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Fáilte!

One of my greatest enjoyments each summer is to sit on my deck overlooking the Arisaig waters of the Northumberland Strait, taking in some of the most picturesque sunsets anywhere to be found. The tranquility and oneness with nature nurtures much, the least of which is reflection on the day's activity and on life's unfinished ambitions.

This was a great summer; it was a delight to have two of our children and their partners home from Alberta, especially our new born granddaughter, Isla Grace. She donned a Nova Scotia tartan and, at five months was probably the youngest Celt at this year's Antigonish Highland Games.

The games and festivals were many, and two of my favourites to look forward to over the coming months are the Celtic Colours International Festival in Cape Breton and the New Hampshire Highland Games at Loon Mountain.

Across the Atlantic, the citizens of another Arisaig – between Morar and Mallaig on the western coast of Scotland, overlooking the Sound of Arisaig – have also been reflecting, debating and deciding on what their future may hold. On September 18, 2014, the referendum vote on independence will decide whether the country reclaims its power from Westminster or stays within the parliamentary union of 1707.

In this issue, we invited three prominent Scots to present their views on independence: the Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond, sitting First Minister of the Scottish Parliament; the Honorable Jack McConnell, Member of the Scottish Parliament from 1999 to 2011 and the third First Minister of Scotland (2001 to 2007); and, Brian Wilson, a Member of Parliament for the Labour Party from 1987 until 2005, serving as a Minister of State from 1997 to 2003. As well, our Managing Editor and Montreal native, Stephen Patrick Clare, offers his reflections on the anxiety and uncertainty experienced during two Quebec independence votes.

Among the Scottish Diaspora, there are countless opinions being offered, many of them for independence. It is easy to get caught up in the romanticism of an independent Scotland – William Wallace, Bannockburn, Robert the Bruce – and there is no denying the Northern Celts, both Scots and Irish, suffered at the hands of the English Crown.

As history weaves its way through the centuries, however, time and generations erase the memory of atrocities. We forgive and move on. Scottish independence is not about the past. It is about the future.

I recently had the opportunity to hear Salmond make an impassioned plea for his country's independence. He explained that independence is not about any political party; it is about a fundamental democratic choice for the people of Scotland; the power to decide who should govern and the power to be able to build a country that reflects the priorities and values of Scotland as a society and as a people. He added that decisions about Scotland need to be made by the people who care the most about Scotland. Scotland's future must be in Scotland's hands.

It is a compelling argument. However, so are those against independence, of which there are many. Whatever the outcome, the people of Scotland are the ones who will decide their future on September 18, 2014.

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



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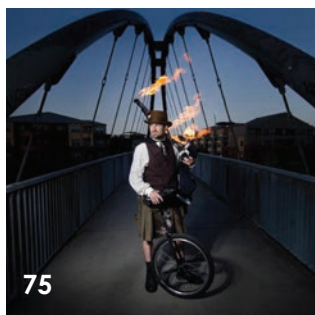
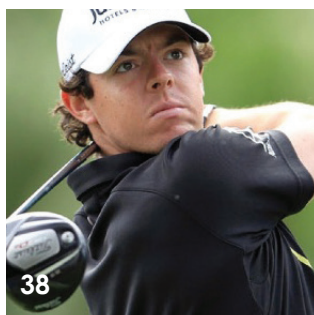
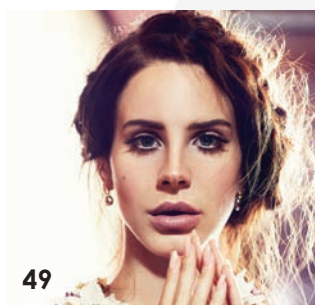
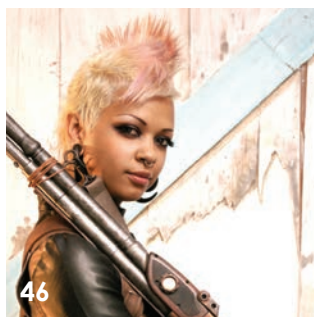
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Our fall cover photo is of Scottish-American singer-songwriter Lana Del Rey



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DE *tha* DOL



Dude! Let's hit the waves – in Scotland

Surf's up! Are we talking Hawaii? California? How about Thurso, Scotland? The small town in Caithness hosts an annual surf competition every year, something that seems fairly unlikely in itself when you consider that it shares the same latitude as Moscow and Oslo, according to feature writer Kate Ball. Ball's story on Thurso's surfing, on the website *The Skinny*, notes that for years the location was the most northerly point on the Association of Surfing Professionals World Qualifying Series. One feature of Thurso is "the Bowl," located six miles west of the town. The Scottish Surfing Federation describes it as a "treacherously sharp, shallow reef offering no margin for error." Despite the breathtakingly cold water, the world's surf professionals come to compete at Thurso, which will host the UK Pro Surf Championships in late October/early November, 2014. More than 100 surfers are expected to compete in the event, which is anticipated to attract some 2,000 spectators.

Country singer, rugby player among unorthodox cast for Dylan Thomas film

Dylan Thomas might look askance at some of the casting for the new film version of his radio play, *Under Milk Wood*. Joining Rhys Ifans, who will star as First Voice, are country singer Charlotte Church and rugby player Gareth Edwards, according to a report on the BBC. This marks the second time the Welsh poet's play has been made into a film; the first in 1971 starred Richard Burton. Director Kevin Allen told the British broadcaster, "We want to veer away from delivering a dull, literal reflection of Thomas' original work, intending instead to explore some of the more erotic, visceralness of the richly funny, filthily fluid, magical dreamscape – whilst not stooping to mess with Thomas' original text." *Under Milk Wood*, first broadcast in 1952, was set in the fictional Welsh fishing village of Llareggub, which – despite its Welsh-sounding name – is "bugger all" spelled backwards.



Let the strings sing

National days in Canada already include Heritage Day, Tartan Day and, of course, Canada Day. Possibly soon to join them will be National Fiddling Day. A private member's bill passed its third reading in the Canadian senate and is now headed to the House of Commons. If the bill successfully passes, the third Saturday of every May would be designated National Fiddling Day. According to an article in the *Summerside Journal-Pioneer*, renowned Nova Scotia fiddler Natalie MacMaster said, "When touring Canada, I am always amazed at how our country is united coast-to-coast by the fiddle." Senator Elizabeth Hubley, who proposed the bill, told the *Journal-Pioneer* that she envisioned a day where fiddlers would give back to their community by "entertaining and sharing their talents to make people happy, to lift their spirits, and celebrate the unifying nature of this country through the magic of music and the universality of this beautiful instrument."

A dentist with drive

James Hull has a big smile – and small wonder: The Welsh dentist has amassed a fortune in sports cars through his work on teeth and now he's aiming to sell them all. Wales Online reported that the dentist has 457 cars. As you can imagine, they must have taken a bite out of his income – to the tune of £100 million. The collection, according to the paper, includes Elton John's Bentley and a Mini-Traveller once owned by Lord Mountbatten. Hull earned his money building a chain of dental surgeries and then selling them in 2006 to a private equity firm, Wales Online noted. Will the collection leave a cavity in Hull's life? He told the website he's not certain what he'll do with the empty warehouse once the cars are gone, but says, "I'm a collector. Who knows what will turn up next," adding that his wife hopes that whatever it is, it will be something smaller...like stamps.



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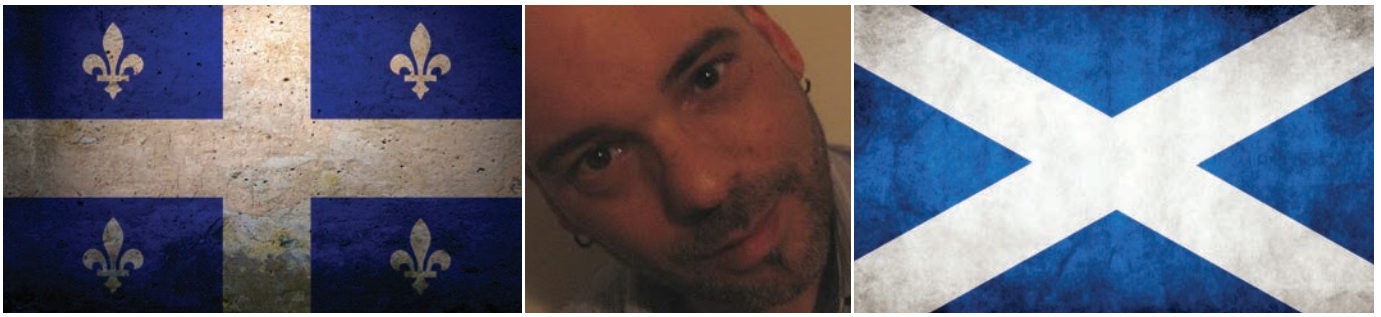
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first word

Searching the Scottish Soul

It isn't often that I get the first word in here at Celtic Life International HQ – or the last word, for that matter. In fact, if I am doing my job properly, then you don't hear from me at all.

However, with the Scottish vote on independence only weeks away, I have been reflecting upon my own experiences with referendums.

I was raised in Beaconsfield, a mostly Anglo, Caucasian, middle-class suburban community on Montreal's West Island.

Like many who grew up in Quebec in the 1970s and 1980s, politics was a part of my childhood landscape; I remember the quiet concerns of my parents and our neighbours when the pro-sovereignty Parti Quebecois swept to provincial power in 1976; I recollect school friends moving away to Toronto en masse over the next four years; I recall the sighs of relief after the 1980 referendum, when close to 60 per cent of eligible voters chose to stay within Canadian confederation.

Only 15 years later, Quebecers were again asked to vote on their future. Though the result was the same, the margin of victory was slimmer; 50.6 per cent to 49.4 per cent. Even more amazing was that a whopping 93.5 per cent of eligible voters – almost five million residents – cast their ballot that day.

I sense that same passion from many Scots and Scottish expats who I have spoken with around the world over the last year. All, it appears, have an opinion on the upcoming referendum, and each makes a convincing case for their stance.

And while the issues facing Scottish voters on September 18 are vastly different from those once at stake with Quebec sovereignty – and far too numerous to note here – the sentiments are strikingly similar.

Speaking with many of my Francophone friends during my younger years, their prevailing concern seemed to be the preservation of their language, culture and identity. My answer to them at that time, as it remains today, was simple; with over six million French speaking residents in Quebec, those things were not, aren't now, nor will be in danger of disappearing anytime soon.

Likewise, who doesn't consider Scottish culture and identity as being unique and separate from the UK? Many people in North America – and likely around the world – aren't even aware that Scotland has any ties with Britain, other than geography. One way or another, like Quebec or Northern Ireland, Scotland stands on its own two feet.

Interestingly, in 2006, the Canadian Government recognized Quebec as a “distinct” society, and as a “nation within a nation.” While the gesture was symbolic in nature, it did seem to appease the electorate with regard to independence – just ask Pauline Marois of the Parti Quebecois, who formed a minority provincial government in 2012, only to be tossed out less than two years later after merely hinting at another referendum.

Like Quebecers, who told the rest of the world to *laissez-nous faire* in both 1980 and 1995, Scots are asking us to mind our own business before and on September 18. But those outside of Scotland with roots and ties to the country have something at play here also, especially those with family “back home.”

Ultimately, however, it is the Scottish people who must decide the fate of their nation – as it should be.

Ask anyone who is, or has been, in a long-term relationship; is the cost of separation or divorce higher than the price of staying together? That question requires some serious soul-searching before the answer becomes apparent.

And if anything is a sure victory here, it is this; by exploring the idea of independence – and collectively discussing and debating its pros and cons – it has Scots thinking about who they are and who they want to be. And that can only make them stronger as a people – as it did in La Belle Province.

Like Quebec, Scottish independence is, I believe, inevitable. The question isn't if – it is when.

Stephen Patrick Clare, Managing Editor

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Located online in cyberspace, and physically in Crawford Bay, British Columbia, the store stocks Medieval to modern-day, northern European-inspired clothing, armour, alternative kilts and jewellery. Shoppers can also find home décor and accessories, historical and fantasy replicas based on Celtic and Scandinavian mythology as well as sources such as Harry Potter, Game of Thrones and Lord of the Rings.

Store owner LaurieLee Mills goes by the Gaelic name of Brahva O. Cwmevos, which she says she received in a Celtic naming ceremony and which means Woaded Brave Daughter of the Glen. Her own background is a mix of Scottish, Irish and Norse and it was, in fact, the search to find out about her own ancestors that inspired her to start the business.

Along the way, she says, a lot of people became inspired by her discovery that First Nations beliefs almost paralleled those of Northern Europeans. For example, Mills says people need to be made aware that in Sweden and many other places "our tribes" wore feathered cloaks, headdresses and mohawks and slept in teepees as well as sharing sacred pipes. "The only difference is that each Celtic or

Scandinavian tribe had its own style," she says.

The Celts and Vikings Store caters to a diverse customer base; people of all ages with Northern European ancestry, the movies and theatre industry and night-life subcultures such as Goths and Steampunkers. Fantasy hats and animal totem accessories also appeal to attendees of fantasy and electronica festivals.

The biggest challenge for Mills was to find artists as suppliers. "I wanted a store that was unique and not like the modern Scottish or Irish shop," she explains. "I wanted to take you back in time, pre-borders, when the tribes were everywhere. I wanted to be the store that had everything in one place, from costumes to occupational tools, accessories to weapons and home décor, tableware for Medieval feasts and more. So I made it happen."

If it was challenging to make the store a reality, then the rewards are twofold, according to Mills. She says she gains pride in her heritage and enjoys "seeing the twinkle in someone's eye when they catch the ancestral calling or understanding as well."

For Mills the store is meant to act as a centre where differences are embraced

and individuality is celebrated. "We are dedicated to creating a safe community that helps connect people to their ancestors, giving a sense of pride in their history," she says.

The store owner also believes more could be done to preserve and promote Celtic culture. "I do think we have some work to do as we are losing some of the languages in the more remote areas as the elders grow older," Mills points out. She says there are also 150 or more books waiting for someone to start the daunting task of translating them.

Nonetheless, thanks to a number of documentary teams at work, Mills says great strides have been made in understanding finds from digs and ancient sites, thanks to the Time Team and other BBC documentaries.

Mills' next undertaking is working to create a cultural centre for workshops, and a fantasy resort with six micro-homes and a mythology creature forest. "Anyone who can contribute and wishes to come help, I welcome you," Mills says. She's offering a free weekend stay for every \$300 contribution or two days of sweat equity.

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SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS



A native of Fredericton, Craig Leonard is the Minister of Energy and Mines for the province of New Brunswick in Atlantic Canada. Here, he answers our Seven Celtic Questions.

What are your own Celtic roots?

A large part of my ancestry is Celtic and both my parents speak the Gaelic language, as did all of my ancestors on the Celtic side. My ancestors came to the Maritimes from Scotland in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Growing up, I was always exposed to Celtic culture and can vividly remember trips to Cape Breton and the Gaelic College.

Why are those roots important to you?

It is important to know the traditions and culture of our ancestors as it forms the basis of how we see ourselves. Celtic culture is clearly alive and well in New Brunswick through the arts and music, but the influence can be seen in our community spirit and pride.

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

I take pride in the fact I am of Celtic heritage, especially when I think of the roles others with the same background have played in Canadian and New Brunswick politics. I like to think that my Celtic roots are responsible for my willingness to stand for what is right and just, and to work hard on behalf of those who put their trust in me as their representative.

How are you involved with the Celtic community?

My family has many friends throughout the Celtic community and, as a result, I not only participate in, but I am frequently requested to speak at Celtic events such as the NB Highland Games, the Saint Andrew's Society and Robbie Burns Day. You might even see me running in my kilt in Fredericton's annual kilted five-kilometre race!

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

It is important for people from all ethnic backgrounds to keep their history, language and traditions alive. We in New Brunswick have a rich mosaic of cultures, which we share with each other for the benefit of all. The Celtic culture is a key part of that cultural mosaic as it is one of the main founding cultures of New Brunswick and Canada.

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

A lot is being done, but there could always be more. The recent resurgence of the Gaelic language in Scotland, Ireland and the Maritime provinces is certainly a positive trend. And given the increasing popularity and success of Celtic events throughout our province, and the long-time reverence for Celtic music in our region, the culture is strong in New Brunswick.

What can we be doing better?

There is always a challenge in finding new ways of promoting any culture, especially to our youth. More could be done through school curriculums to teach the history, culture, and traditions of the Celts and their importance in our national and regional history. However, I believe that Celtic associations and organizations in New Brunswick are doing a great job ensuring Celtic heritage is being promoted in a manner that will ensure not only its preservation, but its growth in our region.

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Paul Meagher

An old family record collection of Scottish music forms the backbone for one of the most beloved hours of Celtic radio around. The Tartan Hour on Seaside FM plays a range of old and new recordings of Scottish, Irish, Atlantic Canadian and other Celtic music. For good measure the program throws in some spoken word on the heritage and the culture as well.

"It's got quite a history," says Paul Meagher of The Tartan Hour. "It's an iconic show!" Meagher should know. He's the voice behind the show, which is hosted on 105.9 Seaside FM, a community-run radio station in scenic Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, which overlooks the Halifax Harbour.

As a teen, Meagher started working in the control room at CFDR in Dartmouth. From there he moved on-air to host a range of shows for CFDR, and other stations such as CHNS 960 AM, Country 101.9 FM and 96.5 Sun FM.

The Tartan Hour was originally on CFDR from 1962 to 1988. While Meagher worked at the station he was able to observe first-hand the show's original host, Jack Hutchison, originally from Glasgow.

"Once or twice a year, Jack would go over to Scotland to see his relatives and he would bring back Scottish music right off the hit parade," shares Meagher. "He'd play that music on The Tartan Hour, plus he'd have local artists come in and he'd interview them live. It was the top-rated show in metro [Halifax] and nobody could come near it for ratings."

After Hutchison passed away, his family donated his record collection, which Meagher refers to as the "entire gold collection of Scottish music," to Seaside FM. The Tartan Hour was reborn in 2003 and Meagher took over as its host, using the same Saturday time slot as Hutchison's show.

"Now, when I'm on The Tartan Hour, the phones always light up," Meagher says. "People were kind of starved for it until it came back. What I like is that the demographic is very diverse, with both old and young listeners."

Besides the Tartan Hour, Meagher hosts a number of other shows on Seaside FM, including Harboursights and Music from the Heart. His passion for broadcasting is as vibrant as ever.

"Radio is the kind of business that seems to get into your system, your blood," he says. "If I had to go back and change things, I don't think I would change anything. I think I followed what my heart told me to do."



Jason Rockman

Jason Rockman is amped – literally. That's the title of his new radio show on Montreal's CHOM station. According to the station, Rockman's show provides "a night of big hair and loud music that will make your head go up and down, make your fist pump and hopefully disturb your neighbours." Rockman should be pretty good at all that. The musician is the lead singer for the Canadian nu-metal band Slaves on Dope, which originally came to prominence through Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne's record label, Devine Recordings.

Rockman jokes that he's a "McJew!" His mother's father is a McCabe with roots in Northern Ireland. His grandfather was a Russian Jew from Latvia. Growing up, music surrounded Rockman from the beginning. "My parents introduced me to folk, Motown and The Beatles. Then I discovered [David] Bowie and it was game over. I was obsessed and it grew from there."

The singer says he fell into the radio gig unexpectedly. While recording Slaves on Dope's last album, he did a demo at the station for fun and it made its way into the program director's hands. "Next thing I knew, I got a call to come in and try out. Just changed my life completely. I also met my wife there, so I kind of got a two-for-one in the life department," Rockman laughs.

Aside from the radio show, he's currently concentrating on finishing Slaves on Dope's next album for release in 2015. But, cautions the singer, music is truly a labour of love: "If you do music to reach financial gain, get into another profession. You will starve. It's a glorified hobby," he says.

Even so, Rockman reckons he has the best job in the world. "I get paid to talk about what I love and work for the greatest radio station in Canada."





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They're young, talented and fiercely proud of their Celtic heritage

Byrne and Kelly

Audiences may be used to seeing Neil Byrne and Ryan Kelly of the Irish supergroup Celtic Thunder on the big stage. But over the coming months, fans across North America will have the chance to catch the duo in more intimate venues as they perform songs from their debut recording, *Acoustically Irish*.

Byrne concedes that moving from large venues to smaller ones would be a change. "At a Celtic Thunder show, we are used to performing to crowds of 2,000 to 15,000, from theatres to arenas to concert halls. Making that big jump, from small pubs and hotels back at home was a magical experience and as long as we have the privilege it will never get old. I have to admit that I did miss the personal touch of the more intimate vibe."

Kelly says the collaboration took place by chance. He and Byrne had always enjoyed performing together and, not surprisingly, have similar musical influences. That led to them recording their Billboard chart-topping debut album and set them off on their biggest tour to date, including 12 dates in Canada and 40 in the US.



To choose material for the recording, the duo sat down and thought about what they wanted to hear. "And that's literally where it all came from," Kelly says. "Some of the songs on there were songs we'd known were popular with fans from our live shows, but quite a few were songs that we'd never performed live before."

Ultimately, the duo hopes that when audiences see the show they'll feel like they've just spent two-and-a-half hours sitting in a local pub in Ireland listening to the pair sing and play the songs they love to perform.

www.byrneandkelly.com



The Dropkick Murphys

Don't call the Dropkick Murphys Celtic punk. Sure, the Boston-based band plays a lot of jigs and reels in an ultra-heavy and super-fast manner, but drummer Matt Kelly says he hesitates to refer to the group's music as Celtic punk.

According to Kelly, the band began as a four-piece punk rock outfit who loved the Pogues, The Dubliners, Clancy Brothers and Irish folk music. "Over the years we've been able to incorporate those influences into our sound as we added band members," Kelly says. "Aside from punk music and rock and roll in all its forms, Irish folk music and traditional jigs and reels are some of our favourite sounds. It's just a good time."

Kelly refers to himself as a "mutt" when it comes to his background. His father is Irish and Polish, his mother is Bavarian

and French-Canadian. His parents were always playing music in the house and it was the sight of his father's drum kit that made Kelly abandon his ambition to play the saxophone to take up pounding the skins, which he began doing at age nine. "I knew at the age of four that I wanted to have tattoos, ride a motorcycle and play music. Now, the first and last of the list are



accomplished, but I'd rather ride in a badass muscle car than on a steel horse."

The drummer believes the current Celtic music scene is "alive and kicking" and that a lot of the bands that refer to themselves as Celtic punk act as a gateway, introducing the younger crowd to classic Irish music. "That brings in new blood and keeps it from becoming anachronistic," Kelly says.

The way to improve the scene is to make it more than a stereotype, he adds. "To some it's just green T-shirts, scally caps and getting drunk. We both know that the culture is much, much deeper than that. The arts and spiritual side of it should also be promoted – fundamentals over fads."

www.dropkickmurphys.com



A man in traditional Scottish attire, including a kilt, sporran, and a dark jacket, is shown in a close-up, slightly blurred photograph. He is wearing a dark cap and a necklace with a cross. The background is a grassy field with other people visible in the distance.

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The Once

Newfoundland trio The Once show their roots with their latest recording

George Street in St. John's, Newfoundland, can get a little rowdy on a Saturday night. In fact, the two-block walk by the provincial capital's waterfront – which boasts most pubs per square foot in Canada – is raucous most evenings, as locals and those “from away” stagger from one bar to the next checking out the live entertainment.

Many renowned musicians have cut their chops here including Ron Hynes, Great Big Sea, Hey Rosetta! and Ryan's Fancy.

“It's a great spot to play or grab a pint,” shares Andrew Dale, multi-instrumentalist with St. John's trio The Once. “You never know who's going to show up, or who's going to sit in on a session. On any given night you can hear folk, roots, rock, blues, jazz, country, cabaret, classical or Celtic music – sometimes all on the same stage!”

Those influences, and more, were present on the band's 2009 eponymous debut recording, on which the group covered Leonard Cohen and Tom Waits, and for which they received numerous nominations and two Canadian Folk Music Awards; Traditional Album of the Year and New/Emerging Artist of the Year.

That diversity was again at play for 2011's Row Upon Row of People They Know, which included a cover of the Queen classic You're My Best Friend, and

which was nominated for a prestigious Juno Award.

“We tried to bring all of those elements into the new recording as well,” notes Dale, referring to the trio's latest effort Departures. “And so we chose songs that challenged us to stretch out as players and performers – songs that we could leave our own stamp upon.”



The new album's title signifies more than just musical growth; Dale and his creative cohorts – vocalist Geraldine Hollett and fellow multi-instrumentalist Phil Cunningham – signed with Netwerk Music Group out of Vancouver this past June, and are now on the road in support of label-mates Passenger.

“I think we are on tour for something like the next six months,” laughs Dale, counting off dates in Canada, the US, Bel-

gium, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Australia, New Zealand and more. “It's pretty exciting actually; a lot of these places we have never played before.”

Once those dates are done, the band plans to go out on it's own in support of Departures.

“By that time people will know us a bit better. That's one of the benefits of opening shows for an artist like Mike (Rosenberg of Passenger); we will be seen by people who might have not heard of us otherwise.”

He and his handmates expect a warm welcome from those audiences.

“If it is anything like the response we have received to the new album, then we aren't worried at all. There is something universal about folk music – something that strikes a chord with listeners everywhere. It's real music – honest and heartfelt. The same can be said for Celtic music; the more traditional tunes we perform always go over very well.”

And while the band may be far from home over the coming while, home is always as close as their fingertips.

“Is it that obvious that we're from St. John's?” Dale chuckles, with a slight brogue common to most Newfoundlanders. “Ah, I guess that's what you get for hanging out on George Street.”

www.theonce.ca

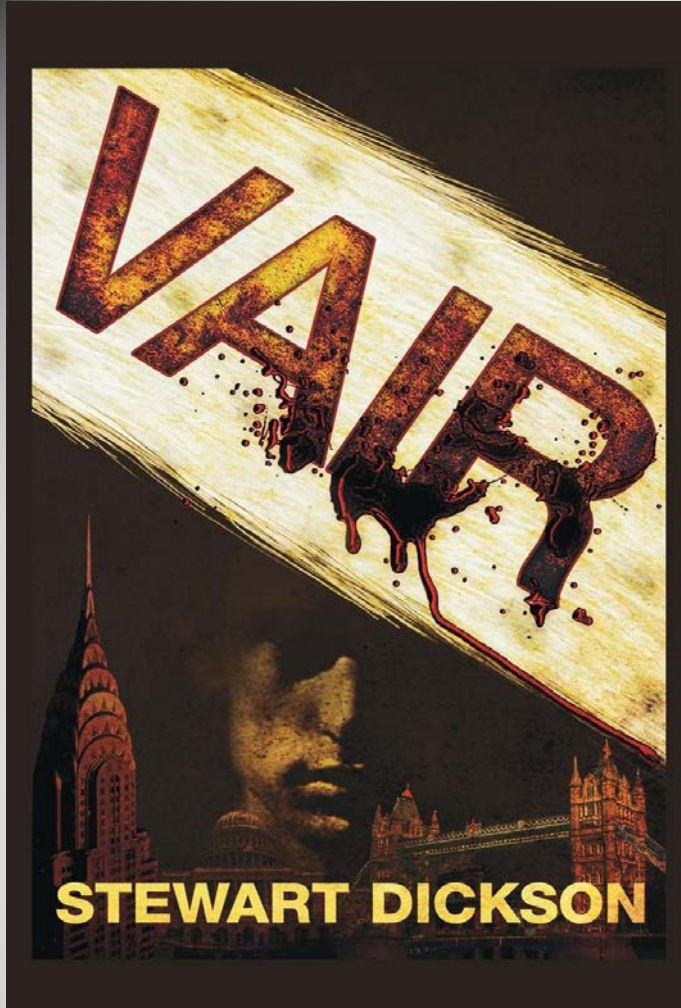


Departures

At just a little over 37 minutes, this ten-track offering is proof that good things come in small packages. From the opening chords of The Town Where You Lived to the closing notes of Fool For You, Departures is a moving mélange of Celtic, folk, roots, country, Canadiana – and even a hint of cabaret – that will soothe body and soul like a warm and welcoming cuppa tea. Geraldine Hollett's airy vocals float effortlessly over wispy guitars, banjo and piano, showcasing simple, but solid arrangements. The less-is-more approach works wonders, allowing the songs proper space to breathe, and inviting listeners into the mix. The Ron Hynes' cover (Sonny's Dream) is classic, as is the trio's version of Can't Help Falling in Love With You. ~ SPC



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David Adams Richards

The Irish-Canadian “Bard of the Miramichi” stays close to home with his latest effort, Crimes Against My Brother

Chatting with David Adams Richards is a little like reading one of his books; it requires attention and focus – you don’t want to miss a word.

“It’s been a hard year,” sighs the sixty-something scribe over the phone from his home in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Richards isn’t referring to his health – he is feeling strong again after a minor setback two years ago. Nor is he talking about his family life or friendships – all of which, he says, are solid. Likewise, the writing continues to go well – he has already finished two more books which will be released in the next year or two.

“I’ve been up to fish the river a couple of times,” he shares, alluding to recent outings with his son and with friend and fellow writer Wayne Curtis. “We haven’t had much luck at all.”

Ironically, it is this river – the mighty 250-kilometre-long Miramichi River, with its many branches and tributaries, which opens into the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the province’s picturesque eastern coastline, by the small town of the same name where Richards was born and raised – that has been a fountain of good fortune for the author.

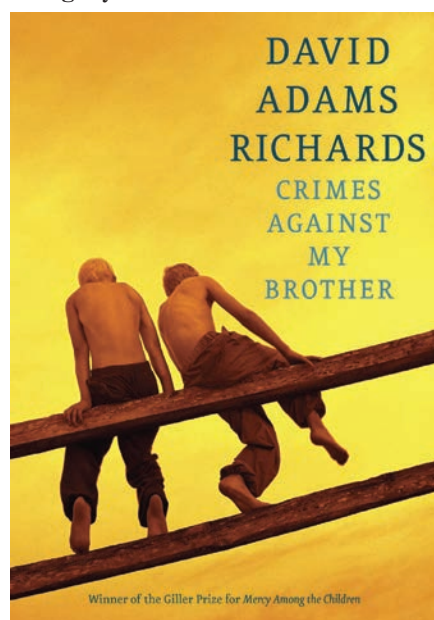
“I write what I know,” he notes, “and the Miramichi is what I know.”

As with many of his previous works – including 2000’s Giller Prize-winning *Mercy Among The Children* – the working-class, Irish-French-Mi’kmaq mill-ville is the setting for his most recent novel, *Crimes Against My Brother*; the story of three young cousins who make a blood-pact with one another.

“It took me the better part of three

years to write this book,” explains Richards. “I knew where I wanted to go with it, and what themes I wanted to explore, but I also allowed the story and its characters to reveal themselves to me over time.”

Luckily for readers, what emerged was a complex and compelling tale of trust, betrayal, gossip, murder and moral ambiguity.



“I started with the idea of the three boys and this pact that they make with each other. Over the course of the story, we see how this bond unravels – and eventually fails entirely – through a series of choices that they make, the consequences of those choices, and the actions of the other characters.”

Richards credits two central catalysts

from the book’s fictional locales of Bonny Joyce and Clare’s Longing for pointing the narrative in the direction it needed to go.

“Lonnie (Sullivan), who is driven by power and greed, lords over these poor kids, manipulating them, exploiting them, and dividing them against each other for his own personal ambitions. And his protégé, the beautiful young temptress Annette (Brideau), also has a hidden agenda that affects everyone around her.

“We all know people like Lonnie and Annette,” continues the author. “People who act like God, twisting and turning morality as they see fit, as it suits their interests. Often, and as is the case with this story, their selfish acts can lead to terrible results.”

Richards’ ability to address bigger themes in a small-town setting is a hallmark of his writing.

“For me, it makes a great stage for the human drama. That said, folks from that part of the world are really no different from folks anywhere else – I lived in downtown Toronto for over a decade, and people there were just as inclined to gossip as people from the rural parts of the country.”

Despite the dark themes and thoughts, Richards says that *Crimes Against My Brother* is a hopeful story and one of triumph.

“It’s about the power of the human spirit – over adversity, over hardship and pain, over sadness and sorrow. It is when we struggle with things like trust, love and betrayal that our better angels have the chance to take flight.”



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John Ferguson

Saltire Superhero!

He's heavily muscled, with blue skin and burning ginger hair and he's an immortal being dedicated to protecting Scotland. Meet Saltire, the Scottish superhero, who's quickly become a sensation. How much of one? The comic, that Glaswegian John Ferguson created, is nominated in the Best British Comic category at the True Believers Comic Awards. It's the first time a Scottish superhero has ever received the nod in that particular category.

Ferguson's inspiration came from not only a love of the superhero genre, but from a bit of a challenge as well. He'd read an article saying that "Scotland would be a dreadful country to have a superhero because it was too drab." Ferguson said a typical Scottish attitude of "I'll show you," possessed him to create Saltire. "I'm a huge fan of Scottish mythology and wanted to create something authentic with a particularly legendary feel," Ferguson said. "Saltire is a character who represents everything Scottish."

Saltire is a superhero who is designed to engage readers with Scottish culture and its past. According to Ferguson, "The era of the tartan cringe is very much over and 'Caledonian cool' is on the rise as Scotland discovers a new sense of itself. We're going to continue to portray Saltire

to an international audience within a very dynamic and creative modern field. We'd like to take this series beyond books and into other mediums. Saltire is an iconic figure who's ready to rival the Supermans and Batmans of the world."

Ferguson first created the world of Saltire, populated it with characters and then wrote the narrative for the story. To find suitable artists to draw the comic, he tapped into the talent within Duncan of Jordanstone, an art college in Dundee that teaches comic-book studies. Next, Ferguson set up his own company to publish the books and Diamondsteel Comics, the home of Saltire, was born.

Ferguson says the comic has come out to positive reviews, garnering favourable comparisons to Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones and Marvel's Thor. "Scottish people have really taken to the character and like seeing a modern and very cool concept based in Scotland that they can really relate to," Ferguson notes. "The first book in English, Saltire Invasion, has sold out many times over in the major retailers and there's a real buzz about the sequel. The Scottish story is one of the underdog and people relate to that story all over the world. It's why the Scottish are so well-liked."

Ferguson himself was raised in the

Glasgow area to Scottish parents. He says that while he's travelled a fair bit, he loves the culture and humour of Scotland and that it would always remain home to him.

The comic is set in a complex world of clans and guardians with a variety of usurpers and villains who attempt to quash Scotland's freedom. Working with the historic aspects of myth and folklore and making that engaging for readers is one of the challenges Ferguson faces writing the comic. Another challenge is creating a cohesive narrative that feels and reads like a legend. Clearly, Ferguson's creative gambits are working though. "Seeing kids wearing Saltire T-shirts and putting posters on their walls is pretty cool when it's something I created from my imagination," he says.

The series has eight books, so it has a long run ahead of it and Ferguson is betting its popularity will increase with his announcement that the comic will also be released in Scots and Gaelic versions. "Translating the books into Gaelic and Scots is also very important to us as we feel it adds to the authenticity of the Scottish mythology."

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Scotland's Trees For Life *Celebrates 25 years*

The Romans once called Scotland “Caledonia,” meaning “wooded heights.” Today that name is nothing if not ironic. The country’s native pinewoods, which formed the westernmost outpost of Europe’s boreal forest, were once estimated to have covered 1.5 million hectares. It formed a vast, primordial wilderness of Scots pine, birch, rowan, aspen, juniper and other trees. But because of climate change and human exploitation, the Caledonian forest is almost a wisp of what it once was: overgrazing and the burning and felling of trees for timber have, at the end of the 20th century, turned Scotland into one of the least-forested countries in Europe.

Today, only a few isolated fragments of Caledonian forest remain, according to Becky Priestly, the marketing and communications officer for Scotland’s Trees for Life. Trees for Life is a small charity that is trying to restore the forest, if not to its former glory, then at least to a point where the precipitous decline of the forest is halted. Much of what remains of the original forest is “geriatric,” composed of old trees reaching the end of their lifespans. Overgrazing from deer and sheep has prevented new trees from growing to take their place. And with the trees gone, so are all the large mammals which once roamed the forest.

At one time, the forest was home to wildlife such as the European beaver, wild boar and lynx as well as moose, brown bears and wolves. A long history of deforestation in Scotland has led to the demise of many of these species. Land clearance began as far back as Neolithic times when trees were cut for fuel and timber and taken down to clear the land for agriculture. As the forest shrank over the centuries, the human population grew, with some parts being burned deliberately to eradicate “vermin” such as wolves.

Only a tiny percentage of the original forests survives, while the native pinewoods exist only as 35 isolated remnants. Since 1989, with the help of thousands of volunteers, Trees for Life has been working to restore the Caledonian Forest. Now in its 26th

year of operation, the organization plants trees, removes non-native species and fences seedlings to protect them from grazing animals. In 2012, the charity planted its one-millionth tree and hopes to establish another million by 2018.

Priestly said the charity has a growing membership which learns about the organization’s work through the magazine, *Caledonia Wild!* The magazine appears three times annually and features articles on the charity’s projects, what’s new at the group’s conservation estate at Dundreggan, and on the achievements of the volunteers. If people are inclined to become involved, they can volunteer for a conservation week and help plant trees and carry out what Priestly calls other practical conservation tasks at a number of scenic locations across the Scottish Highlands.

One upcoming opportunity for volunteers in November is the first ever conservation week on the Ben Damph Estate in Torrington in northwest Scotland. The privately owned estate has a large area of woodland and land that’s become overgrown with an invasive non-native rhododendron. A good level of fitness is necessary for the work as it can be arduous. The group’s work involves rescuing the choked trees and cutting down and removing as much of the rhododendron as possible.

In late May, the charity celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Dundreggan estate, one of the organization’s long-term projects. The 10,000-acre estate has been described as a “lost world.” More than 3,000 species have been identified there so far, including 10 never before recorded in the UK.

“One of the easiest and most poignant ways to support our work is by dedicating a tree for someone or to mark a special event such as a birthday or a wedding,” Priestly notes. Individual trees may be bought for £5, or a grove of eight trees with a personalized web page to which family and friends can add dedications costs £50.

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The Loch Ness Marathon



With a straight face, the Baxters Loch Ness Marathon & Festival of Running bills itself as a “monster race.” And why not? After all, the race runs right past the Loch where one of the most celebrated sea creatures of all time is rumoured to live. This year the popular event is introducing a twist: the Clan Challenge. Scots, expats and runners with Scottish ancestry are invited to represent their clans and “show who has the fastest feet in the Highlands.”

The Clan Challenge is part of the national celebrations from the Year of Homecoming Scotland 2014. The challenge will be determined by the number of runners from each clan in the races. From Macdonalds to Macraes and Camerons to Campbells, dozens of clans will be represented in both the marathon (42.2 km) and the River Ness 10-km on September 28.

Race director Malcolm Sutherland says he hopes that proud Scots from around the world will participate in the races and wear a touch of tartan on their running kit. “We are urging Scots at home and abroad or anyone with an affinity to Scotland to come and help push their clan to victory.”

He adds, joking, “We want to discover whether the Macleods are faster than Macraes and find out about the far-flung places you are coming from to represent your clan.”

The results of the 2014 Clan Challenge will be based on the number of runners from each clan who successfully complete either race.

Race day includes other distances besides the iconic marathon and the River Ness 10 km. A 10 km corporate challenge,

a five-km race and a “Wee Nessie” run for children are all available. Last year more than 9,000 people took part in the Festival of Running.

Sutherland notes that runners came from all over the UK as well as 30 different countries to participate in the Festival. “We hope that the Clan Challenge will see even greater numbers come forward this year,” Sutherland says.

“It’s a fantastic day for serious runners and those taking part in their first mass-participation event and the atmosphere is always electric. We hope that the added element of the Clan Challenge will add to the feel-good factor.”

The extremely scenic route for the full marathon begins on high ground between Fort Augustus and Foyers, before dropping down to run alongside Loch Ness. It’s not been reported if any runners have actually caught a glimpse of the Loch’s famous inhabitant while taking part in the race.

Runners proceed along the Loch’s southeast shore, heading northeast toward Dores at the north end. From Dores, the race heads directly into the centre of Inverness for the finish.

“The Loch Ness Marathon is a fantastic opportunity for runners to enjoy the beautiful scenery and iconic landscape that the local area has to offer,” says finance secretary John Swinney. “The marathon will also celebrate Scottish ancestry, with Scots from home and abroad to represent their family in the Clan Challenge.”

The 2014 Year of the Homecoming in Scotland features a number of major events. The Ryder Cup is scheduled to take place in Scotland and a year-long program of events and activities are underway. The marathon is also scheduled to take place during the two-month Highland Homecoming that kicks off in September.

The two months are jam-packed with events, including the World Sheepdog Trials, the Inverness Highland Meeting and the Royal National Mod. The latter is Scotland’s premier Gaelic festival of language, arts and culture and includes everything from literature awards to concerts and Highland dancing.

www.lochnessmarathon.com



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New Hampshire *Highland Games & Festival*

The New Hampshire Highland Games & Festival, the “largest and most diverse Scottish cultural festival in the northeast,” is tucked away in an enchanting setting.

“We’re at Loon Mountain Ski Resort surrounded by nothing but the White Mountains, which reminds one of the highlands of Scotland,” says professional drum major and the games’ executive director, Patti Nisco. “You’ve got a little mist in the morning so that it really makes you feel like somewhere faraway.”

The site is even more picturesque with the addition of an 11-foot-tall Scottish standing stone, donated by Swenson Granite Works, first unveiled in 2012, and permanently installed in 2013. Piper and graphic designer Kevin Wisehart created the artwork on the face of the stone and its paver garden is set to be unveiled at the 39th games which take place from September 19 to 21, 2014.

A number of people have already purchased inscribed pavers to remember a loved one, a fond memory or to show their support. Net proceeds from ongoing paver sales will go to the NHSCOT Fund and its programs, such as scholarships and workshops, which help to foster Scottish heritage.

The enthusiasm to share memories around the Scottish standing stone demonstrates that despite the event’s tremendous growth over the years – with its now impressive range of competitions, stellar line-up of Scottish and North American performers and more than 30 pipe bands and 60 clans attending –

the New Hampshire Highland Games & Festival maintains the same strong feeling of kinship, community and warmth it did almost four decades ago.

“It was a festival that our founder, Evelyn Murray, decided to start,” recounts Nisco, “so that people who were like-minded and cherished their Scottish heritage could get together and celebrate it.”

www.nhscot.org

Did You Know?

This year, the Manchester Pipe Band from Connecticut is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The pipe band will be attending the New Hampshire Games & Festival from September 19 to 21, 2014



Aztec *Highland Games & Celtic Festival*

In 2010, a group of friends sat round a kitchen table sharing a bottle of Jamesons, bonding over their Celtic heritage and passions. John Cater told the group he would love to host a Highland Games at Riverside Park in Aztec, New Mexico.

“So we actually got our poop in a group and proposed the idea to the City of Aztec for this two-day event,” says Jessica Polatty, now chair of the Aztec Highland Games & Celtic Festival. “The City of Aztec was gung-ho from the beginning. Other Highland Games events thought we were crazy to host a two-day event right out of the gate, but it has been successful every year.”

The mayor of Aztec, Sally Burbridge, was enthusiastic and involved from the beginning and continues to help out year after

year. “This event offers the opportunity to experience the beautiful fall weather available in the Four Corners Region and is welcomed by our community because it offers an opportunity to experience yet another culture that helps to shape who we are,” she says.

The fourth annual Aztec Highland Games take place on October 4 and 5, 2014, and features the Four Corners’ largest Celtic Music festival, with the Wicked Tinkers headlining this year, pipe bands and dance, clans and vendors, sheep herding demos, tug-of-war, a golf tournament and more.

“This year we are also the proud host of the annual Four Corners Highland Games Regional Championships,” adds Polatty. “Aztec will host this huge event for this first year and for all the years to follow. This championship will include Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona competing for a state trophy through the best scores of their participating athletes.”

Polatty says she and the organizers are happy to host an event that celebrates a key component of the area’s cultural – Native American, European and Hispanic – make-up. “People who love music and dance, athletic competitions and good food and drink will definitely want to come to this event,” she adds. “That just about sums up Celtic culture in a nutshell!”

www.aztechighlandgames.com



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MANY NATIONS ONE FAMILY

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Halifax Celtic Festival

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Halifax Celtic Festival

After a successful first year, The Halifax Celtic Festival is back. The fledgling fest attracted 1,000 people during its one-day event and this year, organizer Rick Grant clearly expects a much larger attendance. Some of the highlights of this year's fest, which runs from September 12 to 14, are two free events, Celtic's Got Talent, as well as a Celtic Kitchen Party on the Friday evening. On the Saturday a family day of events will take place, followed by an evening concert featuring Ashelin and The Stanfields. The festival continues on Sunday with The Halifax Gaels Hurley Association and the Nova Scotia Rugby Association each presenting an exhibition game of their respective sport.

"The response to the initial festival demonstrated that our belief that the Celtic family of nations needed to be recognized and supported in Nova Scotia was true," Grant declares. "As a gentleman from the Isle of Man stated to me, 'This is the first time in Canada that I went to a public event and saw my flag prominently displayed.'"

The genesis for the festival actually began about 10 years ago, according to Grant, back when he was on the board of directors of The Scots, The North British Society. As vice president and event chair, Grant organized the combined Scots and Charitable Irish Harbour Cruise and the pub nights which raised funds to support Gaelic language education and programs. "That demonstrated to me that together we can create positive initiatives to support the efforts of individuals and groups to preserve, promote and expand their



Rick Grant

specific interests in their heritage and culture," Grant said.

Further, Grant's involvement through The Scots with the Federation of Clans in the Highland Games, The International Gathering of the Clans, and The Scots Golf Tournament cemented his belief that Celts had to support each other while at the same time informing all Nova Scotians of the impact of Celtic culture on the fabric of the province.

The idea went on the back burner until 2011. At that time, Grant attended a meeting with members of the Federation for Scottish Culture to discuss a revival of the Highland Games. During the talks, Grant

broached the idea of a combined Celtic nations event. Following the meeting, Grant and several others decided to explore the idea of a Celtic Cultural Festival. The result was the establishment of the Celtic Cultural Society of Nova Scotia as a non-profit society in January 2013.

It should come as no surprise at this juncture to learn that Grant is primarily Scottish with a mixture of Irish, Isle of Man, Norse and French in his background. His family roots in Nova Scotia and Halifax span 150 years. Grant's involvement in the Nova Scotia Celtic community includes being a life member of The Scots, The North British Society of Halifax, and a member of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax.

Nor is it surprising, given Grant's prominent involvement with Celtic culture, that he believes not enough is being done to promote or preserve it. "The short answer is no," Grant says. "That is the underlying reason for the formation of the Celtic Cultural Society of Nova Scotia. To date, the sustaining of Celtic culture, heritage or traditions has been generally individual or by interest-specific organizations or associations. Overall, our hope for the festival is to create awareness of the many components of the Celtic experience, so that those directly involved in maintaining those aspects of Celtic life will have a venue to showcase, promote and hopefully preserve what they do."

www.halifaxcelticfest.com



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2014 Celtic COLOURS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Presented by **The Chronicle Herald**





Celtic Colours

International Festival

Amid the plush autumn foliage of eastern Nova Scotia, Celtic Life International's Rosalie MacEachern finds one of the world's great music festivals

With fiddle and flute, piano and accordion, bodhran, bagpipes and banjo, International Festival 2014 celebrates family and friends, many hailing from the towns, villages and rural corners of Cape Breton, and others from across sprawling borders and a vast ocean.

From October 10 to 18, strains of richly evocative music will echo down to the island's shores, along its scenic, winding roadways and up through the high forested hills flashing their fall splendour of reds, golds and oranges. An island-wide celebration with 46 concerts, the festival also includes more than 200 community cultural events.

Artistic director Dawn Beaton, who performed in the first festival 18 years ago, said this year's program pays tribute to the ways in which traditional music has been passed down through families and is sometimes refashioned with modern instrumentation and interpretation.

"We've got siblings and cousins and several generations of Cape Breton families playing together and they will be joined by some of Scotland's best musicians. We have amazing talent coming from Ireland, the United States and Sweden."

It is never easy to trace Celtic lineage in the middle of a week-long party, as a couple of popular trios of MacDonald brothers illustrates. A visiting Scottish group, the MacDonalds of Glenuig, is comprised of three brothers, folk musician Iain along with pipers Allan and Dr. Angus, a physician on the Isle of Skye who spent 11 years doctoring and playing music in Cape Breton. One of the local groups, All Fired Up, is comprised of three MacDonald brothers from Foot Cape, fiddler Kyle, piper Keith and pianist Colin who went to Skye to study Gaelic language and traditional music.

Among the festival newcomers is Hamish Napier, an innovative Highland musician who remembers signing up for step dancing at a music camp on the assumption it was a form of step aerobics. It was, instead, his first introduction to traditional Cape Breton music and dance, which immediately hooked him.

"Around Scotland I went to more concerts and workshops from visiting dancers and musicians such as Katie Shaw, Rodney MacDonald, Buddy MacMaster and others. I loved it! The piano accompaniment style influenced my own style a great deal, and I discovered I loved strathspeys for the first time, played with that really chomping, stomping, rocking rhythm," he said.

Napier has toured most of Canada, but will make his first trip to Nova Scotia for Celtic Colours. "I have pals that have raved about their wonderful experience there and I even have a few pals out there that I've met at Glasgow's Celtic Connections festival and on tour. I'm absolutely delighted to be collaborating at Celtic Colours with local musicians alongside my duo partner Adam Sutherland, who also enjoys a stomping, chomping strathspey or two," he said in an interview from Glasgow.

Fiddler and composer Sutherland, considered one of Scotland's foremost traditional players, figures in a Celtic Colours-carried-back-to-the-old-country story told by Chris Stout of the Shetland band Fiddlers Bid which opened the 2012 festival. On returning home, Stout reported that he heard Sutherland's tunes played all over Cape Breton Island but to his consternation, no one knew of Sutherland.

"That's traditional music and I love it. I don't care if folk don't know who I am. I

am naturally delighted folk like the tune, though," said Sutherland, who added Celtic Colours is known throughout Scotland for its warm welcome and "great craic."

Cape Breton fiddler Colin Grant, who will perform solo as well as in Sprag Session and Còig, relishes the chance to listen to and match notes with a variety of artists. "For us, it's really like our Christmas, a musical reunion with friends, and a chance to play and hear great tunes every night of the week. We really shouldn't be getting paid to have this much fun," he said.

He will collaborate with American bandura player Julian Kytasty, as well as Napier and Sutherland. "Who knows what surprises we'll come up with working with those fellows!"

Champion fiddler Natalie MacMaster and Ireland's Sharon Shannon, who played together at the inaugural Celtic Colours festival, are both back this year. In keeping with the family theme, MacMaster's husband Donnell Leahy and their children will join her for the closing concert. "I only wish I could be there longer. There's not a performer from down home I wouldn't be happy to sit and listen to," said MacMaster.

Between concerts and the late night Festival Club at the Gaelic College in St. Ann's, musicians and patrons can take in community suppers across the island. In the picturesque fishing village of L'Ardoise, Nils "Andy" Adamsson, of Swedish and Acadian parentage, is chief organizer of a popular lobster supper in the local lobster pound. "English, Gaelic, French or Swedish, doesn't matter. The music brings us all together and we're offering the best meal on the island."

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Hero Show: The Colorado International TATTOO



Colorado Springs, with its large military presence, its first responders' heritage and its Celtic culture, is an ideal place to host a larger-than-life show like a tattoo. So, it's no surprise that the very first Colorado International Tattoo will be held in the city this September 27.

"We're looking to celebrate those military veterans, first responders and their families and it's going to be a really fantastic tribute," says the event's producer and director, Joseph Poch. "In Colorado Springs, we have five military installations – we're literally surrounded on all sides by a military base. The rich military heritage of a tattoo seemed like a good fit for the city I live in."

Colorado Springs is also home to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) memorial, on which is inscribed the names of fallen fire fighters from across North America. Every year, the IAFF hosts a memorial service – this year it happens to be a week before the Tattoo on September 20 – where pipe and drum bands and honour guards from across the continent participate.

"There's always been a rich culture of fire-fighter pipe bands and that's a heritage we share here," says Poch. "We have had some devastating fires here in Colorado, particularly in Colorado Springs. Two years ago we got hit with a fire which was one of the deadliest wildfires ever that came down over the mountain and actually started spreading through the city. The very next year, Black Forest got hit by some fires. It's taken a lot for the city to recover from that. We're on that bounce back."

Just as Colorado Springs makes an opportune city for the Tattoo, Poch, who has always been immersed in Celtic culture, is a felicitous organizer. For many years his grandparents owned an Irish and Scottish regalia shop. Growing up he played bagpipes, studying under master piper Gordon Speirs, and then went on to Irish dance for 15 years.

As owner of the company Innovative Moments, Poch has been organizing numerous events around Colorado Springs,



Joseph Poch

including the Pikes Peak Celtic Festival and the Colorado Springs Saint Patrick's Day festivities. He is also an orchestrator and composer, and for several years he was the music director/producer for the Longs Peak Scottish and Irish Highland Festival.

"I went to a school for music and one of my first gigs out of college was writing a fanfare for a tattoo," says Poch, who's

been working on some new arrangements for the inaugural Colorado event.

This year's Colorado International Tattoo will consist of more than 400 performers, including some 100 pipers, a 120-voice choir, three brass and wind bands, colour guards and drill teams, world champion Irish dancers from Colorado's Celtic Steps, and more.

During the following week (September 28-October 4) Colorado Springs is hosting the Wounded Warrior Games, so some of those athletes will also be featured in the Tattoo.

"We're integrating some really different things," adds Poch. "In Colorado we have a very rich Native American Indian heritage. So how we incorporate that sound with the pipes and the mass military bands has proven interesting but I think it's going to be a spectacular sound to say the least."

The inaugural Tattoo is shaping up to be one that will move and entertain everyone, young and old. "It's a good thing for the whole family to come to," enthuses Poch. "It will really hit the roots of human nature to listen to music and to enjoy the evening together. People will leave the show awe-inspired. They won't believe what they just saw with so many people working and performing together."

*The Colorado International Tattoo
September 27, 2014
Broadmoor World Arena, Colorado Springs*

www.heroshow.org



CelticLife

10 Things You Need to Know About the Ryder Cup

Some of the best European and American golfers will face off in the 40th Ryder Cup, from September 23 to 28, 2014, at Gleneagles in Perthshire, Scotland. To drive home the significance of this biennial team match – arguably the world's most-anticipated golf event – our senior writer Michelle Brunet looks at some golfing highlights from its past and the latest news.



1. It is fitting that Gleneagles is hosting the 2014 Ryder Cup since the Scottish course hosted what is often credited as the precursor to this celebrated golf competition. In 1921, the first international golf tournament was played between teams from Great Britain and the US on Gleneagles' historic King's Course. The British team – made up of legends like Abe Mitchell and J.H. Taylor from England, James Braid and George Duncan from Scotland and Harry Vardon from the Bailiwick of Jersey – won the challenge. Representing the US were prominent golfers such as Walter Hagen, Wild Bill Mehlhorn and Scottish expats Fred McLeod and Jock Hutchison.



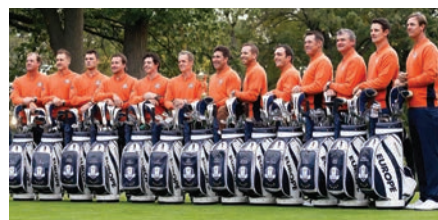
2. In 1926, American and British teams faced off again, this time at the Wentworth Club in Surrey, England. Present for the international competition was Samuel Ryder. The entrepreneur had taken up the sport later in life and hired Abe Mitchell to be his personal golf instructor. "Ryder was enthralled by the match at Wentworth and particularly delighted to see Mitchell team up with George Duncan to defeat the defending Open Champion, Jim Barnes, and the great Walter Hagen," states EuropeanTour.com. "We must do this again," said Ryder in the bar afterwards and The Ryder Cup was born."



3. Samuel Ryder, the Ryder Cup's founder, donated the gold trophy awarded to the winning team. The inaugural tournament took place in 1927 at the Worcester Country Club in Massachusetts when the US took home the Cup. Out of the 39 Ryder Cups played between 1927 and 2012, the US has won 25, Great Britain (or Great Britain and Ireland, or Team Europe) has won 12, and the teams have tied twice.



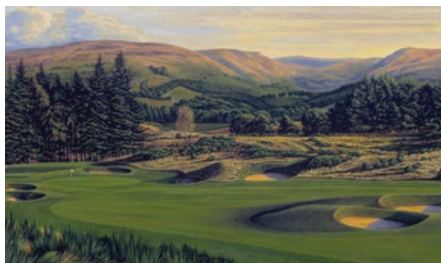
4. In 1973, the name of the British Ryder Cup team changed to Great Britain and Ireland, although golfers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland had been playing on the squad since 1947 and 1953 respectively. It became Team Europe in 1979, extending membership to continental golfers. This was to even up the playing field – the US had won 18 of the 22 Ryder Cups up to that point – allowing Spanish greats Seve Ballesteros and Antonio Garrido to come on board. Since 1979, the European team has won nine of the last 17 Ryder Cups outright, including five of the last six.



5. The present day Ryder Cup format includes three days of play between the US and European teams, each comprising 12 golfers. The first two days consist of four foursome and four fourball matches, where teammates compete in pairs. Twelve singles matches take place on the last day. A total of 28 points are up for grabs over the three days. To win outright, a team must score at least 14 ½ points. To retain the Cup from a preceding win, the defending champions must at least tie with 14 points.



6. Europe's victory at the 2012 Ryder Cup is known as the "Miracle at Medinah." After the first two days, the US was leading 10-6. But a glimmer of hope arose for Team Europe near the end of day two. "It will probably remain a mystery why they did not come to life until late on Saturday night, when a birdie by Rory McIlroy on the 13th hole of the day's last fourball match inspired Ian Poulter to finish the day with a run of five birdies," wrote Richard Williams in The Guardian newspaper. "After that, they started to believe that a miracle was possible." On the Sunday, Europe made, as Williams described, a "comeback of epic proportions," winning eight and halving one of the 12 singles matches.



7. September's tournament is the second time Scotland will be hosting the Ryder Cup; in 1973 it took place at Muirfield. During the 2014 Ryder Cup, it is predicted that 45,000 spectators from 75 different countries will visit Gleneagles each day. The Jack Nicklaus-designed PGA Centenary Course is ready to welcome the American and European teams. In recent years, Nicklaus oversaw improvements to the course, including the use of a SubAir ventilation system – the first UK course to do so – and significant upgrades to the 9th and 18th holes.



8. Eight-time majors champion, six-time PGA Tour Player of the Year and four-time Ryder Cup player Tom Watson is Team USA's Ryder Cup captain for the second time this year. Watson has chosen Raymond Floyd and Andy North as vice-captains. Team Europe's captain is European tour champion, five-time Ryder Cup player/vice-captain, and Dublin, Ireland-native Paul McGinley. He has recruited fellow Irishman Des Smyth and Scotsman Sam Torrance as vice-captains. Each team is made up of the top nine American or European golfers, based on rankings and performances at tournaments including the recent 96th PGA Championship as a qualifier for Team USA, and the Race to Dubai Tournament, ending August 31st, as a qualifier for Team Europe. On September 2nd, Watson and McGinley will announce their "captain's picks" for the three remaining spots on their teams.



9. While the three match days take place between September 26 and 28, the 2014 Ryder Cup is a week-long affair. The Junior Ryder Cup for American and European youth is scheduled for September 22 and 23 at Perthshire's Blairgowrie Golf Club. The week also features a gala concert, featuring renowned Scottish and international acts, an opening ceremony, numerous family-friendly events and more. More than 1,800 volunteers will help run the world-class tournament, including 50 youngsters selected to receive financial support and vocational training as part of the Volunteer Support Scheme/Scotland's Best program. Additionally, the first practice day has been named Tartan Tuesday when spectators are encouraged to wear their favourite plaid to welcome golfers and the world to Scotland.



10. When Scotland bid to host the 40th Ryder Cup, it committed to increase and enhance the golf events it hosts. EventScotland kept that promise and the country's 50th golf tournament since 2003 took place in June of this year. That milestone competition was the Scottish Hydro Challenge, which Martin Dempster, of The Scotsman newspaper, described as a "key tournament in ensuring that opportunities are given to the next wave of Scottish professional golfers in terms of advancing to the next stage of their careers." As part of the Ryder Cup legacy initiative, investment in domestic golf events is planned to continue through to 2018.

Test your Ryder Cup Knowledge.



1. Who does the small figure atop the Ryder Cup trophy represent?
2. What is the prize purse for the winning Ryder Cup team?
3. In team golf matches, such as foursomes, what word should teammates vow never to say to one another?
4. Where was the 2010 Ryder Cup held?
5. At which Ryder Cup did Team USA make a tremendous comeback comparable to Team Europe's in 2012?
6. Which golfer sank the winning putt at the 1985 Ryder Cup, swiping the trophy from the Americans for the first time in 28 years?
7. When Wild Bill Mehlhorn said, "If a man can't play here then he can't play," what place was he talking about?
8. On the last match day of the 2012 Ryder Cup, what image appeared on the sleeves of Team Europe's shirts?
9. Despite never winning a major championship, which Scotsman has been extremely successful at Ryder Cups with an impressive history of 20 wins, seven halves and nine losses.
10. What has become a Ryder Cup tradition for Team USA off the green?

Answers: 1. Abe Mitchell, Samuel Ryder's mentor / 2. \$0 / 3. "Sorry" / 4. Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, Wales / 5. 1999 Ryder Cup ("Battle of Brookline") / 6. Scotsman Sam Torrance / 7. Gleneagles (1921) / 8. A silhouette of the late Seve Ballesteros / 9. Colin Montgomerie / 10. Ping-pong matches in their team room

The Liberator:

Daniel O'Connell



By Ken McGoogan

The grandest boulevard in Dublin, originally called Sackville Street, was renamed O'Connell Street in 1924. At the south end of the street, overlooking a busy intersection and the River Liffey, stands a larger-than-life statue: Daniel O'Connell. In Glasnevin Cemetery, on the city's outskirts, O'Connell is remembered with a round tower that dominates the graveyard. And at Derrynane, the estate he inherited in southwest Ireland, visitors can see the magnificent chariot in which O'Connell rode through Dublin, waving to the cheering thousands who had gathered to celebrate his release from prison.

O'Connell was jailed in 1843 when his non-violent “monster meetings” proved so effective the authorities felt threatened. His profound commitment to non-violence would inspire such figures as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King who, in the 20th century, would adapt O'Connell's approach to freedom struggles in India and the United States.

O'Connell was arguably the greatest statesman Ireland had ever produced. But one century before the Dublin city fathers attached his name to their most splendid thoroughfare, the man himself was fighting for his political life in the town of Ennis, 250 km to the southwest in County Clare.

Today, Ennis is a music-rich “boutique town,” with a population of 25,000, situated on the River Fergus between Limerick and Galway. It is less than 20 km from Shannon Airport and offers easy access to the Aran Islands, the Cliffs of Moher and the

Dingle Peninsula. In June, my wife and I spent five days there for all these reasons, but mainly because of Daniel O'Connell. I was researching a book about outstanding Irish and Scottish figures and I wanted to get a sense of the place where, almost two centuries ago, O'Connell made his first mark as a world figure. By then he was 43 years old.



O'Connell was born in August 1775 in a stone farmhouse whose ruins can still be seen at Cahirsiveen, County Kerry, 200 km southwest of Ennis. When he showed signs of being precocious, an uncle who owned an estate (Derrynane) stepped in to educate him. After studying in France, and narrowly escaping the violence of the French Revolution, O'Connell spent three years in London training as a lawyer.

At a debate on the fate of Britain, he heard Prime Minister William Pitt speak and took note of the man's “majestic march of language” – the way he used lower tones to end sentences and threw his voice to make himself heard at a distance. Inspired, O'Connell joined a debating society and began training himself as a speaker.

Then came a slow, steady climb to prominence. As a lawyer, he proved witty, incisive, erudite, theatrical, fluent in English and Irish and creative. Soon enough, he was peerless. His forte, according to bi-

ographer Charles Chenevix Trench, “was the cross-examination of hostile witnesses.” With great good humour, O’Connell would coax and confide, “from time to time rolling his large, blue-grey eyes at judge and jury,” until he trapped the witness in a lie or contradiction, and nailed him to the wall.

Born and raised a Roman Catholic, O’Connell became politically active. Ireland’s Catholics had been subject to discrimination since England had gained control of the country in the 17th century. They were barred from holding public office or serving in the army. Members of the government had to be Anglicans, so that even Presbyterians – mostly Scottish – did not qualify. By the early 1700s, the Anglican ruling class, known as the Protestant Ascendancy, had enacted penal laws to ensure their own dominance over Catholics and dissenters of all stripes.

By the early 1800s, some of the worst excesses had been rescinded. Catholics could serve in the armed forces or enter the legal profession, for example. Yet still they could not inherit Protestant land, own a horse valued at more than five pounds, become court judges or be elected to serve in the British House of Commons, which had governed the country since the 1801 Union of England and Ireland.

O’Connell set out to change all this and to bring about “Catholic Emancipation” by democratic means. In 1811 and well-known as a barrister, O’Connell established the Catholic Board to campaign specifically for Emancipation, or the right of Irish Catholics to become Members of Parliament. A dozen years later, he turned this board into the Catholic Association, a broad-focused organization that sought to improve the Catholic situation generally. Gradually, he gained a massive following and built a war chest to support pro-Emancipation candidates standing in Ireland for election to the British House of Commons. Yet, because a discriminatory oath of office demanded the renunciation of Catholicism, all of these propertied men were Protestants.

In 1828, O’Connell decided to seek the election of an Irish Catholic who would go to Westminster but refuse to take the reprehensible oath. When the 1828 by-election was called in County Clare, he anticipated that a prominent Catholic, an ally from the County, would contest the election. When that candidate withdrew, he agreed to stand himself – not out of personal ambition he explained, but “to advocate a principle, which may in my person be vindicated.”

The election was to be held in Ennis. On Monday, June 30, 1828, after travelling day and night by coach from Dublin, Daniel O’Connell arrived at two o’clock in the morning. At the Court House a few hours later, his opponent, William Vesey Fitzgerald, gave a tour-de-force speech that reduced most of the audience to tears. As he rose to answer it, O’Connell – already considered the greatest Irish orator of the age – knew he had his work cut out for him.

O’Connell did not dislike Fitzgerald, a Protestant who supported Catholic Emancipation. But if he were going to win this election, he had to demolish him verbally. In his book *King Dan*,

biographer Patrick Geoghegan shows how he did this with a speech that was “nasty, brutish, and brilliant, without doubt one of the greatest of his life.”

O’Connell charged that Fitzgerald belonged to a government that treated Catholics with contempt. He lamented that he could not rise in his chosen profession because he was a Catholic. He argued that Protestants could murder Catholics with impunity and that Catholics were not permitted even to mobilize. Fitzgerald’s conduct was “barefaced and miserable hypocrisy.” The speech ended, Geoghegan writes, “with a volley of execration for the combined enemies of the Catholic cause” that had the crowd cheering, roaring, and laughing.

The formal vote began the next day and, with people pouring into the town from the countryside, lasted almost a week. When polling ended on Saturday, July 5, O’Connell had won with 2,057 votes to 982. The people had elected a Roman Catholic to enter the House of Commons.

In February 1829, O’Connell went to London to try to take his seat as a Catholic member of Parliament. By now, the elected British government had accepted this idea. But King George IV was trying to prevent it. Finally, in April, the emancipation bill gained Royal Assent. Because of a technicality – the bill did not

become law until after the Ennis election – O’Connell himself had to be re-elected. This he did, unopposed, the following July. And when Parliament resumed in February 1830, he took his seat in the British House of Commons.

Having planted a flag on behalf of Irish Catholics, Daniel O’Connell became known as “The Liberator.” He would go on to fight many battles and would even spend three months in jail for non-violent political agitation. But as biographer Charles Tenevix Trench observes in *The Great*

Dan, “The reputation of this greatest of Irishmen deserves to rest not on what he might have done, nor on what he failed to do, but on his wonderful achievement in 1828, which raised his people’s heads and straightened their backs after generations of subjection and failure.”

In Ennis, where Daniel O’Connell changed the course of history, the Old Court House is long gone. But where it once stood we find O’Connell Square, which boasts a sky-high, 74-foot tower topped by a statue of the great man. A local historian, Jane O’Brien, sprinkles her daily guided walk around Ennis with anecdotes about O’Connell. The town’s main street, she tells us, has taken his name and was once called Jail Street. And, this being Ireland, she takes us past a lively pub, Dan O’Connell’s. Here in Ennis, as in Dublin, the great man’s memory would appear to be cherished and protected.

Ken McGoogan, whose dozen books include How the Scots Invented Canada, will publish Canada’s New Ancestors, subtitled The Scots & the Irish Rise Again, in 2015.

Photos: Sheena Fraser McGoogan



A Welsh cerddda in the countryside

By John Geary

Wales is renowned for its many incredible pubs, not to mention its numerous castles and more than its fair share of poets, the most famous being native son Dylan Thomas. But the mountainous country has a wild side often overlooked by tourists and local citizens alike. For such a small country, Wales includes great diversity when it comes to natural beauty.

Within just a few hours' drive, visitors can experience a rugged seacoast, an ancient forest and a fen that boasts ponds and rare sand dunes. All three habitats feature plenty of bird and animal life, some of it unique to the area.

So put down your pint, bookmark your poetry tome, strap on your hiking boots and head out for a glimpse of nature in these three untamed and scenic spots on the country's southeast coast.



TOLKIEN'S MIRKWOOD: *Afan Forest Park.*

Even though the sun is shining and the skies are blue, as I walk past some of the gnarled old trees crowding along the path that leads up into the forest, the feeling that I'm traipsing through Mirkwood pervades my thoughts.

But, unlike Tolkien's Middle Earth forest, this one lacks wargs or orcs. It does, however, host several bird species, including woodpeckers and nightjars, which show up fairly regularly in the 30,000-acre park. If you're really lucky, you may spot a fallow

deer or brown hare, two mammal species that also live there.

While you won't find any Tolkien-esque creatures, it is easy to surmise these oak-filled woods hosted Druids long ago. I could almost see them – which is more than I could say for the woodpeckers.

Walking along a portion of the Penhydd trail, I heard a woodpecker drumming, but never glimpsed it. It was as invisible as the spirits of the long-dead Druids. I did see several other birds flitting about, however.

Eventually, the trail doubles back and climbs up through thick forests, ending up at an overlook where I could gaze down at the fields and forests stretching out to the horizon. You can spend a few hours exploring the park as I did, or choose to spend several days wandering its paths. The park offers two-day itineraries, complete with guide maps to help explorers. Both mountain-biking and hiking itineraries are featured, the latter offering trips for varied fitness levels ranging from easy to more demanding jaunts.

The park is renowned as a mountain-bike destination, with more than one published article listing it in its "must-do" trips around the world. If you don't feel up to hiking or biking, Afan Forest Safaris offers four-wheel-drive trips throughout the park. But if you want peace and quiet, and perhaps to imagine you're passing through Mirkwood, the walking option works best. And, rather fittingly, nearby Lothlorien Cottage (40 minutes away) offers accommodation for visitors to the park.



THE LAST OF THE DUNES:

Kenfig National Nature Reserve

For a completely different experience from Afan, a 30-minute drive south takes you very close to the coast and the very tiny – but very ecologically significant – Kenfig Nature Reserve. It contains a mere remnant of the once-extensive sand-dune system that stretched along the coast of southern Wales from the River Ogmore to the Gower Peninsula.

Some small trees may be found within the reserve, but it is very open; a windswept landscape with one main circular path around it. I stopped at the 70-acre Kenfig pool, and watched some coots and swans going about their daily routine, grooming, bathing, looking for food, and oblivious to my presence. A blind on the pond offers the best place to try to spot birds, such as the ever-elusive bittern.

As I approach the pond, smoke fumes from some Port Talbot industrial operation drift up into the sky on the western horizon, a reminder of the small size of this reserve and its close proximity to developed areas.

Up in the sky, out of range of my camera, I spot soaring raptors flitting about against the overcast grey background. They are quite possibly merlins, although too far away to tell without good binoculars.

Along with birds, rabbits and foxes also live in the reserve. Rabbits play an important role in dune conservation; over-vegetation is the main issue facing preservation of the dunes here and rabbits help keep the grass down to aid the uncovering of the dunes.

One of the rarest beauties found here is not animal, though; it's the rare fen orchid, *Liparis loeselii*, for which Kenfig is world-renowned.

The self-guided tour uses interpretive signs. You really cannot get lost here (although hiking through sand dunes can be disorienting), but a check-in to the visitor centre can help you plan your tour and allow you to examine its small but interesting natural-history display.



TIME FOR A CERDDA:

The Ceredigion Coastal Path

The first two stops above are really just warm-ups for a real cerdda – Welsh for “walk” – along the Ceredigion Coastal Path. This trail made me realize why Wales is called “a country made for walking.”

About a two-hour drive northwest from Kenfig, this scenic footpath runs for 96 km between the Teifi and Dyfi estuaries. It links coastal towns and villages along the rugged Cardigan Bay coastline that marks that section of southwest Wales.

You can pick a section to stroll along for an hour or two, or you can spend a week tramping along the trail. Some easy-going sections even offer people with limited mobility – wheelchairs or pushchairs – enjoyment.

Starting near the village of Newquay (one of the rumoured settings for the Dylan Thomas radio play, *Under Milk Wood*), I chose the first option, and walked about four hours southwest along the trail, much of which is in its naturally wild and rugged state.

Two areas within Cardigan Bay are designated as Marine Special Areas of Conservation because of their importance for wildlife. Wildflowers, seabirds and, if you're really lucky, dolphins, porpoises, or seals, can be seen along certain sections of the trail.

Sadly, I didn't spot any of those, but certainly got a workout making my way along a section of the trail that led across bridges and along switchbacks that gave out onto views below of small beaches and the ocean.

Natural history is not the only attraction here; much cultural history is in evidence, from ancient churches, to iron-age hill forts, to 19th century harbours. I finished my cerdda at one of these ancient churches as the afternoon sun sank into the ocean to the west of me, the day's bright sunshine turning dark with overcast clouds threatening rain and the onset of evening.

John Geary is a freelance writer-photographer based in Vancouver, BC, who loves to walk in nature no matter which continent he's on.



TIPS FOR YOUR TRIP - *Some helpful websites:*

Afan: <http://www.afanforestpark.co.uk/>

Lothlorien Cottage: <http://www.lothloriencottage.co.uk/index.html>

Kenfig: <http://www.first-nature.com/waleswildlife/e-nnr-kenfig.php>

Ceredigion: <http://www.ceredigioncoastpath.org.uk/>

For accommodations along the path:

<http://www.tourism.ceredigion.gov.uk/walkcardiganbay/accommodation.htm>

Interested in history?

<http://www.ceredigioncoastpath.org.uk/heritage.htm>

Coastal weather can change quickly, so be prepared for all kinds of weather at any time of the year and take extra care in windy conditions. Dress in layers, including a waterproof slicker or jacket in your gear, even if you're out for just an afternoon stroll.

Wear sturdy footwear, hiking boots or heavy walking shoes, even if you're out for only an hour. The path is fairly remote and many spots do not have cellphone coverage so if you turned an ankle, help could be a while coming.

It's also important to note that some sections of the trail that traverse beach areas are not passable during high tides. Check the tide tables. www.tourism.ceredigion.gov.uk

The Return of the

White-tailed Eagles

The 18th century fishing port of Tobermory, on the Inner Hebridean island of Mull, has provided a safe haven for storm-tossed boats and welcomed many travellers over the years. Its brightly coloured buildings sparkle in the blue waters of the bay. Go no further and you would leave Mull with pleasant memories. Explore the natural wonders of this island beyond Tobermory and you will experience something magical.

Story and photos by Tom Langlands



With an area of 338 square miles (875 square kilometres) and a coastline of 300 miles (483 kilometres) Mull is the second largest island of the Inner Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland. In the early 1800s Mull's population numbered around 10,500 but the ensuing Potato Famine and Clearances forced many to leave. Now it is home to fewer than 3,000 people. Fishing, farming and forestry once formed the main industries and although they still exist, it is now tourism that drives Mull's economy. Many of today's visitors come to see the island's wildlife, but few appreciate what makes this place so unique.

Mull has large areas of native deciduous woodland with ancient trees, ferns and lichens. These are Celtic rainforests dominated by sessile oak and hazel. Mountain streams cascade over waterfalls before winding on through moss-covered boulders

and fern-laden banks. Colourful fungi sprout from decaying branches on the forest floor and the air is thick with the scent of warm, damp foliage. This is home to an astonishing range of mosses, liverworts and lichens along with rare fungi, such as hazel gloves, that thrive in the damp, unpolluted air that the Gulf Stream warms.

John Clare moved to Mull seven years ago, having holidayed there for 30 years. He ran a wildlife consultancy for more than 20 years and has written management plans for some of the most important nature conservation sites in the UK. He is the author of several books about Mull's wildlife and is currently Community Information and Tourism Officer for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Clare understands what is special about this place. "Mull has a very varied geology and landscape and a long maritime coastline. Thus, a wide range of wild-

life habitats exist. The climate is mild and wet, much of the land has been untouched by herbicides and pesticides, and large areas are uninhabited and difficult to access, which all enhances the diversity and abundance of wildlife species. Mull's uniqueness is this diversity and abundance."

A trip around Mull's coastline reveals sea otters, seals, porpoises, dolphins, whales and basking sharks. Seabirds and ducks forage along the foreshore, while birds such as crossbills can be spotted feeding on the cones high in the pine forests. In autumn, the roaring of red deer stags and the clashing of antlers announce the arrival of the rutting season. This "monarch of the glen" has attracted visitors to Scotland for many years but it is Mull's eagles that bring the new generation of wildlife tourists. Mull hosts one of the largest concentrations of golden eagles to be found anywhere. Search above

the ridgelines of the island's mountainous interior and you may see this iconic Scottish bird soaring high. For the greater part of the last century the golden eagle has enjoyed the status of being Britain's largest bird. Now, it has forfeited that place to a new-comer.

With a staggering six-and-a-half to eight-foot (roughly two metres) wingspan, the white-tailed eagle has returned to take its place as the UK's largest bird. Nicknamed the "flying barn door," these birds are easily recognizable. Mull's rugged coastline provides the ideal environment that this sea eagle favours. Often perched on a tree or rocky promontory overlooking the sea, it can launch itself and, with a few beats of its massive wings, ride the thermal currents searching for fish in the waters below.

One, just above the waves, partially folds its wings and starts a rapid but graceful descent. Brown feathers flutter and white tail feathers fan out against the blue sky. Drawing closer, the size and strength of this predator is evident. Penetrating yellow eyes are fixed on the water. A huge hooked flesh-tearing beak points the way while stocky legs are raised forward with ominous curving talons protruding from large yellow feet. Speeding over the water, it drops those mighty claws into the sea and with a few powerful wing beats heads back to its cliff-top nest with a doomed fish. The nest comprises a huge pile of sticks in which the female will lay a single brood of two eggs between March and July.

Several hundred years ago the sight of a white-tailed eagle around the UK coastline would not have been uncommon. Sadly, habitat change and persecution resulted in their extinction with the last known native bird being shot in Shetland in 1918. Unsuccessful efforts were made in the late 1950s to reintroduce the birds to Scotland and it wasn't until 1975 when 82 young birds from Norway were released on the nearby isle of Rum that the re-introduction program became properly established. Later re-introductions have taken place in Wester Ross, Fife in east Scotland and also Ireland. None has been re-introduced to Mull and yet the island now has around 20 established white-tailed eagle territories.

Clare explains, "Juvenile birds roam far and wide, usually for the first four or five years in search of a mate. They then establish a territory and remain there for the rest of their lives, often into their 30s. The first two pairs of the re-introduced birds to set up territories did so on Mull in the early 1980s and the first wild-fledged chick was on Mull in 1985. The reason the white-tailed eagle chose Mull was probably because of the diversity of habitats and abundance of prey species. Of particular importance was the richness of sea fish and seabirds around the Mull coastline."

The re-introduction program has had its critics, mainly croft-



ers and farmers. Although these birds predominantly feed on offal around the coast, an eagle will occasionally take a small lamb. In most cases the lamb will already have been dead or dying. Clare is aware of the prejudices that exist. "We have had one of the Mull juveniles poisoned on the Scottish mainland. One of the first three chicks to fledge in Ireland in 2013 was shot and one of the nest trees was chopped down on an estate on the east coast of Scotland last winter." Despite the critics, 85 per cent of visitors list the birds as a significant factor in visiting Mull and it is estimated that the eagles generate £5 million annually towards the island's economy.

Martin Keivers operates Mull Charters, a local business established on the back of the eagles' arrival. Liaising closely with the RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage, Keivers bought a boat and started running trips to take visitors along the coastline to see the eagles and other wildlife. At other times he arranges fishing trips. "We are now in our sixth season. I employ my son Alex as full-time crew and my wife to do bookings and paperwork. Alex already has some Royal Yachting Association qualifications and wants to be a skipper one day. We also run a B&B that benefits from return visitors to Mull who want to go on the boat trips again and we already have bookings for 2015!"

Keivers is very much aware of the wider value to the community. "The partnership between the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission and Mull and Iona Community Trust results in large amounts of the money generated going directly back into the community to support various clubs and causes. They support many youth projects demonstrating how valuable an asset the wildlife, especially the eagles, is to a small community like ours."

In a world where wildlife and the natural environment seem constantly under threat it is wonderful and encouraging to see the white-tailed eagle back in the skies over Scotland. It is slowly, but surely, strengthening its hold and expanding its kingdom.

Thanks to John Clare
www.johnclaremull.com

and Martin Keivers
www.mullcharters.com

www.tomlandsp photography.com





Kato

I was born and raised in mid-Wales.

I started out in fashion illustration and began designing clothing that I wish existed. I launched Steampunk Couture in 2005.

I've become more skilled at my craft, savvier about PR and market-

ing and more ruthless with licensing deals. I don't let people walk over me like I used to.

Mainstream fashion bores me. There's so much talent out there, fresh out of fashion-design school, with beautiful, brave ideas and yet

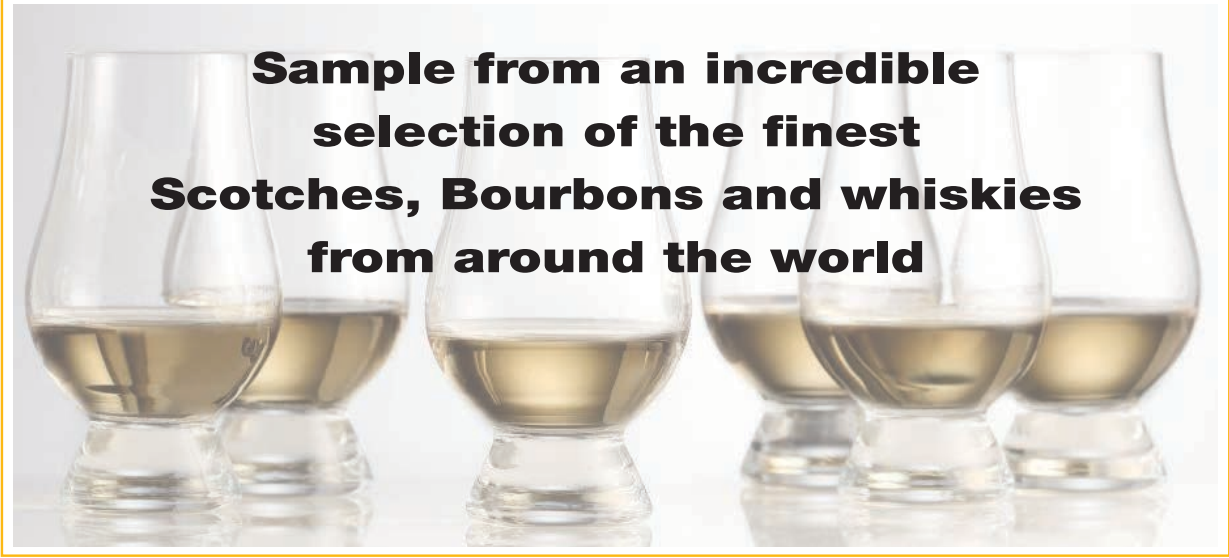
high street stores just bring out a slew of '80s-inspired off-shoulder rubbish again. Alternative fashion is fantastic and I get very excited by those heavily inspired by futuristic shapes and functionality. Sustainable and organic wear blows my mind!

www.steampunkcouture.com



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Ultra Lana



Lana Del Rey's femme fatale persona might be all-American, but Celtic Life International has uncovered the USA-born singer's taste for the Highlands.

Drawn to Scotland by her ex-boyfriend Barrie-James O'Neill (lead singer of indie band Cassidy) coupled with her Scottish/Anglo ancestry, it's clear to see why Del Rey calls it her "second home."

Del Rey is a keen supporter of the Scottish indie scene – with Cassidy, until recently, opening for her – and there are obvious parallels between her sound and that of the Scottish band Coc-teau Twins.

Outside music and, if Instagram is anything to go by, the singer is proud to sport her Scottish/American heritage; she's even been spotted donning a Celtic Football Club shirt. Her song National Anthem may be a lyrical vessel about money being the doctrine of success, but it seems Del Rey yearns to put down roots. Famously, when asked where she'd call her permanent home, Del Rey replied, "I don't have one...but when I have any time I go to Glasgow, that's where I'm happiest."

Most of us know Elizabeth Woodridge Grant as her alter ego, Lana Del Rey. The singer's cult following morphed into mainstream recognition around about 2012, when her second album, *Born to Die*, shot to the top of the UK charts. Since then, her sultry sound, pouted lips and enigmatic stage presence have seen her capture audiences worldwide, with her new material already becoming staple fixtures on most radio playlists. Closer to home, she's hit the UK festival circuit and graced the Pyramid stage at this summer's Glastonbury Festival.

Routinely provocative (it wasn't so long ago that Del Rey fanned the flames of controversy by answering an interviewer with the statement "I wish I was dead already"), even the titles of her albums carry ominous undertones. She's been lauded for her sensual voice, but scorned for her stylised image and mysterious backstory. The musical equivalent of Marmite, Del Rey's tracks within both *Born to Die* and *Ultraviolence* seem saturated with the sense that happiness remains permanently just out of reach.

"I haven't yet found that easy path towards happiness," she says. "It's been years since I've felt at peace. That's been my theme in life: trudging the road to happiness. For me, there are moments of pure happiness, but you can't achieve that over a sustained period of time...you try to make those moments as many as possible."

Happiness for Del Rey "is not a static state" but instead a process, something that she actively pursues. "I have found that de-

voting your life to the people around you and caring for them is the true road to general happiness."

Giving the ones you love your full attention must be hard when also dealing with the demands of being a globe-trotting pop star. Constantly on the move, Del Rey also rarely has time to pause and reflect on her increasing interest in spirituality.

"My life has gone through various incarnations and transitions," she says. "I don't consider myself to be someone very provocative or radical; I embrace a lot of traditional things. But I believe in alternative lifestyles and in alternative relationships."

To Del Rey, being "transitional" frequently involves looking back.

"I think we've lost the kind of cultural and personal liberation that we were exploring in the '60s when people were experiencing a new concept of freedom. That was a much more exciting notion than the freedom we talk about now."

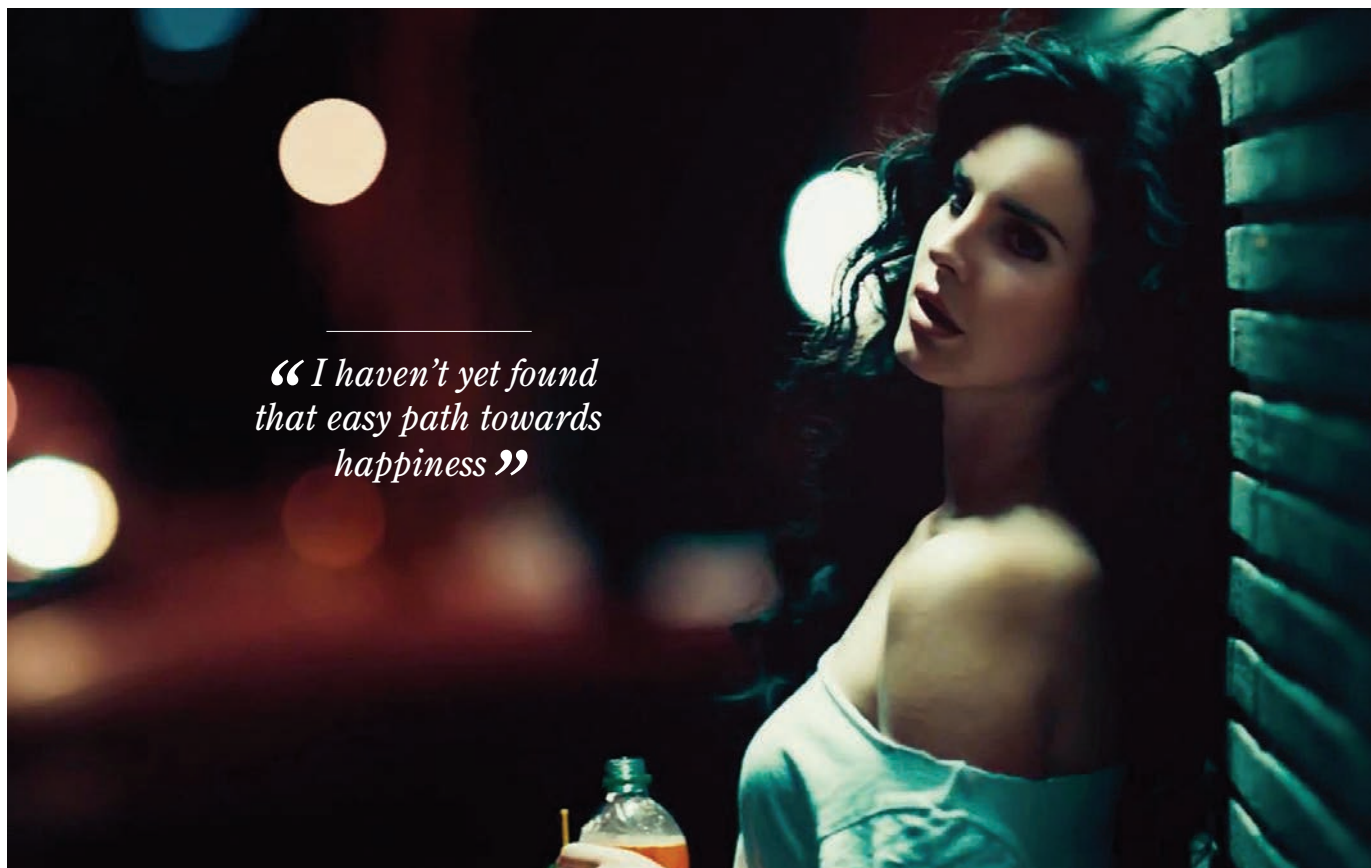
Today's freedom might differ from that of the past, but Del Rey is a woman constantly seeking liberation from her own demons. For her, her personal and creative lives appear to go hand in hand and she's experienced waves of musical and personal change since her teenage years.

"When I was 15 my parents sent me to a private boarding school in Connecticut so I could fight my addiction to alcohol. I had a very young teacher, Gene Campbell, who introduced me to hip hop. That set things in motion for me and my music evolved over the course of the next few years – especially after I moved to New York which was a very troubled time, but also very creative."

Explaining that a lot of her music "is a reference to the feeling I had when I was inebriated" and the fact that her addiction to booze rapidly became destructive, it wasn't just music, but faith, that motivated the younger Del Rey (back then, she was still plain Lizzie Grant). "I went to a school where Jesuits taught the philosophy classes. I was fascinated by the basic question of 'why do we exist?' I enjoyed thinking and talking to other people about basic questions like why we are how we are and what kind of meaning can we find in life."

The words why and how still abound in Del Rey's lyrics; she's clearly a fan of multiple meanings. Take *Ultraviolence*'s title track, which features the lyrics "He hit me/And it felt like a kiss" or *Cruel World* and the cryptic phrase "Did what I had to do/





*“I haven't yet found
that easy path towards
happiness”*

Cause it's so far past me now.” Her philosophical musings are alive and well in the new album, so why the abruptly aggressive title *Ultraviolence*?

“I found the title before I had written almost any of the songs. I love the idea of having a one-word title because I think that has a beautiful simplicity. I was thinking of flowers at the time and since I love flowers that are shades of blue and violet I had this idea of ultraviolet and that kind of vibration.”

“Ultra is a sweet sound and completely opposite to the sense of violence. It also summarises some of the contradictions I find in myself. That my essence is sweet but I also have this violence in my life that I've experienced over the last four years.”

Telling us she's in love with this record, she praises Dan Auerbach, The Black Keys' guitarist and vocalist for its production. Their collaboration was spurred by a chance late-night meeting in a club. “He listened to the record and really liked it but thought it had too much of a classic-rock feel. But when I told him that I had this idea for a West Coast fusion with an underground jazz culture for the mood, he said he felt that he could deliver that. We went to Nashville and recorded everything live and it had a really good feel to it,” she recalls.

“Something Dan really tapped into was that all of my choruses slipped into half-time beats and half-time swings so he called it ‘narco-swing’ every time the ‘West Coast’ chorus would kick in and that's a good description of it.”

The American west coast is also the site of her creative release. “Being in LA has been an escape and I've been inspired by how casual everything is over there. I love to swim, I love going to the beach every day. I spend hours and hours during the week driving up and down the coast listening to music.”

Telling Celtic Life International that she's inspired not only by the natural world but by the soundtracks of films past – “like *American Beauty*, *The Godfather*, *Scarface*” – she was thrilled to perform her own beautiful ballad *Young and Beautiful* in last year's *The Great Gatsby* soundtrack. This year saw Angelina Jolie hand-pick her to sing *Once Upon a Dream* in the trailer for *Maleficent*.

Del Rey speaks wearily of a busy year both commercially and creatively, with soundtracks recorded, festival routes conquered and an album to promote. A self-confessed “nocturnal creature,” she makes use of the twilight hours, working “either with the radio in my car playing or in my house and the TV turned on, usually chain-smoking and drinking coffee...I drink tons of coffee!”

It's through working day and night that, at 28 years old, Del Rey can call herself a transnational, globally-recognized musician. But does this tireless work ethic ever catch up with her? The singer pauses to think.

“I thought I saw something strange or a ghost while staying at a friend's house recently. I swear to God these three apparitions appeared above this deck on Kingsland Road in London. I called 911 but I didn't know at the time that 911 doesn't work in England. I learned later that it was light coming from Chinese lanterns that people light up in the summer. It was really humiliating!”

With this, Lana Del Rey's perfect poker face is transformed by a laugh and we can't help but join her. The spooky anecdote doesn't seem to fit the provocative, angsty image Del Rey normally exudes. But it proves that even musical megastars are sometimes afraid of the dark.



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Scotland Votes

On September 18, 2014, Scottish voters will be asked to decide on their country's future. We examine the angles and issues of this historic referendum.

The Road to Referendum

Those who are voting “yes” in the referendum on September 18 are not the first to push for Scotland’s independence from England, or from other empires and invaders for that matter.

Although during the Battle of Mons Graupius, the Roman army killed some 10,000 Caledonians, they never managed to dominate the people and land in what is now Scotland. In fact, they built Hadrian’s wall to protect Roman Britain from the mighty, determined Picts of Caledonia.

What is now Scotland also contended with Viking raids – which ultimately united the Picts and Scoti – and, for a short stint,

William the Conqueror. But during King Alexander III’s reign (1249-1286), Scotland enjoyed a prosperous, and relatively peaceful time.

When Alexander was suddenly thrown from his horse and killed, King Edward I of England seized his opportunity for conquest, setting in motion more than 700 years of conflicts, truces and union between England and Scotland.



1286:

When King Alexander III of Scotland died, his only heir was his granddaughter Margaret, a mere toddler, living in Norway. In 1290, en route to Scotland, Margaret became ill and died. The Guardians of Scotland named Edward I, known to be a successful king, arbitrator to decide who would take the Scottish throne. Among the 13 or more claimants, Edward named John Balliol to be King of the Scots in 1292, but he expected his choice to literally abide by his oath of fealty. King John succumbed to Edward’s pressures for a time until he signed the Auld Alliance with France in 1295.



1296 - 1328:

Scotland aligning with France infuriated King Edward. In 1296, England invaded

Scotland, dethroning King John, to begin the First War of Independence. The Scots retaliated under the leadership of William Wallace and Andrew Moray, defeating the English during the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Wallace was captured and executed in 1305, but Robert the Bruce became the King of Scots in 1306 once rival John Comyn was out of the way. He led the Scots to victory at the famous Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. In 1328, King Edward III and Robert the Bruce signed the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton, establishing Scotland’s independence.

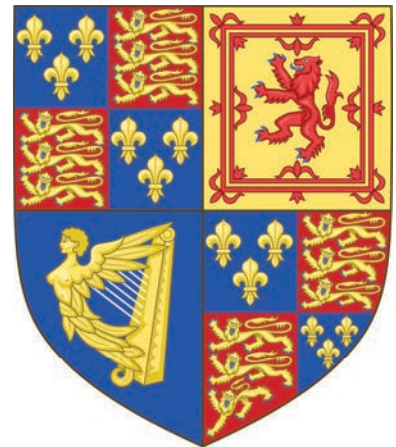


1332 - 1357:

Upon the support of England, Edward Balliol invaded Scotland and initiated the Battle of Dupplin Moor. This began the 25-year Second War of Independence - a failed attempt of Balliol to overthrow King David II, the son of Robert the Bruce, from Scotland’s throne. The war ended with the Treaty of Berwick.

1513:

Scotland, under the rule of James IV, invaded England in the Battle of Flodden Field as part of their renewed Auld Alliance with France. James IV was killed during the battle and the Scots were defeated.



1603:

James VI, King of the Scots, inherited the thrones of England and Ireland, known as the Union of the Crowns.

1707:

The United Kingdom of Great Britain was created under The Treaty of the Union to politically join England (and Wales) with Scotland. Robert Burns wrote, “We are bought and sold for English gold,” describing the Scottish parliamentary members who were bribed into signing.

1715 & 1746 (also 1689):

The start dates of the main Jacobite risings where supporters from Scotland, as well as Ireland and northern England, attempted to restore the House of Stuart (Stewart), which was founded by Robert II of Scotland, to the British throne.

18th & 19th Centuries:

During the Highland Clearances, many Scots were forced from their homes and thousands crossed the Atlantic to settle in North America. It was a time where the British parliament attempted to wipe out Highland culture with legislation such as the Act of Proscription (1746) which included the Dress Act, making it illegal to wear traditional tartans and kilts.

1853:

The National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights was founded, spearheading Scotland's home – rule movement.

1934:

The Scottish National Party (SNP) was founded.

1975:

Production of North Sea oil began at the Argyll field. During the '70s, the SNP initiated the "It's Scotland's Oil" campaign.



1979:

A referendum was held on the question of devolution and the establishment of a Scottish assembly. Despite the result of 51.6 per cent "yes" votes, it did not meet the proportional electorate requirement.

1997:

A majority of Scots voted in favour of a Scottish parliament with tax-varying authority in the 1997 devolution referendum.

1999:

Elections for the first Scottish Parliament since 1707 took place. The Labour Party won 56 seats while the SNP won 35.



2007:

The SNP, led by Alex Salmond, won the Scottish parliamentary election. The SNP formed a minority government with Salmond as First Minister of Scotland.

2011:

In the 2011 parliamentary election, the SNP won by a landslide forming Scotland's first majority government since the parliament was re-established.



2012:

On October 15, First Minister Alex Salmond and British Prime Minister David Cameron sign the Edinburgh agreement, granting authority to Scotland to hold an independence referendum in 2014.



2013:

The Scottish Parliament passed the Referendum Bill on November 14th and it received royal assent on December 17th.



2014:

On September 18, voters will answer "yes" or "no" to the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?" As of July 29, approximately 100,000 16-and 17-year-olds have already registered to take part in the referendum, according to Macleans magazine's Katie Engelhart. The Poll of Polls dated August 7, 2014, from John Curtice's What Scotland Thinks, reveals an average of 57 per cent against and 43 per cent for Scottish independence.

Did You Know?

In 1296, Edward I's army stole the Stone of Destiny (coronation stone) from Scone Abbey, north of Perth. In 1950, four Scottish students broke into Westminster Abbey on Christmas Eve to reclaim the stone. They, after mistakenly breaking the stone in half, took it back to Scotland and left it in Arbroath Abbey. When the authorities were alerted, the stone was returned to London. But in 1996, the British government formally returned the stone to Scotland, where it is now displayed in Edinburgh Castle.

Perspectives



Should Scotland be an independent country?

That is the question over four million Scottish voters will be asked on September 18, as the country decides its future.

It is also the question that pollsters and marketing research firms have been asking tens of thousands of Scots, both at home and abroad, for the last 18 months.

Let's look at the numbers, first within Scotland.

- As recently as mid-August, UK-based marketing firm Ipsos Mori had the margin at 57 per cent to 43 per cent in favour of No.
- Likewise, a mid-summer poll by ICM Reseach in London revealed the same result, as did an August poll by Survation.
- Similarly, TNS-BMRB, which has offices both in London and in Edinburgh, had an August poll at 58 per cent for the No side.
- Another UK polling firm, Panelbase, also showed the No side ahead, but by a closer margin of 54 per cent to 46 per cent in mid-July.
- Elsewhere in the U.K., the trending appears to be upward for the No side; Progressive Scottish Opinion had it at 61 per cent to 39 per cent, as did London's YouGov. Both polls were taken in mid-August.
- Overall and combined, including polls taken by other firms within the U.K., recent results indicate that 58 per cent of Scottish respondents would vote No to independence if the September 18 referendum were to be held today.

Even with the margin of error at +/- three per cent, a No vote would still prevail.

And while there are still a number of eligible voters who have yet to decide which way they will cast their ballots on September 18, most pollsters and researchers suggest that it won't have a major impact on the final outcome.

In truth, the overall sentiment has not changed much over the last 18 months.

The results are similar outside of Scotland.

- In England, a myriad of polls throughout the summer show support for Scottish independence hovering at about 30 per cent. 50 per cent are not in favour, while 20 per cent are undecided.
- A spring poll in Wales suggested that only 16 per cent supported an independent Scotland.
- A recent poll of 300 prominent Scottish expats living in the United States, conducted by the Friends of Scotland – a non-profit corporation that was originally co-founded in 2001 by Sir Sean Connery – notes that 74 per cent of respondents would vote No in the referendum. Another 94 per cent believe that there is commercial value in Scotland remaining part of the UK.

Though sentiment seems to be similar in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Australia, Canada and elsewhere, polling statistics were not available at this time.

Regardless of outside opinion, however, and barring a seismic shift in Scottish public opinion, the No side appears to be poised for victory on September 18.

Sources: Various

Carpe Diem

In just a matter of days, we'll hold the future of this nation in our hands. Each and every one of us will have the opportunity of a lifetime – the chance to win our independence.



For me, it's all about democracy. A Yes vote will finally mean that decisions affecting Scotland will be taken in Scotland by the people who live and work here.

That isn't the case at present. We continue to get governments we didn't vote for. The Tories have just one Westminster MP north of the border – that's one out of 59. Yet they are happy to force their right-wing austerity agenda on our country.

Their priorities simply aren't our priorities. Take two recent reports for example. One showed that more than 100,000 more people have fallen into poverty in Scotland in a single year. The other, from a panel of Westminster grandees, recommended spending billions of pounds on a new generation of Trident nuclear missiles.

So, as more and more of our families are forced to turn to food banks, the Westminster parties plan to upgrade weapons of mass destruction on the Clyde at a cost of £4 billion a year. That's despite the fact that a majority of MSPs at Holyrood are opposed to Trident, and a majority of Scottish MPs voted against its renewal.

To me, that's an obscenity. We can do a lot better than this. With a Yes vote, we can remove Trident, address this searing injustice and, instead, mobilize our fantastic assets and people to achieve fairness, equality and prosperity.

Independence will give Scotland the opportunity to make the most of all our great industries. From oil and gas through to shipbuilding and from life sciences to the renewable energy revolution, we are

at the forefront of global innovation.

Scotland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world – richer per head than Japan, France, the UK and the majority of developed countries. But at present we simply can't spend our money as we choose. So we don't feel rich. With independence, that will change.

A Yes vote will mean investment in priorities like childcare and substantial savings of around £600 million a year by not spending on Westminster priorities like Trident and not paying for sending MPs and peers to the Commons and House of Lords.

Independence will also allow us to protect our vital public services, including the NHS, as the privatization of the health service in England threatens Scotland's budget.

An independent Scotland will have a seat at the top table in Europe for the first time ever. That's hugely important, as it means we'll be able to fight for a better deal for our farmers and fishermen, the latter of whom were once described by Westminster as "expendable" in the UK's negotiations with Brussels.

And if we don't vote Yes? The alternative is risking seeing Scotland dragged out of Europe against our will in an in-out referendum as Westminster dances to a UKIP tune. That would have disastrous consequences for Scottish jobs and investment, cutting us off from a single market of more than half-a-billion people.

Referendum Day will be a defining

moment for our nation. During those 15 hours that the polling stations are open, Scotland will be sovereign for the first time in more than three centuries. The decision we make that day will determine whether we hand that sovereignty back to Westminster or move forward in a new 21st century partnership of equals.

The choice people have on September 18 is a very simple one – should Scotland govern itself? Should the Scottish Parliament we voted for overwhelmingly 17 years ago have the full powers other national parliaments take for granted? Should we always get the governments we vote for?

And are the people of Scotland, who live and work here, best placed to decide our future? When the United Nations was formed it had only 50 member states. In the last 70 years or so that has grown to more than 190 independent countries.

Independence is the natural state of being for nations. So why should Scotland be different? Only a Yes vote gives us chance to create a brighter future.

September 18 can be our Independence Day – a moment in history and a historic opportunity. This is Scotland's chance. We should – we must – grasp it with both hands.

The Rt. Honourable Alex Salmond is the First Minister of Scotland





**Jack
McConnell**

*Home rule
inside the UK:*

The best of both worlds

The atmosphere in Glasgow and Scotland during the 2014 Commonwealth Games was electric. Referendum campaigning was put to one side as we enjoyed the biggest spectacle ever to come to our country, and we showcased modern Glasgow and Scotland to the world.

But the Games are over, and it is “game on” in the battle for Scotland’s future, the battle to decide between home rule inside the UK, and independence outside the UK.

On July 1, 1999, we celebrated the opening of Scotland’s first democratic parliament. And no-one can deny that the new Scottish parliament had strong powers back then, and more have been added since. It was and is autonomous, free to make its own decisions. And it has made a huge difference.

We had the power to ban smoking in public places, leading the rest of the UK, and we did. We had the powers to support Scottish industry abroad – promoting exports and creating jobs, and we have.

We had the powers to transform our education system, and over tuition fees, investment in facilities, enterprise education and the standards in our colleges, and we have. We had the powers to change our laws and the way the courts enforce them. And we did.

We had the powers to attract the Ryder Cup, the Commonwealth Games and other events to Scotland, and the powers

to build the world-class facilities that will leave a legacy. And we did.

We had the powers to abolish feudal land ownership and regenerate rural areas through community ownership schemes, and we did.

The parliament had the power to set up national parks, the power to establish rights to nursery education, the power to ban fox hunting, the power to enact equal marriage, the power to protect vulnerable adults and children, and the power to prosecute those responsible for human trafficking.

And we used those powers to change Scotland.

We have the powers to change tax rates; to introduce incentives or raise resources – and more powers are on the way. But we also have the UK to support Scotland.

We have the power of the UK brand and more than 200 embassies and consulates to promote Scotland and attract investment worldwide. And we have the power of the UK to contribute to a better world; and the power of the UK to keep us safe and secure.

So, for me, it makes sense to share our sovereignty with the other nations of the UK in areas of mutual interest.

For three years the referendum debate has been too negative and too polarised between old Unionism and old Nationalism. I am neither a Nationalist nor a Unionist; I am a patriot and a democrat. I want a better Scotland in a better world.

That is why I will say no thanks in September – because we are better off when we have the best of both worlds. A strong Scottish Parliament backed up by our United Kingdom of nations.

I hope all of those who fought for “home rule” or devolution in the ’80s and ’90s will come out fighting. And those who made the parliament work for Scotland will stand up and be counted.

It is time to fight to save home rule inside the UK as the best way to govern Scotland. I hope we make the right choice.

The Honorable Jack McConnell was a Member of the Scottish Parliament from 1999 to 2011, and the First Minister of Scotland from 2001 to 2007.



Brian Wilson

“Nothing can be taken for granted until the ballots are counted and anything can happen...”



Two-and-a-half long years after it began, the Scottish referendum campaign is drawing to a close. The latest opinion polls suggest that we are pretty much back where we started with those opposed to separatism around 20 points ahead of the pro-independence forces.

It is impossible to avoid the feeling that a great deal of time, energy and money have been wasted on answering a question which most Scots did not even want to be asked. The vast majority of us are content with our multiple identities – Scottish, British and whatever else goes into each individual's mix.

Nothing can be taken for granted until the ballots are counted and anything can happen on a wet Thursday in September. But the absolute certainty is that there is no overwhelming demand from the Scottish people for independence and the tragedy would be if a temporary spasm carried us into constitutional territory that would soon be deeply regretted.

The finality of this decision, in the event of a “yes” vote, is beginning to be appreciated more fully by the Scottish electorate. This is not a general election. We would not be able to reverse the outcome even if what followed bore no relationship to what has been promised. For Scotland, this really would be the ultimate step in the dark.

In these circumstances, it has been incumbent upon the Nationalists to make a

convincing case, particularly in economic terms. They have signally failed to do this. We have had bluff, bluster and assertion by the barrow-load. We have had assurances on every front that things would continue much as at present because the UK (continuing), the EU, NATO and everyone else would keel over in the face of Scottish demands.

This fantasy world collided with reality during the first televised debate between the Nationalist leader, Alex Salmond, and the former UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling. In response to repeated questioning about what currency Scotland would use, Salmond could only say that there would be a currency union “because it would be in the best interests of the rest of the UK to have one.”

It is complete nonsense, as the audience quickly realised. Whatever else Salmond can decide, it is not what would be in the interests of the state from which he would just have led a secession. Yet the currency question is crucial to so much else – jobs, pensions, prices, family security. To have reached this far in the campaign without a Plan B, when currency

union is refused is reckless beyond words.

At heart, Nationalism is a fundamentalist belief. There are maybe 25 per cent of the Scottish population who want an independent country come what may. What happens after September 18th is of no great interest to them. Their economic arguments are rationalizations of the non-negotiable demand for independence. For this minority, the implications can wait until after the referendum, if only they can get over that hurdle.

Fortunately for Scotland, that is a minority position. The great majority of Scots know that we already have a strong national identity which nobody can take away from us. We also have many benefits from being part of the United Kingdom which bind. We do not need to turn ourselves into a separate state and hopefully that option will be dismissed for the foreseeable future on September 18th.

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





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Crossroads; The State of Celtic & Gaelic Studies



Celtic and Gaelic studies are at a crossroads. Currently, no lack of opportunity exists to study the subjects. Schools that either specialize in, or teach, both subjects exist on both sides of the pond and are plentiful. But are they attracting students and do they have the resources necessary to keep both the culture and the language alive? Celtic Life International checked in with a scholar and a school administrator to get a better handle on some of the challenges and some of the successes.

The “Celtic Boom” of the 1990s has come and gone, according to Heather Sparling, Canada Research Chair in Music Traditions at Cape Breton University in Nova Scotia. She says the institutions are increasingly looking toward international students who are not necessarily familiar with – or even interested in – Celtic or Gaelic studies. Add to that the fact that decreasing student populations are challenging universities and that liberal arts programs and disciplines – including Celtic and Gaelic studies – aren’t currently trendy, and it becomes clear that maintaining interest in those programs isn’t all that easy.

“But the story isn’t all doom and gloom,” Sparling reassures. Far from it. She notes that the devolution of Scotland’s Parliament in 1999 resulted in a huge increase in resources devoted to the preservation, maintenance and strengthening of Gaelic language. Although those resources are meant to benefit Scottish citizens, they’ve been a boon to Gaels globally, providing access to new Gaelic textbooks, literature, songs, recordings, dictionaries, websites, radio shows and television programming.

“There is a growing awareness globally of the value of minority languages and cultures,” Sparling says. “Gaelic language proficiency can lead to jobs and careers on either side of the Atlantic.”

Bob Leonard, executive director of the Atlantic Gaelic

Academy – which operates in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick – contends that Gaelic studies need to be redesigned for today’s students. He argues that using technology to present the language would pique their interest in languages as students are now used to a world in which they live using mobile devices. According to Leonard, a dynamic Gaelic studies program should use the latest in technology and social media, among other requirements. “Our students love texting in Gaelic,” he notes.



Sparling calls for “active learning opportunities.” Those, she says, should involve the Gaelic communities outside of the university and provide students the opportunity to interact with others and become engaged with Gaelic language and culture as a way of life and not just a subject of learning. “Research shows that active learning is the deepest, longest-lasting kind of learning. Active learning requires that students use their learning in practical ways, or that they learn through doing instead of simply through reading or listening,” Sparling points out.

Doing this, however, isn’t easy when universities and other institutions often face a climate of fiscal restraint. Sparling says both limited resources and accessibility issues create barriers to fostering this kind of learning. While community-based projects and initiatives can be motivating for students and, at the same time offer much-needed help to community groups, those can take more time to develop than



afforded in a single course. Field trips offer valuable insights, but are expensive and difficult to coordinate with the busy schedule of students. “In short, we need money to develop engaging, active learning opportunities for students, or creative ideas and a list of best learning practices for those times when money is short,” Sparling says.

For his part, Leonard offers that a truly dynamic Gaelic studies program needs to teach students how to read, write and speak the language, including the opportunity right from the onset of the program. He also says it’s necessary to tap into the knowledge and experience of native Gaelic speakers who have obtained teaching qualifications and education in Gaelic. That said, Leonard notes that currently a “dire shortage” of good Gaelic teachers exists, something he says needs to be addressed. “The quality of a student’s Gaelic will only be good as his or her teacher’s Gaelic and the program,” Leonard says. He adds that the Atlantic Gaelic College gets around this problem through its online programs, which allows the school to access top Gaelic teachers throughout the world to teach its programs.

First though, students need to be attracted to the programs. “Interest doesn’t normally start when students enter university,” Sparling notes. “Rather, interest emerges and is best nurtured throughout a young person’s life. Therefore, attracting students isn’t just a university responsibility; it’s a community issue.”

To entice students to study Gaelic, the university works with area teachers and the office of Nova Scotia Gaelic Affairs. The school has also partnered with the Celtic Music Interpretive

Centre to produce traditional music recordings, developed a unique major specializing in local musical traditions – especially Celtic music – and offers Gaelic language courses via distance learning. “We are working on other initiatives all the time and these initiatives help to keep our programs fresh, innovative and relevant, while increasing opportunities for students to engage in active learning and network with the local Gaelic community,” Sparling says.

To strengthen Gaelic language and culture, Sparling suggests more opportunities need to be created to speak the language outside the classroom and that resources and best practices should be shared with other minority language groups.

“We must continue to ensure that Gaelic culture remains relevant to contemporary life by supporting the creation of new books, songs, plays, TV shows, periodicals and other cultural expressions.”

Leonard comments that while Celtic music is held in high esteem throughout the world, the language needs to be promoted and marketed more. He insists the problem isn’t the availability of Gaelic teaching institutions, but rather the lack of awareness of the opportunities to learn the language that exist. “The Celtic culture still appears to be strong in many areas today and probably stronger than the language,” Leonard

says.

“However, the language itself must grow, as we all know that the heart of a culture is its language.”





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"The Buddy MacMaster school of fiddling is unique to Cape Breton Island in that it features the styles of ten different teachers, both from the younger and older generations of fiddlers. The atmosphere is one of natural Cape Breton hospitality, in a focused environment that allows you to absorb the music and the meaning" ~ Natalie MacMaster

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www.celticmusiccentre.com/education/fiddleschool

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Atlantic Gaelic Academy

Imagine someone in Mongolia speaking Gaelic. With the resources available online, the idea might not seem so far-fetched. But suppose they could be learning the language “live,” with a fluent Gaelic speaker. This possibility has been made a reality with the Atlantic Gaelic Academy (AGA).

“Our students live all over the world from California to the Maritimes and from Scotland to places like Mongolia, Crete and Australia,” says Bob Leonard, the AGA’s executive director. “Before the AGA, students from Canada most often had to go to Scotland to learn the language properly. The AGA now fills that void and in fact many students that graduate from the top Gaelic school in Scotland afterwards enrol in the AGA’s advanced classes.”

Based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Fredericton, New Brunswick, the AGA began operating eight years ago. Leonard, a Fredericton resident and Cape Breton native whose ancestors spoke Gaelic up until his mother’s generation, had been wanting to learn the language, but could not find any classes locally.

“So I, along with some Gaelic educators in the area decided to organize a school to teach the language,” says Leonard. “We compiled a total curriculum to take a student from the beginner level to fluency.”

The academy’s personnel is comprised of qualified instructors, regional directors, representing areas across North America and the UK and Europe, as well as advisors who are native Gaelic speakers from Scotland.

Initially, the academy led both in-person and online classes. Students much preferred the telecommunications format, so today classes are offered completely online.

“Our online classes are actually ‘live’ with about 10 students and the teacher all being in class at the same time,” adds Leonard, noting that students are more relaxed talking to one another, and are able to more finely tune their ear for the language via the online format.

Students enrol for a number of reasons, from wanting to speak the language of their ancestors to training for employment opportunities or to “exercise their brain.”

“No matter the motive, the intrinsic value is immeasurable as it adds a richness to life,” Leonard says.

“The year we graduated our first students, and then hearing the praise from native educated Gaelic speakers as to the quality of their Gaelic, was a true highlight. This has become the highlight each year!”

www.gaelicacademy.ca



Celtic Music Interpretive Centre

Seeing one fiddle master is rare enough, but to see 10 playing together is almost unheard of – except at the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in Judique, Cape Breton. During the Celtic Colours International Festival, the centre hosts the annual Buddy MacMaster School of Fiddling, a fitting tribute to a fiddler’s fiddler, the “Judique Flyer” himself, MacMaster.

This year, from October 13 to 17, the School of Fiddling features Wendy MacIsaac, Mairi Rankin, Troy MacGillivray, Colin Grant, Rachel Davis, Kimberley Fraser, Andrea Beaton, Shelly Campbell, Glenn Graham and J.J. Chaisson as instructors.

“Cape Breton traditional fiddle music is pretty much a solo tradition where everybody is encouraged to express their own individual flavour,” says piano player and the Centre’s music director, Allan Dewar. “The people attending the Fiddle School get exposure to all 10 instructors so they get a more complete feel for the true extent of the tradition.”

Throughout Fiddle School week, each instructor performs during the daily lunchtime ceilidhs. Jam sessions, open to the public, close out each day. On the Thursday night before (October 9), the centre will also host the masters concert with all 10 fine fiddlers performing.

When tourist season ends, the centre doesn’t pack up for the winter. Instead, Sunday ceilidhs continue right through the year. Visitors can also explore the interactive exhibit room and a well a vast archives of texts and music recordings. Additionally, the facility now offers Gaelic immersion classes and events.

The centre has also resurrected Cape Breton Live. The on-line radio show was started by Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy, and produced by Cheryl Smith, the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre’s executive director. It consists of more than 50 live recordings, which individuals can subscribe to, of ceilidhs, dance-hall performances, house parties, even a milling frolic. Dewar has been creating new shows with the centre’s recording studio equipment.

It’s no wonder the Nova Scotia Legislature named this Judique gathering place the “Official Celtic Music Centre of Nova Scotia.” Dewar says he and the staff are passionate about sharing the “dialects and pockets of the tradition” from all over the island.

“It’s fulfilling that we have a hand in making sure people get an authentic experience and see the tradition continue,” adds Dewar. “I grew up with it in the home and that’s true for a lot of people growing up around this area during that time frame. But nowadays, people just don’t drop in for tunes and tea anymore. So we supplement that by putting on things that allow everybody and anybody to come.”

www.celticmusiccentre.com



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Sampling the Arran Distillery

with

Andrew Ferguson

The Isle of Arran Distillery is approaching a milestone; in 2015 it will bottle its first 18-year-old whisky. Founded in 1993 by Harold Currie, some early construction delays occurred owing to a pair of endangered golden eagles nesting on a mountain slope nearby. The owners felt it would be a bad omen to disturb them so they put construction on hold until the chicks first flew from the nest. Supposedly, the parents flew over the distillery on its opening day. This legendary encounter is now the distillery's emblem, with a pair of soaring eagles adorning every bottle.

Production began a little over halfway through 1995 on the Isle of Arran, the first licensed distillery on the west coast Scottish isle in nearly 160 years. Not that the island wasn't producing whisky before that date, it just wasn't doing so legally.

The distillery is nestled into the head of a tight mountain valley on the island's northern coast in the ancient village of Lochranza. The village shares its name with the sea loch it sits

whisky, let alone sell it.

As it matures you can start selling some of your stock, if it is up to snuff. But most of your production will have to wait up to a decade before you can bottle it as quality single malt and have a good prospect of selling it. Even after 10 years, if you've made a good product, the demand is there and the revenue starts trickling in, you still have to keep investing in your facilities, raw materials and people.

Starting and operating a distillery is a long game if ever there was one. Incredibly, in 2010, 17 years after ground was first broken and 15 years into production, Isle of Arran turned its first profit.

That Arran has not only survived but thrived is testament to its founder's vision and the quality of the people behind it. It plotted a course for slow but steady growth and has never looked back. This spring the distillery launched a limited edition 17-year-old whisky, the second of a trilogy which included a limited 16-year-old (released last year) and a yet to be released 18-year-old. The latter will herald the arrival of the distillery's first core 18-year-old expression next year, fulfilling the vision of the distillery's late founder.

Twenty-one years after its founding, Arran has a very bright future indeed. If you're one of the many whisky aficionados who have yet to try its soft, floral and honeyed malt, you'd be wise to invest in a bottle or two.



on, Loch Ranza, a Norse reference to the rowan trees which line the local burns. The island is just 10 by 20 miles in size, but punches well above its weight. Bisected by the Highland Lowland boundary fault, it has an astonishing variety of terrain, including one of Scotland's most rugged mountains. This, and the myriad of historic sites which dot it have earned it the moniker, "Scotland in Miniature!" Only one hour by ferry from the mainland, Arran is a popular tourist destination though the quiet north of the island, one Scotland's most magnificent destinations, was little visited until the distillery was built.

As an independent start-up, the Arran distillery is a success story that has encouraged many others to follow in its footsteps. Imagine starting a business where you need to build and equip your production facilities from scratch. For years you need to pay staff, utility bills and property taxes and purchase barley and barrels for your whisky, all without a cent of income. For the first three years of production you can't even call what you've made

Arran 10 Year – To me this is their classic expression, honeyed, malty and soft with some floral and fruity tones. It is also one of the whiskies I recommend to people just starting their exploration of the world of malt whisky. - **\$55**

Arran Machrie Moor – Much harder to find than the 10 year the Machrie Moor is a lightly peated expression of Arran. The bottling is named for the stone circles found on Machrie Moor not far from the distillery. It is sweet and smoky with some BBQ notes. - **\$78**

Arran 17 Year – Only 9,000 bottles were released worldwide from whisky matured exclusively in ex-sherry casks. Very fruity with soft leather and spices, this Arran is showing some maturity and great depth. Can't wait to try the 18 year! - **\$110**

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

Mitchell's Scottish Ale House *Cape Town, South Africa*



Rumour has it that the great Nelson Mandela frequented Mitchell's on occasion, as it was the only spot where he could find a proper pint of Guinness on the continent. True or not, Mitchell's serves up a solid selection of domestic and imported beers both on tap and by the bottle, including Kilkenny, Foresters, Windhoek and Carling. Even more impressive are the whisky offerings, with an excellent selection of Scottish, Irish and American blended and single malts available. In particular, the 18-year Glenfiddich and 25-year Glenlivet fetch a pretty penny, as do the Bushmills 16-year and Johnnie Walker King George. While you are enjoying a wee dram, go the extra mile with a fine Cuban cigar; more than just a good smoke, both the Cohiba Siglo II and the Montecristo No. 5 are available by request at the bar. Equally diverse and decadent is the menu, which antes up pub-grub options and fine-dining fare. For the former, try the make-your-own Pizza platter or the Suicide Burger. The evening set menu includes Grilled Beef Fillet, Linefish and a Chicken Peri Peri with Prawns – all worth the price of admission. The waterfront setting affords a patio seat with a stunning view of the harbour.

The Craic Irish Bar *Christchurch, New Zealand*

With the likes of the Blarney BLT, Father Ted's Fish & Chips, Beef and Guinness Hotpot and the Poppa Chop Steak Special on the menu, a sense of good humour is almost mandatory at The Craic Irish Bar in Christchurch. The locale's lighthearted mood is the perfect setting for a pint of the good stuff and some old-school pub grub; the bombastic Bunratty Burger is more than a mouthful, while the Limerick Lamb Shank and the Irish Stew both taste like they've just come from Mother Maguire's



ye-auld-country kitchen. The Craic Platter is a good bet also; the assortment of finger foods and wedges is an affordable feast for friends, of which you will make plenty of on any given night of the week. The thing here, however, is the drink; domestic and imported spirits, lagers and ales are abundant, and both long-time patrons and newbies will enjoy the 100 Pint Club, which gives you 12 months to reach the magic mark. The establishment's infamous Social Club also hosts a number of in-house and off-site activities, including the annual "Tour de Craic" bicycle race. If all that isn't enough, then simply stop in for the best in local live music.

Ty Gwyn Coaching Inn *Betws-y-Coed, Conwy, Wales*

Situated in the heart of Wales' spectacular Snowdonia National Park, the Ty Gwyn is one of the UK's most renowned and reputed inns. Family owned and operated, the hotel offers more than a great night's stay in a scenic locale; the pub-style dining was recently awarded an AA Gold Star Food Award for its mouth-watering menu. Start with the light Grilled Pen Loyn Farm Lamb Fillet or the Oven Baked Local White Rose Smoked Cod and Mediterranean Prawn Thermidor Gratin. For the main course, be sure to savour the Chargrilled Seasoned Fresh Swordfish Loin, the beyond-tender Suckling Pig,



or the delicious home-made Seafood Gratin. The brilliant Braised Welsh Mutton is highly recommended for the ravished traveller, as is the hearty 1lb Triple Smoked Gammon Steak. If there is room for dessert, opt in for the in-house Chocolate and Caramel Bread N Butter Pudding, a favourite of area residents. A strong selection of wines and spirits are available to accompany your meal, but your best bet is to whet the whistle with one of the fine light local ales; Bevans or Cwrw Haf. Afterwards, burn off some calories with a hike in the nearby woods or a stroll by the lake.



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Cabrini's Kitchen



Orange Almond Scones

Anne MacLellan of Boston, Massachusetts, kindly shared this recipe of scones with Celtic Life International. Her Boyd relatives on her mother's side are from the Lakevale area of Antigonish Co., Nova Scotia, and Anne returns each year to share summer fun with her cousins. This particular recipe was recommended to me by one of those cousins and it came with strict directions. There are to be no substitutions, butter must be used – no margarine –

and the liquid ingredients should be at room temperature. If they are not tepid, Anne puts them in the microwave for 15 seconds. Once cooked, they freeze well, so you can enjoy them at any time. They go particularly well with the fisherman's appetite, in from the sea following a day of pulling lobster traps on St. George's Bay. Whether or not you are a fisher person, you will enjoy these delicious scones.

INGREDIENTS

½ Cup Freshly Squeezed Orange Juice
¼ Cup Milk (room temp)
1 Large Egg
¼ Tsp. Almond Extract
3 Cups All-Purpose Flour
½ Tsp. Baking Soda
4 Tsp. Baking Powder
¼ Tsp. Salt
8 Tbsps. (1 stick) Unsalted Butter
½ Cup Granulated Sugar
½ Cup Ground Almonds
1 Tbsp. Freshly Grated Orange Peel

INSTRUCTIONS

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees F

Measure juice and milk in a two-cup glass measure.

Add egg and extract, beat smooth with a fork.

Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt into a large bowl.

Stir to mix well.

Add butter and cut in with a pastry blender or wire whisk until the mixture resembles fine granules.

Add sugar, ground almonds and orange peel, toss to distribute evenly.

Add egg mixture and stir with a fork until a soft dough forms. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured board and knead 5-6 times.

Form dough into a ball and divide in two, pat or lightly roll out each ball into a circle and cut into 8 wedges.

Place each wedge on an ungreased cookie sheet.

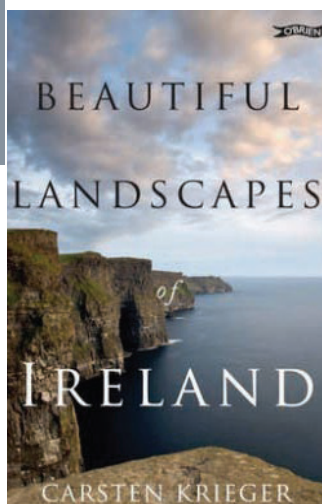
Sprinkle each wedge with a small amount of granulated sugar.

Bake about 12-15 minutes, (start checking after 12 min) or until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack. Cover with a tea towel while cooling.

Ith do shàth! Cabrini

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





**Beautiful
Landscapes of
Ireland**
By Carsten Krieger
O'Brien Press
144pp / €12.99

Those looking to visit the Emerald Isle will want to pick up a copy of Krieger's latest effort. Unlike his previous coffee-table sized collections, however, *Beautiful Landscapes of Ireland* is portable; the paperback edition has been designed specifically for travellers and will fit into any backpack or purse. Awash with amazing and inspiring colour photographs from across all regions of Eire, the book showcases the spectacular and diverse physical beauty inherent to the landscape.

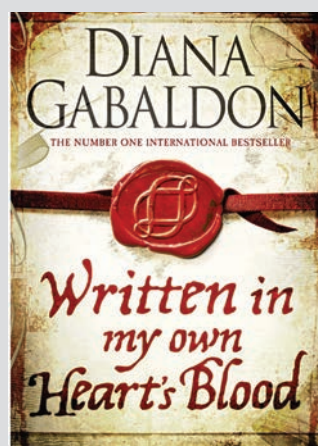
In particular, chapters on Donegal, Galway and Kerry are sure to lure visitors to the west coast. With a forward by Dr. Peter Harbison, and text by noted travel writer Muriel Bolger, this might be the only book you need to wind and weave your way through the countryside and coastlines.

~ SPC

**Written
in My Own
Heart's Blood**
By Diana Gabaldon
Doubleday
864 pp / \$39.95

What's not to like about the latest instalment in Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series? Like the previous seven tomes, *Written in My Own Heart's Blood* has all the elements for a great read; action, history, romance, mystery, familiar characters and a soaring narrative arc. And where lesser authors might grow weary with this kind of winning formula, Gabaldon thrives as she brings something new to the table with each work; mainstays Claire and Jamie have grown over time, because the author's ability to tell a great story has evolved. And while much can be said in 864 pages, it is in the things left unsaid where the novelist shines this time around, inviting her loyal and growing audience to fill in the blanks with their imaginations.

~ SPC



SCOTLAND'S REFERENDUM



JAMIE MAXWELL AND DAVID TORRANCE

**Scotland's
Referendum: A
Guide for Voters**
By Jamie Maxwell and
David Torrance
Luath Press
128pp / €5.99

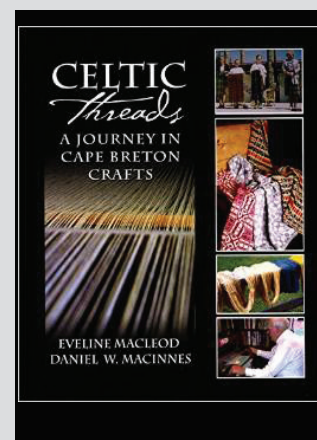
Having grown up in Montreal during Quebec's referendum years (1980, 1995), something like this would have come in handy. Scottish journalists Jamie Maxwell and David Torrance examine the coming independence vote from all angles – political, economic, social and cultural – to produce a well-rounded, balanced and objective perspective on what's at stake on September 18. While facts and figures don't lie, the most revealing element of this work is the authors' treatment of the intangibles; the heart-felt desire of a people to stand alone versus the creature comforts of keeping within the confines of the UK. While post-vote outcomes are speculated upon, credit the duo for allowing readers both at home and away to better understand the grey areas that exist between black and white.

~ SPC

**Celtic Threads: A
Journey in Cape
Breton Crafts**
By Eveline MacLeod and
Daniel W. MacInnes
CBU Press
176pp / \$24.95

Journey is the keyword here, and authors MacLeod and MacInnes have done well to capture, convey and condense centuries of history and heritage into 176 pages. Under the guise of crafting, the authors examine the past and present patterns of Cape Breton customs – including its roots, traditions, tools of the trade, meanings, etc. – weaving individual yarns into a vivid temporal tapestry. Accompanied by both colour and black-and-white photographs, and peppered with sketches, the work's warm tone welcomes readers into the homes of those who kept the Island's textile traditions alive. More than a treatise on weaving, however, *Celtic Threads* is an engaging, enlightening and entertaining examination of culture in Cape Breton, and an insightful look at the rich lives of its people.

~ SPC





Byrne and Kelly

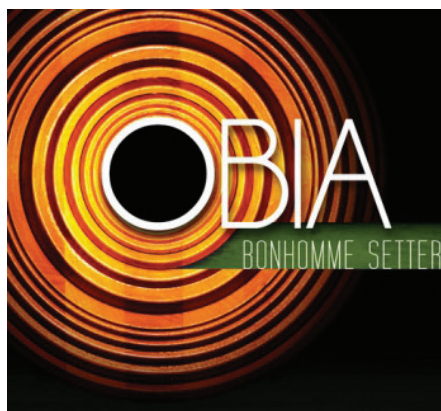
Acoustically Irish

There is a reason why this album went to number one on Billboard's World Music charts; Neil Byrne and Ryan Kelly of Celtic Thunder make the case that they are more than just pretty faces with this cozy and quaint collection of 11 classic Irish tracks that highlight the pair's musical and vocal prowess. Guitars, mandolin, piano and percussion bring Saints and Sinners, Captured and On Ragland Road to new places, while covers of Van Morrison's Brown Eyed Girl and Hothouse Flowers' Don't Go sound both fresh and familiar at once. The real treats here are the ballads; Beautiful Affair, No Man's Land, The Fields of Althenry and The Water Is Wide will all bring a tear to the eye and a tug to the heartstrings. ~ SPC

Jennifer Licko

a thousand curses upon love

From Swansboro, North Carolina, super-soprano and mega multi-instrumentalist Jennifer Licko could very well be the heir-apparent to Canada's Loreena McKennitt and Clannad's Maire Brennan; soaring vocals dominate her sixth full-length release, a thousand curses upon love. Plush harmonies drive the disc's opening track, Turning Away, while The Moon Going Home, Fickle Breezes and The Sea are subtler, allowing the melodies more room to breathe. The Song of the Singing Horseman and Hard Times Come Again No More are good standard fare, and succeed at showcasing the singer's American roots. The lovely Licko is at her very best, however, when she lets loose with the more traditional Mile Marbhphaisg Air A' Ghaol and the rolling Siuthadaibh Bhalachaibh. Bonus points for the all-too-cool album title. ~ SPC



Bonhomme Setter

Obia

Little known to most, Quebec City is a cornucopia of Celtic culture, with many Irish settling across the St. Lawrence Seaway in the latter half of the 19th century. The ensuing hybrid created a lasting and fascinating musical mélange that continues to evolve. Not quite Quebecois, nor Irish, nor even Acadian, area sextet Bonhomme Setter has brought the best of each to Obia, a stirring and sombre set of 10 terrific original and traditional tunes that speak to the region's distinct and diverse past. Guitars, bass, pipes, whistles, fiddle, cello, percussion and voice all shine on Man of the House, The Blacksmith and Gloomy Sky, while Back Home in Derry combines the melodies of Gordon Lightfoot and Christy Moore with the poetry of Bobby Sands. ~ SPC

Gillian Head

Spirit

Nova Scotia has long been a hot-bed of Celtic fiddling, with new generations of four-stringers standing atop the shoulders of their predecessors. Twenty-something Gillian Head takes a place in those ranks with her 11-track debut recording, Spirit. From the opening salvo of Sputnikskerry to the closing chorus of Willie's Mom in Donegal, listeners are taken on a timeless trip through Cape Breton's rich musical heritage, and by turn, those of Scotland and Ireland. A solid and spunky selection of jigs, reels and ballads showcase her finesse on the frets – lively and loose atop a tight quartet of guitar, piano, drums and whistle. Ideal for Friday nights in the family parlour or kitchen, Spirit is sure to keep your hands clapping and your toes tapping. ~ SPC



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Brian Kidd

Brian Kidd's name might mean nothing to you, but without a doubt you'd recognize him in an instant. The YouTube video of him riding a unicycle in a Darth Vader mask while playing the Imperial March from Star Wars has surpassed 1.8 million views. To say that Kidd has become something of a celebrity is to put it mildly. He's performed live on Jimmy Kimmel, been flown to Denmark to play a corporate party and is the unofficial mascot in his home town of Portland, Oregon.

Kidd, 31, takes it all in his stride. Celtic Life International asked him if he was now pigeon-holed as the piper on the unicycle in the Darth Vader mask. "To a certain degree," Kidd replied. "I am certainly most recognized when I'm wearing the Vader mask, but there are worse things to be known for, however."

"On the other hand, having that recognition has gotten me plenty of both traditional and non-traditional piping gigs. With an established fan base, I have been able to expand my repertoire with other costumes. Over time I've grown from the piper on the unicycle in the Darth Vader mask to the piper on the unicycle with the flaming bagpipes that wears funny costumes."

For all that, Kidd insists that he is a serious piper, "as serious as any self-respecting piper," he says. For the moment he remains a solo act, although he's played with several bands in Portland. However, as demand for Unipiper – as he calls himself – performances have increased, Kidd hasn't had time to do both.

The remote-sensing-data-acquisition specialist grew up in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Virginia, where the influence of the Scots and the Irish shaped the folk music of the region. Though Kidd's ancestry is English, he says he's always had a deep appreciation for the "soul-tingling" sound of the bagpipes.

He first took up the pipes nine years ago while attending the University of Virginia. There, he received free lessons from the Albermarle Pipes and Drums of Charlottesville. At the same time, he came across a unicycle in a dumpster. "Apparently at the time I thought I needed another unique hobby, so I rescued the unicycle and taught myself to ride it in about three weeks."

A bet with a friend that he couldn't play the bagpipes and ride the unicycle at the same time led Kidd to put the combination together. Then he added the Darth Vader mask. "The theme to Star Wars fits the range of pipes as though it were written for them," he says. "As a life-long Star Wars fan, the Vader costume was just the logical next step."

When it comes to balancing on an unicycle with a set of bagpipes, Kidd says that of the two, the harder is playing the pipes. He says he doesn't think about riding the unicycle since that comes from muscle memory. "The pipes, on the other hand, take a fair bit of concentration. The movements required on the unicycle often make it difficult to keep the air pressure constant in the pipes. I also tend to get winded faster on the unicycle, which in turn leads to shorter sets."

More recently, Kidd has taken to employing other costumes into his routine. He enjoys arranging songs from pop culture for the pipes and as he notes, "It wouldn't seem right playing the Game of Thrones theme dressed like Darth Vader."

And then there are the flames.... "What's great about the flames is that they really grab people's attention!" Kidd enthusiastically says.

Kidd has launched a website which allows people to track him in real time while he's performing and he's recently added an electric unicycle to his act as well. "I've got plenty of ideas for new songs and costumes," he says. "The problem is deciding which one to focus my time and efforts on next. One thing is for certain though: the Unipiper is here to stay."



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theCelticfiddlers

Ask Korona Brophy about her most memorable moment with the Celtic Fiddlers and she takes you back to a show in 2008 on the Isle of Man. The venue was jam-packed, the fiddler recalls, and the group played for 45 minutes. “All at once everyone got up and danced their own style of traditional dancing to our tune. It was a sight to behold for sure!” Brophy says.

Since then, the group has set plenty more people dancing. Brophy, 59, leads the Celtic Fiddlers, a group of 13 musicians based in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Between them, they play a diverse range of instruments, including piano, mandolin, mandola, tin whistle, bodhran, accordion, banjo, bass, guitar and more.

Each member of the group plays at least two instruments, although band member Anthony Chase plays 15. Brophy says he joined the group at age 12 and is now 18. Last year the band – which has ranged in age from six to 26 years old – had its 20th anniversary. Sixty members attended the reunion, which coincided with the group’s fifth CD release.

Brophy is a classically trained musician who originally studied cello. Following St. Patrick’s Day concerts at schools where she taught, she formed the Celtic Fiddlers. In 1993, the 17 members who made up the group consisted of most of the school orchestra. Brophy describes herself as a traditional Celtic fiddler. “I play mostly tunes that are relevant to Newfoundland and Ireland,” she says.

Brophy is of Irish stock, her parents’

ancestors having come from Waterford and Cork. She describes both families as musical, eager to entertain others whether at a kitchen party, wedding, folk festival or family get-together. In terms of influences, she cites Kelly Russell, a Newfoundland fiddler, as well as Natalie MacMaster. “Also in Newfoundland, The Wonderful Grand Band of the 1970s was a great group of musicians, along with Figgy Duff and The Sons of Erin. These all influenced many musicians to perform this great genre of music in our province.”

As her own personal accomplishment, Brophy cites the fact that she plays by ear and arranges the harmonies for the group, particularly for the waltzes and ballads. She points out she’s arranged a number of the pieces for the band’s five CDs since 1999. “My technique has improved greatly by watching other fiddlers and listening and learning challenging music from the great fiddlers,” she says.

The biggest challenge Brophy faces is finding music that the group as a whole likes and agrees on. She notes that months can pass while they search out new tunes, but then suddenly they’ll have

five or six that the band likes. “I think that it’s important to like the repertoire you are playing as it can affect your enthusiasm on stage and the audience’s engagement.”

Still, the latter doesn’t appear to be a problem they’ve faced. On a recent trip to New York Brophy said the Celtic Fiddlers amazed audiences not only with their talent, but the depth of knowledge they had of the Irish repertoire. A New York pub owner told them, “I have never seen the likes of the talent – brilliant!”

Every second year the group travels outside the province so in 2015, the Celtic Fiddlers will remain in Newfoundland since they have just completed a New York tour. In New York, the ensemble played at the Canadian Consulate, the Canadian Association of New York, the Irish Christian Brothers and a few pubs and sessions. “It was a fabulous experience for all of us, as we were ambassadors for our province and our country,” Brophy says.

www.thecelticfiddlers.ca



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Elizabeth MacDonald

Ready, set...to say "go" might be redundant when it comes to Irish set dancing. It's a style of square dancing rooted in the quadrille tradition and introduced to Ireland after the Napoleonic Wars. Set dancing is one of the many styles that Halifax, Nova Scotia, dancer and teacher Elizabeth MacDonald has mastered. According to MacDonald, the Irish sets number in the hundreds with regional variations in style and footwork. "Initially, I was drawn to the depth and breadth of this old body of knowledge," she says.



MacDonald travelled to Ireland and the United States for set-dance workshops, studying with some of the leading collectors and instructors of the form, including Pat Murphy and the late Connie Ryan. She's taught set dancing in Halifax since 1992, with the exception of four years when she lived in Europe teaching Belgium set dancers. Back in Nova Scotia, the province's Irish Association was in need of a teacher and MacDonald wanted to share her knowledge. "It was a fortuitous coming together of events," she says.

The 58-year-old communications consultant also teaches old-style traditional step and a sean-nos step. The latter is considered the oldest of the Irish step forms and originated in the Connemara region of Ireland. MacDonald says that in contrast to modern step, the sean-nos is low and into the floor, with a distinct heel-and-toe style and intricate rhythm patterns. "What I love about sean-nos is its playful, individual quality with a focus on improvisation," MacDonald explains. "No two dancers dance the same way – nor do they want to – but each strives to have a unique conversation with the musician. That's why

they call sean-nos the jazz of Irish step dance."

As if the dancing and teaching isn't enough to keep MacDonald busy, she's in charge of the dance program for the Re-jigged Festival. The festival is a celebration in Halifax that focuses on learning, sharing and creating the best of the new traditional Celtic music and dance. Along with sean-nos and modern step, Cape Breton and Acadian styles have been featured at the festival as well. "I'm proud to say, that unlike other festivals where dance is often treated as an afterthought or an add-on, dance is as important as music at Re-jigged," MacDonald says. "And it's a program we want to continue growing."

MacDonald herself is as Celtic as could be. Her father hails from Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and is descended from Lauchlan MacDonald, who arrived from Moidart, Scotland, around 1800 and settled in Antigonish Harbour. Her mother is a Campbell from Sussex, New Brunswick. The Irish comes from her mother's side; MacDonald's maternal grandmother was a McKeever, whose family arrived in Saint John, New Brunswick, from Limavady, Northern Ireland, in the 1870s. "My Celtic

roots run deep and true," MacDonald notes.

As a child, MacDonald was so shy that her brothers were convinced she'd never survive school. In an effort to prepare her for the terrifying world of grade one, MacDonald's mother signed her up for a tap-dancing class, where she was the only beginner in a class of girls who already had one year of instruction. "Imagine my mother's astonishment when she came in after an hour or so to find me out front, leading the routine, with the rest of the girls in a line behind me. I might not have been much of a talker but boy, could I dance!"

After several years of tap and ballet, MacDonald found her passion in Highland dancing. Then, while living in Toronto in the 1980s, she discovered traditional Irish social dance. "And 53 years on, I'm still dancing, teaching and performing," MacDonald says, adding that as an older dancer she's aware of time ticking away, but is determined to dance – and dance well – as long as she possibly can.

www.rejiggedfestival.com





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ClanMacThomas

Clan MacThomas' history is long and exciting. The roots of the clan, which today boasts several hundred members in branches across the globe, come from Tomaidh Mor – "Great Tommy" – a Gaelic-speaking Highlander. Thomas was a descendant of the Clan Chattan Mackintoshes and lived in the 15th century.

At that time, the Clan Chattan Confederation had become large and unmanageable, according to Wendy Thomson, the clan's North American Convenor. So Thomas took his kinsmen and followers to Glenshee, where they became known as McComie, McColm and McComas.

The Government of Edinburgh declared them as MacThomas and so described them in the Roll of the Clans in the Acts of the Scottish Parliament of 1587 and 1595. MacThomas remains the official name of the clan to this day.

Among the long line of illustrious MacThomas Clan chiefs was John McComie, who inspired legends. Among them was his defence of a poor widow single-handedly against a number of tax collectors; the killing of the Earl of Atholl's champion

swordsman; the slaying of the man who insulted his wife; and overcoming a bull with his bare hands.

Today, a large stone at the head of Glen Prosen is known as McComie Mor's Putting Stone, a nearby spring is called McComie Mor's well, while at the top of Glen Beannie, a chair-shaped rock is called McComie Mor's Chair.

In the 1870s, the 16th Chief was the eccentric George Hunter MacThomas Thoms, an advocate, bon vivant and philanthropist. He became the Sheriff of Caithness, Orkney and Shetland in 1870 and upon his death in 1903 gave his vast fortune to St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall.

The Clan MacThomas Society was formed in 1954. This year marks the clan's 60th anniversary, which was celebrated in Glenshee in August with a tour of clan territory, a ceilidh and more.

www.clanmacthomas.org



ClanYoung

In 1987, things didn't look so great for the Clan Young: That's when Highlander Magazine listed the clan as dormant.

The clan's roots can be traced back to Scotland in 1672, where a large concentration of Youngs could be found in the Bowmount Valley, according to Linda Young-Sheiko, the current vice-president of the Clan Young Society USA. It is the only place where the Youngs gathered in sufficient numbers to be considered a clan.

But when King James cracked down on the lawless Borderers, many of the clans were scattered, including the Youngs. Fast forward to 1987 and the long-time crack-down has had its effect, with the Youngs all but gone from the roll call of clans.

The mention of the clan's dormancy in the Highlander prompted Edward A. Young III of Orlando, Florida, to seek permission to reconvene the clan. Young set about making the necessary contact with Lord Lyon in Scotland and in 1988 the clan was reconvened and able to display the arms and crest of Peter Young of Aldbar.

In 1987, the clan had five members. Today it now boasts 250 members in the United States and independent branches of the clan now include members in Scotland, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.



Clan Young is represented at Scottish games and festivals throughout the year in the US, the UK and Canada. Every year the clan gathers for an annual meeting; the members in Canada usually gather at the Fergus Scottish Festival and Games in Fergus, Ontario, in mid-August. The US members try to move the meeting to different locations around the country.

Young-Sheiko's own Scottish heritage goes back to her grandfather, Robert Fenton Young, who was born in Forfar, Scotland, in 1888, one of 12 children born to Charles and Ann Young. He emigrated to New York at the age of 17.

www.clanyoungsociety.com





Clan Arthur Association USA (CAAUSA)

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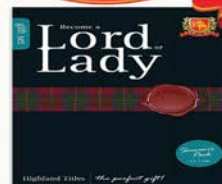
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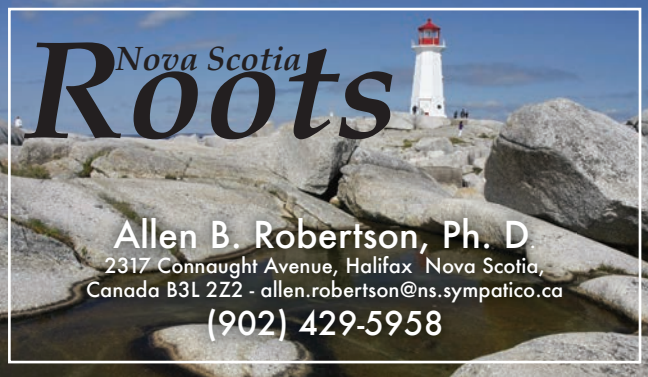

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Errie Ball

Errie Ball hit the ball long in more ways than one. The Welsh professional golfer, who died in July at the age of 103, was the PGA's longest-serving pro. He was the last survivor out of the 72 players who participated in the first Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia, in 1934. According to his obituary in the New York Times, Ball finished in a tie for 38th place. "I thought it [the Masters] was the greatest, the best place that I could be in golf," Ball told PGA.com.

The New York Times reported that while Ball lucked out at the Masters, he proved himself in other matches. According to the paper, he won the South-eastern PGA title several times in the 1930s, the Atlanta Open in 1932, the Virginia Open in 1936 and the Illinois Open in 1953. He also qualified for 20 United States Open championships and 12 PGA championships, according to The Times. But he only competed in one other Masters in 1957, a 23-year gap between appearances that remains a record, The Scotsman noted.

The 1957 Masters marked the first time in which a 36-hole cut was put in place, The Scotsman reported. Ball failed to make it, but wasn't alone: Ben Hogan and first-time Masters winner Horton Smith also dropped out.

But little doubt existed that Ball could drive the ball. The Scotsman said he was nicknamed "the little man with the big stick" and at 100 years of age he could still whack the ball more than 200 yards down the middle of the fairway. The newspaper also reported that Ball attributed his many years to the pleasure of a Scotch whisky every afternoon.

Ball was born in Bangor, Wales, to what PGA.com called "one of Great Britain's famed golf families." His father spent 50 years as a golf professional at Lancaster Golf Club, while his great uncle, John Ball, was the first amateur to win the Open Championship in 1890 as well as eight British Amateur Championships.

Ball's pro debut came at age 17, seven years after he first began playing golf. It is as an instructor, however, that Ball may



have made his mark. Beginning in the late 1930s, Ball would serve as a PGA professional at numerous courses across the United States. The Times said he spent almost 25 years at Oak Park Country Club outside Chicago and 20 winter seasons at Tucson County Club in Arizona.

Apparently he had a sense of humour;

Golf Week said he registered for a lesson at a local driving range in Chicago and acted as if he couldn't shoot. But at the end of the lesson he was driving the ball down the length of the fairways, amazing the golf pro who'd been assisting him. The Scotsman reported, "...his influence as a teacher, and in particular as a teacher of professionals, was immense." In recognition of his long teaching career, spanning 83 years, he was inducted into the PGA Golf Professional Hall of Fame.

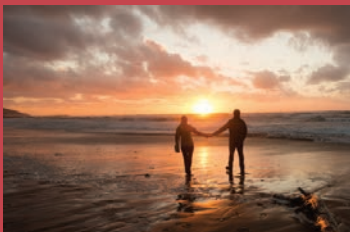
The Scotsman reported that in Stuart, Florida, the town in which he retired, a statue of Ball was put up on the first tee. Golfers rubbed the statue's head prior to teeing off to ensure a good game score. "Errie's amazing career spans the legends of the game – from Harry Vardon through to Tiger Woods," PGA of America President Ted Bishop told PGA.com. "His longevity, according to those who knew him best, was founded upon a love of people. Each day, like each step he took on the course, was spent with purpose. We will miss him dearly, but his legacy continues to shine through the many PGA professionals he inspired to grow our game."



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