of my Soul.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika became the national anthem of the African National Congress during Apartheid. Then in 1994, after Apartheid was ended, Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika was named co-National Anthem of South Africa, along with Die Stem van SuidAfrika, the prior Afrikaans National Anthem, which in English is The Call of South Africa. Finally, in 1997, parts from the two anthems were combined to form the current National Anthem of South Africa.

Speaking of music, the Welsh Male Voice Choir of South Africa continues the tradition of the Welsh presence in the country. Formed in 1978, the group of more than 40 members performs dozens of concerts a year, in a variety of European as well as African languages. Celebrating their 40 years in 2018, the choir performed a St. David's Day concert in Johannesburg on March 3.

These are just a few highlights of how the Welsh have made their mark on South Africa over recent centuries. Pretty impressive after all. My thanks to picturesque, yet unpretentious Llandudno, South Africa, for sending me on a journey that produced this treasure trove of fascinating, historical encounters. For those wanting to learn more about South Africa, an Englishman aptly named Frank Welsh has written a comprehensive volume, titled A History of South Africa.

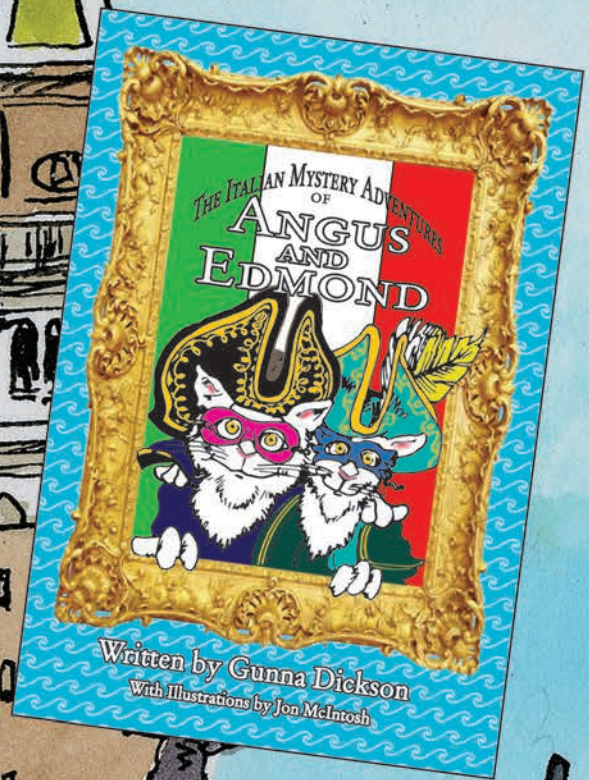


Gerald Herter

CATS AND CLUES

With the Highlands of Scotland and Key West adventures behind them, Angora-mix brothers Angus and Edmond are resting up at home in New York City when they cross paths with a shady rodent and begin receiving cryptic messages. The clues lead them to Italy -- the opera in Milan and carnival in Venice -- where the mystery unfolds and danger threatens.

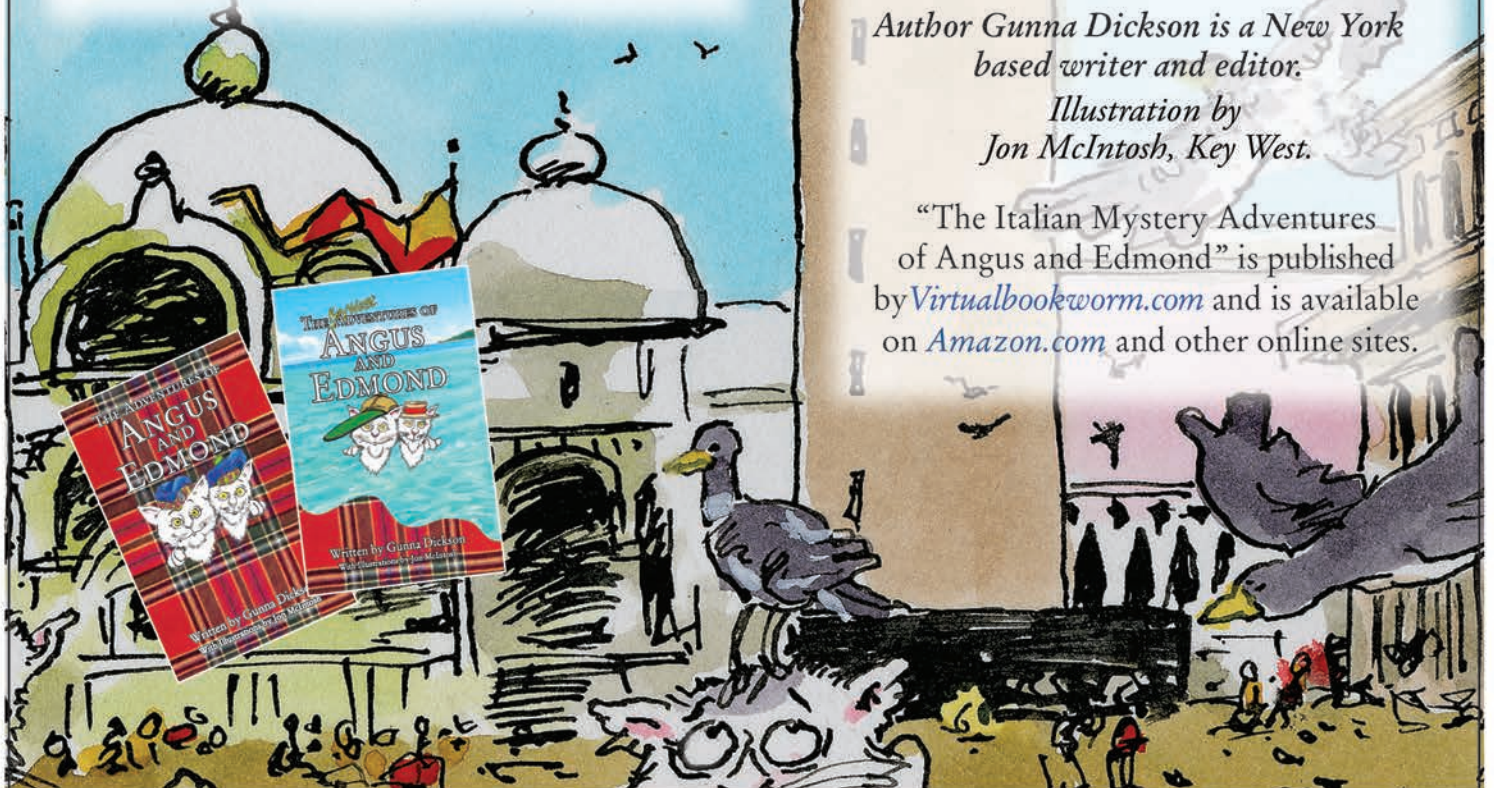
Animal lovers and children of all ages will enjoy this third book of lively cat tales.



Author Gunna Dickson is a New York based writer and editor.

*Illustration by
Jon McIntosh, Key West.*

“The Italian Mystery Adventures of Angus and Edmond” is published by Virtualbookworm.com and is available on Amazon.com and other online sites.



Kelty and Me and a Brief History of the West Highland White Terrier

~ By Lesley Choyce



It is a frosty spring morning as I sit in my warm kitchen at Lawrencetown Beach in Nova Scotia. My wife Linda is working, so I am home alone - well, not really alone; my dog is sitting on a chair beside me. Yes, he is sitting there, watching me write this, looking a bit like one of those dogs in that silly but ubiquitous 1894 painting titled *Dogs Playing Poker*, by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge. Unlike any of the dogs in the artwork, however, Kelty is a two-year-old West Highland White Terrier - a Westie.

He is a most lovable pet most days, but on occasion becomes a little West Highland Terrorist when the spirit moves him.

For as far back as I can remember, there has always been a dog in my life. Sadly, we outlive our dogs, and I have outlived nearly a dozen. But it is not a morning to be mourning - nor to be pondering mortality. It is a day to plan for the future.

I have a sabbatical coming up and have decided that some sort of grand adventure is in order. My fondness for the U.K. - and for the Celtic world in general - got me thinking about a land-based circumnavigation of Great Britain. Linda and I would drive around, paying homage to dead poets and novelists, find small villages with funny names, and drink local brews at England's smallest pubs and other sudsy establishments with names like the Cock Inn and the Broken Whistle. We'd meet fabulously quirky and eccentric Brits, Scots and Welshmen, and I would write a book about it.

But we wouldn't leave the mutt behind this time. Instead, we'd drive around England, Scotland and Wales with a dog. It was a most exciting idea.

Two authors were partly responsible for inspiring this peripatetic quest. One was Bill Bryson, who had written two wonderfully funny and insightful books about his travels in England. The second was Tony Hawks, who had written a most hilarious book titled *Around Ireland with a Fridge*.

Prepping myself for the upcoming odyssey, I first wrote to Bill Bryson, believing he was living in New Hampshire, requesting an interview. He promptly wrote back with the following: "Thanks for your inquiry. I am afraid I haven't lived in New Hampshire for 15 years, which kind of suggests that you haven't been following my work terribly closely for quite some time. I am afraid I am not able to give interviews at present." I guess it was his semi-polite way of saying "go-fly-a-kite."



Nursing a bruised writer's ego, I am still working up the courage to write to Mr. Hawks, bracing myself for yet another scathing brush-off, but hoping that a man who has hitch-hiked the perimeter of the Emerald Isle will see my own humble quest as modestly noble and offer up some advice.

In my mind the whole adventure was shaping up nicely: fly with my wife Linda and dog Kelty to Glasgow, rent a car, go first to Poltalloch, the legendary origin of the modern Westie, then over to Edinburgh to sit in the back at The Elephant House café where J.K. Rowling reputedly wrote her first Harry Potter novel. We might possibly take a quick nip over to 6a Nicolson Street, where she did more writing - now the location of Jimmy Chungs Buffet King restaurant. Then it would be down to Sibson in Leicester-

shire, home of my ancestor, William Percival Choyce, before moving on to Wales to Surf Snowdonia, the world's first inland surfing destination - all with Kelty along for the adventure.

At Christmas, someone had even given me a book titled Good Guide to Dog Friendly Pubs, Hotels and B&Bs. In it, Fiona Stapley notes that "8.5 million households in Britain own a dog," and that she takes her Labrador to many friendly pubs where they offer her black pet "biscuits and other treats such as pig's ears and a sausage or two." I was convinced immediately that, without a doubt, Kelty's first tasting of pig's ears would be a highlight in his young life.

But alas, the kind folks at the airline informed me that you can't fly into the U.K. with a dog in the cabin - they could only go

in baggage. And there was simply no way we were about to let that happen. The Brits, for all their love of dogs, had thrown a mighty wrench into the works, the bureaucratic bastards!

We almost gave up on the idea. I went looking for advice on how to get a dog into the U.K. and discovered that we could travel over on the Queen Mary from New York and take the pooch. The only problem, however, was that it would cost many thousands of American dollars - more bad news.

A little more digging, however, revealed that we could fly to Paris with Kelty and smuggle him into the U.K. in our rental auto strapped down on a rail car through the Chunnel. It smacked of a slightly tamer version of something from Mission Impossible and I immediately knew it was the



to do. So we booked tickets to Charles De-Gaulle instead of Glasgow and paid an extra \$50 to keep our dog with us in a carrier at our feet. "Around England with a Dog" would have to begin on French soil, and we would make our landing in England not far from Hastings where the French army under William of Normandy successfully invaded England in 1066.

Some might wonder why go to all this trouble just to take the family mutt to a foreign country.

Well, dogs are damned important to some of us - man's best friend and all that. Let's face it. Dogs are loyal and lick your face. They are exuberant and fun-loving. I'd always had mixed breed dogs but, with the arrival of Linda in my life, came a pure-breed Westie. Kelty's predecessor, Murdo, was a purebred Westie that required expensive grooming and who slept on the bed. Murdo died of cancer a few years back and we mourned his loss for a full year before Linda convinced me we needed a new dog - a puppy - and a Westie of course. The only problem was there was not a single Westie puppy to be found for sale in the Maritimes. We had to drive to Ontario and escort our new puppy home to Nova Scotia, where we three are living happily ever after.

Hoping to avoid a tedious internet research on the subject of Westies for this article, I made a library reservation for what I thought was the definitive tome on the dog breed - West Highland White Terriers by Sara Green. When I arrived at the library,

however, I discovered it was a children's book. It had such great photos of lively tongue-protruding, tail-wagging Westies that I checked it out anyway, and found a wealth of information. I also concluded that I had made a big mistake as a young lad when I gave up on those colorful slim volumes about volcanoes, spiders, Uruguay, and how things work, in favour of dull, wordy and picture-less books for more mature readers.

I devoured the book cover to cover and was reminded that Westies are "small, friendly dogs with shiny white coats." Well, not my dog after a trip to the beach where he has rolled in sand, mud, and washed-up unidentifiable sea creatures that had been decomposing for at least a week. But underneath, yes, white it is.

I didn't know about the double-coat made up of a "short and soft" undercoat and a coarser outer-coat of wiry hair, but here was a two-coated dog. I also discovered that our noble beast was descended from Cairn Terriers, who have a darker coat. Apparently, back in nineteenth century Scotland, some Cairns had white puppies which were thought to be weak and poor hunters. That was undoubtedly a lie but, back then as today, people believed what they wanted to believe, true or not.

The book tidied up the story about Edward Donald Malcolm of Poltalloch who, in the 1800s, started breeding the white dogs because "it would be easier for hunters to recognize their white dogs in the fields or woods." Well, I already knew that Colonel Malcolm himself had shot one (if not more) of his own darker Cairn Terriers while hunting foxes, so the breeding was an attempt of

sorts to offset his own incompetence as a huntsman. But, nonetheless, he gave us the modern Westie. He called them Poltalloch Terriers because that was the name of the town where he lived.

And indeed, Poltalloch is first on my list of places to visit in the U.K. - a most appropriate pilgrimage to the sacred soil where Kelty's ancestors roamed the fields, chased rabbits, and sniffed each other's butts.

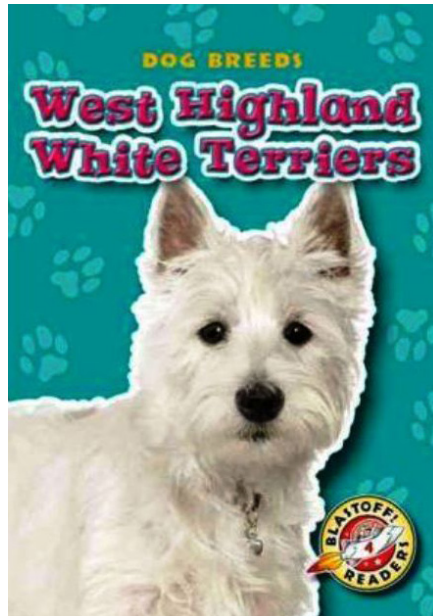
Westies are darn good at digging. Apparently their claws grow faster than other dogs for just this purpose. They like to dig deep and follow tunnels made by animals living underground. In fact, the name "terrier" comes from a Latin word meaning earth. This was labelled a "fun fact" in the child's book, allowing me to remember that, yes, once upon a time facts really were fun, as opposed to today when "facts" are no longer fun and, so often, are not even facts at all.

Kelty, like his ancestors, is a great digger and if we had rats, I'm sure he would heartily enjoy catching them and biting into their necks, then swinging them left and right like his Poltalloch cousins have done for over two hundred years. Apparently, Westies also have extra-strong tails, so if they are stuck down deep in a rat hole, you can pull them out by their tail and it won't hurt them, although it would surely be a significant discomfort. I have seen Kelty "unhinge" his back legs as well, sprawled out flat on the



Linda & Kelty





floor in a pool of sunlight. These are very versatile and agile dogs, indeed.

Early Westies had several different names, and this annoyed dog breeders so much that the Scottish Kennel Club gathered in 1904 and, after what I envision as a highly charged debate involving scathing Scottish insults and many glasses of Scotch, came up with the official name of the breed: West Highland White Terrier. And that was that.

Today, I am told by Ms. Green, "Most Westies just dig for fun." But some are trained to work with deaf people; when they hear crying or doorbells or smoke alarms, they use their nose or paw to inform their deaf companions - how ingenious is that?

Modern dogs, even Keltie, are related to those howling wolves I occasionally hear on moonlit nights here on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia. But they came into their own about 100,000 years ago. About 30,000 years ago in Europe, humans started to domesticate dogs - or at least dogs started hanging around the campfire hoping someone would toss them a bone. Domestication led to breeding for certain desired traits. Hunting and guarding were big ticket items, and West Highland Terriers certainly have that going for them.

White dogs probably first appeared in Spain, although I could not find an explanation as to why the Spaniards wanted a white dog more than anyone else. Some time in the 1500s, James VI of Scotland gave a white terrier (but not the modern version, and probably not pure white) as a gift to Henry IV. There are no reports as to how well the dog fared while Henry spent considerable time

during his kingship fending-off assassination attempts and rebellions.

Just so you won't be as confused as I was, James VI (the dog giver) became James I of England after the death of Elizabeth I. Certainly he brought some terriers south with him as Scottish comfort against the many conspirators who gave him trouble as well, including one Walter Raleigh. And it was this James I who granted a charter to Sir William Alexander in 1621, giving him rights to a large parcel of land in the New World that would one day be Nova Scotia, present home of Linda, Keltie and me.

Unlike King Charles II, he did not name a dog after himself, but in Volume 12 of *Classical Review* (1898), there is an article about a most convoluted discourse that took place in Cambridge back in 1614-1615 involving "King James I on the Reasoning Faculty in Dogs."

One way or the other, it is clear that dogs helped influence, if not shape much of the history of Scotland, Britain, and other nations.

Dogs have inspired poetry and paintings as well, of course. One fine example is the 1839 painting by Sir Edwin Landseer - *Dignity and Impudence* - of a bloodhound, representing dignity, and a small white terrier, well, representing the alternate quality.

I have discovered there is much ink spilled on the subject of Westie breeding, definitions of a pure breed, and the world of show dogs - none of which is my cup of tea. Nor would I want to get into an argument in a dog-friendly pub about which lineage or breed is nobler than the others. There seems to be a considerable number of various of-

ficial competitions as well that involve Westies, including agility competitions, "conformation shows" (sounds nasty to me), a dog sport called coursing ability, earthdog trials, freestyle (more like it) and, God help us, something called "obedience and rally."

I am certainly not an advocate that everyone should go out and buy a Westie; it turns out that between vet bills, endless grooming, and making travel arrangements for the small white creature, you could probably raise a child for less.

Famous Westies abound, and I was surprised to learn that Mohammed Ali Jinnah, considered the founder of Pakistan, had a Westie. A Westie also appears on the label of Black and White whisky, as well as on Cesar dogfood throughout the world. You should never tell an owner that all Westies look alike - even though, for the most part, they all do look alike.

I grew just a tad jealous when I learned that J.K. Rowling's West Highland White Terrier, Bronte, won a cutest dog competition. The headline in the *Scottish Sun* read, "THE MAGIC MUTT: JK Rowling's adorable West Highland Terrier Bronte earns top marks in cute pooches competition WeRateDogs." I mean, isn't literary fame and unspeakable wealth enough?

I am hereby giving Ms. Rowling's fair warning that we are headed her way and, although I may not be as famous a writer as the author of the *Harry Potter* books, I have a dog that I think is both smarter and cuter than any in the U.K. And there will be photos taken to prove it - lots and lots of photos.



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Top 10 Wedding Planning Tips

1. Dine with us (and overnight), if possible. Your wedding day is a big investment and you wouldn't buy a car without taking it for a test drive. You won't be disappointed!
2. Decide on what's important to you – make a list of 3 things that are important to you that we can fulfil.
3. Save the date – the most popular dates get snapped up first so if you have your heart set on a specific date, get in early to avoid disappointment!
4. Delegate – all those little jobs can be given to someone you trust to take the pressure off.
5. Keep the contact – make sure to keep in touch with your wedding planner, and if in doubt, ask if there's something you're not sure about. The more detail you can provide about what your dream day should be, the better picture can be painted for them.
6. The personal touch – injecting your own personality into the day can really make it stand out whether it's your stationary or flowers, guest book or cake.
7. Get an early night – it might go without saying but try to get a good night's sleep on the eve of your big day.
8. Have a good breakfast! It's going to be a long day.
9. Once the day is here relax and enjoy this most special of days with your partner, family & friends.
10. Set your budget (include a contingency in case of last minute 'must haves').

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A monochromatic blue-toned photograph of a woman in a long black dress with lace sleeves, holding a crow on her outstretched hand. She stands in a snowy field with bare trees in the mid-ground and a large castle or manor house in the background under a dark, overcast sky.

Cat Burton

www.catburton.co.uk



I grew up in a small rural village in England. My family took holidays to Scotland every year for as long as I can remember, so despite being English, my heart is firmly north of the border. Scotland is home. I currently live in the village of Scone, famed for Scone Palace, the crowning place of Scottish kings.

I have always been passionate about the arts, from writing poetry as a child to developing a love for photography with my first film camera. Despite that love for

photography, I followed a math and science route through school, graduating university with a computer science degree. I worked for 10 years in the technology industry, with my photography being a side interest and hobby. It was only in recent years that I made the big leap of faith to pursue my art full-time.

There is nothing I would rather be doing. A day at work for me can be anything from editing artworks at my computer, to hiking through beautiful woodlands, to scouting

castle ruins in remote Scottish Glens. I love everything about this lifestyle, and I hope to be working in the visual arts for many years to come.

I first started out taking wildlife and landscape photographs. Nature and the outdoors have always been a huge inspiration for me. In more recent years, I've evolved from purely taking photographs to creating photographic artworks. My goal now is to reveal the magic of the land around us. I like to show a beautiful, time-



less, atmospheric view of the world - primarily of Scotland. My artworks are meticulously crafted from multiple images, seamlessly blended together to show a photo-realistic but romantic vision of the place. Lots of people ask me if my work is a painting, and I like that. My process is very similar to painting - I just use photographs instead of paint.



The weather is also a big challenge, but I love Scotland's moody and stormy days - they help me portray the true nature of this beautiful land. It is rare that you'll find me taking photographs on a perfect blue-sky day. Thankfully we don't get too many of those!

I'm inspired by so many different things. I love looking at classic paintings as they portray a version of the scene as the artist wanted - just like I do. It reminds me that I can mould a scene to match my vision and to convey the story I wish to tell. I'm also inspired by folklore and fantasy. If I hear an interesting story about an animal, a historic figure, or a place that will often inspire me to create a new artwork.



There are so many things that can contribute to a good photo. To me the most important is that I've captured what I've wanted and it conveys the story that I want to tell. I know when I've captured a good image or created a great artwork when it makes me smile. If we can spread happiness with our work, then we've done well.

The biggest reward is the happiness and freedom of doing something I love in my favourite place in the world. I get to explore the wildest parts of Scotland and share my interpretation of them with the world. When people buy my limited edition prints, it feels nice to know they have a part of Scotland in their home.



Scotland is such an exciting place to be for an artist. I have so many talented friends who work in all kinds of mediums. This is a place where people can create, explore and most importantly, be themselves. I have no doubt that some of the best contemporary art in the world is being created in Scotland.



Jemima Blackie Sutherland-Graham
and Jean Darling Sutherland



Pipe Major Donald Sutherland (B210)



Sandy Graham



Pat Beaven



Don Graham



Old Man Flanagan's Ghost



Cellie



Ne Oublie

The Annual Beach Celtic Festival

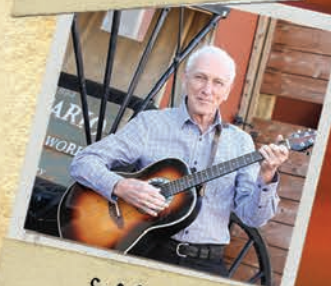
What started out as a one-day event to honour the legacy of Producer and Beacher Sandy Graham's family has turned into a popular yearly event that is held over two days nestled in the Beach at Kew Gardens, Toronto's very own Brigadoon.

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

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

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

www.thecelticfestival.com



Syd Simkins



Piper Rory Sinclair
Caledon County



Bold Steps Dancers



Fiona Heaney

I am originally from Omagh, Co. Tyrone, but studied fashion design at NCAD in Dublin, where I currently reside and work.

I have always been interested in fashion; I was taught to knit by my grandfather (on my dad's side of the family) and to sew by my grandmother (mum's side).

I love starting each season ~ I am like a kid in a candy store; so many new fabrics, prints and colours!

My collections evolve every season. It is important to keep evolving, to bring the customer with us and offer them something new. When the collections began, we included a lot of Italian-made knitwear and leather, and many more casual separates. Over the years we have become a 'go to' occasion-wear brand, with many more dresses.

It is always a challenge to come up with something new and fresh every season, and with commercial deadlines there is a time constraint on the creative process. Also, some elements are simply outside of my control, including fabric quality, trims, construction, patterns - there are many aspects involved in the process.

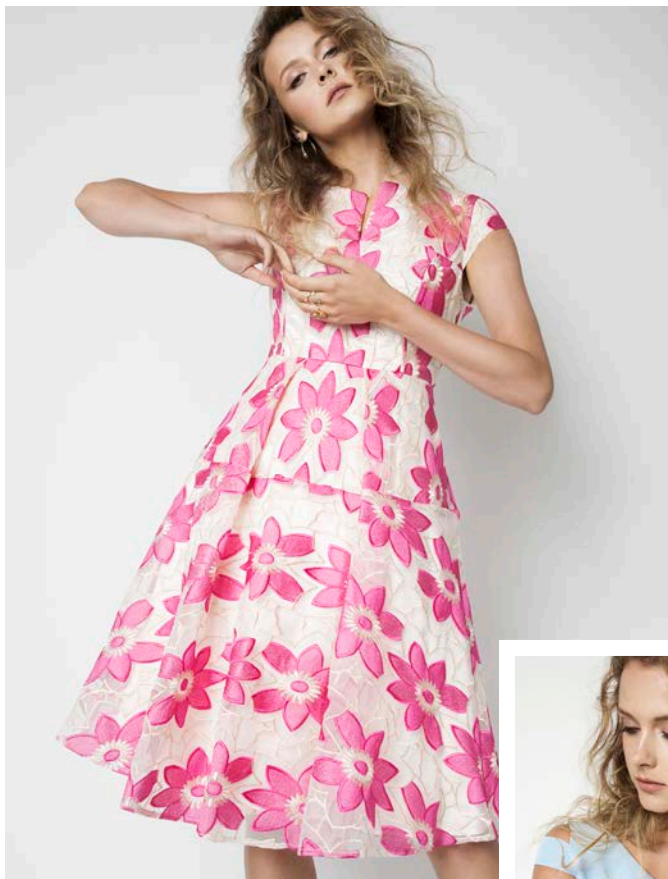
We sell via boutiques and department stores. We deliver two seasons per year. Each boutique selects from our collection individually, so no two ever have the same selection.

Seeing my designs being worn by ladies all over the country is the greatest reward of doing what I do. We have a distinct signature, and our customers can recognize our designs. It is what makes our brand distinct.

I have always loved stripes and patterns and I am not afraid to use them boldly. I enjoy working with clean, bright colours, and my Spring-Summer 2018 collection reflects that.

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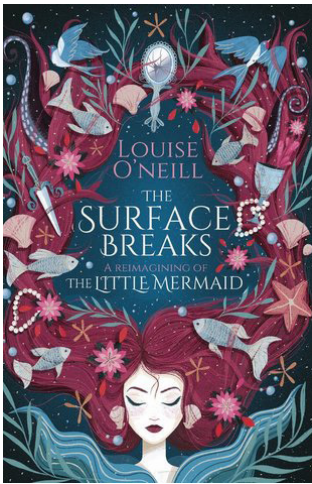
Summer Reading Guide

With warmer weather on the way, your next great read is sure to follow. Celtic Life International's Caitlyn Mearns offers up some storied suggestions for summer

The Celts have a way with words, be it in the form of storytelling, poetry, fiction, fantasy, history, mystery, magical realism, young adult, biographies...like their landscapes, their literature is lush and lyrical.

Here are a few suggestions to keep your mind engaged over the coming months - on the beach, at the cottage, or in the comfort of your own backyard.

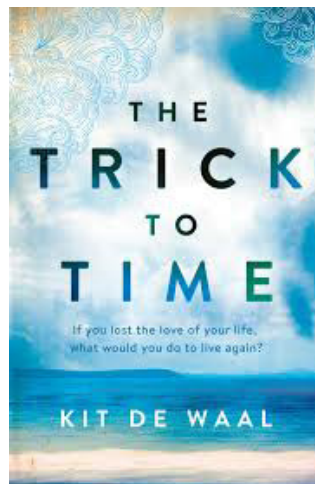
IRELAND



The Surface Breaks: A Reimagining of the Little Mermaid

By Louise O'Neill
320 pp / Young Adult Fantasy

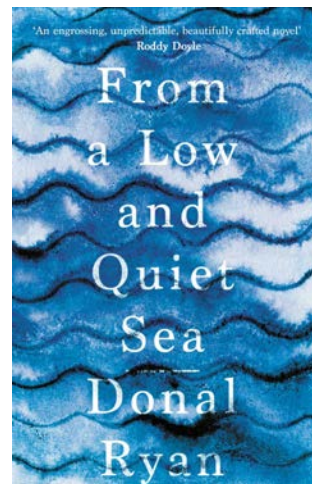
Like Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch* and Kirsty Logan's *A Portable Shelter*, Irish author Louise O'Neill's latest foray into fiction retells a popular fairy tale - this time, Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid*. The updated account follows young Gaia, a mermaid living off the Irish coast. As with the original work, Gaia becomes taken with a young, human boy after her first swim to the water's surface. From there, the wily scribe takes the tale in a different direction altogether, steering the saga through the sphere of contemporary feminism. The result is a dark and spellbinding story that questions the high price of true love. Nonetheless, the work will surely appeal to readers of all ages, and perhaps inspire some to trek through O'Neill's strong back-catalogue, which includes the magnificent *Asking for It* and *Only Ever Yours*.



The Trick to Time

By Kit De Waal
272 pp / Literary Fiction

In 2016, Kit De Waal took readers by storm with her debut narrative *My Name is Leon*. The book became an instant bestseller, and was short-listed for the Costa First Novel Award. This year, the Irish/British scribe returns with a solid sophomore effort called *The Trick to Time* - a stirring and unique love story set on the Emerald Isle and beyond. The tale's protagonist, Mona, creates beautiful, handmade dolls in her workshop in Birmingham, U.K. Her back-story slowly unfolds through her bespoke creations, with each doll holding unique and special memories, including a revisiting of early-1970s Birmingham, and Mona's youthful love affair with a gentle and kind Irish boy named William. Tender and touching, and gently seasoned with themes of love, loss and longing, the work has already been long-listed for the Women's Prize for Fiction.

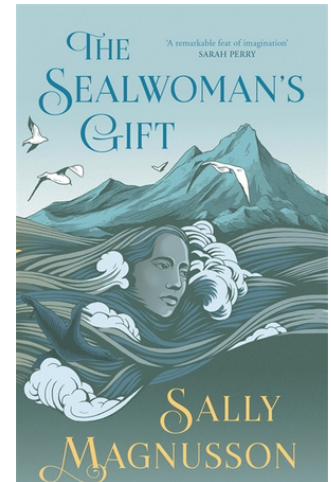


From a Low and Quiet Sea

By Donal Ryan
192 pp / Literary Fiction

Multi award-winning author Donal Ryan's newly published narrative *From a Low and Quiet Sea* - his fourth full-length work of fiction - is already receiving high praise from readers, critics and peers alike. Fellow Irish novelist Roddy Doyle calls it "an engrossing, unpredictable and beautifully crafted novel." Composed of three interwoven storylines, the work draws its lot from man's deepest and darkest emotions. As one character named 'Farouk' struggles to survive in war-torn Syria, another - simply called 'Lampy' - struggles to survive a love-torn heart. The third account is one of recollection; as 'John' nears the end of his life he struggles to survive a shameful secret from his past. Over the course of the book, these three men - the refugee, the dreamer and the penitent - emerge as a singular voice. Though they may come from different places, and live under distinct circumstances, the trio share a unique emotional experience.

SCOTLAND



The Sealwoman's Gift

By Sally Magnusson
384 pp / Historical Fiction

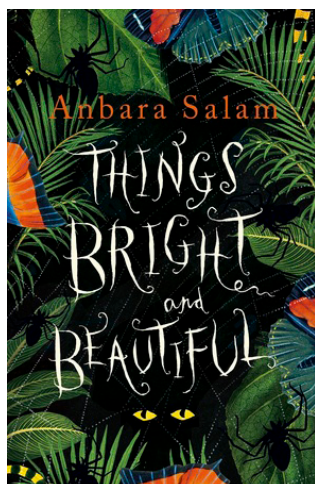
No proper reading guide would be complete without at least one solid recommendation for a work of historical fiction. Scottish-Icelandic author Sally Magnusson's debut narrative, *The Sealwoman's Gift*, is a retelling of a well-documented era of Icelandic history. In 1627, the Barbary pirates raided the coast of Iceland, abducting more than 400 residents. Magnusson re-imagines the story through the eyes of Asta, the wife of the island's pastor. While much is known about the attack itself, there was little documented on the fate of the islet's women and children in the days and weeks that followed. Here, Asta and her family are sold into slavery in Algiers, where she soon finds herself lost amidst the Arab landscape, with neither family nor freedom. The book is also honours the art of storytelling; rich with Icelandic folklore and Arabian tales, the author shines a light on the importance of better understanding and appreciating other cultures.



Sal

By Mick Kitson
240 pp / Young Adult
Contemporary

Younger audiences will love this fresh, coming-of-age story by Welsh author Mick Kitson. A journalist turned teacher turned author, Kitson - who now lives and works in Fife, Scotland - was frustrated with the quality of books found in the school curriculum. Taking matters into his own hands, he opted to author something that he would enjoy teaching his young students. The simple, yet stirring story follows Sal and Peppa, two sisters who run from domestic abuse by escaping into the Scottish wilderness. The narrative recounts the siblings' preparations for their exodus - watching YouTube videos, reading the SAS Survival Guide, and purchasing essential tools with a stolen credit card - before detailing the journey itself. Through young Sal's voice, Kitson has actually written a modern love letter to Scotland and sisterhood, one that is by turns disquieting and uplifting.

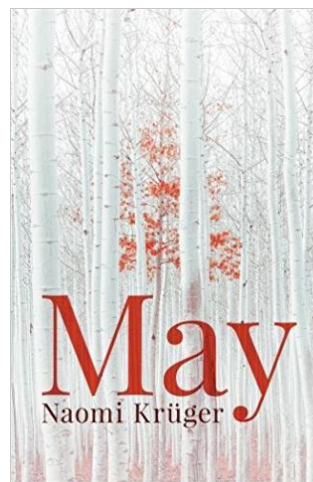


Things Bright and Beautiful

By Anbara Salam
288 pp / Literary Fiction

Scottish-Palestinian author Anbara Salam takes readers to the rainforest in her debut novel, *Things Bright and Beautiful*. In the mid-1950s, Beatriz Hanlon - Bea - moves to a remote South Pacific island with her husband Max, a missionary. Bea tries desperately to find some form of comfort in her new and wild surroundings. With time, she grows accustomed to the bugs, dirt and trivial inconveniences, eventually settling into a routine of sorts, until an unexpected guest arrives to upset the balance. Suspense soon abounds, as the book's protagonist becomes stretched to the point of breaking, while Max battles with a guilt that slowly drives him mad. Lyrical and darkly comic, the work calls to mind the magical realism of Columbia's Gabriel Garcia Marquez, perhaps signalling a new direction or genre in Scottish literature. If so, then Salam will surely be its surest voice.

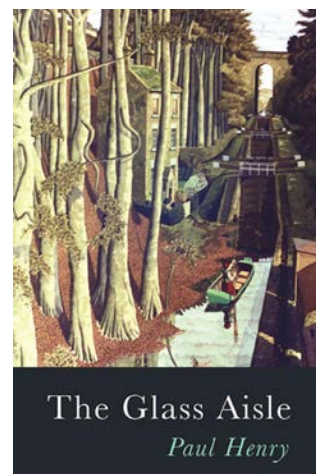
WALES



May

By Naomi Krüger
210 pp / Literary Fiction

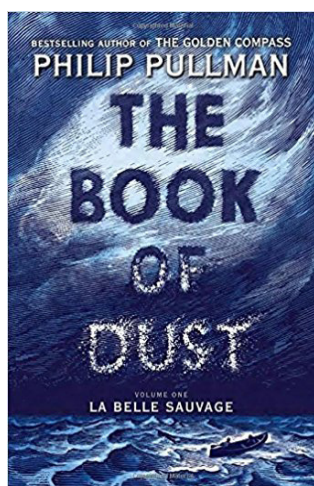
Welsh author Naomi Krüger's first full-length novel, *May*, is a fine mix of literary fiction and gripping suspense. An elderly woman with fading mental faculties, May has but three fragments of memory that persist in her mind; a boy with fiery hair, a letter without its stamp, and a secret she promised never to share. Living out her last days at a local nursing home, she longs to know who the boy was, and what sort of connection he might have had with her, the letter, and the secret. Flowing fluidly back and forth from one decade to another, the work introduces readers to the rich tapestry of May's family and friends. The moving narrative also highlights four other characters - Afsana, Karen, Alex and Arthur - each of whom, like May, are haunted by the past. It is only when the five come together, and their memories are linked, that truth is revealed.



The Glass Aisle

By Paul Henry
72 pp / Poetry

A seasoned veteran in Welsh literature, Paul Henry has ten publications to his name, including seven collections of poetry. His latest, *The Glass Aisle*, has quickly earned the respect of the country's toughest critics; *The Wales Arts Review* called it "his best to date," and *Caught by the River* reminded readers that with this anthology, Henry's wordsmithery remains "a rich and comforting voice next to you in the dark." The collection explores themes of rage, stillness, time, music and silence. The title poem is a unique take on temporality, as a telephone engineer working on lines to an old workhouse connects past and present, bringing Victorian-era ghosts back to life. Divided into three parts, the collections first section includes a thematic ode titled "The Hesitant Song," while the other two look at loss and love. Interestingly, a performance version of *The Glass Aisle* is currently touring festivals.

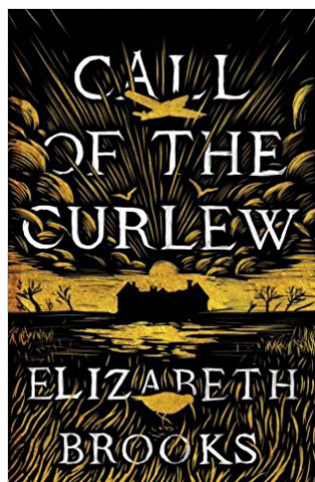


The Book of Dust Series

By Phillip Pullman
464 pp / Middle Grade and Young Adult Fiction

This summer is an ideal time to read Phillip Pullman's *La Belle Sauvage*, the first book in his latest trilogy, *The Book of Dust*, and the prequel, or - as the author notes - an *equal* to his award-winning series, *His Dark Materials*. *La Belle Sauvage* follows a young spy named Malcolm Polstead, who finds a secret message, inquiring about "dust" - a dangerous, yet vital elementary particle highly connected with an individual's consciousness. Malcolm then gets swooped up in an adventure of science and faith, and the thin line that separates them. This book is a great back-story for fans of *His Dark Materials*, as it takes place 12 years prior, and includes many of the same characters. The trilogy's second installment, titled *The Secret Commonwealth*, is scheduled for release later this year.

ISLE OF MAN



Call of the Curlew

By Elizabeth Brooks
320 pp / Gothic Fiction

There is always something special about a historic gothic tale - think back to reading *Jane Eyre* as a child. Manx author Elizabeth Brooks invites the audience into her own gothic universe with *Call of the Curlew*. The story opens with Virginia, 86, on New Year's Eve. All her life, Virginia has known that she would die on the marsh by her house, in retribution for mistakes she made as a child. Traveling back to 1939, Virginia - then a ten-year-old orphan - meets her adoptive parents, Clem and Lorna Wrathmell, at their large, mysterious house. At first, things go smoothly for the youngster, until matters take a sinister turn; she senses tension between her new custodians, and a nosy neighbour becomes nosier with each turning page. After a German plane crashes on the property, matters start to go horribly wrong for all involved.



Folk

By Zoe Gilbert
256 pp / Short Stories

Although award-winning author Zoe Gilbert admits that she isn't Manx, the U.K.-based scribe insists that did not stop her from writing a book inspired by the country's rich and robust folklore. *The Isle of Man*, says the scribe, is a "place of gorse-scented inspiration and fantastic folk tales." *Folk*, her dazzling debut collection of short stories (interestingly marketed as a novel), takes place on the fictional (though familiar) island of Neverness. There, weaving dark threads of fantasy and magical realism - a young girl is snatched by a water bull, while a baby is born with a wing for an arm - Gilbert crafts a contemporary narrative tapestry, with each piece of literary fabric sewn together in homage to the Celtic nation's great storytelling traditions. Of note, the anthology's opening tale, *Fishkin*, *Hareskin*, won the 2014 Costa Short Story Award.

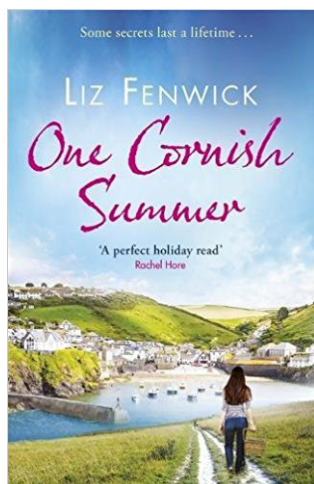
CORNWALL



The Great Cornish Getaway

By Fern Britton
102 pp / Light Contemporary Fiction

Sunday Times Bestselling author Fern Britton's new novella, *The Great Cornish Getaway*, has been listed as one of 2018's must quick-reads. The story of best friends Penny and Dorrie takes place in the quiet, idyllic, seaside Cornish village of Trevay. When a stranger with a secret shows up looking for a safe haven, the pair recognizes him as a leading Hollywood heartthrob, and makes haste to provide him with a comfy place to stay. Soon it becomes a town-wide affair - with everyone from the neighbours to town council members working together to protect the stranger, and his secret. In return for their hospitality, the stranger lends a friendly ear, listening to local residents' ongoing issues with one another, and offering solutions when possible. Warm and witty, and bubbling with personality, the work serves up a super slice of Cornish life.

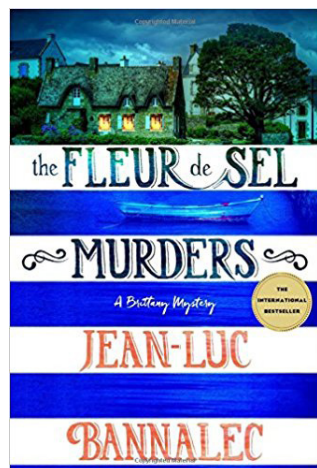


One Cornish Summer

By Liz Fenwick
400 pp / Contemporary Fiction

Expat author Liz Fenwick is said to know Cornwall as well as anyone. Her latest literary effort, *One Cornish Summer*, is a contemporary mystery, and will appeal to fans of fellow scribes Rachel Hore, Lucinda Riley and Rosanna Ley. In the story, two women from different generations - Hebe and her niece Lucy - wrestle with their respective pasts; one tries to remember, and the other can't forget. At 53, Hebe is diagnosed with a life-changing medical diagnosis, and her days are spent making sense of it, trying to hold onto memories that are quickly slipping away. Her niece, Lucy, moves to Cornwall to support her aunt. All the while, Lucy is harbouring a shameful secret from her past that won't let go. A warm and honest tale of family, friendship and love, the book is sure to resonate with readers of all ages.

BRITTANY

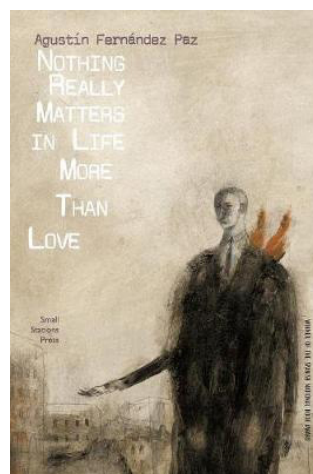


The Fleur de Sel Murders: A Brittany Mystery

By Jean-Luc Bannalec
320 pp / Mystery

For fans of *The Commissaries Dupin* series - or, for anyone who fancies a summer mystery - check out bestselling Breton author Jean-Luc Bannalec's latest release, *The Fleur de Sel Murders*. Over the first few pages, Dupin is attacked by an unknown assailant on the salt marshes of Bretagne's beautiful Guérande Peninsula. The marshes are said to release a violet scent at harvest time, causing hallucinations. At first Dupin doubts the claim, but following the assault he wonders if there isn't some truth to the myth. Soon after, Dupin's friend Lilou Breval goes missing. A journalist, Breval had been researching the salt marshes, and Dupin - aided by investigator Sylviane Rose - mucks through the clues and evidence to uncover more than he bargained for. Readers will enjoy all three books in the much-lauded series.

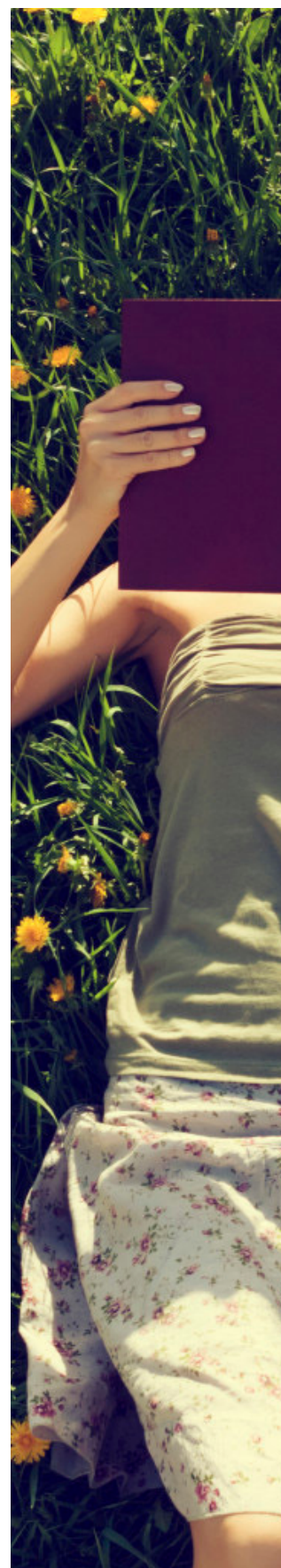
GALICIA



Nothing Really Matters in Life More than Love

By Agustín Fernández Paz
154 pp / Short Stories

While many Galician authors might not be familiar to North American readers, they are renowned in Spain - most notably award-winning author Agustín Fernández Paz. A decade after winning the 2008 Spanish Book Award, *Nothing Really Matter More in Life than Love*, is finally being translated in English for foreign markets. This compelling collection of ten short-stories overflows with tender tales of love. In one piece, a young woman, bored with her job, finds solace in a small bookshop filled with tomes of amorous accounts. In another, a man and his dog search endlessly for the love of his life. In another, a woman looks back on her first physical encounter with a boyfriend. Each small saga spills over with romance, both the fresh and the forgotten. As a collage, the work is an essential exploration and analysis of the importance of love and the role it plays in our life.



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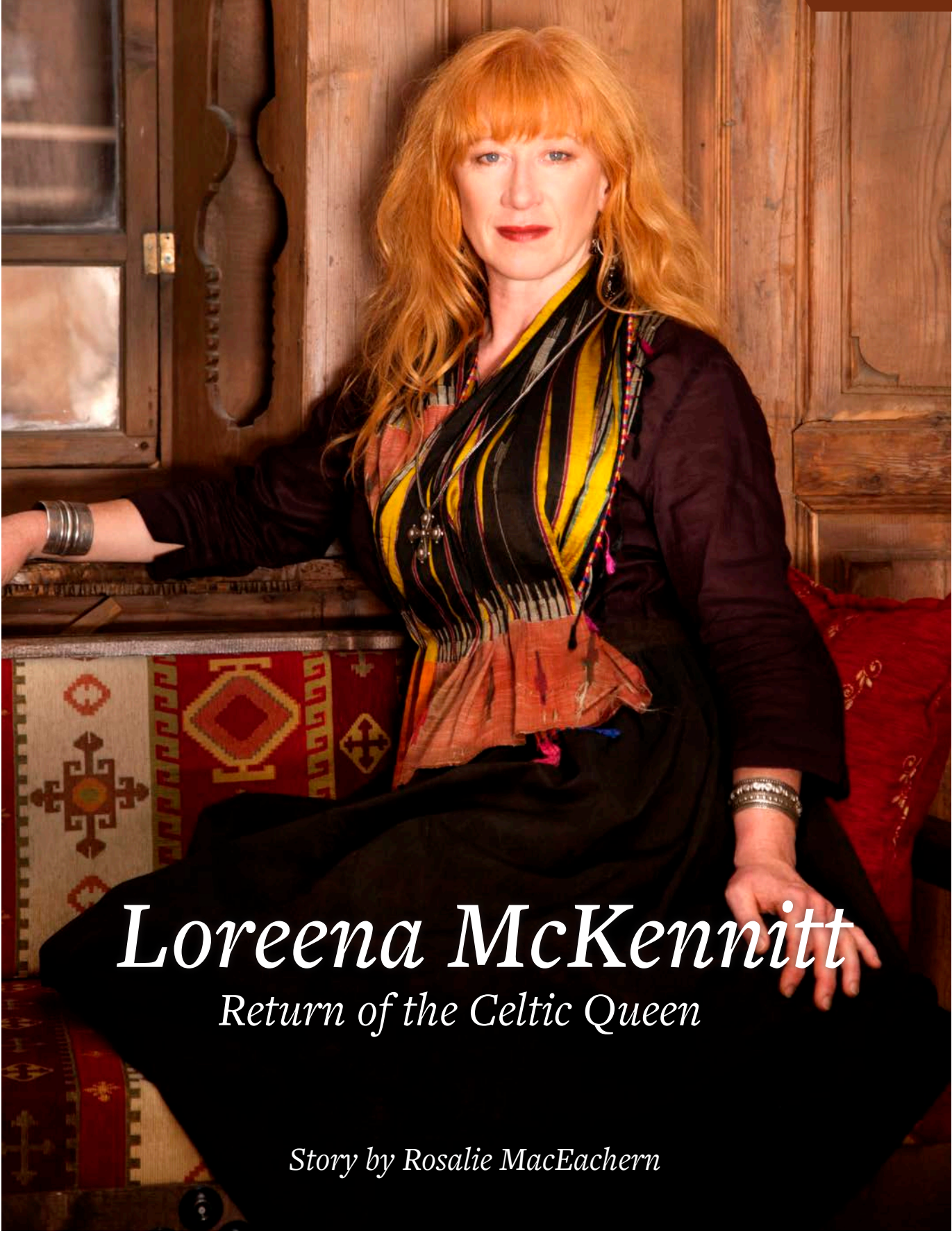
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Loreena McKennitt

Return of the Celtic Queen

Story by Rosalie MacEachern



On her stirring new album, *Lost Souls*, Loreena McKennitt sings achingly of love, loss and layered things, her music as complex and varied as the emotions it carries.

The nine-track recording is an eclectic weave of stories and songs inspired by a myriad of influences, including the works the English Romantic poet John Keats and Ireland's W.B. Yeats. Celtic and Middle Eastern touches are there as well, cultural and musical traditions that have enchanted the red-haired songstress for more than 30 years.

Her first album of original music since 2006's *The Ancient Muse*, and her first studio recording since 2010's *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, *Lost Souls* was recorded from May to October, 2017, at Catherine North Studios in Hamilton, Ontario, and at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios, near Bath, in South West England.

"Life has been so full and demanding the past decade, both personally and professionally," muses the multi-award-winning vocalist and multi-instrumentalist over the phone from her home in Stratford, Ontario, two hours west of Toronto.

Best known for chart-toppers such as *The Mummer's Dance* and *All Souls Night*, McKennitt has sold more than 14 million records worldwide. She has been touring at a steady pace in recent years, after taking two years off to care for her ailing mother.

"When I returned to the road, life became very busy, so I am very grateful to have gotten back to the creative part of the process over the past year."

On *Lost Souls*, she accompanies her soaring soprano with both traditional instruments - harp, piano and accordion - and with other, unique musical paraphernalia, including nyckelharpa, oud, kanoun, flamenco guitar, and the precision beat and pounding rhythms of a Canadian military band.

It is exactly the sort of rich and textured sonic tapestry that fans have come to expect from McKennitt, whose debut album, *Elemental* (1985), set an early musical tone that would evolve over the course of two decades and more than a dozen studio and live recordings.

The songstress shares that some of the songs on *Lost Souls* are recent compositions, while others were pulled from the past.

"Four of the pieces on this album are works that I came to like and held onto until I found a place for them - a process that, in some cases, took many years."

*She describes **Lost Souls** as a "poesy of songs" - adding that the individual tracks are "like unexpected travelers that appeared on the paths of previous journeys."*

One such song is *100 Wishes*; originally written in 1991, the piece is steeped in Celtic and folk influence, and features lyrics taken from

some of the world's most heralded poets.

A more recent number, *Breaking of the Sword*, was inspired by McKennitt's participation in Canada's ceremonies recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

"I was originally asked to compose a piece for the occasion, but was later asked to play Dante's Prayer from my 1997 album, *The Book of Secrets*. I had already started thinking about a new piece, and I was further inspired by the statues I saw at the Vimy Ridge Memorial in France, particularly that of Mother Canada."

The Mother Canada statue is one of 20 sculptures that portray a young country mourning the loss of its dead.

Written from a grieving mother's perspective, *Breaking of the Sword* describes the joy of her son's birth, and how he grew to work in the fields and stables at home before being called to war.

"Losing a child is unimaginable - that loss and longing is felt the world over; it transcends borders and cultures and time itself."

As such, the loss in the song resonates beyond the mother to include the community where the young man was raised and the military family with whom he enlisted and fought.

"In a contemporary sense, families of those serving continue to make huge compromises and sacrifices to support their loved ones, regardless of their mission or task - from combat to humanitarian and search-and-rescue missions, to the demands of daily training and operations. We, as citizens, owe those who serve our immense gratitude and at the very least, the act of remembrance."

McKennitt, a proud honorary colonel in the Royal Canadian Air Force (435 Transport and Rescue Squadron, Winnipeg, Manitoba) recorded the haunting track with the Central Band of the Canadian Armed Forces, accompanied by the 90-voice Stratford Concert Choir. Fittingly, the song was released in advance of last Remembrance Day.

"I wanted the contributions to the piece to symbolize the circles in which the loss is felt."

A passionate reader with expansive interests, McKennitt explains that both the new album's title, and its title song, was inspired by Ronald Wright's compelling narrative *A Short History of Progress*.

"He suggests that we as a species may have lost our moral compass

with respect to progress, and that we have become lost souls."

It is an idea that hits home for McKennitt, who often suggests that people unplug from their technology, embrace nature, and enhance their personal relationships.

"The book gave me a tiny taste of the huge swath of history, and an appreciation of the large arc of time.

"It is concerning that, in the past, moral progress was of the greatest concern, but now tactical or strategic progress seems to be a higher priority."

"I have a real concern that, as a species, we have a propensity to get into progress traps, as we may be now. However, I believe that there is enough metaphorical language in a song like *Lost Souls* that everyone needn't be hinged to that concern. People can have different interpretations."

Her take on the traditional Irish tune, *Bonny Portmore* (from 1991's *The Visit*), is another example of musical metaphor; though the song concerns the loss of a lone tree in Northern Ireland, it also expresses a growing concern for contemporary ecological issues.

McKennitt, who appeared at Carnegie Hall last fall with environmentalist Al Gore and a cast of celebrities in a tribute to Planet Earth, has had a lifelong interest in forestry, wildlife and conservation, and regularly harvests from her own garden. She notes that her "green thumb" is likely rooted in her rural Manitoba upbringing, where her mother was a nurse and her father was a livestock dealer.

"I don't recall much music in my home as I was growing up. I really only remember my grandmother playing the piano if our parents were away and she was putting us to bed."

She credits the musical community of nearby Morden with giving her the opportunity to learn, play, compete and perform.

"I started piano lessons at age five and then joined a children's choir. After that there were festivals and I enjoyed all of it. I was attracted to musical theatre, folk and Celtic music as I encountered it, but certainly not in the way that a youngster on the east coast of





Canada might have been immersed in that cultural music tradition.”

In high school, she developed an early appreciation of literature. Later, she enrolled at the University of Manitoba to study agricultural sciences, with a view to becoming a veterinarian. Three months into her courses, she dropped out to pursue her true passion, music.

“I like to say that music chose me. I felt that if I didn’t go with it I might always regret not having taken that chance.”

McKennitt spent four years at Stratford Theatre, playing, acting, composing, and reading to broaden her education.

“When my contract was not renewed I borrowed the money my parents had set aside for my education and made my first recording in a barn studio in Elora, Ontario. I had about 30 cassettes made, and would set out on Friday night from Stratford to Toronto so I could be up early to sell them at the city’s St. Lawrence Market.”

Her musical career grew steadily after she founded Quinlan Road - her own record label and management company - in 1985. She had released three full-length albums by the time she signed with Warner Brothers in 1991. Despite the major-label interest, however, her experiences as an ‘indie’ artist afforded her the business savvy to continue managing her own career.

“I would love to say I knew what I was doing when I decided to be my own manager, but it was more about the process of learning

what I did not want to do. It wasn’t the norm for most performers, and I can remember the folks at Warner Brothers in Los Angeles were a little surprised by my resolve to carve out my own career, but they eventually resigned themselves to my decision.”

That decision, she acknowledges, has come at a price.

“It is quite time-consuming. It means that I create less, but I can better take care of what I have created. Actually, I feel that it is a model that most people in the normal world - the world outside of the music industry - can relate to.”

Eschewing the typical trappings of celebrity, McKennitt continues to live and work in the quiet and quaint community of Stratford.

“The music business has changed drastically in my time. I now have an office of five, and being a small, self-contained enterprise has allowed us to remain standing while other deserving artists are not. It concerns me that it is now a much more challenging environment for artists who are just starting their careers.”

Early on, McKennitt felt the pressure to record and release a new album every couple of years.

“It wasn’t until the geography of my career widened that I allowed myself to be guided more creatively.”

While she had been drawn to Celtic music since the late 1970s, and her appreciation of the genre certainly deepened during the 1980s after visiting Ireland and Spain, she points to a 1991 visual arts exhibit in Venice that really opened her eyes to the scope of Celtic history.

“I remember being struck by the realization that these people were much, much more than a collection of anarchists dating back



into history. I began to learn about the geographic and historic spread of the Celts, and I was drawn into a rich, ancient tapestry of sounds and rhythms and stories.”

McKennitt notes that her musical journey has been a unique way of exploring her own Irish roots.

“There is something very infectious about the process. I think I headed off into history as an act of musical travel.”

“What really intrigued me was discovering myths, stories and practices that mirror each other, yet come from entirely different geographic areas.”

She was also inspired to study formal Irish history.

“It was a piecing together of the puzzle. I began to examine the music and the instruments and arrangements in the context of history, politics and economics to get a broader picture, a better understanding. Music has been the vehicle of my self-education in that it allowed me to explore history and culture in a more academic way. Because of that, I have perhaps been able to stretch the boundaries of traditional Celtic music.”

McKennitt is naturally drawn toward the spiritual, and believes that an open and relaxed mind allows for enhanced creativity. She refers to being ‘visited by ideas’, and loves to wander through new and spacious landscapes in places like Tuscany and Spain with a notebook and recording device. Those experiences eventually become lyrics

and melodies.

“Sometimes, the creative process is not unlike the determined trial and error of playing with a Rubik’s Cube.”

Her travels to Africa, the Mediterranean, China, and most recently, India, have enhanced both her world view and her worldly music, strengthening her already-held belief that we are all extensions of each other’s history.

“Wanting to learn about our neighbours is also a desire to learn about ourselves. I have simply chosen the Celts vehicle in which to do this. No doubt I could have chosen another conduit for my music and experienced just as interesting a journey as I have had with Celtic history. But that vehicle has taken me to so many places worldwide, and also down paths and into themes with little Celtic connection whatsoever.”

Interestingly, McKennitt admits that *Lost Souls* is considerably less Celtic than much of her past works.

“It does not follow the next chapter in my pursuit of the history of the Celts, but I still think that most people will be open to it.

“Given all of the personal and professional demands of the past decade - and the fact that the band will be on the road for 18 months starting this fall - I am just really glad and grateful to have had the opportunity to write, record and release new music.”

www.loreenamckennitt.com

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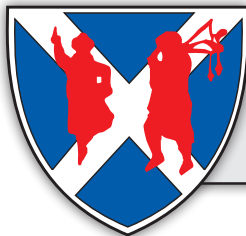
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Grayling Trout with Mushrooms and White Wine

The coracle dates back over 2000 years. It is a one-man, oval shaped boat not unlike a half walnut shell. The framework was constructed of willow bark and woven with hazel wood. Once the form was created, it was covered with the hide of a horse and a thin layer of tar to waterproof the vessel. The coracle was keelless, or flat-bottomed. This distributed the load evenly across the vessel and enabled the boat to navigate shallow waters - perfect for the rivers of Scotland, Ireland or Wales!

As it barely disturbed the waters, fishers could creep up on unsuspecting prey. The coraclers would paddle one-handed, dragging the net in the other, and draw the net downstream. When a fish was caught, each hauled up an end of the net until the two boats were brought to touch, and the fish was then secured.

Today there are various regattas involving the coracle, with at least

one boat sure to capsize at every race - which only adds to the fun of the community outings!

I would like to draw your attention to one event in particular; the Macmillan Coracle World Championships. Macmillan Cancer Support does fantastic work in Shropshire, U.K., near the Welsh border, to help people living with the disease. Over £20,000 pounds was raised in last year's regatta, and the hope is to surpass this figure in 2018. The event takes place each autumn on the River Severn. If you would like to get involved, please visit their website; www.coracleworldchampionship.co.uk

The River Severn is renowned for its Grayling trout; it is very tasty, with firm white meat. However, be sure to enjoy it immediately as it does not keep well!



Ingredients

2 grayling trout fillets
2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
½ cup white wine
1 cup fresh mushrooms
¼ cup chopped onions
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Heat oil in a large skillet. Add trout fillets, meat sides down. Sprinkle in chopped onion and sauté for approximately 5 mins. Turn trout fillets over and add mushrooms and wine. Simmer until wine reduces and mushrooms are cooked. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately with a salad of your choice. Serves 2.

Slàinte mhath! ~ Cabrini



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with **Andrew Ferguson**

Scotland's Caol Ila distillery is named for the body of water it gazes across, the majestic 'Sound of Islay' - a narrow but turbulent ribbon of water separating the islands of Islay and Jura.

The distillery is built almost precariously into the rocks of a steep embankment on a tiny bay. As with all of Islay's distilleries, Caol Ila had to be supplied exclusively by sea until the middle of the 20th century. Ships full of barley and oak barrels from the mainland sought a safe anchor from the tempestuous North Atlantic sea. They would return to the mainland with casks of the peaty, smoky, single malt whisky which Islay is still famous for. Then, as today, the vast majority of these casks were destined for blending.

Caol Ila - pronounced "cul-ee-lah" - is a facility full of contradictions. It is, by some margin, the largest of Islay's eight active distilleries, but it also produces one of Scotland's most dependable whiskies. Whisky Advocate Magazine refers to the distillery as 'Mr. Consistent' - a reflection on how few poor bottlings and casks of the whisky are in the marketplace. Is the size of the distillery and its efficiencies counterintuitively an asset? Perhaps, but these factors also make it one of the least interesting distilleries to visit on Islay, with one crucial footnote; the view from the Still Room at Caol Ila is unrivalled by any other distillery in Scotland, and possibly the world.

The Still Room's floor-to-ceiling windows offer a panoramic view across the Sound of Islay to the dramatic Isle of Jura beyond. Whales, dolphins and sea otters all frolic in

the waters out front, while the sun and clouds take turns revealing and obscuring the wilds of Jura.

In addition to the distilleries, there is much to see on Islay. One would be hard pressed, in fact, to see all eight of the island's active distilleries in three or four days. I am torn when asked to recommend which distilleries visitors should see; in a perfect world the answer would be all of them. Islay is, after all, Mecca for disciples of malt whisky gospel. But when a distillery needs to be cut, Caol Ila is often the first on the chopping block. Other than the view, the distillery isn't all that interesting compared with its neighbours.

Although its output is two and three times that of the next largest distilleries, almost none of Caol Ila's production is matured on the island. More than 99 per cent of its whisky matures in warehouses on the mainland.

The vast majority of Caol Ila's production is earmarked for blends - most importantly the world's second bestselling blended scotch whisky, Johnny Walker Black Label. While less than 5 per cent of the distillery's production is set aside for bottling as single malt by the owners, Diageo, a quirk of the Scotch whisky industry's supply chains has made Caol Ila the most widely available Islay single malt from independent bottlers. Whisky companies trade casks with one another to add complexity to their blends. Some of these casks find their way into the hands of independent bottlers; Gordon MacPhail, the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, Port Askaig, and others regularly bottle excellent single cask and small-batch bottlings of Caol Ila.

If you make the trek to Islay (and you should), and have the time, be sure to pop by Caol Ila to admire the view. Whether on tour from the Still Room or from the pier in front of the distillery, the views of the Sound of Islay and Jura - regardless of the weather - will take your breath away. More importantly, try every bottling of the whisky you can find; few, if any, of 'Mr. Consistent' are likely to disappoint!

Johnny Walker Black Label: This, like Guinness, is often the best of a lot of bad choices in most venues. The whisky is dry, smoky and malty; not mind-blowing, but very drinkable. **\$55**

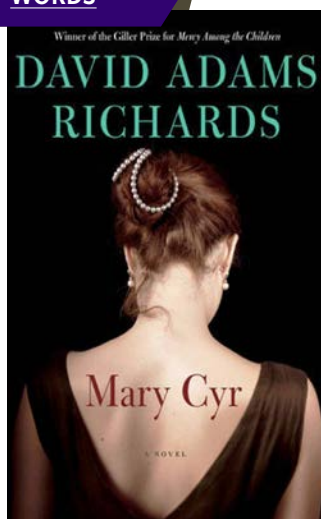
Finlaggan Eilean Mor Islay Single Malt: Named for the seat of the Lords of the Isles on Islay, this mystery malt is big, malty and classic Caol Ila...even if they don't explicitly call it that! **\$60**

Caol Ila 12 Year: A stalwart single malt expression, white fruits and citrus with malt and salty sea smoke. Consistently good! **\$89**

Port Askaig 19 Year: A stunning older Caol Ila, delicate and tropical with the profile of a much older whisky. A bargain at any price! **\$195**

Caol Ila 30 Year: Big, but rounded nicely with loads of fruit and a delicate peaty profile reminiscent of Port Ellen. **\$800**

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Mary Cyr

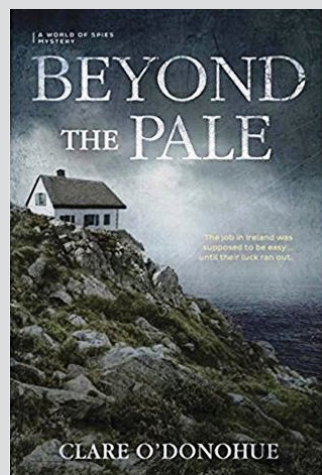
By David Adams Richards
Doubleday
420 pp / \$34.99

The 'Bard of the Miramichi' is back with his best novel in more than a decade. Exploring the larger themes of power, loss, remorse, conscience, and redemption, Canada's finest scribe (and newly-appointed Senator) David Adams Richards takes readers from the slums of South America to the east coast tributaries of his native New Brunswick. When a young boy is found dead in Mary Cyr's hotel room in Mexico, the trail of justice uncovers the dark and murky depths of her family's fortune. En route, Officer John Delano - familiar to readers from the author's previous works - uncovers corporate corruption, and wrestles with the demons of his own past. A stirring and powerful narrative that further cement's Richards' legacy as the country's finest literary craftsman. ~ SPC

Beyond The Pale

By Clare O' Donohue
Midnight Books
360 pp / \$15.99

It's been a creative whirlwind for Irish-American author Clare O' Donohue since the release of her debut novel in 2008. The past decade has seen success for both her 'Kate Conway' and 'Someday Quilts' mystery series, with each book outselling the previous as her following flourishes. Her latest work, *Beyond The Pale*, signals the start of a new series. In the book, two college professors are recruited by Interpol to secure a valuable manuscript in Ireland. A simple assignment quickly twists and turns for the worse, however, as the pair are tracked by an unknown assailant. As with the author's previous efforts, the strong narrative arc carries readers along for the suspense-filled ride. Look for this one atop the bestseller list in the coming months. ~ SPC



The Wolfe Tones Phenomenon

By Alex Fell
Choice Publishing
194 pp / €20.00

It is almost incredulous that a proper telling of the role that one of the Emerald Isle's greatest folk bands played hasn't been told until now. With over two dozen live and studio recordings of Irish rebel music to its name, the Dublin-based band continues to influence countless artists both at home and abroad. Thankfully, author Alex Fell has written more than a simple biography, instead placing the sometimes-controversial band and its vast volume of work within the context of Eire's social, political, and economic upheaval of the past half-century. The result is an insightful, important work that is both academic and accessible, and can be enjoyed by readers young, old, and in-between. More pertinently, perhaps, the tome will inspire audiences to revisit the group's music. ~ SPC

Heaven Help Us

By Jo Macleod
TellWell
418 pp

Self-described as "a modern day ghost story, inspired by true events," *Heaven Help Us* is proof that truth is stranger than fiction, and that the best stories contain both. More than magical realism, the other-worldly tale of two Irish siblings and their mother meeting in the after-life - and an ensuing 'spirit rescue' with the help of a modern-day intuitive - is a masterfully-woven tapestry of supernatural threads. Canadian author Jo Macleod - who was born in Scotland and later studied spiritualism on the Isle of Man - draws upon her own experiences to construct and connect the dots between the physical and metaphysical, inviting readers to suspend their disbelief as they venture into the paranormal. A work that is both beautiful and evocative. ~ SPC





Chvrches

Love is Dead

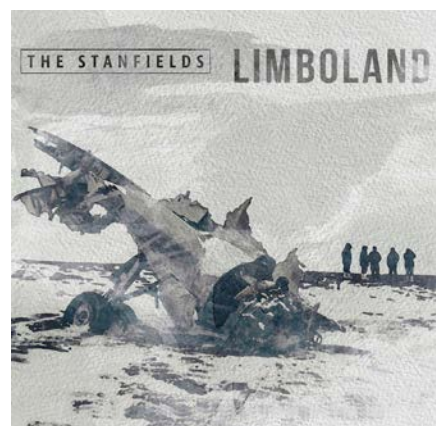
Those who know me know that I am a sucker for good, poppy hooks in any musical genre. I had an eargasm with *Love is Dead*, the third offering from Scottish synth-pop band Chvrches (pronounced Churches). Written and recorded over 14 months, and featuring the genius of Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics and Matt Beringer of The National, these 13 songs take the Glasgow-based trio's surreal style and sound to the next level. Powered by the first single, *Get Out*, the new work is less ethereal and abstract than previous efforts, while still highlighting the band's experimental edges. American producer Greg Kurstin makes the magic happen, and vocalist Lauren Mayberry may be the finest frontwoman to come out of 'ye ould country' since Annie Lennox. ~ SPC

The Stanfields

Limboland

Nova Scotia's favourite Celt-Rockers come of age on their fifth full-length release, *Limboland*.

From the opening salvo of *Afraid of the World* to the closing chords of (bonus track) *Blow Winds Blow*, the kick-ass quintet shows a commitment to the craft of songwriting. Perhaps inspired by the great storytelling traditions of Atlantic Canada, these 11 tracks ebb and flow like a stormy sea - by turns rocking and rollicking listeners with strong melodies and soaring harmonies. Credit goes to the band for staying true to their sonic roots - Joe Strummer, Social Distortion, Dropkick Murphys - while carving out a solid identity all their own. A guest appearance by Cassie and Maggie MacDonald is a sweet touch, further pushing the Stanfields' vibe up and away. ~ SPC



Connla

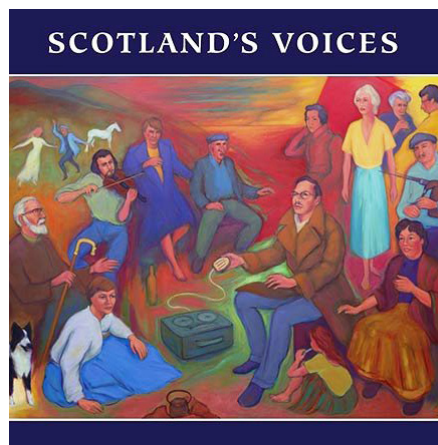
The Next Chapter

Despite the forgettable album cover and title, *The Next Chapter* from Northern Ireland quintet Connla might very well be the best 'trad' recording I have heard over the last while. Upon further research, I was pleased to discover that the band - whose members hail from both Armagh and Derry, and met while studying music at the University of Ulster - have picked up an array of awards and accolades since the release of their debut EP in 2015. Deservedly so, I might add. Singer Ciara McCafferty's lush harmonies lilt effortlessly over gentle uilleann pipes, flutes, whistles, harp, guitar, and more on this strong selection of 11 classic and contemporary compositions - further proof that Celtic culture is alive and well in the six counties. ~ SPC

Scotland's Voices

Various Artists

Inspired by Alexander Moffat's painting of the same name, this terrific 16-track collection is an homage to some of Scotland's finest singers and songwriters, past and present, including Jeannie Robertson, Belle Stewart, Willie Scott, Aly Bain, Jimmy MacBeath, and others. The real treats here are Dolina MacLennan's stirring take on *Tha Mi Duilich*, Hugh MacDiarmid's powerful and poignant version of *The Watergaw*, and Flora MacNeil's stunning rendition of *A Mhic Iain Ic Sheumais*. More than a mere selection of strong songs, however, the anthology does well to capture the spirit and sound of a country, while doing its bit to preserve and promote traditional Celtic culture. A great project by the good folks at Greentrax Recordings that will be enjoyed by listeners of all ages. ~ SPC



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Matt MacIsaac



Matt MacIsaac does what he loves and loves what he does



Canadian piper Matt MacIsaac is no stranger to Celtic culture. His parents - who own and operate MacIsaac Kilt Makers in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia - are both of Celtic stock; his mother is of Scottish descent, and his father has Irish roots. His sister, Veronica, is one of the foremost tartan fashion designers in the world.

"Growing up in that part of the country, my family listened to a lot of the popular Irish and Scottish groups of the day," he shares via email.

As such, MacIsaac - who now resides in Ontario - believes that he was born to play the pipes.

"Piping has always been an important part of my life. Even before I knew how to play, the pipes were all around me. My mother's three brothers - Kenny, Allan, and Ian Mackenzie - all play the pipes. Listening to them throughout my infancy and childhood inspired me to learn."

Other influences included Allan and Iain MacDonald from Glenuig, Scotland, and the renowned Dr. Angus - one of the best-known pipers in the world - who lived close to MacIsaac's grandmother.

"I was fortunate to have had several formative lessons with him when I was young, starting at about the age of 10."

More than twenty years later, MacIsaac still yearns to learn.

"I continue to play the pipes because I love it. I haven't really known anything else besides piping and music. Talk to anyone who plays pipes in a band or on their own, and they will probably agree that it is very much a way of life, rather than a hobby, or even a career."

Over the years there have been many career highlights, including winning a Silver Medal at the 1998 Oban Games piping competition.

"Shortly after that, I left competitive piping for a long while and went on the road as a touring musician. Being in Natalie MacMaster's band when we toured with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones was a massive treat for me, as was recording on several of her albums."

He admits that a career in music is not without its challenges.

"Making a living when you work in a niche market isn't always easy. It is certainly rewarding to do something you love as a career, but sometimes it can be difficult to choose between what makes financial sense and what would be most creatively rewarding."

"It also requires a lot of self-promotion and marketing. As a traditional musician, the general approach - whether nature or nurtured - seems to be 'don't talk about yourself.' However, it seems to be a necessity these days."

MacIsaac currently plays a set of Fletcher drones, and considers himself to be a 'modern traditionalist.'

"In some ways, I would call myself a traditional piper - while in other ways, not at all."

"If I am playing in a folk band I sound fairly traditional. In a pipe band, my sound is more modern. But when I am in solo piping setting, I am a modern traditionalist."

After a recent trip to Edmonton for a workshop with the Edmonton Youth Pipe Band, he was inspired to become more involved with up-and-coming pipers.

"I am honestly not doing near enough at the moment in that regard. I'd like to change that."

Despite the abundance of daily distractions, he believes that young people are still very interested in piping.

"It's a bit daunting, trying to compete with sports, devices, short attention spans. But I do think there is still interest out there for young people to join an organization that teaches and promotes musical skills, social interaction, physical activity and discipline."

In addition to working with students at his home studio - both in person and online - MacIsaac will be busy over the coming year, with teaching gigs at the National Piping Centre's Virginia School in June and at the Gaelic College in Cape Breton in August. He is also the Pipe Major of the 400 Tactical Helicopter Squadron Pipes & Drums, a competitive Grade 2 Pipe Band based in Borden, Ontario.

"On the performance side of things, I will be playing with the wonderful group Beolach from Cape Breton at a few shows, and a new piping album is on my list of things to do. I guess we will see where the year takes me."

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Laura Risk

Laura Risk reaps the rewards of fiddling

Laura Risk began classical violin lessons as a child, but she didn't take up fiddle until she was introduced to it through her best friend, Athena Tergis, several years later.

In 1986, Tergis attended Alasdair Fraser's Valley of the Moon Scottish Fiddling School in California. Risk went along the following year. Fraser, one of the world's great contemporary fiddlers, soon became a musical mentor to Risk.

"It's a week-long summer camp - total immersion in fiddle music," explains Risk via email. "I have been attending ever since, first as a student and now as a teacher.

"At first, what really drew me to fiddling was the sense of community. At fiddle camp, people stay up until all hours playing music just for the fun of it - it brings people together. I had never seen anything like that before and I really wanted to be a part of it.

"I also loved the musical freedom of fiddling. You learn the songs and study the style, of course, but in the end it's about finding your own voice and expressing that. Every fiddler has a unique sound and a unique way of playing the tunes."

Born in San Francisco, Risk has been told that she has a "California Scottish" sound, which, she notes, is "a growing, sub-genre of Scottish fiddling."

She is "drawn to the sound of older fiddlers" and considers herself a traditional fiddler, although she has some diverging thoughts about what "tradition" means. She recently finished a doctoral dissertation in musicology at McGill University in Montreal. The dissertation examines Quebec's traditional instrumental music "looking, in part, at how the institutionalization of folklore studies and the commercialization of recorded sound redefined folk or traditional music in Quebec in the early 20th century."

In a way, explains Risk, tradition is more of a construct than something with a factual definition. "When you label music as 'traditional,' you're mythologizing it, in a way, and foregrounding those aspects that tend to remain unchanged. That's what makes it such a useful tool for association, a musical repertoire, and a playing style with a national or regional history. Musicians can choose to make music that aligns with the idea of tradition, or that challenges it, or even music that does both simultaneously.

"I find that ongoing dialogue, between the music itself and the idea of tradition, to be a very productive and creative place."

Risk believes that more young people than ever are interested in fiddling. For her own part, she continues to fiddle because of its av-



enue to personal expression, as well as the comfort of community.

"Those kinds of connections, when they come, keep me going. I try my best to help build a sense of community and to encourage people who are just getting into it to find their own musical voice."

Her own musical voice has provided her with many career highlights, including appearances at Celtic Connections in Glasgow, Celtic Colours in Cape Breton, and at the famed Newport Folk Festival.

Her collaboration with Glenn Patterson also holds a special place in her heart. Patterson, a writer from Belfast, teamed up with Risk to produce a CD of local archival recordings for the village of Douglstown, Quebec - a small village at the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula with a strong sense of Irish heritage and a rich tradition of fiddling, singing, and dancing.

"We collected homemade reel-to-reels and cassettes and digitized them, interviewed local musicians, and wrote a 30-page CD booklet about local musicians, repertoire, and playing style."

At the CD release concert, the village hall was packed with people.

"For the next few days, I heard the CD coming out of cars and in houses all over Douglstown. That was three years ago, and now I hear Douglstown tunes in sessions all the time. I feel lucky and honoured that I was able to play a part in bringing that music to a wider public."

Going forward, Risk shows no signs of slowing down. This summer, she is co-curating #PerformingResearch series at the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention in Aberdeen with dancer Nic Gareiss. As well, she will be performing at various festivals across the country, and even spending a week teaching in Australia.

"I encourage your readers to contribute to the scholarship fund at their local fiddlecamp - and even to take up the fiddle themselves... it's never too late."

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Yovanna Torres

Yovanna Torres is living proof that it's never too late to learn to dance

When Yovanna Torres first fell for Irish dance, there was only one dance academy in her native Mexico teaching that particular style.

"I have loved Celtic music since I can recall," she shares via email. "I remember going to see Riverdance when I was in high school and shedding tears of joy when I saw the first number, Reel Around the Sun."

At the time, however, Torres couldn't afford to attend the lone Irish dance academy, so she waited a couple of years and began learning as an adult. She currently has eight years of experience under her belt - mostly self-taught.

"Now I have even more reasons for which I dance," she explains. "The essential reasons remain the same, but the more I get immersed in Irish dance - its roots, history and culture - the more I like it."

"I started as a competitive dancer, but I studied traditional and old styles when I attended the Blas Summer School at the Irish World Academy at the University of Limerick."

There, Torres learned from several renowned traditional dancers, including Emma O'Sullivan and Liam Scanlon.

"Blas' in Gaelic means 'taste,' which perfectly describes the variety of techniques taught there, such as sean-nós and Cape Breton dance - which I fell in love with - as well as competitive dancing and other forms."

Throughout her training, Torres often longed for a mentor. As a self-taught dancer, she wished she had someone "who could tell me if I was doing things wrong, correct me or even motivate me at the competitions." The Irish World Academy gave her the chance to learn directly and draw inspiration from teachers.

Since then, she has become a mentor for others.

"I moved from Mexico City to Guadalajara when I was 24 years old. I wanted to keep dancing, so the director of the Irish dance academy in Mexico City helped me open a school in Guadalajara under her instruction."

Torres has also worked with a children's home called Little Ranch With Hope, offering free Irish dance classes to youths and inviting them to the academy.

Today, she teaches people of all ages, from a variety of backgrounds. With major productions like Riverdance and Lord

of the Dance touring Mexico regularly, residents have become increasingly interested in the traditional Irish art form.

"My students can expect more than dance lessons - they learn cultural aspects regarding Irish dance; why they dance that way, why they wear wigs, how dance has evolved through the years, the social implications, etc...as well as the differences between cèilidhs, step dance, set dancing, and sean-nós."

"I wanted to focus not only on competition, but also on the artistic part of dance, the importance of being on a stage, and of self-expression through dance. And of course, to have fun and feel fulfilled."

Over the course of her career, Torres has earned scholarships and performed alongside many other talented dancers and musicians. In 2012, she was part of the ensemble for "Take The Floor," a performance associated with Riverdance. Take The Floor saw roughly 50 dancers from around the world participate in 10 days of rehearsals, followed by a one-night show in Dublin.

Last March, her dance academy - Luna Celta - was invited by the Irish Embassy to perform at the Municipal Palace of Jalisco for Global Greening 2017, a worldwide initiative by Tourism Ireland. Famous attractions and sites around the globe literally "go green" for St. Patrick's Day. Torres notes that it was a "diplomatic event with the Governor of Jalisco and the Irish Ambassador, Sonja Hyland."

And Torres still has plenty of experiences ahead of her. In September, she began studying a Master of Arts in Irish Traditional Dance Performance back at the Irish World Academy at the University of Limerick.

"My goal is to keep spreading Irish dance both around the world and with the people around me. When I finish the MA I would like to get the TCRG certification in order to keep teaching with better technique and a stronger understanding of Irish dance."

"I have seen real miracles through dance and I believe it is a great tool of social change and awareness for people of all ages."

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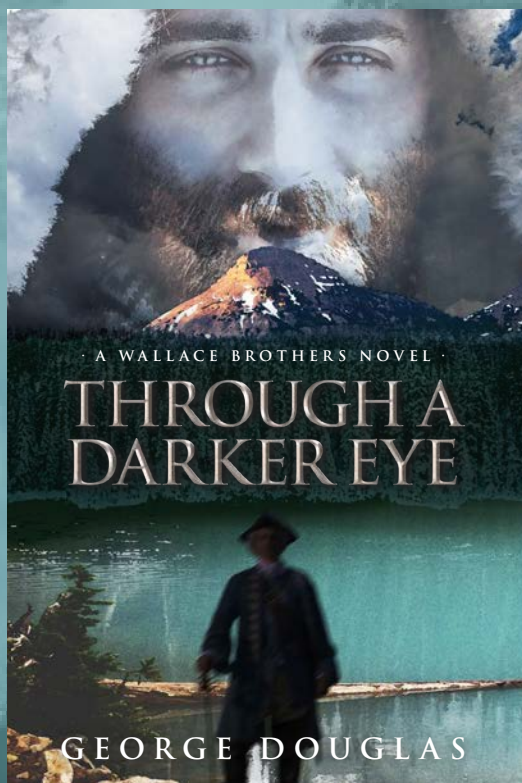


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George Douglas was born and grew up in Scotland, and has lived in Canada for over thirty years. He lives and writes in Vancouver, BC and travels extensively in Scotland and North America to research the historical and geographic background for his fiction.

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malad valley welsh festival



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

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

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www.welshfestival.com

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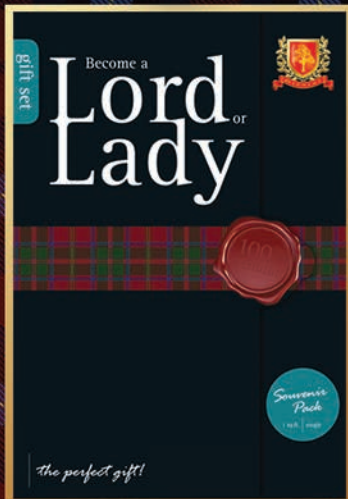


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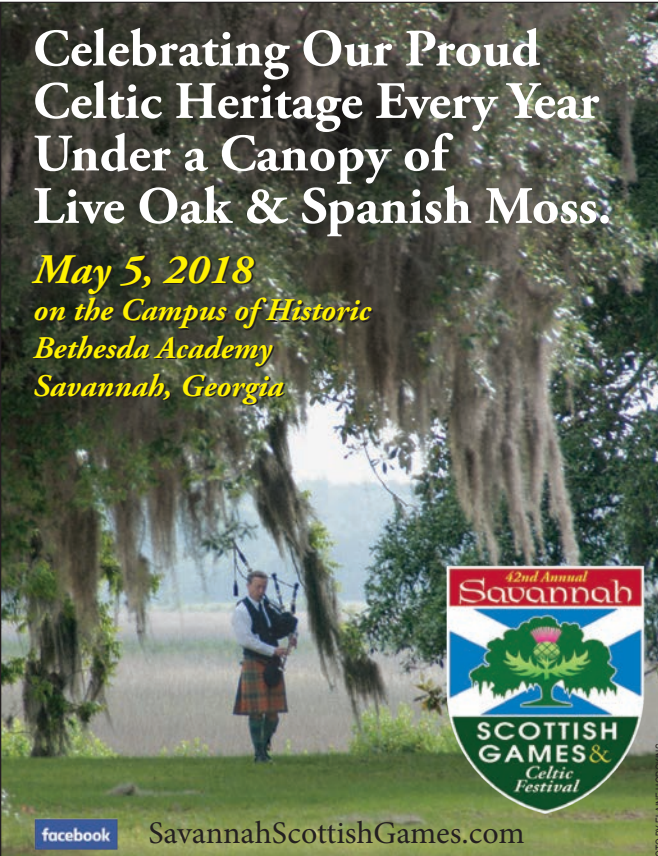
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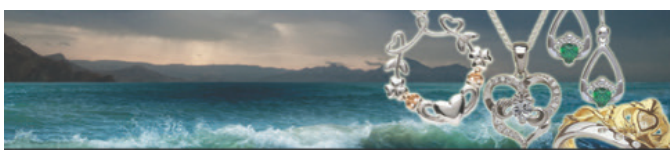
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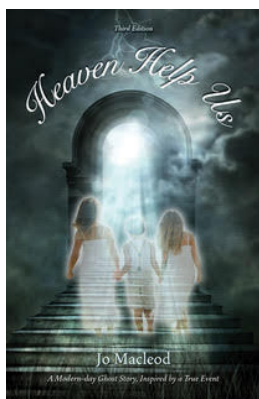
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Emma Hannigan; 1972-2018



After ten cancer diagnoses, popular Irish writer Emma Hannigan finally succumbed to her illness in March, leaving behind a lasting legacy of hope.

Once a tireless ambassador for Breast Cancer Ireland (BCI), she complained of feeling “as useless as a chocolate teapot” just before her death, and begged others to take up her fight through a Text Cure campaign. In doing so, she sparked an initiative that quickly raised €126,000, resulting in BCI announcing the founding of the Emma Hannigan Breast Cancer Research Fellowship for pioneering studies at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

“Farewell Emma, your sparkle will never fade,” concluded a moving video tribute from BCI showing Hannigan front and centre at many fundraising and awareness-building events.

In 2005, at age 33, with two pre-school children, the Irish scribe discovered she had the BRCA1 gene mutation, which carries an 85 per cent risk of developing breast cancer and a 50 per cent chance of developing ovarian cancer. She chose to have both breasts and both ovaries removed.

“I wasn’t actually sick at the time, but I felt like a ticking time bomb,” she wrote in her online blog. “Opting for surgery was not a shocking or crazy decision for me. Quite the opposite, I felt huge relief. I was glad there was something I could do to make my body safer. After breast reconstruction, I thought I had cancer pipped at the post and would sail happily off into the distance.”

However, just two years later, and in spite of her surgery, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Following treatment she was diagnosed again in 2008 and “got a free ticket on the chemotherapy train.” In 2009, “the cheeky bastard” returned and she underwent radiation treatments. The cycle of remission and reoccurrence continued until February when she was told all of her options had been exhausted.

“The time I knew was borrowed must be given back soon,” she wrote just two weeks before her passing.

A trained chef and a beauty specialist - who lived in Bray, Co. Wicklow, with her husband and children, next door to her parents - Hannigan used her time sidelined by cancer to become a much-loved writer.

“Once I started I knew this was the missing piece of the jigsaw to make my life complete.”

She penned 11 novels, as well as two books about her cancer journey, *Talk to the Head Scarf* and *All to Live For*.

Just as her last narrative, *Letters to My Daughters*, was being released, Hannigan announced her cancer was now terminal.

“Usually I’d spend the next few weeks chatting about it (the book) and inevitably daring to wonder if you like it. Because this is the time when all authors want to hide in the back of the wardrobe in case nobody likes their new baby! I won’t need to hide, unfortunately, but I sincerely hope you enjoy it.”

Hannigan need not have worried; her fans, book stores, and fellow Irish writers rallied to boost her new work to become an instant best-seller. Several stores donated the profits to cancer agencies. It was, many said, the least they could do for a woman who was particularly generous in her encouragement of fellow writers.

Dublin fiction writer Ciara Geraghty described Hannigan to *The Irish Times* as graceful, petite and stylish - “an Irish, blonde Audrey Hepburn” - with tremendous courage and resilience.

“Emma always said that she would never let cancer define her and, right up to the end, it never did. She remained graceful under fire.”

Actress and author Claudia Carroll told the *Irish Times* Hannigan was gone far too soon.

“She was the most positive, buoyant and life-affirming person I ever had the privilege to meet. I like to think she is above now, sharing a posthumous gin and tonic with Maeve Binchy and Anita Notaro, three greats together, happy, and at peace.”

Ever the writer, with the help of an audio dictation device, Hannigan left a final blog and scripted her own funeral service, saying she hoped to be remembered as someone who fancied fairies, unicorns and angels. She urged family, friends, writers, readers and fellow cancer warriors to avoid negativity and “gravitate toward the light and laughter.”

“Like a moth to a flame, remembering not to get your pretty wings burnt. You’ll like it better there, I promise. Farewell and thank you, I am taking a bow. Until we meet again, may all that is good and decent be yours.”



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