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SUMMER MEMORIES



The Sunrise Trail, along the Northumberland Strait on Nova Scotia's northern coastline, will always bring to mind happy memories for me. It's a beautiful scenic drive westward toward Pugwash, a trip I first made with my parents to a highland dancing competition more than 50 years ago. Pugwash is special to me. For many years, on July 1st, it represented the beginning of the highland games season in Atlantic Canada.

From my early youth, the highland games were a big part of my life that I looked forward to every summer – like the first day of lobster season. I first drove my five sisters to highland dancing competitions, then my own children. I lived the anxiety and anticipation as my son Hector prepared for a march, strathespey and reel or piobaireachd on the bagpipes and the excitement of my daughters, Alison, Sheena and Meaghan as they approached the stage for the fling, sword dance and seann triubhas. There were days full of excitement, smiles and glee – and days of nervousness, disappointment and tears. However, no matter what the day held in store, the games were an event that gave my family a chance to experience the culture and heritage of our ancestors.

Later on, the games became family vacations. During the summer months it was routine to load up the minivan, pack a cooler of food and take off to a highland games somewhere along the Atlantic east coast. The games were a time to get together with friends, meet new people, gather political votes, share a drink and have a dance. But more importantly, they gave my children a chance to grow, follow their passion and take their places in life worth a world of experience whether it be competitions in Ontario, Scotland or touring North America with the production DRUM!

Over the years, I have been lucky enough to experience highland games from both ends of the spectrum, whether it be competing in band competitions, playing with the massed bands, enjoying my family in performances or proudly sporting my clan colours. Today, I still experience the games, not necessarily from the same perspective, but in a more relaxed atmosphere. The anticipation now is awaiting the day when I will enjoy my grandchildren perform.

In this issue, we present a special section on highland games and festivals. As well, you will enjoy an entertaining mix of delightful articles and perspectives by contributors from various parts of our Celtic world. But the summer is a time to enjoy. Take time to find yourself a highland games or festival this summer, relax and relish the entertainment. You will not be disappointed.

On a personal note, it was on one of my "Highland Games" trips to Scotland several years ago that I was introduced to the West Highland Free Press, which is based on the Isle of Skye. I soon became a faithful follower of Brian Wilson, for whom I have the utmost of respect as a writer. There was never an issue or an establishment too big or too small for Brian to challenge. He later became the Labour representative at Westminster and a Minister in the Labour Government. Today he is Chairman of Harris Tweed. I am both pleased and honoured to have Brian, and all of our contributors, involved with this edition of our publication.



Marcie Macquarrie, Publisher



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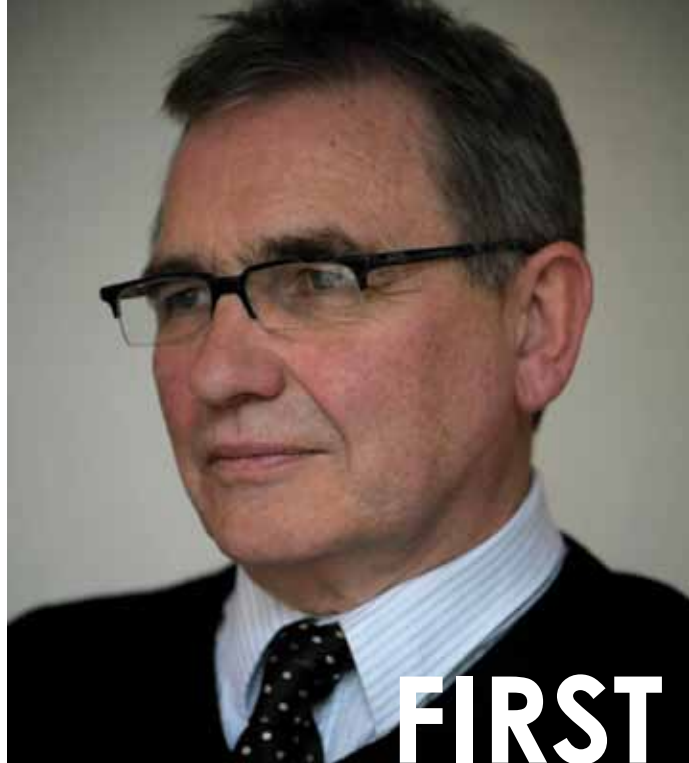
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FIRST WORD

By Brian Wilson

The die is cast for Scotland to have a referendum on independence, probably in the autumn of 2014. Many around the world who value their Scottish connections will find the outcome of great interest and opinions will be as sharply divided as they are within Scotland itself.

Ever since the devolved Scottish Parliament was created more than a decade ago, it's been almost inevitable that the people would be asked to determine whether they want to take the next, much larger step. If the outcome of the referendum decides the issue a useful purpose will have been served and Scotland can start looking outwards again.

The worst outcome would be an indecisive one leading to the Quebec scenario in which no sooner was one referendum concluded than the separatist movement started demanding the next. Already, the proposed two-year campaign seems unnecessarily protracted, leading to uncertainty on daily issues that affect people's lives.

When Tony Blair's Labour government, of which I was a member, delivered devolution, optimists believed it would settle the Scottish constitutional question. I never did. One only had to look at precedents elsewhere, where devolution on the basis of national identity led to Nationalist parties being handed devolved power by the voters. Quebec offers the closest parallel.

The calculation that the Nationalists are best qualified to stand up to the centre by exerting the leverage that comes from the threat of separation is rational. However, when Scotland gave the Nationalists a majority in 2010, it was inevitable that as well as maximising the grievance factor in dealing with the UK government, they would also initiate a referendum on the question of full independence. So let's get on with it.

Yet it is unclear that even a majority of SNP voters want independence. A 2010 opinion poll suggested that 28 per cent of their supporters would opt to stay within the UK if the referendum was held tomorrow. For many years, polls have suggested that the majority against a Scottish breakaway runs at around two-to-one. But much can change in two years, particularly when the Nationalists hold the levers and purse strings of government in Edinburgh.

Personally, I am against separation. I have lived all my life in Scotland and would compete with any Nationalist if required to proclaim Scottish credentials. But I have never found any difficulty in carrying several identities. I am West Highland, Scottish, British and European - a citizen of the world. I do not want any of these taken away from me or my children.

Scotland has been bound with the rest of the United Kingdom for three centuries, in times of war and peace. All the great social advances have been made together, through shared objectives. The economic strength that we benefit from, even in hard times, comes from being part of a larger unit. The argument that we could "be like Ireland" is unconvincing.

Let us hope that we get this right, that the debate takes place in a spirit of mutual respect and that the outcome is accepted as final.

The Rt. Hon. Brian Wilson is a former Labour minister in the UK. He was founding editor of the West Highland Free Press and his current roles include chairman of Harris Tweed Hebrides. He lives on the Isle of Lewis.

 By Brian Wilson



UP FRONT

"Please, call me Jack."

The informalities are both surprising and refreshing.

"Yes," laughs the former First Minister of Scotland over the phone from London. "The Right Honourable Lord Jack Wilson McConnell, Baron McConnell of Glenscorrodale is a real mouthful, isn't it?"

Thankfully, though his long and distinguished career in public service has afforded him myriad monikers, McConnell comes across as the guy next door.

"Ah, my roots are showing," smiles the 51 year-old, who was raised on a sheep farm on the Isle of Arran on Scotland's plush southwest coast. "You can take the boy out of Arran, but you can never take..."

While McConnell did leave home, first to attend Stirling University and later to teach mathematics in Alloa, his heart was firmly footed in Arran.

"I think you carry those roots with you wherever you roam," he muses. "Those values – the things you learn as a youngster – you never really shake them I suppose."

McConnell carried those virtues into public service. From 1988-1992, he served with Stirling District Council, before being named General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party. After his party crushed the Conservatives in the 1997 election, he pioneered the Scottish devolution referendum success, establishing the Scottish Parliament. After being elected an MSP in the first Scottish Parliament elections in 1999, McConnell was appointed Minister for Finance in the new Scottish Executive by then First Minister Donald Dewar.

An appointment as Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs in 2000 led to a successful leadership bid just a year later, with McConnell serving as First Minister until 2007. He retained his seat as MSP for Motherwell and Wishaw until retiring in 2011.

"Well, it certainly doesn't feel like retirement," he chuckles. "Actually, I don't think I have ever been busier. My wife was worried that I'd be moping around the house all day. I think that she's quite relieved that this hasn't been the case."

Indeed, as a UK Ambassador for Action for Children, a Fellow of the 48 Group Club (which promotes relationships between the UK and China) and an Ambassador for Pump Aid (which buys water pumps and sanitation equipment for the poor in Africa), McConnell is always on the go.

"I'm not complaining," he notes. "Quite the opposite – this work is as fulfilling as anything I have ever done."

Last year McConnell took his first public post since resigning as First Minister when he was named as Chairman of Radio Clyde and West Sound's Cash for Kids charity board.

"We have raised £1.7m for thousands of children across Glasgow and the West of Scotland over the past 12 months. These are kids that have special needs or life-limiting illnesses, are suffering abuse or neglect, or simply need a little extra care or guidance in their lives."

"And, every single penny goes directly to the children."

The good Baron isn't merely a figurehead for the foundation however.

"I visit with the kids all of the time," he laughs. "It's adorable when they try and pronounce my full title – I ask them to just call me Jack."



SEVEN

CELTIC QUESTIONS

The Honourable Peter MacKay is the Member of Parliament for Central Nova in Nova Scotia, on Canada's east coast, as well as Minister of National Defence in the Federal Conservative Government.

What are your own Celtic roots?

I'm very proud of my Celtic connections and lineage. My father's people came from the Scottish Highlands during the Clearances. They settled in New Scotland and made a life working in the woods and running a grist mill. I claim Celtic ancestry on both sides as my mother's side is descended from Northern Ireland. My family has now lived in Pictou County, Nova Scotia for five generations and I should also note that the place where I proposed to my wife Nazanin – a small island at the southern tip of Ireland called Valentia – was my great-grandfather's ancestral home. So there's a bit of Irish there, too.

Why are those roots important to you?

It's important to have a connection to the past no matter what your background. I have always taken a great interest in history and I believe certain traits can descend through the generations. I think sometimes about the early settlers who, much like my own family, came to the Northumberland Shore back in 1773 aboard the ship Hector – some people consider this vessel the Mayflower of Canada – and their sheer determination and perseverance in forging their livelihoods from essentially nothing, upon being greeted by little more than a mass of virgin forest. Some of the stories about the passengers literally picking pieces of the rotting vessel apart with their bare hands have become the stuff of legend but still, there's no question they possessed a certain tenacity and pioneering spirit that I believe carries on in their descendants to this day. My grandfather always told me there is no greater measure of a person than work ethic. For me, it was my grandfather who instilled the values of hard work and honour above all.

What does it mean to be of Celtic heritage?

I'd like to think it means being a solid, upright and sensible person. There is a certain pragmatism – even stoicism – associated with Celtic heritage. We are a loyal people, sometimes to a fault.



I think there's great pride in being of Celtic heritage and it's reflected in the many place names and traditions that are common in parts of Nova Scotia. Every April, for example, the community of Knoydart near Antigonish, Nova Scotia, holds a special service to commemorate the Battle of Culloden and, in fact, it takes place at a cairn where three Culloden veterans are buried, and it contains actual stones from the Culloden battlefield. Celtic culture is alive and well in such a meaningful and tangible way in Nova Scotia, whether it's through Gaelic language training, clan societies or musical traditions, that it's easy to feel an immediate connection when travelling to 'the homeland'. I am immensely proud of the many contributions made by Scottish Nova Scotians in the field of academics, the arts and other endeavours - Rev. Dr. Thomas McCulloch, for example, who founded Pictou Academy and went on to become one of the most prominent educators and theologians in the Maritimes.

How are you involved with the Canadian Celtic community?

Over the years, I've participated in many events and celebrations devoted to Celtic culture and sport while at home in Nova Scotia – such as the Festival of the Tartans, Gathering of the Clans, Highland Games competitions in places like New Glasgow and Antigonish. Actually, the Antigonish Highland Games are the oldest continuous Highland Games outside of Scotland and they really do contribute to the region's cultural and economic vitality. People come from all over North America, parts of Scotland and other parts of the world. Of course, I used to play for the Nova Scotia Keltics rugby club. And, yes, I own and often wear my kilt.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive in Canada?

As with any culture, it's important to educate our children about

the past but also to engage them in a way that's relevant to the present and future. Scots were among the first immigrants to settle in Canada and I understand people of Scots descent make up the third-largest ethnic group in this country. Sir John A. Macdonald and many others who created this country were Celts. Scottish people have had a large impact on Canadian culture since colonial times and it's gratifying to see the efforts being made to preserve this heritage. You hear so much about kids being glued to their video games these days, and it pleases me to see that so many children are taking fiddle lessons and Highland dancing in Nova Scotia and across the country.

In your estimation, are we doing enough to keep Celtic culture alive here?

I think we're doing a very good job of keeping Celtic traditions, music and stories alive through places like St. Ann's College in Cape Breton, Saint Mary's University in Halifax, with its strong Irish Studies program, and at St. Francis Xavier University, through offerings like Celtic Studies. St. Ann's continues to serve as a gateway to the culture and language of Nova Scotia Gaels and there have been incredible efforts in recent years in Cape Breton to preserve those stories, and to remind Islanders that they are indeed a part of a great history.

What could we be doing better?

We need to continue to educate ourselves about the opportuni-

ties that already abound, such as the education system and articles such as this, to keep enthusiasm for Celtic culture. I recently read a story about a remarkable young woman from Bedford, Nova Scotia, who has just been awarded a very prestigious scholarship to St. Andrew's University in Scotland – valued at close to \$200,000 – and she found out about this competition purely by chance. This experience of a lifetime will not only broaden her own horizons but it will strengthen the ties between Canada and Scotland even further through her impact on others. I believe we should celebrate more Celtic traditions in Canada. We truly are a founding people and rich in the fabric of our nation. We are responsible for much of what makes Canada the greatest, most diverse and freedom-loving country in the world.



"Gaelic isn't history. It's part of my everyday life."
Joanne MacIntyre - interpreter of Gaelic culture

Highland Village Museum, Cape Breton

Joanne's Nova Scotia

When visitors come to Highland Village Museum, they are in awe of what we have here. As they walk through the village, they learn about the Scottish Gaels of Nova Scotia and what it must have been like to live here more than a hundred years ago. We're lucky to live in a province with such a rich cultural landscape where the influence of our Gaelic, Acadian, Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian cultures is all around us.

My cultural must-do list

- Visit the Great Hall of the Clans at the Gaelic College of Arts & Crafts
- An afternoon milling frolic at the Highland Village Museum
- See how kilts are made at MacIsaac Kiltmakers in St. Peter's

So when are you coming?

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Iaon Gruffudd

The weather in South Wales is rarely a hot-topic of discussion amongst its residents – mostly as it is rarely hot there.

“We do get some good days for sure,” shares Welsh-born actor Iaon Gruffudd (Anglo: John Griffith) over the phone from Bristol, U.K, where he about to start work on another feature-length film project. “But that’s more the exception than the rule I’m afraid. More often than not it’s damp, if not outright wet.

“Actually, it’s a little like being in Bristol at the moment,” he adds. “I guess there is something about the U.K coastline that brings out the clouds.”

It’s easy to like Gruffudd; he is warm, well-spoken, and a welcome-breath of fresh air in an industry renowned for stale egos.

“Ah, that would be my parent’s doing,” smiles the 39 year-old, humbly. “They were both teachers, and quite religious as well. My brother, sister and I grew up in a strict, but fair environment, where respect and courtesy for others was at the top of the list.”

“And it might well be a Welsh thing also.”

I ask him to elaborate.

“Well,” he pauses. “How might I say this without it coming across as offensive? You see, the Scots and Irish can be fairly, er, vocal about their heritage. The Welsh are maybe a bit more, um, subtle and reserved?”

Refined, perhaps?

“Oh I wouldn’t go that far,” he laughs out loud.

Born in the small borough of Llwycoed, Gruffudd and his family later relocated 40 minutes southeast to the capital city of Cardiff.

It was there that the youngster took up music, even winning a number of awards for singing and playing the oboe.

“Those early experiences gave me the confidence to do what I really yearned to do, and that was to act,” he remembers.

Gruffudd got his wish by the age of 13, when he was cast in a Welsh television drama. Other local opportunities ensued, both on screen and stage. At 18 he moved to London to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, soon-after picking up small bits in television and film.

His first international role came as Fifth Officer Harold Lowe in James Cameron’s cinematic epic Titanic.

“It was simply incredible to be a part of something of that stature,” he recalls. “And the experience opened up all sorts of new opportunities for me.”

Indeed, choice roles followed, including major parts in Horatio Hornblower, Great Expectations, 102 Dalmatians, Black Hawk Down and King Arthur.

Audiences might know him best, however, as the brainy - and rubbery - Mister Fantastic, (Reed Richards) in the 2005 and 2007 big-screen adaptations of Marvel Comics’ Fantastic Four.

“Great fun,” he recalls fondly. “Imagine, getting to play a super-hero...I mean, what more could one ask for really?”

And while he acknowledges the dangers of being typecast with these types of films, Gruffudd notes “that hasn’t been my experience.”

Sure enough, the work has been steady and varied since then, including a recent stint alongside Sarah Michelle Gellar in the television series Ringer, which was filmed in his current hometown of Los Angeles where he lives with his wife (actress Alice Evans) and three year-old daughter (Ella).

“I loved being able to go home to my family at the end of a work day,” he confides. “For the first time in my life I feel like a regular working guy. It’s quite nice actually.”

“And, well, frankly I’ve become quite spoiled with the great weather there.”



Kevin Ryan

A lot has happened since we last spoke with Kevin Ryan (“Warming Up To Kevin Ryan” ~ Celtic Life International Magazine, Spring 2012).

The 28 year-old Irish actor and filmmaker has been in top-flight in recent months, jet-setting from New York City to Cannes to Toronto and back to his native Dublin.

“Ah, it’s just been bloody nuts mate,” exhales Ryan over the phone from his home in Los Angeles, where he is enjoying a few days of relative stability.

He isn’t kidding. First there was April’s From Scotland With Love fashion event in the Big Apple (“A riot”). Then there was an Outstanding Achievement in Filmmaking prize at the Newport Beach Film Festival in May for his feature film Songs For Amy (“Really exciting”). And then there was Cannes.

“The (Cannes) Film Festival was incredible,” he continues. “It was everything you hear about and more. The glitz and glamour is a good time to be sure, but the real treats are the films themselves – it’s an absolutely amazing atmosphere and it’s quite inspiring to be keeping that kind of creative company.”

One of those in attendance was Ryan’s father, who flew down from the Emerald Isle to partake in the prestigious proceedings.

“He’ll never admit it, but he loved it,” confides the young thespian. “We hung out together for the week, had a few pints and took in a lot of the events. This kind of thing – seeing Kanye (West) and Kim (Kardashian) - doesn’t really faze him though. He’s too down-to-earth to be star-struck.”

A week-end trip to the Monaco Grand Prix was a fitting finale to the festivities.

“It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” shares Ryan. “Men, cars and beer – is there a better bonding experience for a father and son?”

His dad also joined him on-set in Toronto for the shooting of Copper, the BBC America mini-series which premieres this August.

“He went right up to (mega award-winning director) Barry Levinson, completely oblivious of who he was, and started lecturing him,” laughs Ryan.



“It was friggin’ brilliant – here we are, on a multi-million dollar set with all sorts of expensive props and special effects - and my old man, an eighth-generation stonecutter, is calling out my boss on the importance of taking proper care of the people around him.”

Copper, in which Ryan plays Detective Francis Maguire, finished production last month.

“It was very intense,” admits the actor, “lots of long days, hard work and very little down-time.

“I went through a bit of withdrawal when we wrapped the shoot,” he continues,” which is normal. You can’t help but to get close to the people you work with in these situations and I’m missing them already. Thankfully the series has already been picked up for another round and I’ll have the chance to work with them again next time through.”

Until then, Ryan’s agenda will keep him moving forward at full-speed.

“A few of my films are in post-production (Paddy’s in the Boot, Tripping Tommy, Caravaggio), and I’m still involved with (Irish TV series) Raw. And, of course, there will be all the media and marketing to do for Copper over the summer and fall.”

And if all of that weren’t enough for the travelling man, there are the newly acquired responsibilities of being a dog-owner.

“I adopted a German Sheppard puppy a couple of months back,” he smiles. “I named her Copper. I thought she might help to keep me a little more grounded, but she’s even busier than me.”



Young Canadian choir wins international acclaim and popularizes Gaelic at home



Listening to the joyful sounds of the Ar n-Òran Gaelic choir as they rehearse in Canada's capital city is a powerful experience.

The infant choir, born in Ottawa in June 2009, has already won awards in Scotland's Royal National Mòd, and in similar events in North America. Its 2009 disc, *An Toiseach*, sold out. A-rithist, the second, is planned for October, but the music is best enjoyed in person.

Standing in the same room as the singers, it's a privilege to listen to the velvet consonants of the ancient language being expressed in a new country.

As the only Gaelic choir in the province of Ontario, the members of Ar n-Òran (it means Our Song) have a unique role. They're passionate about promoting Gaelic, which is particularly interesting as not all of them have Celtic roots.

Randolph Waugh, whose ancestors emigrated to Canada from Tiree and Islay in Scotland's Inner Hebrides, is choir founder.

"The energy in our group is tremendous and has led to our many successes," says Waugh, adding, "I am Canadian born but with a Gaelic heart."

Like Waugh, singer Maureen Culhane has Celtic roots, hailing from Nova Scotia on Canada's east coast. Krista Grant, Mike and Kathy Bleakney are also from the east coast; New Brunswick in their case, where they studied Gaelic. But Waugh's wife, Olga comes from the Ukraine and only started learning Gaelic in 2009.

For choir director, Fiona McDonald, Ar n-Òran deepens her personal Celtic connection. McDonald was born into a Scots-speaking family near Glasgow but moved to Canada when she

was five. She wasn't taught the language, but always remembered the sounds of Gaelic as spoken by her grandfather.

In her twenties, McDonald moved to a farm in Glengarry County, Ontario and there heard, "folks speaking the language my grandfather didn't feel it worth learning."

In 1992, the award-winning soprano joined the Glengarry Gaelic Choir, where she became director and grew serious about learning Gaelic. She joined Ar n-Òran in 2009, as a singer and assistant director, progressing to directorship in 2011.

Stéphane Lebeau, Julie Desrosiers and Stacey Mathews are bi-lingual Canadians, raised speaking English and French. For them, Ar n-Òran offers the chance to explore a tradition they've long appreciated.

"Ever since I can remember, I've had a love of the Celtic music sound; everything from the old traditional tunes to modern Celtic performers," explains Lebeau.

Waugh says the music and language belong to the next generation.

"When my first child was born, a switch was activated inside, and I knew that the torch for Gaelic would not be relit in our family if I didn't step up to the challenge and ensure that my children have a strong cultural, linguistic, and musical sense of who they are," he says.

For that reason, Ar n-Òran has begun a junior choir.

 *By Reuel S. Amdur*



When Scottish Gaelic singer Joy Dunlop looked out into the audience and saw esteemed poets Sheila McLeod and Christine De Luca sitting in the front row, her heart skipped.

Dunlop, along with fiddle and harp duo Twelfth Day, had just finished putting poems by some of Scotland's leading female writers – including McLeod and De Luca – to music. Now, after eight months' work, it was time to launch the CD and enjoy the applause. Still, it was nerve-racking to see McLeod and De Luca sitting in the audience at the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh.

As Dunlop stood on stage with Twelfth Day members Catriona Price and Esther Swift she realized the moment of truth had arrived.

"There was a horrible few seconds when I thought, I really hope they like this," recalls Dunlop with a giggle.

"I was relieved that at least I was singing the English translation of De Luca's poem. She wrote the original in Shetlandic (a dialect that blends Old Scots with Norse.) Shetlandic is a really strong dialect and I would have sounded fake singing that."

The musicians needn't have worried: McLeod and De Luca loved hearing their work performed, and the show turned out to be a moving celebration of an unusual collaboration.

Entitled *Fiere* (a Scots word for companion or friend), the CD has been warmly welcomed by the poets featured.

Summing up her feelings, Meg Bateman refers to English essayist Walter Pater, who in 1873, wrote that all art aspires to the condition of music.

"A musical delivery is able to make more of the mood and dynamics than the spoken word ever could," Bateman says.

Dunlop says that poems are perfect songs in the making due to the flow or rhythm of the language.

She said that in making *Fiere*, the musicians chose poems that touched them in some way. In many cases, it felt as though the tune was already in the poems.

"As soon as we read each one, they just cried out to be sung. There was something unique in each poem that caught our attention, but they all had one thing in common: an ability to touch the reader and therefore, the listener."

The poems are sung in Gaelic, Scots and English. The blend of languages wasn't deliberate, but the trio enjoyed working in the three languages. The musicians are well-known in their fields, but this was the first time they had composed their own melodies and the experience was a thrill.

Fiddler Catriona said she and harpist colleague Esther enjoyed the experience of fusing their musical style with Joy's, and exploring the poetry to make something new.

Working with nationally recognized poets was naturally a buzz.

"We knew which poets were on our wish list but that's exactly what it was – a wish list," Dunlop says. "When we first contacted them we fully expected a lot of hard work and even some knock backs."

But the poets' response was positive from the start.

"Every single writer we approached gave us their permission. To be able to bring together a body of work that celebrates the experiences of Scottish women in a completely new and unique way has been a privilege."





John Boyne

The critical and popular acclaim that followed the release of his Young-Adult novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), left Irish writer John Boyne feeling both amazed and apprehensive.

“The book did unbelievably well,” recalls the 41-year-old scribe over the phone, still sounding almost astonished. “But I do remember thinking at the time, ‘Well, I guess it’s all downhill from here.’”

The concern was understandable. The stirring story of a budding friendship between two boys - one the son of a Nazi officer, and the other imprisoned in a WWII concentration camp - sold more than 5 million copies worldwide, sat atop the New York Times bestseller list for months, and was formatted into a feature length film in 2008.

To his credit, Boyne took his newfound renown in stride.

“I went back to work,” he states flatly.

“The writing muscles are like any other,” continues the Dubliner. “They will only stay toned and fit if exercised regularly. And you don’t want to see how flabby mine get when I am not working.”

The multi award-winning author is an anomaly of sorts; his pleasant nature and light-hearted humour are off-set by the surprisingly somber tones and themes inherent to his nine novels and two novellas.

“I suppose it is a form of therapy for writers,” he explains. “All of us carry a shadow around wherever we go – you know; the murky waters, the dirty little secrets and the proverbial skeletons in the closet. It is what we do with it, how we channel those things,

that matters the most.”

In his latest effort, *The Absolutist* (see review), Boyne again sheds light on that darkness, all the while aligning the account with his own definition of what makes a good book.

“I like characters who are flawed and complicated and whose actions are impossible to predict,” he shares. “I enjoy a story that is engaging and brings surprises at every turn, with themes that speak to the reader.”

In that regard, his hometown has given him plenty of fodder for fiction.

“Ireland, and Dublin in particular, is filled with fascination for me. The people, history and sense of mythology here have been beyond inspiring. Sure, most of my stories take place elsewhere in the world, but this place inevitably shows up in all of them in some manner.”

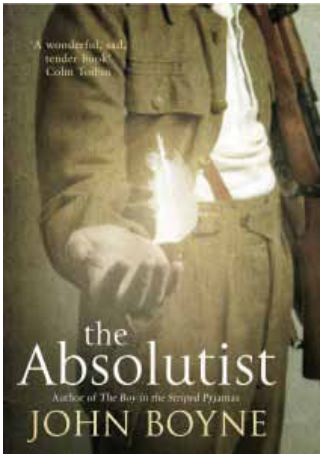
Boyne adds that his Irish-Celtic roots are also very apparent in his work.

“We are storytellers by nature,” he notes, adding that “centuries of relative isolation forced us to entertain one another at home, at church and in the pubs. As a result, and almost in spite of ourselves, we have nurtured a long and rich narrative tradition.”

It is a heritage that Boyne hopes will continue to flourish on the Emerald Isle.

“I tell young writers to read constantly, and join a writing group – give people work to read and read theirs. Learning to be an astute commentator of other people’s writing is crucial in learning to understand one’s own.

“And, most importantly, I advise them to write every day. Like a muscle, if they don’t use it, they will lose it.”



In *The Absolutist*, he evokes the loneliness of the young male through the experiences of Tristan Sadler, a teenage soldier caught in the First World War.

Sadler is gay and has been so traumatized by homophobia and violence that he is passive and unable to define his own principles or defend Will Bancroft, the conscientious objector whom he loves. *The Absolutist* speaks for all young men confined by narrow ideals of masculinity.

Colm Toibin



“I am so, so very sorry...the fault is all mine really...”

Colm Toibin is all apologies over the phone from his office at Columbia University in New York, where he is currently Mellon Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature.

“My day has simply blown up and gone all-to-hell,” sighs the 57-year-old Irish author, short-story writer, essayist, playwright, journalist, critic and poet. “I’m late on every interview and appearance so far this morning, and right now I am desperate for a good, strong cup of coffee and a nibble.”

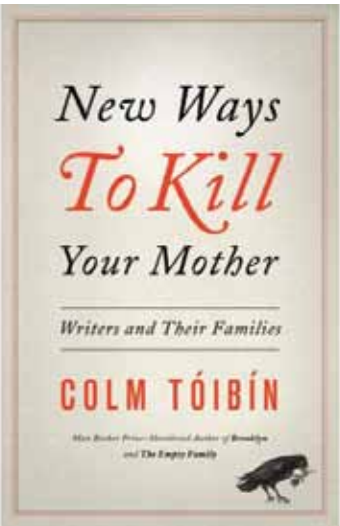
Toibin comes as advertised; he is opinionated, yet polite; formal to a degree, yet friendly; serious, yet true to his witty Celtic roots. There is also, however, an eccentricity there – a unique, indefinable quality that comes across in his speech.

“It is only, perhaps, that I do not see the world the same way as most,” he shares with a smile. “Many people interpret their lives as a story, with a macro narrative arc. I believe that our time here is nothing more than a series of random events and occurrences, and that all we can do is react to the immediacy of circumstance.

“In that regard, it is the small, daily details that fascinate me. In particular, I have an affinity for the odd and off-beat, and how we deal with them.”

Strange is the subject of Toibin’s latest work, *New Ways to Kill Your Mother; Writers and their Families*, a quirky collection of essays that explores the sometimes surreal lives of scribes (see review).

“In my years of reading and writing I have come across many examples of artistic temperament in the field of literature, both true and exaggerated,” he explains. “Writers are an interesting lot,



New Ways to Kill Your Mother; Writers and their Families
By *Colm Toibin*
Scribner / 352 pp / \$26

Colm Tobin’s latest collection of original essays in an insightful look into the private lives of scribes and of the people closest to them. “The novel is a ripe form for orphans”, he writes candidly, noting the impact of absent mothers and fathers upon characters in classic works of fiction, citing Beckett, Baldwin and Austen as

to be sure, as are the people in our immediate sphere.”

Sure enough, the new tome is as revealing of writers’ kin as it is of the wordsmiths themselves.

“These family members were often the backbone of creative endeavour, and without their support, many of our finest works would not have come to be.

“By turns, many of these individuals were mad themselves, and they could have a profound, if not perverse impact upon the authors.”

Toibin gives a nod to his own as well.

“My family is only mad in that they have put up with me for as long as they have,” he chuckles. “We Irish can be a little peculiar, don’t you know.”

Born and raised in Enniscorthy, County Wexford along Ireland’s plush southeastern coast, Toibin attended University College Dublin before relocating to Spain. In 1978 he returned to Dublin to pursue a career in journalism with the monthly news magazine *Magill*. He published his first novel, *The South*, in 1990, and has released nearly two dozen fiction and non-fiction works to date.

En route, the writer has been nominated for, and awarded, a litany of literary honours, including the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, the Man Booker Prize and, most recently, the Irish Pen Award.

“Most writers will tell you that these prizes mean nothing to them, but that really isn’t the case,” he explains. “Having my work acknowledged and recognized by my peers has meant the world to me, especially back home where there is such a tremendous literary tradition – Yeats, Joyce, Shaw, Wilde, etc. To even suggest that I be considered amongst those names is equally amazing and absurd.

“I can’t help but wonder, however, if they had to endure all of the interviews and appointments. If so, then it is really no surprise that so many of them were mad.”

examples. Other pieces on Yeats, Mann and Cheever are biting and intense, detailing family dysfunction to the point of disbelief. Unfortunately, the omission of the author’s own upbringing is obvious, and stronger reference to his own experiences would have served the work well, especially given his brash, brilliant style. Warm, weird, witty and wonderful, *New Ways to Kill Your Mother* is a must read for those with an inkling for the stories behind the stories. ~ SPC

Lines on the Water

By his own admission, Canadian writer David Adams Richards has but a handful of pastimes.

“Well, outside of my life with my wife and two boys, I would have to say that I enjoy watching a good hockey game, and I also enjoy hunting now and again,” shares the 61-year-old scribe from his home in Fredericton, New Brunswick. “And then there is the work, which has taken up so much of my time over the last two or three years.”

It has been a prolific era for the much-honoured author; his highly-personal treatise on spirituality *God Is* (2009) re-sparked debate between believers and atheists, and in 2011 Richards released two strong new works, *The Life and Times of Markus Paul* (a sequel to 2006’s *The Lost Highway*) and the controversial memoir/essay *Facing The Hunter; Reflections on a Misunderstood Way of Life*.

“People in Canada are much divided on the subject of hunting and on gun ownership in general,” he explains, adding “it wasn’t really my intention to stir-up those issues. I simply wrote about what I know and love and hoped that it would be received that way.”

If history is any indicator of public and critical reception to what Richards’ knows and loves, then *Facing the Hunter* will likely bring home the literary hardware, as it did for his 1998 Governor General’s Award winning *Lines on the Water; A Fisherman’s Life on the Miramichi*.

Considered by many to be a modern Canadian masterpiece, *Lines on the Water* is more than a tribute to the tributaries of the salmon-stocked Miramichi River that Richards waded as a young man; it is, at heart, a work of gentle lore, simple wisdom, homespun humour and romance.

“I was very fortunate to have had those experiences with the great people that I fished with and learned from,” says Richards, who is of Irish descent, “and my hope was simply to share them with others.

“There was something about that book touched people,” he continues, “even those that do not fish. Perhaps it is because there is something about fly-fishing that brings out the best of us; patience, passion, a deeper connection with the natural world, awe and wonder...”

And will.

“It is a solitary sport, or pastime, yes, and it is a good metaphor for the individual amidst and against the elements. To a degree, it represents our efforts to conquer and contain the natural world and, in many ways, it symbolizes our striving

to overcome ourselves and our condition. There is a real sense of power and of self when you are standing still in the river as the waters flow all around you, like you are telling the world ‘here I am - I exist.’”

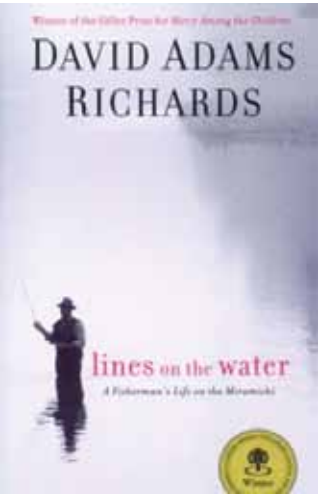
And then there is the strike.

“There’s no feeling in the world like it,” smiles the writer. “You live for that moment, like when you play 18 holes of golf just to get that one good shot. It’s addictive, a rush, and it makes all that time spent up to your waist in the water worthwhile.”

While Richards no longer prowls the river as profoundly as he once did, he still gets out several times each season.

“Oh, I take my boys out now and again when we have time. I was there when John landed his first salmon, and it was as much of a thrill for me to see him bring it in as it was to catch mine all those years ago.

“I don’t know if I will ever write about fly-fishing again, but perhaps my kids will have something to say about it one day. At the very least they will have some good memories.”



Jennifer Reoch is the current Miss Scotland.



I am of Scottish-Celtic origin ~ both of my parents are Scots, as are my grandparents...



We have a rich culture, with wonderful traditions and history, and it is important that we celebrate this with the rest of the world...



That celebration starts at home, as young people uncover their own Scottish-Celtic heritage...

Riverdancer

Riverdance star Caterina Coyne will miss the exuberance of North American audiences, but there will be new national quirks to discover as the cast of the perennially popular Irish show dances on to seduce fresh nations.

Riverdance has been seen many times in North America since its premiere in 1995, but the show leaves this June.

“I’ve grown to love this part of the world,” says Coyne by phone from Ontario where she’s performing. “In North America, audiences are so vocal about how much they love the show.”

Coyne has traveled with Riverdance for 7.5 years, five of them as a lead dancer in the North American production. For her and other cast members, there’s a touch of nostalgia in these farewell tours.

“North American audiences are very expressive and dance in the aisles. It’s a contrast with some other countries, especially in Asia, where people are much more reserved and clapping during a performance is considered disturbing.”

Riverdance was developed from a dance segment performed at the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest. The piece featured well-known Irish-American dancer Michael Flatley and his partner Jean Butler, and was the brainchild of Moya Doherty.

The dance segment was a huge success, and Riverdance was subsequently created by composer Bill Whelan (who won the 1997 Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album) along with Doherty, acting as producer, and director John McColgan.

Shawn Silver, a Newfoundland-born dancer who’s performed with Riverdance and now runs his own company, iDance, says the production has universal appeal because the bass rhythms and foot stomping patterns of Irish dance speak to our instincts.

“People feel an innate spiritual connection to the percussive rhythms and ancient melodies. We have a natural rhythm and tempo and somehow these bass rhythms strike a chord,” says Silver, on the phone from Australia where he’s created iDance Australia with Cape Byron Celtic Dance Co.

The Irish have been dancing for centuries, Silver says, and have recorded steps that are hundreds of years old.

“Prior to Christianity, the druids and pagans did ring dances and group dances. It’s also been said that during times of invasion men would stand on wooden surfaces and tap out signals to one another.”

Riverdance uses the hands and arms more than is common in traditional Irish dance. The show also breaks with tradition in the way dancers look, eschewing elaborate hairstyles formed of wigs and ringlets, for a more natural look. The core of the show, though, remains authentically Irish.

Since Riverdance began, similar shows have also won acclaim, but the original Riverdance remains the most successful touring dance show in history, Silver says.

The show’s global appeal is boosted by the participation of tap and flamenco dancers. In North America, tappers Benjamin

Mapp and Jason E. Bernard along with flamenco dancer, Marita Martinez-Rey have added colour and depth.

These dancers help tell the story of Irish emigration to North America. Their segments demonstrate the physical and psychological blending of the old and new worlds. The show’s initial scenes are set in ancient Ireland, where the ancestors rejoice in the sun, the moon, the elements and the seasons. The show then moves on to the emigrant experience. Finally, the children of the emigrants return to the homeland, and a new people who speak with a global voice arise.

For Coyne, an award-winner who began dancing in Galway at age four, Riverdance has provided a rewarding career.

Becoming a lead dancer five years ago put a little extra pressure on Coyne’s slim shoulders but she enjoys the challenge of heading up the show and representing her country and culture.

“It’s a good feeling, good nerves and good energy. You need that energy for a good performance. The adrenaline makes the show, and the audience feeds the energy.”

The show has three sets of lead dancers, so dancers are able to rotate and take breaks. But the 29-year-old works hard to stay in peak form.

“Your career depends on how you look after yourself,” she says. “Dancers today, train like athletes. When we’re not performing, we’re in the gym or doing yoga, trying to stay injury free. It’s important if you want a long career as a dancer. I hope to stay in theatre arts. As long as I love it, I’ll keep doing it.”

For Silver, Irish dance is as much sport as art.

“It’s an incredible illusion of the feet and feast for the eyes to make something so athletic and difficult look simple,” he says. “It draws entirely on core strength and Irish dancers train like Olympic athletes. In today’s world, Irish dancing is a sport first and foremost.”

After so many years on the road, Coyne is accustomed to being away from Ireland. Homesickness is alleviated by her love of travel and the presence of her fiancé, the show’s drummer/percussionist Mark Alfred.

“I love traveling, it’s a perk,” Coyne says. “I’ve been very lucky to make a career from Irish dancing. I don’t see it as a job. The fact I’m in a show like this is very special to me. I see myself as an ambassador for my country.”

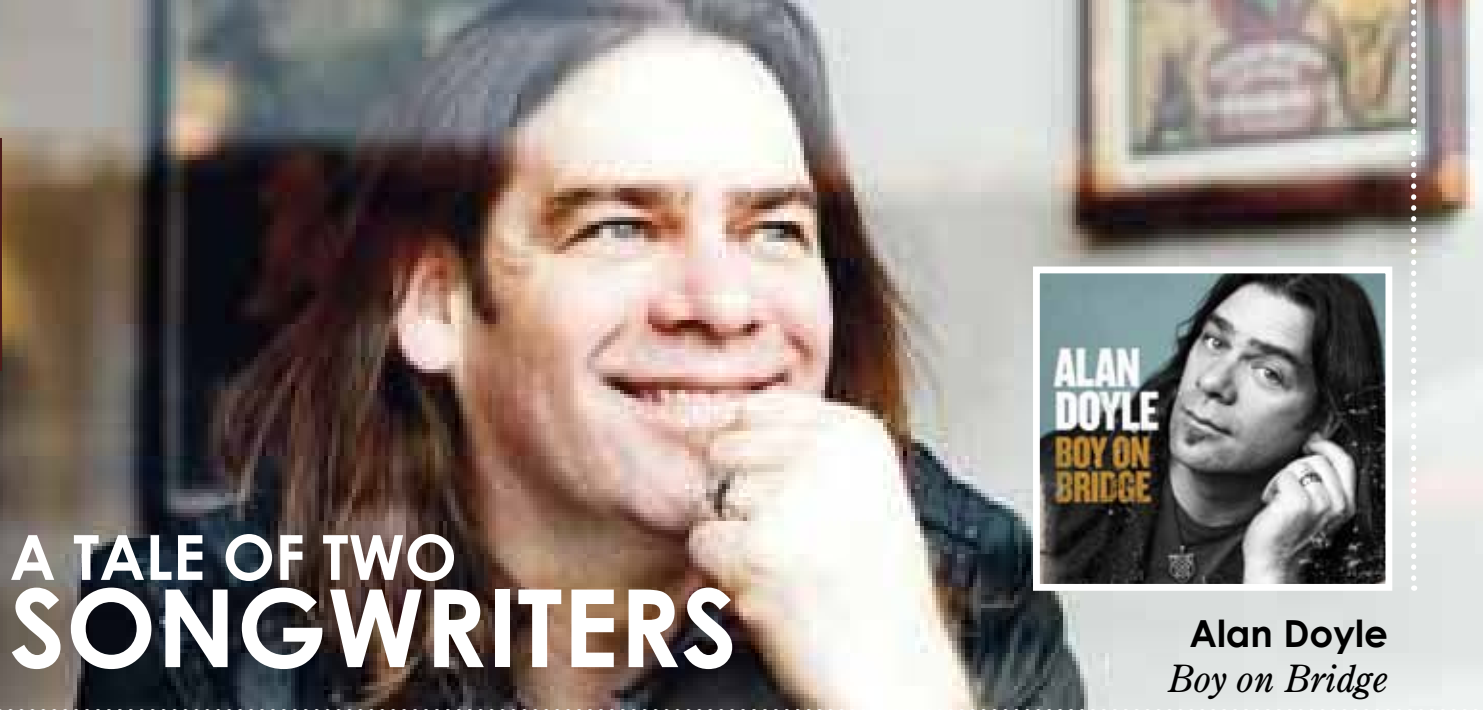
She is looking forward to future Riverdance performances in Belgium and Asia and possibly South America.

But it’s only natural that she misses Ireland and Galway at times.

“Ireland is my home and always will be. I live by the sea, so I always think of that beautiful landscape. And I miss a good cup of Irish tea.”



By Carol Moreira



A TALE OF TWO SONGWRITERS

Alan Doyle
Boy on Bridge

The liner notes on Alan Doyle's first solo recording speak volumes; "recorded in all kinds of ways in the most likely and unlikely places". Sure enough, the GBS frontman has enlisted the likes of Jim Cuddy, Hawksley Workman and amigo Russell Crowe to give fans a mixed bag of gorgeous goodies here; from straight-up rockers I've Seen a Little, Testify, and Light the Way, to the soulful stirrings of Love While Love's Awake and The Rules Will Be Broken. There are departures here – Where I Belong is an acapella masterpiece, and Lover's Hands is a delicious duet with Maureen Ennis - but ultimately tunes like Perfect Excuse, Sorry, and My Day will ring happily familiar with longtime devotees.

Alan Doyle and Johnny Reid are heading in opposite directions – literally.

"Ah, it was simply brilliant," smiles the 30-something Reid, referring to his recent swing across Atlantic Canada in support of his latest recording Fire It Up.

"Maritimers know how to let their hair down and kick-up their heels. It was one big kitchen party really."

Doyle knows the gig. Canada's east coast is familiar turf for the native Newfoundlander.

"Its home for me, and there's no other place like it in the world," shares the Great Big Sea frontman, who will soon wind his way through the region as part of a cross-country tour for his debut solo release Boy on Bridge.

"We are a unique people," he continues, "a cultural hybrid that is reflected in our arts."

Reid echoes the sentiment, taking it to a national level.

"Unlike the U.S, where people from away are absorbed into a melting pot of sorts, Canada is more like a colourful mosaic of cultures where we all get a chance to shine."

The multi award-winning singer/songwriter has been aglow since relocating to the Great White North from his native

Scotland fifteen years ago. A solid string of gold and platinum recordings – including the monster-selling, smash-hit single Thank You – has established him as one of the country's premier performing artists.

Doyle is no stranger to success himself. Over the course of their 20-year career, he and his Great Big Sea band-mates have performed thousands of concerts to millions of devoted fans around the world, selling truckloads of CDs and other merchandise along the way.

While both bring a distinct musical sound and style to the stage and studio – Reid a cross-breed of country, soul and Motown-era R'n'B, and Doyle a sea-salty mix of rock and traditional Celtic melodies – there are a number of common bonds in their offerings.

"There's no escaping my roots," laughs Reid, "There was music everywhere when I was a kid growing up in Lanark (his Scottish hometown, pop: 8,253). For as long as I can remember there were always these infectious melodies pouring out of the pubs and people's parlours. It seeped its way through my thick skin and settled in my blood."

Doyle's experiences were similar.

"I was raised on music," notes the 40-something songsmith. "It was my whole world, at home, at school, with my family and friends. Everything I learned and know about life was plucked

A TALE OF TWO SONGWRITERS



Johnny Reid
Fire It Up

The Scottish-born singer/songwriter returns to his roots with this fiery offering that is sure to set the charts ablaze. A smokin' title track sparks the session into gear, followed up by Walking on Water - a sexy duet with a raspy Serena Ryder. Yeah Its Alright, Let's Have a Party and Dancin' Shoes pay homage to Reid's country-soul spirit, and Right Where I Belong tips a hat to Otis Redding. The 30-something is at his strongest, however, with Love of a Life, Dedicated to You and What Used to Be, a trio of tender ballads that will touch hearts and trip the tear-ducts. Reid is on a roll, and if Fire It Up is any indication of his growth as an artist, then his Tartan Army will likely grow in size and stature for many years to come.

from turntables, cassette decks and the bars along George Street in St. John's."

In both instances, the Celtic influence was ever-present.

"Look at our ancestry," says Doyle. "When the English, Irish and Scots settled the new world, Newfoundland was the first port of call. They came for the fish and forests, and they left behind a musical legacy of instruments, harmonies and melodies. And that influence is as present here today as it was centuries ago."

Reid believes that, despite the obvious impact of the North American sound on his recordings, the Celtic vibe is always within earshot.

"What defines my music, and that of artists like Great Big Sea, is a certain heartfelt and simple honesty – a very Celtic quality I might add. And we can dress these tunes up anyway we like, but those three chords at the heart of our songs are the same batch that have been played back in the old-country for hundreds of years."

Other factors are at play for both as well.

"Newfoundlanders became storytellers out of necessity," explains Doyle. "We were isolated for so long that music was one of the only ways of entertaining ourselves. And the lack of a formal education system meant that we were forced to pass along

our lore and culture in song. Over time, it became an essential part of preserving our identity."

Reid can relate.

"Despite our affiliation with the U.K, Scotland has successfully established its own sense of self. One of the big ways that we did that was with our music - and not just with the pipes and fiddles, but also, more recently, with other genres; rock, country, blues, jazz, etc. Our musical identity, like our national identity, is very much a work in progress."

The sheer physical beauty of the landscape has been an inspiration as well.

"I actually get teary-eyed when we're flying in to St. John's," confides Doyle. "Even after all these years of travelling, I still stare in awe as soon as that coastline appears. It's breathtaking. I have no doubt that it works its way into our music."

Reid understands the feeling.

"Aye," he says. "Every time I go back I get ridiculously sentimental. I feel like a little kid again, walking through the fields and looking out over the rolling hills. It touches my heart, and I can only hope to pass along that feeling to the hearts of others in my songs."

 Stephen Patrick Clare



Scotland's Mountain Biking EXPLOSION!

A beautiful and thrilling thirty-eight miles of Scotland's West Highland Way constitutes mountain biker Jim Shields' ultimate ride.

"Starting off from the very tip of Loch Lomond, the route passes through gorges and rapids with dark peaty pools," the seasoned mountain biker describes.

The course then proceeds by Robert the Bruce's St. Fillan's Chapel, crosses the Bridge of Orchy, where bikers can revel in 1,000-foot views, descends down to Rannoch Moor and ends at the 17th century Kings House Hotel.

"This day's ride has everything you could ever want from mountain biking in Scotland, with great climbs, amazing descents, fabulous scenery and the chance to chat to amazing people from all over the world," shares Shields.

Scotland's mountain biking scene has exploded over the last 10 years, and recreationalists, competitors, guides and trail centres are all along for the ride.

"The Scots have gone positively bonkers!" declared the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) upon awarding the nation the coveted Global Superstar title in 2005 and 2006. Increased trails and facilities and never-ending natural, cultural and historical experiences have transformed Scotland into one of the world's top mountain biking destinations.

"It has evolved into a mainstream activity for many holiday makers," says Sam Hill, owner of The Break Pad, a bike hire shop in Newton Stewart. "It used to be very much men in their 30s, and now we see all sorts of people."

Numerous centres have recently popped up across the country on Scotland's Forestry Commission lands, including Laggan Wolfrax in the Highlands and 7Stanes in the south. The latter

offers eight centres with 400 km of single-track trails and routes marked according to skill level. "They are colour-graded from the green route for families with small children to the black route for serious mountain bikers," explains Hill.

"The 7stanes trails should be on everyone's list," raves Peter Corson, owner of Trailbrakes Biking Holidays. "They include some of the most flowing, fun single-tracks available anywhere on the planet."

Scotland's more rugged terrain is also open for exploration. "Scotland has liberal views on access to the countryside, with equal access rights available to bikers on pretty much any trail where you can walk or ride a horse," says Corson.

He's referring to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (2005) which allows bikers free rein in many of Scotland's far-flung landscapes as long as they ride responsibly.

"There are large areas of sparsely populated back country with mile upon mile of great scenery and fantastic trails, from easy going gravel roads with magnificent views, to action packed single-track that will have you hurtling down a mountainside," Corson notes with a grin.



Mari Findlay, Development Manager of the 7stanes Mountain Biking Community Interest Company, says that local and international bikers have responded to Scotland's purpose-built facilities and open access laws. "In 2007, the number of tourists who undertook mountain biking during a trip to Scotland nearly doubled from the previous year."

Findlay adds, "Mountain biking tourism generates £46.5 million (US\$74.4 million) each year for the Scottish economy plus there are an estimated 11.8 million people who own a mountain bike in the UK."

What perhaps makes Scotland most appealing for both rookie and professional bikers is the holistic experience. Many destinations have biker-friendly accommodations, cafés and rental shops and even the option of hiring companies to transport your baggage. Opportunities for cultural and historical immersion also abound.

"Any cross-country biking route can be adapted to include detours to visit places, from ancient churches and castles to distilleries and ice-cream factories," shares Corson.

John Fulton, pioneer of the renowned Coast-to-Coast mountain biking route, understands the importance of integrating recreation with history. "One can ride on ancient trails used by the Highlanders over the centuries," he muses. In July 2014, Fulton's company, Wildcat Adventures, is planning a tour to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, which will coincide with the International Gathering of the Clans.

Scotland's mountain bike scene has also reached international competition acclaim. Fort William hosts the downhill portion of the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup annually. Plus, in preparation for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, Glasgow is building new, world-class XC facilities. "We're producing an ever-increasing number of very talented young riders," says Catherine Shearer, Marketing Manager of H&I Adventures Mountain Biking Worldwide, about Scotland's growing group of competitors.

Recreational mountain biking will also continue to grow, Shearer adds. "Businesses are becoming more aware of the benefits of mountain biking tourism to Scotland's economy, so there's a real commitment to growing the sport for the future."

With more trails and centres being developed and upgraded, Scotland shows no sign of slowing down and nor does the influx of local and international mountain bikers.

So, where to begin your Scottish MTB adventure?

"Of course I'm going to recommend Kirroughtree where we are based," says Hill, "but you can really take a mountain bike safari here in Scotland for a month. Head up to Fort William to sample the World Cup downhill course and the amazingly technical trails of Laggan Wolfrax; take a trek up to the Isle of Skye and encounter a golden eagle...The opportunities to have a real Scottish experience are endless."

Perhaps you might book H&I Adventures' leisurely Taste and Trails of Scotland tour or more challenging Torridon and Skye. You could complete the classic Coast-to-Coast with the trail's pioneer, Wildcat Adventures, or an alternative Southern Upland Coast-to-Coast tour with Trailbrakes Biking Holidays.

But you don't necessarily need a plan. Set out in the Highlands north, the Lowlands south, the Isle of Skye or any place in between and allow your body, spirit and wheels to freely roam.

 By Michelle Brunet



For more information on mountain biking in Scotland, please visit;
www.glasgowmtbmad.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
www.mountainbikeworldwide.com
www.wildcat-adventures.co.uk
www.trailbrakes.co.uk
www.bottlegreenbiking.co.uk
www.thebreakpad.com
www.7stanesmountainbiking.com
www.forestry.gov.uk/mtbscotland



TITANIC Remembered

In 1985, U.S. explorer Dr. Robert Ballard beat other adventurers to the prize when he discovered the Titanic’s resting place, more than two miles beneath the surface of the Atlantic.

The explorer has said, “The Titanic belongs to Belfast,” the city in Northern Ireland where she was built. That connection is vividly demonstrated with the creation of another stunning new structure in Belfast: Titanic Belfast.

Built on the dockyards where the great ship took shape, Titanic Belfast is a modern banqueting and conference centre that tells the interwoven stories of the Titanic and the city’s industrial heritage.

Since it opened just before the April 14th centenary of the disaster, Titanic Belfast has been a focus of international interest. That’s not surprising as, like her namesake, Titanic Belfast is a marvel.

Designed to look like the doomed steam liner, the building’s exterior resembles four jutting prows and it’s lined with silver steel paneling that shines and undulates like waves.

It’s the world’s largest Titanic visitor experience and undoubtedly also the most diverse – the story is told through nine interpretative galleries, including an undersea exploration centre featuring live links to Ballard’s exploration vessel, Nautilus.

The building is the centre of the Titanic Quarter – Europe’s largest urban regeneration scheme.

When Titanic was launched in May 1911, Belfast was booming. The city was known for engineering, ship-building and linen manufacture. The city’s Harland and Wolff Shipyard was the largest in the world and, when Titanic slid from the dock onto the River Lagan, 100,000 people turned out to watch.

The shipyard had produced many fine ships, but R.M.S. Titanic was special: she was the largest ship ever built and extremely innovative. Most famously, it was believed that her 16 sealable,

watertight compartments would make her unsinkable.

Everyone knows how the Titanic story ended: 1,514 people died on the night of April 14, 1912 when she hit an iceberg 800km southeast of the Canadian city of Halifax.

It was her maiden voyage and she was carrying passengers from Southampton to New York. They included wealthy, high-profile figures and many poor emigrants, who were dreaming of a better life in North America. The plight of those lost emigrants led to the Titanic being called, “the ship of dreams.”

Later in the twentieth century, the decline in manufacturing, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, hit Belfast hard. But recent years have seen stirrings of fresh energy, especially since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement stabilized the political situation in Northern Ireland.

Now, it’s hoped Belfast’s inspirational new building will foster a modern era of industrial greatness.

In Halifax, resting place of many Titanic dead, Canadian musicians pay tribute

It’s not surprising that musicians who play together develop a



The Halifax Titanic Band

close bond. Some call it “the mystical experience” where all sense of self is forgotten and individuals merge with the music and each other.

That bond is movingly illustrated by the musicians who worked aboard the Titanic. The youthful eight-man band continued to play as the great ship sank, becoming known as “the band that played on”.

In commemoration of their bravery, and the centenary of the disaster on April 14th, a group of five musicians in Halifax, Canada, have created the Halifax Titanic Band, with a repertoire based on the tunes heard that fateful night.

They play the salon, dance, and after-dinner music performed for wealthy passengers, followed by hymns including, ‘Nearer my God to Thee’, played as the huge liner sank.

“We wanted to pay tribute to the Titanic musicians,” Ian Bent, pianist and band director told Celtic Life, as he and his black-clad band members gathered prior to a recital in suburban Halifax.

“They didn’t try to save themselves – that’s heroic,” violinist Gina Burgess added.

The group formed in Halifax because it was from this east-coast city that rescue ships departed on the morning of April 15th, 1912.

Sadly, there was little rescuing to be done, and the city’s cemeteries contain the bodies of many of the ship’s dead, including Scottish violinist, John (Jock) Hume, 21, and English bassist John Clarke, 30.

The two were found with bandleader Wallace Hartley, 33, whose body was returned to England. They were the only musicians recovered.

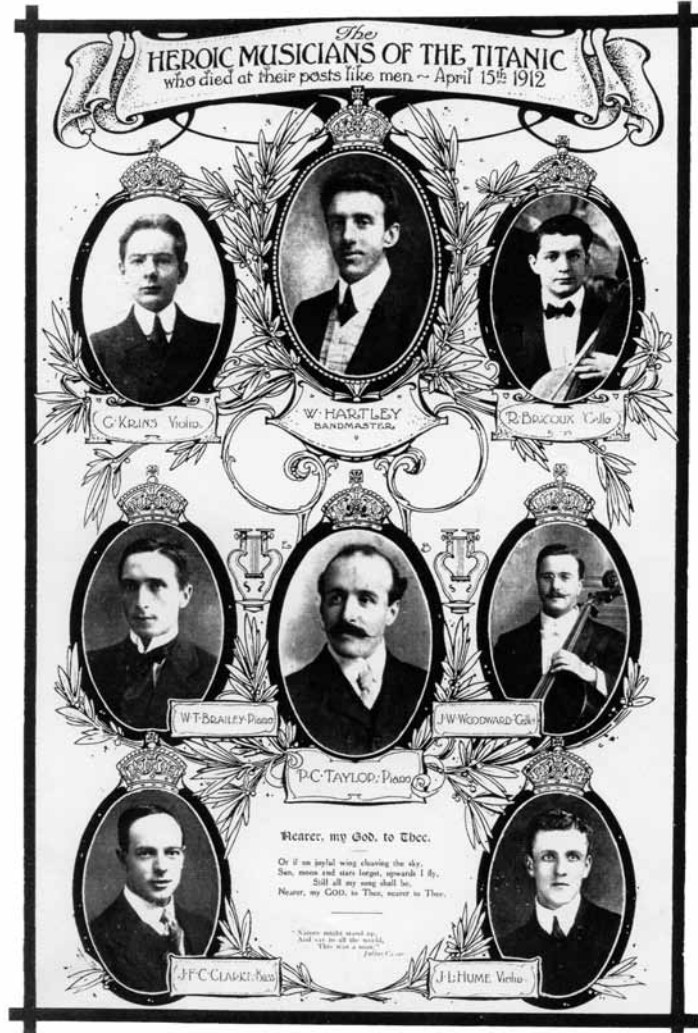
During the centenary period, the Halifax band has participated in many commemorative events. It’s been emotionally draining to play those tunes, made tragic by association, but meaningful.

Cellist John Spearns said the story of the Titanic band underscores the importance of music to humanity.

“It shows that at the darkest hour, people turn to music. There’s not a facet of our lives not affected.”

Violinist Sussane Brown said the Titanic repertoire allows us to put ourselves in the place of the people who stood on that deck and heard those tunes.

“It gives us, and the listeners, the chance to think: What would it have been like?” she said.



Musicians Union Archive, University of Stirling

The music would have been “a great solace”, bass player Ron Hynes added.

Spearns said that when the Halifax rescue crew retrieved the bodies of Hume, Clarke and Hartley, they were floating around one life ring.

“They were found 40 miles from the wreck, arm-locked around one ring,” he explained.

It’s sad to think of the three musicians drifting in the dark, frigid waters, but the Halifax band members are comforted by the fact the waves did not separate them.

“You get very close when you play together,” explained Gina.

 *By Carol Moreira*



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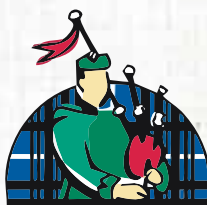
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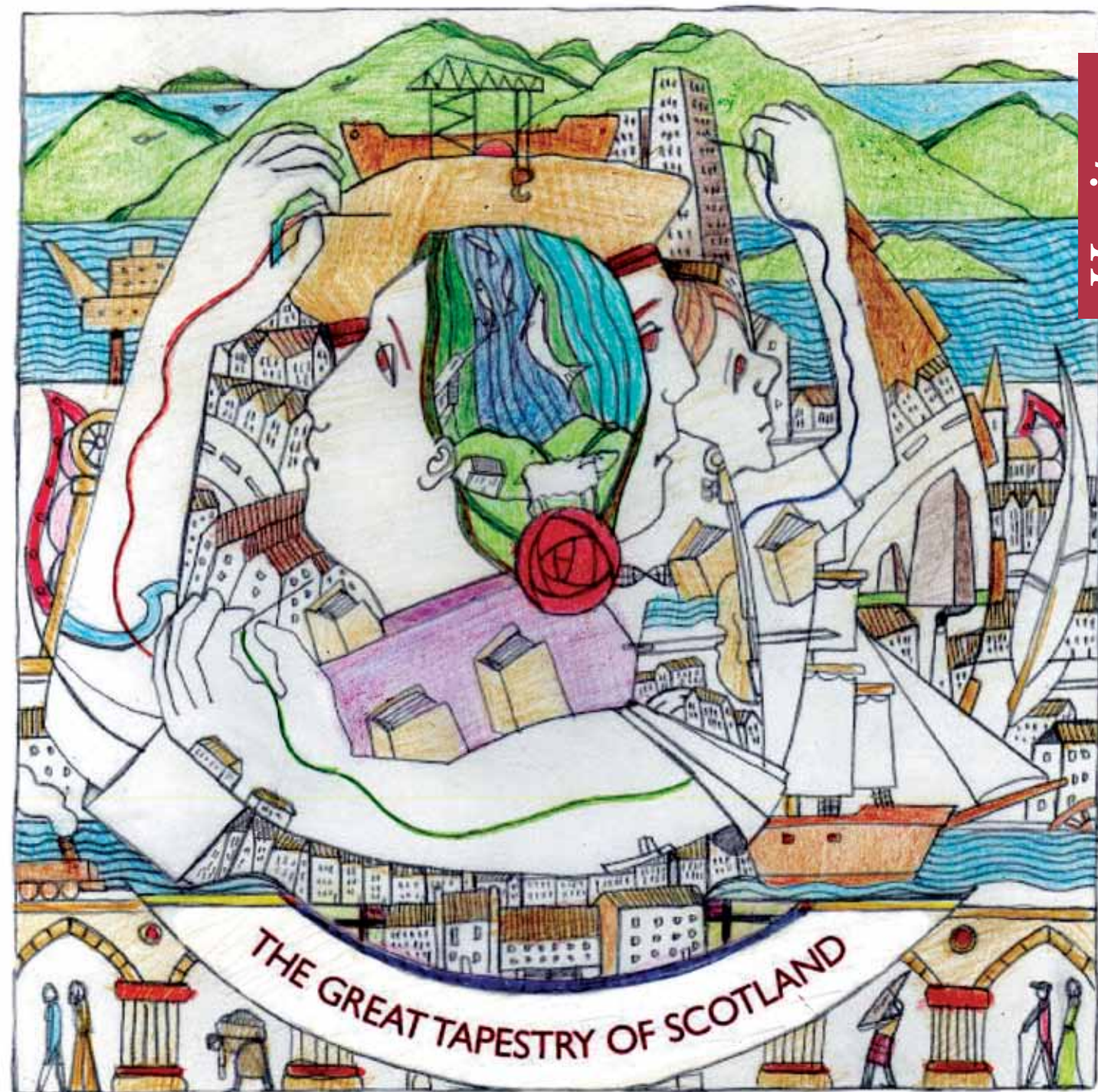


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Heritage

Scots embrace *The Great Tapestry of Scotland* and begin stitching their country's story from pre-history to modern times.

Maud is a member of one of many scattered community groups that have just begun to create what will be the world's longest tapestry.

Maud Crawford loves to stitch and the Dunblane resident loves to feel part of her community. It's only natural then, that Maud is one of more than 300 stitchers across Scotland to have volunteered to be part of an ambitious community arts project: The Great Tapestry of Scotland.

Scotland's Great Tapestry will tell stories taken from the country's 12,000-year history. Over the next 15 months or so, stitchers will create more than 160 story panels, each requiring over 400 hours of sewing. The panels will tell key stories, ranging from the work of 13th century theologian and philosopher John Duns Scotus to the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first mammal ever to be cloned in 1996.

“Stitchers have been clamouring to get involved,” says publicist Anna Renz. “And Scots have been hotly debating which topics are worthy of inclusion.”

Although called a tapestry, the work is being created, like the Bayeux Tapestry, on embroidered cloth. It will be annotated in English, Gaelic, Latin and Scots, with surface stitching in yarns chosen to create a rich and tactile artwork. Stitches will include stem, split and chain, with filling stitches like long and short, satin and darning.

For Maud, the project allows her to increase her stitching expertise, which is currently mainly in crewel work (wool on linen).

“There is always more to be learnt, which I enjoy,” the stitcher told Celtic Life International.

Maud previously worked on the Prestonpans Tapestry, also recently created in Scotland, which depicts the journey made by Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745 as he sought to regain the Crown.

“I enjoy having to work to (fairly) strict guidelines,” says Maud. “Our stitching group will be the same volunteers who collaborated on the Dunblane panel for the Prestonpans.”

The new tapestry is the brainchild of well-known writer Alexander McCall Smith, creator of the Scotland Street novels and the No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency series, who came up with the idea after seeing the Prestonpans.

“This is an important project because it will be a very vivid and accessible account of Scotland’s history,” the writer said.

Scotland is currently debating whether to stay in the United Kingdom or become independent. Scots will hold a referendum on independence in fall, 2014. McCall Smith says this is an important moment.

“In considering her future, Scotland should also be aware of her past. This tapestry is a public celebration of Scotland’s colourful and dramatic history.”

Alistair Moffat, the historical writer charged with deciding which episodes of Scottish history to include in the work, says tapestry seems to fascinate us, pulling on ancient sensibilities.

“To make a tapestry for a nation, something attempted nowhere else, involves a glorious process of ruthless editing,” says Moffat.

“Pitfalls open on every side,” he says. “One of the deepest is the military option, our history as a series of invasions, wars and



Maud Crawford

battles, many of them grey defeats. Another is to show Scotland and the generations of nameless people who made the landscape and built the towns and cities as a soft-focus background for colourful, stately aristocratic processions.”

By all accounts, Moffat has avoided the pitfalls, and stitchers are beginning work from designs created by artist Andrew Crummy, who sees the project as an artistic challenge and an opportunity to create a piece that is engaging and contemporary.

“Our aim is to involve as many people as possible to hopefully create a unique slant on our Scottish history,” he says.

Each stitching group is being allocated a panel - often one that relates specifically to their area – along with a pack containing threads, needles, and a piece of linen, which has the design traced onto it. Groups are given a colour picture of the panel design, which can be used for colour reference, and a suggested list of stitches to use. The rest is up to them.



“There is lots of scope for stitchers to be really creative with their use of colours, textures and patterns,” says Renz. “We give them guidance, but it’s their imaginations which will really bring it to life and give the tapestry its flavour. “

Renz said that so far some sponsorship has been provided by private individuals, as well as thread and yarn company, Coats. But more money is needed.

“We need help to maintain our momentum and achieve our true potential to create one of Scotland’s greatest contemporary artworks,” she says.

When complete in August next year, the tapestry will go on display; initially in the Scottish parliament, then nationally and internationally.

Moffat says it’s important the tapestry distil Scotland’s unique sense of herself.

He says the aim is to tell a story, “Only of this place and, without bombast, pomp or ceremony, to ask the heart-swelling rhetorical question; Wha’s like us?”

 By Carol Moreira

The numbers behind the Great Tapestry of Scotland

- 12,012 years of Scottish history
- Over 300 stitchers
- Over 160 panels
- 50,000 sewing hours
(equivalent to sewing 24 hours a day for six years)
- 49,000 meters of yarn
(enough to be draped up and down Ben Nevis 37 times)
- 1 beautiful tapestry



Ask anyone to conjure an image of Scottish wildlife and they'll probably think of that great monarch of the glens: the red deer. Standing on heather-clad hills with antlers probing the all-too-familiar Scots mist, it embodies the spirit of a nation. Fortunately, the red deer is thriving, with a healthy population spread across the country. At the opposite end of the scale in terms of size is another of Scotland's great wildlife icons: the red squirrel. Like the red deer, it has been part of Scotland's natural landscape for centuries. Yet its survival hangs in the balance as a consequence of man's interference in the natural world.

The story begins in the late nineteenth century, when wealthy Victorian landowners who enjoyed easy access to the far-flung corners of the globe flaunted their wealth and status by populating their gardens with flora and fauna from distant lands.

Because of them, Scotland is fighting today to control several invasive species that have adapted all too readily to their new home. Japanese Knotweed, Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam are all spreading out of control. These species alone cost Scotland millions of pounds a year to clean up and mitigate the environmental damage. North America's grey squirrel was also prized for its novelty, and it is this animal that sadly now is ringing

the death knell for its distant cousin, Scotland's native red squirrel.

Grey squirrels were introduced to both England and Scotland. Unfortunately, some of those introduced into England carried the deadly squirrel pox. The first recorded case of the disease was in Norfolk, England, in the early 1980s. Alarm bells started ringing in the 1990s when it became apparent that large areas of England were devoid of the once commonplace red squirrel.

As ecologists prepared maps of those parts of the UK where reds and greys existed, it became clear that England's green and pleasant land was dominated by greys, with hardly a red to be found. Today, the red squirrel is virtually extinct in England save for small numbers in the north of the country. Scotland hosts around 120,000 or 90 per cent of the UK population of red squirrels. Grey squirrels in England now number around 2.5 million. As the grey squirrel's march is northwards and the reds are rapidly succumbing to its advance, Hadrian's Wall, the Roman legacy that separates Scotland and England, has once again become an important battle line.

A particularly nasty virus, squirrel pox is carried by grey squirrels, but they have developed immunity to the disease and appear unaffected by it. Sadly, red squirrels have no immunity. Once a red squirrel comes in contact with the virus it develops weeping lesions and sores around the eyes, nose, mouth and genitalia. These spread, and the animal struggles to see and feed. Death is slow and painful and

occurs about two weeks after infection. There is no cure and it is believed to carry a 100 per cent death rate. Since 2005, there have been localized squirrel pox outbreaks with devastating results at several locations just inside the Scottish border. Rapid action halted these outbreaks, but southern Scotland is now on high alert for any suspicious deaths of red squirrels.

The man charged with saving Scotland's red squirrels, Ken Neil, Project Officer (Tayside), told Celtic Life that the pox is currently found only in the south of the country and that it's hoped various strategies will contain new occurrences.

"Long-term plans are in place to have strongholds for red protection," Neil says. "These are a series of very large woodlands in presently grey-free areas that would be managed to be of benefit to reds."

It sounds as if the reds will be confined to isolated areas, but Neil believes this can be avoided.

"We hope that the work being done on the ground, coupled with the science being undertaken by researchers to find a vaccine for pox, and even an effective contraceptive for greys, will bring the reward of maintaining the red squirrel's present range."

The squirrel pox is the principal factor in the decline of red squirrels, but halting the spread of greys is equally important, for they are larger, live longer, eat more and migrate more easily than reds. They out-compete reds in almost every way. Wherever greys appear, reds disappear, irrespective of disease. Squirrel pox just makes the process more unpleasant and faster.

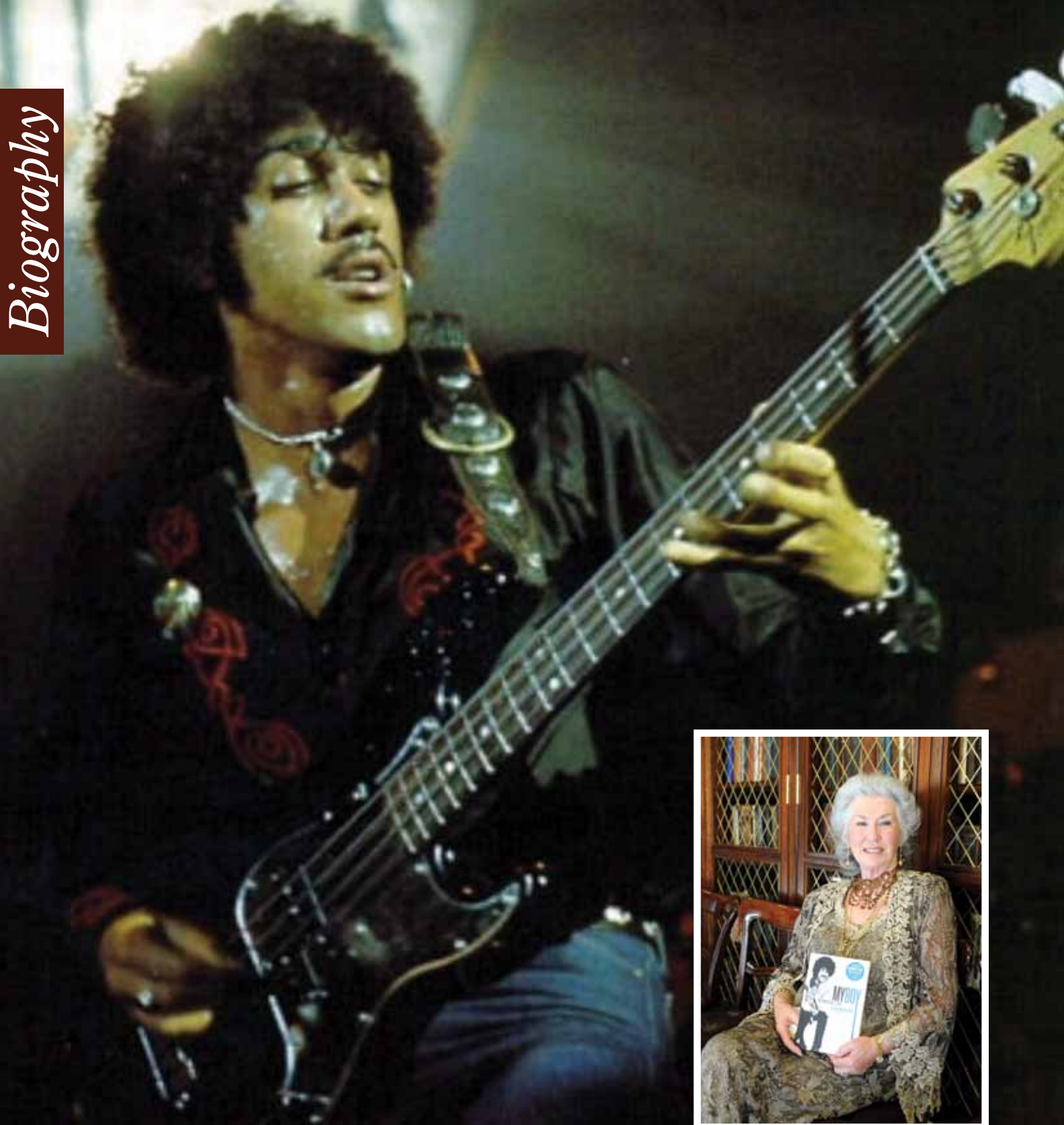
Neil says Scotland is putting resources and commitment into stopping the greys.

"In Tayside alone, we have over 60 large estates and farms working together with our project," he explains. "The effect has been clearly measurable. As this network of supporting parties grows, there will be few, if any unmonitored and uncontrolled grey migration routes. This way, the spread that has been happening for decades will be halted."

For now, things are under control, but if the situation changed and this icon of Scottish wildlife disappeared from the country as it has elsewhere, the impact would be disastrous.

As Neil notes, "Red squirrels are top of the list of "must see" wildlife for visitors. Their loss would be enormous in terms of the value of sharing our woodlands with such a bright, lively, joy-bringing little creature.





Philomena Lynott has enjoyed popular celebrity in Ireland and the UK for years. A gifted public speaker and best-selling author, she is esteemed as the sweet, straight-shooting mother of Phil Lynott, Dublin’s celebrated “Black Irishman” vocalist with the unmistakable voice.”

Songwriter, bassist and frontman for 70s rock band Thin Lizzy, Lynott is revered for having penned one of the most memorable rock anthems ever, The Boys are Back in Town, a staple of both FM radio and sporting events around the world.

However, like her son’s brilliant but brief music career – one that produced more than 20 UK hit singles from more than 10 hit albums in just 15 years – the 82-year-old Philomena is a relative unknown outside her native environs.

With the 2012 e-book release of My Boy: The Philip Lynott Story (Hot Press Books) – now available via online retailers – North American music fans finally have easy access to the No. 1 bestseller that sat atop the Irish literary charts for nine weeks in 2011.

My Boy is a strikingly honest review of the rock star’s childhood, rise to fame and tragic death in 1986, as told through the experiences, perspectives and opinions of his mother. It was a charmed life, she writes, “played out between traumatic events. The hardship of his birth and upbringing, and at the other end his wasting away through a drug habit.”

Philomena’s own inspiring story of triumph – one filled with its own myriad misfortunes - begins in Birmingham, England, in 1948. A 17-year-old single white female away from home at nursing school, she accepted an invitation to dance from Cecil Parris, “a tall black man” from British Guyana.

Returning to her chair, she was shocked to find herself rejected by her girlfriends, and later roughed up outside the dancehall by two male friends. “I could not understand what was supposed to be so dreadfully wrong,” Philomena writes vividly. “Indeed, how could I have refused a man who had walked the length of the dance floor to invite me to dance? In my eyes, to have done so would have been an act of extreme rudeness.”

The young woman could never have imagined that the controversial dance - and others with Cecil in the weeks to follow - would lead to a truly “blessed event” that would change her life, and Irish and rock music history forever. “Little did I know it then, but he was to become the father of my son, Philip.”

Neither could Philomena have envisioned the drama she’d face soon after raising a black child secretly and alone in the 50s - the

scrutiny enough to force her to send the infant to Dublin to be cared for by her own mother.

In the book’s second printing, which includes new chapters and commentary, Philomena confesses to “hiding two enormous secrets that I dared not reveal.” After waiting until her mother passed away, she opens up about two more children, born to her after Philip - Jeanette in 1951, and Leslie in 1952 – both of whom were then put up for adoption.

As she states in the forward of the new edition, concealing the truth “wasn’t a new experience for me. The truth about my personal life had racked me with guilt throughout virtually all of my adult life.”

With the new chapters, her compelling account blossoms into a telling tale of triumph after a long string of misfortunes. “It is the story of how a family was sundered all of those years ago, in a way that would never happen now. And of how they came back together through a series of accidents, adventures and clandestine meetings.”

Daughter Jeanette was reunited with her biological mom just months before Phil’s death, though, regretfully, her existence was kept secret from him. Philomena’s reunion with her second son, Leslie, is a story of intriguing circumstance; mysteriously drawn to her voice on air promoting her new book, he discovered that she had the same last name as the one on his birth certificate.

Reunited with Leslie, the narrative arcs from the horror of losing an only child to the bliss of finding two long-lost children.

Sadly, the book’s finale has Philomena again struggling to muster strength through the dark days of losing her life partner, Dennis Keeley, to lung cancer. “The depths” of her past, she confesses, “had not prepared me for his suffering and wasting away.”

Since then, she has characteristically carried on, and is re-discovering and newly appreciating her late son’s music and lyrics. She has also reached out to thank all the ‘Rockers’ around the world for helping her to keep the memory of her son and his music alive and thriving to a new generation of fans.

 By Donald Wiedman



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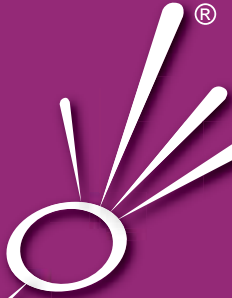
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CELEBRATE!
a Summer of Celtic Love...

~ By Carol Moreira

Special

*Celtic Communities
Around the World Come
Together this Summer for
Fun, Family, Friendship
and Festivities...*

It's a long day's journey between Cornwall in the United Kingdom and Brittany in France, especially when the sea is rough. But turbulent waves don't deter Cornish and Breton festival-goers, because at journey's end they're warmed by each other's company.

"The crossing is always wonderful for us because we are going to see our friends," Catherine Pasco, an organizer of the Breton festival told Celtic Life.

Deep friendships between the people of Cornwall and Brittany have developed because they alternate their Easter festivals - the AberFest and the Breizh-Kernow – so that participants act as hosts one year and guests the next.

The dual festivals celebrate Celtic links that originated between the fifth and seventh centuries when seafarers left the rocky shores of Cornwall and landed on the equally rocky coast of Brittany, becoming the Bretons of today. There are similarities

language is surprisingly unimportant,” Dudding told Celtic Life. “The whole experience just rolls wonderfully.”

Dudding’s children grew up with Pasco’s, developing friendships and language skills. Dudding says the young people have a Breton-Cornish “hybrid culture”.

It began during Easter 1986, when Pasco and her husband Padrig Lorho invited the Cornish to attend their festival. The

the richest strands of other traditions. The festivals also steep the young in their heritage. And they create friendships across cultural borders.

In Havana, for example, the three-year-old Celtfest Cuba brings overseas Celtic musicians to the city for a week in April. Spanish immigration to Cuba began in 1492 and traditional Celtic music arrived with early immigrants from Galicia and Asturias in Spain’s northwest.

Irish,” says Coto Picart. “Brendan Begley so gently let me scan his songbook. Nuala Kennedy donated a whistle, which I love and play every night.”

Fun and Sharing

Such stories resonate across many festivals. Canada’s Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo took the bond of friendship as its official theme after the 1983 event. That year, local people still scarred by the Second World War objected to the involvement of a German band. But the band participated and entered into the spirit of the Tattoo, explains marketing manager, Leah Whitehead.

“What followed was a stunning performance of German and Canadian music,” Whitehead says. “It was a triumph.”

Each July, that spirit still unites the military, service, and civilian performers who attend from many countries. For the audience, the Tattoo is an exciting spectacle. Young people also enjoy the workshops in music, dance and gymnastics that are held around the host city, Halifax, during Tattoo week.

Luckily, it’s not hard to interest youth in colourful Celtic arts and sports. The Highland Games format is an exciting way to educate children about their heritage, say the organizers of California’s Pleasanton Scottish Highland Gathering and Games. They should know: the massive event has been held every September since the 1860s and is organized entirely by volunteers from San Francisco’s Caledonian Club.

In another Californian festival this May, 21 burly men simultaneously tossed their cabers in one big, dramatic salute to the large crowd that had gathered for the 80th annual ScotsFest at Costa Mesa.

“Caber tossing requires an immense amount of strength and mental power,” event coordinator Kelly Chang says. The 21-caber salute ended the celebration that featured the National Heavy Athletic Championships.

The Eisteddfod: Passing it on and Boosting the Economy

The Celtic passion for transmitting culture to the young is exemplified by the Welsh eisteddfod. An ancient word meaning ‘sitting’, the first eisteddfod was held in 1176. Today, it describes a gathering of musicians, dancers and artists who meet to compete and learn.

Eisteddfods are scattered throughout the world. There are eisteddfods in the U.S. and Argentina, and an International Eisteddfod in Wales each July.

The big Welsh event – the National Eisteddfod of Wales - occurs every August and features eight days of artistic competitions and performances in the Welsh language.

“The eisteddfod is a celebration of Welshness, of our culture, of



between the languages, musical styles and sports such as wrestling.

“We generally don’t speak at all about England and France, only about Cornwall and Brittany,” Pasco says with a smile. “Some Breton and Cornish speakers try to talk together; it’s possible for simple things because the languages are very close.”

Falmouth resident John Dudding, a long-time friend of Pasco’s, says festival-goers carry dictionaries, but don’t use them.

“The lingua francas are mostly English and French, but

exchange has helped to foster cultural interest. In Cornwall, ancient celebrations, such as the Montol Midwinter Festival in Penzance, are being revived. The links keep growing and this Easter, more than 80 Bretons undertook the 10-hour journey to Cornwall.

For Pasco, the Duddings are dear. “They are friends, but more than that, they are the family we would have chosen.”

This Cornish-Breton celebration is just one of the marvellous Celtic festivals held around the world each year. These festivals share the best of Celtic culture, often blending this magic with

the concept of belonging to a community,” Elfed Roberts, national eisteddfod chief executive, told Celtic Life.

The event attracts 6,000 competitors and an audience of up to 160,000. Interestingly, the festival alternates between northern and southern Wales in order to share the cultural and economic benefits of the gathering. When the eisteddfod visits, the host region reaps a financial benefit of \$10 million-\$13 million. Eisteddfod organizers encourage local businesses to tender for associated work, which is lucrative as the festival costs about \$5 million to stage.

Eisteddfods have also taken root in Australia, where over 50 per cent of the population has Celtic heritage. The Association of Eisteddfod Societies of Australia represents 86 different competitions. Some are very large, like the Royal South Street event that runs from February through October; many smaller competitions last just days.

Association president Tony Kemper is involved with the City of Wollongong Eisteddfod, where sponsors are asked to attend the final Taste of Talent concert.

“This gives them an opportunity to see what talent we have and how we try to encourage these young people to give them every opportunity to be the best they can be,” Kemper says.

It’s the same priority around the globe. On Canada’s east coast, Celtic Colours takes place each fall on Cape Breton Island, and is preceded in May by the Celtic Colours in the Schools Program, a participatory musical presentation delivered by young Gaelic speakers and musicians.

The young need to be encouraged as developing expertise in Gaelic or any of the Celtic arts is a long process. Celtic dancing styles are famously athletic and mastering ancient languages

takes time, but Canadian Joyce MacDonald, now in her thirties, says she’s found learning Gaelic rewarding.

“Every time I go into my grandmother’s house and see her face light up as we chat in her first language...I know that what I’m doing is worth it,” says MacDonald.

Despite being a major festival, Scotland’s Celtic Connections also embraces the young. Held every January, this year’s event saw 2,100 artists from around the world in Glasgow for 18 days. Highlights included performances by Bruce Hornsby and Hue & Cry. Within the main event, a smaller festival, Showcase Scotland, focuses on promoting the careers of young Scottish musicians as well as those of the partnering nation – this year, Catalonia.

New artists get to perform before international music industry delegates, who this year numbered 180 and came from more than 20 countries. These influential delegates move between the big international festivals, such as the Dublin (Ohio) Irish Festival, Brittany’s Interceltique and Australia’s National Celtic Festival. This June, Australia’s event celebrated its 10th anniversary in the company of top international stars, such as UK-based The Popes, Irish singer Fiach Moriarty and Scottish group, Breabach.

Showcase Scotland provided valuable experience and exposure for the six Catalan bands who attended, says Marisol López, Director of Catalan! Arts.

The participating bands represented a spectrum of the Catalan folk scene and included Lidia Pujol, who collaborates with the Irish flautist Brian Dunning, and Jordi Molina and PerePau Jiménez, who play the Catalan tenor oboe and diatonic accordion.

Another participating band, La Carrau, shared the stage with Serbian guitarist Emir Kusturica and the No Smoking band. La Carrau were pleased to receive positive feed-back from Kusturica’s manager.



“The professional side of the event gave us a unique chance to reinforce the networking between Catalan, Scottish, and professionals from all over the world,” says Lopez. “We expect to see good results concerning international bookings for the artists.”

Canadian rock musician Joel Plaskett attended Showcase Scotland last year. “I loved being there,” says Plasket. “The gigs were great and the vibe felt right...It opened the door to new gigs.”

Celtic Connections also benefits its hosts: it’s estimated that in 2011, the festival generated about \$11.5 million for Glasgow and \$4.7 million for Scotland.

Glasgow also hosts Piping Live!, the world pipe band championships and piping festival, which draws around 40,000 visitors and 8,000 pipers to city streets each August.

“London may have the Olympics this year, but the Worlds have long been known as the Olympics of the pipe band world,” says Ian Embelton of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association.

Combined, the two mega events create over \$19 million for the local economy.

Festivals Grow Along with Interest in Celtic Culture

Despite the strain festivals often place on volunteer organizers, festivals everywhere are booming. In Toronto, Canada’s largest city, the Beach Celtic Festival began in 2004 as a one-day, one-off tribute to the organizers’ mother, Mima Sutherland-Graham, a competitive highland dancer from Edinburgh. Held in a neighbourhood park, the free September event has become a two-day fete, attracting 10,000 people.

“When our mum died, she said, ‘Don’t mourn me but have a celebration of my life and your heritage,’” Mima’s daughter, Sandy Graham-Robertson, told Celtic Life International. “We promote our heritage, but like to invite other Canadians to enjoy our culture and music.”

The Toronto Irish Film Festival (TIRFF) only began in April 2009, but its screenings over the last two years have sold out. The festival has a potential audience of 250,000 Torontonians of Irish descent, as well as millions of movie lovers.

San Francisco’s Crossroads Irish-American Festival ran for five weeks last March, proving the success of the festival format, which explores the history of San Francisco’s Irish alongside the

work of the best culture creators in the Irish-American community. Similarly, the Wisconsin Irish Festival attracts hundreds of acts to Milwaukee each August.

Location, Location...

Something most festivals share is their wonderful stages – both natural and man-made. Dublin, a famously vibrant city, holds many festivals; among them Bloomsday, when hundreds of city residents dress up like Leopold Bloom and other characters from Ulysses, the novel by James Joyce that is set in the city on June 16, 1904. On the other side of the Atlantic, the small but famous Canadian town of Lunenburg – a UNESCO world heritage site - hosts the Folk Harbour Celtic Conference each August.

In Scotland in July, music lovers flock to remote Stornoway for the Hebridean Celtic Fest. This year, the Waterboys return after setting the record for the biggest gig ever performed in the islands in 2003. In August, visitors gather in the lovely highland resort town of Dunoon, home to the spectacular Cowal Highland Gathering.

Sometimes, festivals grow because organizers blend Celtic culture with others to create unique collaborative events. CelticFest Vancouver attracts over 200,000 attendees each March. The beautiful west-coast city has staged a Celtic Salsa concert, an Afro Celtic concert and a Celtic Americana event, all of them reflecting Vancouver’s multi-cultural community. Such events promote understanding and enjoyment across cultures.

Community...

Importantly, festivals provide opportunities to mark local events. This year at the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, participants will remember the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic and the central role Halifax played in retrieving and burying the dead.

And in the Canadian province of Ontario, those attending the Goderich Celtic Roots Festival will mourn Norman Laberge, 61, who was killed last August when the pretty town overlooking Lake Huron was hit by a tornado that also injured dozens of others.

Back in Brittany, Pasco says that when the Breton and Cornish Celts re-connect, often before a year’s passed, it feels like stepping back in time.

“Many Bretons have felt this with their Cornish friends,” she told Celtic Life. “This bond has made some Bretons closer to their culture. They discover and rediscover their culture, thanks to the interest of their host family.”



Glengarry Highland Games

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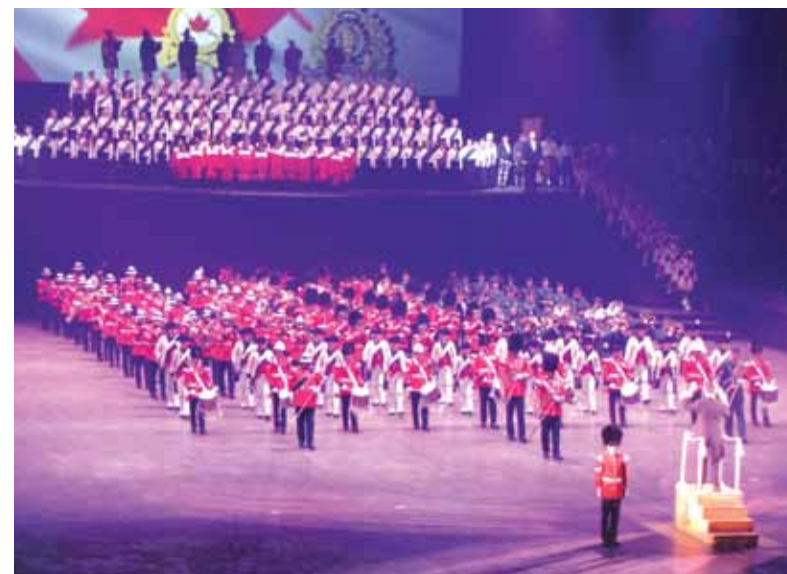
"No dogs or pets allowed on grounds except personal assistance animals"



Check the Games website
for more details

www.glengarryhighlandgames.com

FESTIVAL FOCUS



Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo

Where: Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

When: July 1-8

Details: The Nova Scotia Tattoo is a week-long event built around a family-oriented show. The show, which is said to be the world's largest annual indoor show, is fast-paced, with each scene lasting just 3-6 minutes. Nova Scotia's history is reflected in the bagpipes, the highland dancers, la culture de l'acadie and military traditions. Performers come from around the globe and include innovative acrobatic acts, modern music, contemporary dancing and trampoline routines. The themes of this year's event include the Titanic, (Halifax-based seamen rushed to the rescue of victims following the 1912 disaster), the War of 1812 and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. A series of free events will take place across Halifax, including concerts, parades, walking tours and workshops for musicians, dancers and gymnasts.

Highlights: The Gymnastic Display Team of the Paris Police; Club Piruett (from Estonia) The Flying Grandpas.
www.nstatattoo.ca

Piping Live! International Piping Festival and the World Pipe Band Championships

Where: Glasgow, Scotland

When: August 6-12

Details: Around 40,000 visitors, and 8,000 pipers, drummers and performers will descend on the city for what's called the world's biggest week of traditional music. The World Pipe Band Championships have been held in Glasgow for almost 70 years while Piping Live! is entering its 9th year, and is one of the world's top celebrations of Scottish culture showcasing a diverse blend of traditional music.

Highlights: The 2012 Piping Live! programme showcases the experimental energy of new talents such as Niteworks and Rura, alongside established musicians from around the world. The festival will host bands and musicians from 10 European countries including Rotoro (Estonia), Lyra (Bulgaria), Dram (Sweden) and Franco Calanca (Italy). The event programme includes everything from workshops to masterclasses, ceilidhs to concerts and street performances. Almost 150 free and ticketed events will be held across the city. www.pipinglive.co.uk





FESTIVAL FOCUS



CeltFest Cuba

Where: Havana, Cuba

When: April 14-21

Details: CeltFest Cuba is the Caribbean celebration of music and dance which originated in the Celtic nations of Europe and which has migrated to the New World and beyond. Traditional Celtic music was brought to Cuba by early Spanish immigrants. The music of the gaita (Spanish bagpipe) and other traditional instruments resonates on this beautiful island.

Highlights: This year, Irish piper Gay McKeon gave classes in the Uilleann Pipes, and pipe-making workshops were held at the Museo Servando. Cape Breton fiddle/dance workshops were conducted by Chrissy Crowley and Rosie MacKenzie. CeltFest performers included Havana's Artistica Gallega Pipe Band; uilleann pipe-player, Paddy Keenan; Asturian Folk Group, Pinar Del Rio; Havana's Asturian Pipe Band and Canadians, the Tam O'Shanter Dancers. Many participants enjoyed visits to nearby Irish heritage sites and discussions on the Irish presence in Cuban culture and history.

www.celtfestcuba.org

Celtic Colours International Festival

Where: Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada

When: October 5-13

Details: Since 1997, Celtic Colours International Festival has featured hundreds of musicians from across the Celtic world and attracted tens of thousands of visitors to Cape Breton Island. This year, it will feature 46 concerts in 33 island communities. The festival is a multi-time winner of the Canadian Tourism Awards. Going into its 16th season, it has been named a Signature Experience event by the Canadian Tourism Commission. Many shows are dedicated to Cape Breton fiddling, piping, guitar, piano, Gaelic song and dancing. Popular past performers include: Niamh Ni Charra; the MacKenzie Brothers; Anna Massie; Archie Fisher; Karine Polwart; Dougie MacLean and Blazin' Fiddles. In 2011, the festival focused on exploring Cajun and Appalachian connections with Canadian songwriter Ron Bourgeois and Appalachian fiddler and singer Bruce Molsky.

Highlights: This year's line-up is not yet announced.

www.celtic-colours.com

Festival Inter-Celtique de l'Orient

Where: Lorient, Brittany, France

When: August 3-12

Details: Festival Inter-Celtique de l'Orient attracts over 700,000 festival goers to Lorient for what's called the world's biggest gathering of Celtic cultures. This year, 4,500 artists from all over the world will appear, thanks to the work of 1,000 volunteers. The event began in 1971 with Lorient's first Bagpipes Festival, which grew from the founders' desire to contribute to the development of Breton culture and music. Soon, other countries joined in, and Ireland, the Isle of Man, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Galicia and Asturias send bigger delegations to Lorient every year. In 1996, the event was named one of the 13 most important festivals in Europe by the European Commission.

Highlights: 2012 is the Year of Acadia. Communities of Acadians (total population, 200,000) are found across the Atlantic Canadian provinces. The Acadians first participated in 2004. This summer, over 40 Acadian artists will be in Lorient.

www.festival-interceltique.com

New Hampshire Highland Games

Where: Loon Mountain, Lincoln,

New Hampshire, USA

When: September 21-23

Details: The 37th New Hampshire Highland Games and Festival will focus on family, with a range of children's programs. Among the largest and one of the most diversified games in the country, the NH Highland Games and Festival includes the Gathering of the Scottish Clans, with over 60 clans and societies.

The NH Games has become a favourite venue for many of the world's top Heavyweight athletes.

Highlights: The games feature caber toss, welly toss, sheaf toss and more. There will also be massed bands (more than 30 pipe bands from the USA and Canada), sheepdog trials, Celtic World Music Concerts, the New England Regional Scottish Fiddle Championship, International Scottish Athletics, New England Highland Dance Championships, New England Solo Piping Drumming Championships, Scottish Harp (Clarsach) and other instrumental competitions, as well as whisky tasting and seminars on Scottish history.

www.nhscot.org



Antigonish Highland Games

Where: Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada

When: July 8-15

Details: The Antigonish Highland Games is officially 149 years old and there's evidence that games occurred unofficially even earlier. The Games sees pipe bands from across Canada meet for a weekend of competition. Dancers also compete in the New Scotland Open, Premier and Pre-Premier competitions. Other attractions include: Scottish Heavy Events, such as the famous Caber Toss; Tir Nan Og (Land of Youth) where children participate in athletic events and Celtic cultural activities; an opening ceilidh; a family square dance and a Tug O' War, which sees teams from across the province battling it out in this classic test of endurance.

Highlights: The annual Concert under the Stars kicks off the event with the best of east-coast talent performing under the night sky. This year's performers include: guitarist Patrick Gillis; fiddler Michael Hall; pianist Hilda Chiasson-Cormier; singer-songwriter Sheumais MacLeod and fiddler Donna-Marie DeWolfe.

www.antigonishhighlandgames.ca

FESTIVAL FOCUS



Australian Celtic Festival

Where: Glen Innes

When: May 3-6

Details: The festival is held in Glen Innes, NSW - the heart of Australian Celtic country. Over the past 20 years, it has become a symbol of affection for Scottish and Irish heritage Down Under.

Highlights: This year, the focus was on the culture of Galicia and Brittany. A feature was the Dance Spectacular held both Saturday and Sunday on the Ruby Stage. Musical stars included: Senor Cabrales, traditional musicians celebrating the music of Asturias, Galicia and Brittany; Highlander, an Australian five-piece Celtic rock/bagpipe band; Murphy's Pigs, a nine-piece Celtic band from Brisbane and Leaping Lizards, triple finalists and winners of the 2011 Golden Fiddle Lifetime Achievement Award and Best Group VIC Country Music Awards 2011. The festival is noted for its Triquetra Awards, which go to notable contributors. This year's winners were: Roger Thomas; the Old Irish Pipe Band and Garry Kiefer.

www.australiancelticfestival.com

FESTIVAL FOCUS



Long Peaks Scottish and Irish Highland Festival and Parade

Where: Estes Park, Colorado, USA

When: Sept 6-9

Details: This four-day festival is one of the leading celebrations of Scottish and Irish culture in the foothills of the Rockies. Each night features identical performances of the 2012 Tattoo as well as music and dancing. The agenda includes dog shows and even jousting matches.

Highlights: This year's festival will add new excitement to the jousting venue with a heavy armor competition, popular in the 15th and 16th centuries. The tournaments feature the largest purse in the world and champions from the US, Canada, and Great Britain will appear. There will also be a WWI re-enactment. Musical performances will be by Seamus Kennedy, Giants Dance, Arvel Bird, Black Irish Band and Highland Reign. The Dogs of the British Isles contest includes rehearsals each day and a Saturday morning parade.

[www.scotfest.com/Scottish Festival/Home.html](http://www.scotfest.com/Scottish%20Festival/Home.html)



New Brunswick Highland Games

Where: Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

When: July 27-29

Details: Begun in 1981, these games are held in the beautiful grounds of Old Government House. A volunteer-led, non-profit event that celebrates Scottish culture, the festival attracts 8,000 visitors annually to watch hundreds of competitors and performers from across eastern Canada. The festival has two halves: the Highland Games, consisting of traditional athletics, piping, drumming and highland dancing; and the Scottish Festival, involving entertainment, clans and workshops.

Highlights: The festival will feature a range of workshops, including: The supernatural in Scottish story and song with Margo Carruthers; an introduction to the bagpipes with Pipe Major Rob Stobbs; Gaelic for Beginners; an introduction to the bodhran (the large, round, hand drum often seen in Celtic bands) with Gordon Dougherty; whisky tasting with Frank Scott; beer tasting with Sean Dunbar and haggis hunting and eating with Bruce Noble and Barb MacKinnon.

www.highlandgames.ca



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Summer 2012 Celtic Festivals & Highland Games Guide

JUNE Summerside Highland Gathering, Canada June 17-24 www.collegeofpiping.com Ohio Scottish Games, USA June 21-23 www.ohioscottishgames.com Triskell, Italy June 21-July 1 www.utherpendragon.it/portale Kalamazoo Irish Festival, USA June 22-23 www.kalamazooirish.org Cobourg Highland Games, Canada June 23 www.cobourghighlandgames.ca Red Deer Highland Games, Canada June 23 www.reddeerhighlandgames.ca Drumtochty Highland Games, Scotland June 23 www.drumtochtyhighlandgames.com BC Highland Games & Scottish Festival, Canada June 23 www.bchighlandgames.com Canadian Military Tattoo, Canada June 23-24 www.canadianmilitarytattoo.ca Connecticut Irish Festival, USA June 23-24 www.ctirishfestival.com San Diego Highland Games & Gathering of the Clans, USA June 23-24 www.sdhhighlandgames.org Edmonton Highland Gathering, Canada June 24 www.edmontonscottishsociety.org North Atlantic Fiddle Competition, Northern Ireland June 27-July 1 www.nafco2012.com Malad Valley Welsh Festival, USA June 28-30 www.welshfestival.com Stan Rogers Folk Festival, Canada June 29-July 1 www.stanfest.com Kilmore Celtic Festival, Australia June 29-July 1 www.kilmore.info	Pugwash Gathering of the Clans, Canada June 29-July 2 www.pugwashvillage.com Ceres Highland Games, Scotland June 30 www.ceresgames.co.uk JULY Embro Highland Games, Canada July 1 www.embrohighlandgames.ca Cupar Highland Games, Scotland July 1 www.cuparhighlandgames.org Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo, Canada July 1-8 www.nstattoo.ca Pugwash Gathering of the Clans, Canada July 2 www.pugwashvillage.com Willie Clancy Summer School, Ireland July 2-10 www.setdancingnews.net International Eisteddfod of Wales, Wales July 3-8 www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk Kenmore Highland Games, Scotland July 4 www.spanglefish.com/kenmorehighlandgames Maritime Fiddle Festival, Canada July 5-9 www.maritimefiddlefestival.ca Kincardine Scottish Festival, Canada July 6-8 www.kincardinescottishfestival.ca Almonte CeltFest, Canada July 6-8 www.almosteceltfest.com Luss Highland Games, Scotland July 7 www.lusshighlandgames.co.uk Round Hill Highland Games, USA July 7 www.roundhill.org Forres Highland Games, Scotland July 7 www.forreshighlandgames.fsnet.co.uk Monterey Scottish Games & Celtic Festival, USA July 7-8 www.montereyscotgames.com	Stirling Highland Games, Scotland July 8 www.sshg.org.uk Antigonish Highland Games, Canada July 8-15 www.antigonishhighlandgames.ca Hebridean Celtic Festival, Scotland July 11-14 www.hebceltfest.com Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, USA July 12-15 www.gmhg.org Festival de Ortigueira, Spain July 12-15 www.festivaldeortigueira.com Payson Scottish Festival, USA July 13-14 www.paysonscottishfestival.org Saline Celtic Festival, USA July 13-14 www.salineceltic.org Irish American Heritage Festival, USA July 13-15 www.irishfestchicago.com Colorado Irish Festival, USA July 13-15 www.coloradoirishfestival.com Alva Games, Scotland July 14 www.alva.ukctest.co.uk Kamloops Highland Games, Canada July 14 www.kamloopshighlandgames.ca Annapolis Irish Festival, USA July 14 www.annapolisirishfestival.com Loch Lomond Highland Games, Scotland July 14 www.llhgb.com Haliburton Highland Games, Canada July 14 www.haliburtonhighlandgames.com Yn Chruinnaght Interceltic Festival, Isle of Man July 14-21 www.ynchruinnaght.com Rosneath Peninsula Highland Games, Scotland July 15 www.rosneathgames.co.uk Stonehaven Highland Games, Scotland July 15 www.stonehavenguide.net/prods/stonehaven-highland-games.html	Thornton Highland Gathering, Scotland July 15 www.thorntonhighlandgames.co.uk Burntisland Highland Games, Scotland July 16 www.burntislandhighlandgames.co Interceltic Festival of Avilés, Spain July 16-22 www.intercelticu.com Inveraray Highland Games, Scotland July 17 www.inveraray-games.co.uk Mull Highland Games, Scotland July 19 Canada's Irish Festival, Canada July 19-22 www.canadasirishfest.com Festival of the Tartans, Canada July 19-22 www.festivalofthetartans.ca Cambridge Highland Games, Canada July 20-21 www.cambridgehighlandgames.com Maine Celtic Celebration, USA July 20-22 www.mainececticcelebration.com Orillia Scottish Festival, Canada July 20-22 www.orillialegon.com Cleveland Irish Cultural Festival, USA July 20-22 www.clevelandirish.org Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival, USA July 21 www.glasgowlands.org Balquhider. Lochearnhead and Strathyre Highland Games, Scotland July 21 www.lochearnheadhighlandgames.co Adams County Irish Festival, USA July 21 www.adamscountyirishfestival.com Tomintoul Highland Games, Scotland July 21 Portland Highland Games, USA July 21 www.phga.org Lochcarron Highland Games, Scotland July 21 www.lohcarrongames.org.uk Elizabeth Celtic Festival, USA July 21-22 www.elizabethcelticfestival.com
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celticlife.com
CelticLife
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Arizona Highland Celtic Festival, USA
July 21-22
www.nachs.info

Dakota Irish Fair, USA
July 21
www.dakotairish.com

Durness Highland Gathering,
Scotland
July 27
www.durnesshighlandgathering.co.uk

Bobcaygeon Fiddle Contest, Canada
July 27-28
www.fiddlecontest.ca

Greater Hartford Irish Music Festival,
USA
July 27-29
www.irishmusicfest.com

Balaklava Eisteddfod, Australia
July 27-29
www.balaklavaeisteddfod.org.au

New Brunswick Highland Games,
Canada
July 27-29
www.highlandgames.ca

Dayton Celtic Festival, USA
July 27-29
www.unitedirishofdayton.org

The Highlands of Durham Games,
Canada
July 27-29
www.highlandsofdurhamgames.com

Pacific Northwest Scottish Highland
Games & Clan Gathering, USA
July 27-29
www.sshga.org

The Great American Irish Festival,
USA
July 27-29
www.gaif.us

Celtic Festival Missoula, USA
July 28
www.celticfestivalmissoula.com

Airth Highland Games, Scotland
July 28
www.airthgames.co.uk

Dufftown Highland Games, Scotland
July 28
www.dufftownhighlandgames.org

Halkirk Highland Games, Scotland
July 28
www.halkirkgames.co.uk

Callander World Highland Games,
Scotland
July 28-29
www.callanderhighlandgames.co.uk

St. Andrews Highland Games,
Scotland
July 29
www.shga.co.uk

AUGUST

Killin Highland Games, Scotland
August 1
www.killingames.co.uk

The Guinness Irish Festival of Sion,
Switzerland
August 2-4
www.guinnessfestival.ch

Dornoch Highland Gathering,
Scotland
August 3
www.dornochhighlandgathering.com

Glengarry Highland Games, Canada
August 3-4
www.glengarryhighlandgames.com

Iowa Irish Fest, USA
August 3-5
www.iowairishfest.com

Dublin Irish Festival, USA
August 3-5
www.dublinirishfestival.org

Festival Inter-Celtique de L'Orient,
Brittany
August 3-12
www.festival-interceltique.com

Spokane Highland Games, USA
August 4
www.spokanehighlandgames.org

Aboyne Highland Games, Scotland
August 4
www.aboynegames.com

Inverkeithing Highland Games,
Scotland
August 4
www.fife.gov.uk/events/index.cfm

Newtonmore Highland Games,
Scotland
August 4
www.newtonmorehighlandgames.co.uk

North Berwick Highland Games,
Scotland
August 4
www.northberwickhighlandgames.co.uk

Colorado Scottish Festival & Rocky
Mountain Highland Games, USA
August 4-5
www.scottishgames.org

National Eisteddfod of Wales, Wales
August 4-11
www.eisteddfod.org

Bridge of Allan Highland Games,
Scotland
August 5
www.bofagames.com

Mallaig and Morar Highland Games,
Scotland
August 5
www.mallaigmorargames.org

Montrose Highland Games, Scotland
August 5
www.montrosehighlandgames.co.uk

Montreal Highland Games, Canada
August 5
www.montrealhighlandgames.qc.ca
Piping Live! Scotland
August 6-12
www.pipinglive.co.uk

Isle of Skye Highland Games, Scotland
August 8
www.skye-highland-games.co.uk

Canadian Old Time Open Fiddle
Championship, Canada
August 8-12
www.shelburnefiddlecontest.on.ca

Ballater Highland Games, Scotland
August 9
www.ballaterhighlandgames.com

Tain Highland Gathering, Scotland
August 9
www.tainhighlandgathering.com

Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival,
Canada
August 9-12
www.folkharbour.com

John Arcand Fiddle Festival, Canada
August 9-12
www.johnarcandfiddlefest.com

Assynt Highland Games, Scotland
August 10

Goderich Celtic Roots Festival,
Canada
August 10-12
www.celticfestival.ca

An Ri Ra Montana Irish Festival, USA
August 10-12
www.mtgaelic.org

Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland
Games, Canada
August 10-12
www.fergusscottishfestival.com

Hector Festival, Canada
August 10-12
www.townofpictou.ca

Irish Fair of Minnesota, USA
August 10-12
www.irishfair.com

Irishfest La Crosse, USA
August 10-12
www.irishfestlacrosse.org

Central New York Scottish Games &
Celtic Festival, USA
August 11
www.cnyscottishgames.org

Atholl and Breadalbane Highland
Gathering, Scotland
August 11
www.aberfeldyshowandgames.co.uk

Strathpeffer Highland Gathering,
Scotland
August 11

High Desert Celtic Festival &
Highland Games, USA
August 11
www.hdcs.net

Perth Highland Games, Scotland
August 12
www.highlandgames.org.uk

Pavilion of Scotland, Canada
August 12-18
www.pavilionofscotland.ca

Saskatoon Folk Festival, Canada
August 16-18
www.saskatoonfolkfest.ca

Milwaukee Irish Fest, USA
August 16-19
www.irishfest.com

Berea Celtic Festival, USA
August 16-19
www.berea-celtic.com

Maine Highland Games, USA
August 18
www.mainehighlandgames.org

Helmsdale Highland Games, Scotland
August 18
www.helmsdale.games.info

Bracebridge Highland Games, Canada
August 18
www.bracebridgehighlandgames.com

International Celtic Festival, USA
August 18-19
www.huntermtn.com

Crieff Highland Gathering, Scotland
August 19
www.crieffhighlandgatherine.com

Amherst Scottish Festival & Highland
Games, Canada
August 20
www.amherstmuseum.org

Argyllshire Gathering, Scotland
August 23
www.obangames.com

Cowal Highland Gathering, Scotland
August 23-25
www.cowalgathering.com

Buffalo Irish Festival, USA
August 24-26
www.buffaloirish.com

North Lanark Highland Games,
Canada
August 25
www.almontehighlandgames.com

Birnam Highland Games, Scotland
August 25
www.birnamhighlandgames.com

Lonach Highland Gathering and
Games, Scotland
August 25
www.lonach.org

Strathardle Highland Gatherine,
Scotland
August 25
www.strathardle.org
Quechee Scottish Festival, USA
August 25
www.quecheescottishfestival.com

Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle
Competition, Canada
August 25
www.canadiangrandmasters.ca

Gathering of the Bands, Canada
August 25
www.kspb.ca

Newport Celtic Rock Festival, USA
August 25
www.newportwaterfrontevents.com

Foothills Highland Games, Canada
August 25
www.foothillshighlandgames.com

Long Island Scottish Games, USA
August 25-26
www.liscots.org

Kansas City Irish Fest, USA
August 31-September 2
www.kcirishtfest.com

Wisconsin Highland Games & Celtic
Fling, USA
August 31-September 2
www.wisconsinscottish.org

SEPTEMBER

Calgary Highland Games, Canada
September 1
www.calgaryhighlandgames.org

Braemar Highland Gathering,
Scotland
September 1
www.braemargathering.org

Appalachian Celtic Connection, USA
September 1-2
www.appalachiancelticconnection.org

Scottish Games Pleasanton, USA
September 1-2
www.thescottishgames.com

Virginia Scottish Festival & Games,
USA
September 1-2
www.thescottishgames.com

Blairgowrie and Rattray Highland
Games, Scotland
September 2
www.blairgowriehighlandgames.co

Canmore Highland Games, Canada
September 2
www.canmorehighlandgames.ca

Philadelphia Irish Festival, USA
September 6-8
www.philadelphiaceiligroup.org

Long Peaks Scottish & Irish Highland
Games, USA
September 6-9
www.scotfest.com

Trenton Scottish Irish Festival,
Canada
September 7-8
www.trentonscottishirish.com

Syracuse Irish Festival
September 7-8
www.syracuseirishfestival.com

Pittsburgh Irish Festival, USA
September 7-9
www.pghirishfest.org

Sycamore Shoals Celtic Festival, USA
September 7-9
www.shoalsceltffest.com

Rochester Irish Festival, USA
September 7-9
www.rochesteririshfestival.com

Peebles Highland Games, Scotland
September 8
www.peebles-highland-games.org

Pitlochry Highland Games, Scotland
September 8
www.pitlochryhighlandgames.co.uk

The Beach Celtic Festival, Canada
September 8-9
www.thecelticfestival.com

Ship Bottom Irish Festival, USA
September 8-9
www.lbiaoh.com/ifest
Great Irish Fair of New York, USA
September 14
www.gifnyc.com

Irish 2000 Festival, USA
September 14-15
www.irish2000fest.com

Oklahoma Scottish Games, USA
September 14-16
www.okscotfest.com

Indy's Irish Festival, USA
September 14-16
www.indyirishfest.com

Michigan Irish Music Festival, USA
September 14-16
www.michiganirish.org

Invercharron Highland Games,
Scotland
September 15
www.invercharrongames.co.uk

Hector Quay Highland Homecoming,
Canada
September 15
www.shiphector.ca

Gloucester City Shamrock Festival,
USA
September 15
www.gloucestercityshamrockfestival.com

Greeley Irish Festival, USA
September 15
www.greeleyirishfestival.com

Celtic Games of the Quad Cities, USA
September 15
www.celtichighlandgames.org

Niagara Celtic Heritage Festival &
Highland Games, USA
September 15-16
www.niagaraceltic.com

New Hampshire Highland Games,
USA
September 21-23
www.nhscot.org

Ligonier Highland Games, USA
September 22
www.ligonierhighlandgames.org

McPherson Scottish Festival, USA
September 22-23
www.macfestival.org

St. Louis Scottish Games, USA
September 28-29
www.stlouis-scottishgames.com

Celtic Classic Highland Games, USA
September 28-30
www.celticfest.org

Louisville Irish Festival, USA
September 28-30
www.louisvilleirishfest.com

Cornish Festival, USA
September 28-30
www.cornishfest.org

Pipes in the Valley Celtic Festival, USA
September 29
www.pipesinthevalley.com

KVMR Celtic Festival, USA
September 29, 30
www.kvmr.org/celticfestival



27th Annual Folk Harbour Festival

August 9-12th, 2012
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www.folkharbour.com



24th Annual High Desert Celtic Festival & Highland Games

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www.hdsc.net



Hector Quay Highland Homecoming

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TOP TEN HIGHLAND GAMES EVENTS

The world over, Highland Games are renowned for the drama of the heavy events - everyone likes to watch the big guys toss a caber. But each Games is a blend of activities, which may include some or all of these...

1. Caber Toss

A tree that's been cut and trimmed to make one end slightly wider than the other, the caber is between 16 and 22 feet long and weighs between 100 and 180lbs. The thrower must turn the caber end over end. The competitor generally runs a distance to pick up momentum and leverage before tossing.

2. Hammer Throw – 16lbs and 22lbs

The hammer has a steel or lead head with a bamboo or rattan handle. The overall length cannot exceed 50". The athlete stands with his back to the throwing area, winds the hammer around his head and releases over his shoulder. The athlete's feet must remain fixed until the hammer is released. The throw is for distance and must land within a certain (pie-shaped) parameter.

3. Sheaf Toss

The sheaf is a 16 or 20lb burlap or plastic bag stuffed with chopped rope, straw, or mulch. The sheaf is tossed over a cross bar with a pitch fork. The bar is continually elevated until competitors can no longer get the sheaf over the bar.

4. Open Stone Put

Similar to the shot put, a stone that weighs between 16 and 22lbs is used. Any style of putting is allowed.

5. Braemar Stone Put

This event uses a stone of between 22 and 28lbs, which must be thrown from a standing position.

6. Weight for Distance – 56lbs and 28lbs

The weight is thrown with one hand and can be either block-shaped or spherical with links and a handle. The overall length cannot exceed 18".

7. 56lb weight for height

The weight is tossed one-handed over a crossbar of increasing height. At each height, three attempts are allowed.

8. Drumming

Three types of drum are used: the snare; bass and tenor. Each competitor is judged on how they play a melody and how well the drum scores are executed. Drumming competitions can consist of a variety of different tunes, each requiring skill and focus. A common competition set consists of a march, a strathspey and a reel.

9. Pipes

Solo pipers are assessed on their tuning, timing, tone, tune selection, technique and expression. Depending on their grade level, pipers can enter the category for light music, which includes strathspeys, reels and jigs, or the category for classical piobaireachd. Bands also compete in grade levels. A parade of pipers generally opens the day's events, which conclude with a performance by a massed pipe band.

10. Highland Dancing

Dancers perform the four types of Highland Dance: the Highlands; the Nationals; the Irish Jig and the Sailor's Hornpipe. The Highlands showcase a dancer's strength and sharpness and include the Highland Fling, the Sword Dance, the Seann Truibhas and the Reel. The National dances are more graceful, resembling ballet. The last two are character dances, involving lively movements.

Many other events may be featured, including ceilidhs, sheep-dog trials and clan tents. Whatever the format, a wonderful time is guaranteed.

Sources: North American Scottish Games Athletics (NASGA); the Federation for Scottish Culture in Nova Scotia; the College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts of Canada.



The College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts of Canada

It is going to be a busy summer season for the staff and students at The College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts of Canada in Summerside, Prince Edward Island.

Along with a steady serving of summer-camp classes in piping, drumming and dancing, the world-renowned facility has a handful of extracurricular activities on the go.

“June is probably the most stressful time of the year for us,” laughs Kearsney Smith, who has been a Highland Dance Instructor at the institution since March, 2011.

“We have our year-end recital, the Highland Gathering and the rehearsals for Highland Storm all in one month.”

Smith, who organizes the dance competition at the yearly Highland Gathering and leads the choreographing for Highland Storm, says that the extra effort and hours are always appreciated.

“Seeing the enjoyment that audiences get from these events makes it all worthwhile. And for us, it really isn’t work when we are doing what we love.”

Director of Education for the college, James MacHattie, says that attendees can expect to experience a ‘sensory overload’ during this year’s Highland Gathering, which runs from June 17-24 and includes a Friday night showcase soiree with Celtic music legends the Barra MacNeils.

“There will be pipes and drums everywhere, flashes of bright colours, the graceful movement of dancers, the din of conversation in the refreshment tent when old and new friends meet, Celtic demonstrations in various corners, kids’ events, Acadian music, fiddle music, Scottish country dance, Gaelic song...”

The summer spectacles continue with Highland Storm, a super-charged Celtic music and dance extravaganza, which runs Tuesday-Thursday nights in July and August, and features a cast of thirty performing in an outdoor amphitheatre.

“Highland Storm is comprised of several high-energy production pieces woven seamlessly together through Celtic music and dance,” explains Karen Hatcher, the college’s Executive Director.

She shares that audiences will be “captivated by the fast-paced feet of the Highland and step dancers, stirred by the sounds of the pipes and drums, and soothed by the sweet voice, stirring love ballads and rhythmical work-songs of Rachel Jackshaw.”

And, adds Hatcher, under the artistic and musical direction of Ryan MacNeil of the Barra MacNeils, Highland Storm will provide young performers with the opportunity to nurture their artistic skills, broaden their repertoires, further their understanding of teamwork and commitment, build self-esteem, and be publicly recognized for their unique artistic talents.

The rewards of all the hard work, notes Kearsney Smith, are plentiful.

“Knowing how much time and effort these kids have put into their dancing, it is absolutely wonderful to see them succeed in competitions, in medal tests with other goals they have set for themselves.”

James MacHattie agrees.

“Watching the progress of the students as they improve and grow is incredibly rewarding. And helping them to work through disappointments and to overcome obstacles is as important as helping them to achieve success.”

Like her husband James, Highland Bagpipe Instructor Kylie MacHattie says that her role is ultimately about more than what is learned in school and studio.

“We are mentors of sorts I suppose - not just with what we teach - but in life. We instill the belief that it’s not all about the prizes, but that if you perform well, in a way that that you are happy and satisfied with, that’s all you can ask for.”



All sails are hoisted for The Ships of 1801, a dramatic musical tribute to early Scottish pioneers in Canada’s Antigonish, Inverness and Pictou counties, to be staged in conjunction with the 149th Antigonish Highland Games.

Producer Duncan MacDonald, who came up with the idea of a thematic concert of story, song and verse, marvels at the response.

“I fell in with good company,” he laughs, referring to director Rob Wolf and musical director Katie Jamieson. “For every idea, we have found someone to make it happen and happen beautifully.”

With all original music, except for a sprinkling of old Gaelic pieces, the concert at the Keating Millenium Centre July 14 will be narrated by British actor Jeremy Webb, known for his Neptune Theatre performances in nearby Halifax.

The show is a kaleidoscope of the experiences of hundreds of passengers who boarded five ships – The Dove, The Sarah, The Nora, The Good Intent and The Hope - that sailed from the west coast of Scotland to Pictou, on Canada’s east coast in the summer of 1801. An undercurrent flowing beneath the story line asks the question, “Who will remember?”

“It is not the story of any one ship or any one family. Every passenger on each of the ships had a story and we’ll be presenting a collection of quite different pieces,” says MacDonald.

The sad goodbyes, the children’s excitement at the journey, the trepidation of a new beginning, the mocking of the chiefs and

landowners, the fury of a storm-savaged ocean, the grief over so many children lost and the enduring determination to succeed are all captured in song and verse with Webb, as The Bard, providing narration to anchor the story.

ECMA and Nova Scotia Music Award winner Kim Wempe, with her powerfully resonating vocals, is the voice of courage, urging the highlanders onward in the face of mounting adversity. Among other vocalists are fisherman and Celtic tenor Tom MacDonald, popular alto Janice Alcorn, young song-writer and singer Haley MacDonald and Sheumais MacLeod who has opened for Natalie MacMaster. John Spyder MacDonald and his brother Al, who collaborated on an anthem for the Ship Hector, will be contributing to The Ships of 1801.

Christine Campbell of Mabou who sings in Gaelic with her three daughters, Mairinn, Eilidh and Seonaid, and a Gaelic choir under the direction of Stephanie Johnston are also among the two dozen performers, as are dancer Jenny Cluett and piper Francis Beaton.

A startling number of performers, like MacDonald himself, are descendants of passengers on the ships that sailed in 1801.

“It was music and story-telling that sustained these pioneers individually and as a culture so it is fitting that we remember them this way,” says MacDonald.



By Rosalie MacEachern

The History of Highland Dance - part two

In this second in a series, Dr. Michael Newton of the Department of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia explores the history of highland dance.

The foundations of the Highland Games were laid in 1781 when the Glasgow branch of the Highland Society of London established the Falkirk Tryst, an event focusing on bagpipe competitions. The Tryst continued for several years and in 1783 dances were performed by the pipers themselves. Until close to the end of the eighteenth century these dances were exclusively reels. Dance competitions began in about 1795 at the Edinburgh piping competitions.

The first Highland Games as we know them were held in 1819 in St Fillans. Although it's commonly assumed that the purpose of the Games was to celebrate and preserve aspects of Scottish Highland culture, these events were controlled, orchestrated, and supported by the British elite. The Games allowed the gentry to romanticize themselves and their estates, and to promote a narrow role for Highlanders as loyal soldiers of Empire. The actual functions and competitions at the Games were crafted to stereotype Highlanders as brawny, macho, and militaristic rustics eager to win the approval of their superiors. Had the Games been run by Highlanders for the purpose of maintaining Highland

culture, they would have featured the many aspects of Gaelic oral and literary tradition.

In other words, Highland Games were part of a series of measures designed to transform selected elements of Highland tradition into commodities agreeable to the “respectable” classes of British society, and to orient Gaels toward meeting the demands made of them by the British State and away from their own development as a separate and independent culture.

Few of the British élite who judged the contests and awarded the prizes understood Gaelic language or culture. They thus introduced an increasingly foreign influence to the Highland tradition. This is one of the primary reasons why Highland bagpipe music became so far removed from its roots during this period: the judges simply did not understand the nature of Gaelic music.

Very similar dynamics were at play in Highland Dancing, especially as non-Gaels became involved as competitors, teachers, and judges and imposed the aesthetics of ballet and other modern dance forms. It wasn't long before Highlanders attending the Games began to complain about the differences between what was being performed and the dances that they knew from their own experience. An attendee at the Games held by the New York Caledonian Club in 1865 observed:

“The dancing was very creditable, but it must be remarked that with regard to the Highland Fling, in some instances, steps were introduced entirely foreign to it, which detracts from the national character of that highly picturesque terpsichorean display.”

Other factors also wrought changes. As a professional athletic competition, dances were forced to become increasingly difficult. Also, in order to have a standard form against which competitors from many different origins could be judged, variations that naturally occurred in any folkloric dance had to be “ironed out” and normalized. A letter from Caroline MacDonnell, daughter of the infamous Alasdair “Fiadhaich” of Glengarry, in 1885 complained of these influences:

“Various efforts are being made to revive the old Highland Games, but it seems to be either unknown or overlooked that they were the pastime of the people – whereas now, several persons endeavour to gain a livelihood by them, which materially alters their character and has introduced a theatrical style of dancing, quite foreign to the real Scotch steps and mode of executing them.”

The Highland Fling and Gillie Callum are seldom, if ever, danced to the end, only a few steps of the former, and the first and easiest half of the latter, being now sufficient to elicit great applause and win the highest prizes!! Other feats of strength and agility are wholly unrepresented.”

The MacLennan brothers of Fairburn, Ross-shire, in the eastern Highlands were pivotal figures in the transformation of Highland Dancing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although they began their training amongst family and teachers in Scotland, their later training brought quite different influences to bear on their style and repertoire. The older brother William studied ballet in Paris and Rome, and besides reinterpreting older dances created a new one titled “Parrazzatti” (an Italian name representing his European influences). William died in 1893 at the age of 32 while touring the United States with Scottish fiddler James Scott Skinner. The younger brother Donald, who called himself the “Professor of Dancing,” studied ballet in London and published the influential book *Highland and Traditional Scottish Dances* in 1950.

There can be no doubt that the brothers were skilled and agile dancers; their performances before the Pope and European royalty, such as Queen Victoria and the King of Belgium, brought them great recognition and prestige. These circumstances allowed them to change the nature of the art.

Step-Dance

What we now call “step-dance” also derived from French-trained dancing masters who migrated with their communities to British North America in the later 18th and early 19th centuries. Some of these dancing masters continued working into the middle of the 19th century. Over time, the immigrant communities in Atlantic Canada broke the formal choreography down into its basic footwork components, which became the basis of an improvisational art form.

Thus, step-dance became a vital aspect of Gaelic folk culture. It was performed by people of all ages to the songs and music played by and for their own Gaelic-speaking communities. This is the very essence of what “vernacular” and “folklore” mean: practices engaged in local communities and transmitted to members by observation and participation; traditions owned by communities and maintained according to their own tastes and needs. Thus, step-dance and Highland Dance were going in completely opposite directions during the nineteenth century.

This is not to say that step-dance is “pure” or unchanged from its roots: dancers created new steps, borrowed steps from their Francophone and First Nations neighbours, incorporated what they learned in mass dance movements like the Charleston, and were inspired by professional dancers like Shirley Temple and Gene Kelly. Still, these innovations happened within Gaelic communities according to what suited their own musical tradition – itself derived from the rhythms of the Gaelic language and style of Gaelic song and social functions.

By the 1860s, Highland Games reached North America where most immigrant communities assumed that whatever was being done in Scotland was more authentic and authoritative than what they were doing (after all, wasn't the Queen herself a great fan of Highland Games?), so these events quickly took precedence over local practices in many communities, undermining confidence in the tradition brought by older generations.

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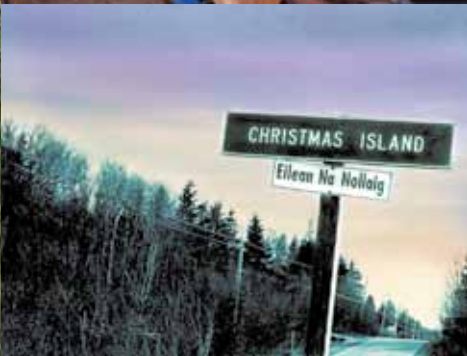
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Highland Dancer

Glancing down to check her ghillies were neatly laced, Margot pressed her heels together, her toes pointed in a wide V. Clenching her fists, she exhaled sharply. From the corner of her eye she glimpsed the old bagpiper squeezing his instrument to life. She willed her lips to smile and tried to focus on a maple tree far behind the crowd. As the music started, she counted the beat for her straight-backed bow. Six, seven, and she rose on the balls of her feet, pushing her bent knee as far back to the right as she could, hoping her leg was in line with her hip. Her left arm arched, thumb and middle finger together making a deer antler of her hand. The straight line from her knee to the tip of her toe meant she had a perfect point. But that wasn't enough to win a championship. She pushed hard and led the next turn with a focused gaze, steady, hopping on the spot.

By the third step, breathing got harder. In the fourth step, her smile disappeared as both arms rose for back steps. Margot scraped the sides of her pointed feet along the length of her shins and down her calves wondering if she drew blood under her heavy wool socks. If she lost, her mother would be happy to see a little bleeding. It would show how hard she'd tried.

Aileen stiffened at the sight of her daughter on stage. Her kilt was askew. The centre of the tartan wasn't aligned with the buttons of her jacket. A stray hair sprang from the side of Margot's bun and Aileen pursed her lips and re-read the programme's list of dancers. There were twelve girls in Margot's age group - nine and under - and Margot could beat all but one. Aileen knew it as soon as she opened the booklet and saw her name: Kenzie Macalvy. The girl's mother taught dance. Rumour had it she home-schooled the child and trained her five hours a day. Aileen envied the woman's trim figure and the girl's new custom-fitted kilt. They made her regret paying the thirty dollar entry fee, not to mention the one hundred dollars she'd spent on a motel room in Antigonish.

The piper's music made Aileen cringe. That old fogey should have retired years ago. He was out of tune. And so slow. Margot's timing would be off. Why couldn't they play the recorded music she practised to? Aileen watched Margot's practices every day and brought Margot to every workshop she could afford. She had talent, the teachers said. Natural turn-out was a gift.

Despite the god-awful piping, Margot’s fling was going well. Aileen’s eyes flicked across the stage from Margot to Kenzie to the three judges perched high on their platform. Two of the judges were also from Ontario. Maybe they knew this girl and her mother. The third judge was Scottish. The Scots were only interested in strength. Margot had that. She had great elevation for her size. Aileen tried to guess what marks they were giving her daughter on their score sheets. She stared at Margot, willing her to win.

During the last step of the fling, Margot spotted her mother on the edge of the crowd by their umbrella-covered lawn chairs. Margot hated seeing her mom in the crowd while she was dancing. She felt so emotional when she saw her face it almost made her cry. She had no idea why except she wanted her mother to be happy. Usually she was not. But this time, her mother’s tense expression spurred her on. If she could just win a championship her mother would be pleased. She pulled her head high, stretched out her points and finished with a real smile.

After the dance, Aileen passed Margot a bottle of water and warned her not to forget to count the split high-cuts in the Sword. She tucked her daughter’s loose hair back into the bun and straightened her kilt. Margot wiped sweat from her brow, unbuttoned her jacket and ran off to practice.

Backstage, she saw the girl from Ontario preparing. Margot knew she’d be good. People didn’t come all the way to Nova Scotia for a championship unless they thought they could win. Margot tried to ignore her. She needed to focus.

On stage, the two gleaming swords crossed in front of her loomed large. Margot swallowed and began the routine; happy she could look at her feet and not worry about forcing a smile. Up and over the swords, pointed toes, knees flat back, she focused, completely absorbed in the straight lines and mathematical pattern. One touch and she’d be disqualified. Nothing would disappoint her mother more. The Sword was her best dance. Her mother never watched it. She said she couldn’t. It made her sick.

Aileen turned to stare at the noisy tug-of-war going on behind her when Margot took the stage. Her stomach tightened with anxiety. Above the shouting and cheering for the tug-of-war, Aileen thought she heard the clang of metal. Had someone kicked their swords? Was it Margot? She couldn’t look.

Margot heard the crash and wondered if she’d done it. Sometimes it happened that fast. But she didn’t break her focus. Up and over, open pas de basques, back steps and down for a bow. She smiled, then glanced sideways. The fat girl at the other end of the stage was red-faced, her blonde head bowed and swords splayed. Margot pitied her. She knew what it was like. She decided not to tell her mother. She’d think the worst. Let her be surprised.

Aileen took a deep breath. Margot had kicked her swords. There was nothing she could do. It was done. All the practice in the world couldn’t make that child a champion. It was useless.

Why did she bother? She wondered how much she could get if she sold the kilt and ghillies. They were still like new. Maybe seven hundred and fifty on eBay or dance.net. No point in going further into debt over this foolishness.

But she marvelled as she watched Margot strut onstage for the third time to dance the Seann Truibhas. At least she’d learned to lose graciously. Margot smiled at the judges, charming them. She swept around with a bold intro and first step. Her fluttering shakes dazzled Aileen – five on each side.

Margot let her body feel the piper’s music. The tune may have been off, but he tapped the beat with his foot as she moved, helping her keep time. She forgot she shared the stage. The leap was coming next – her favourite part. Her mother raved about her leap. She jumped up, up and split her legs, feet landing together neatly, and bowed.

Aileen applauded. Her daughter could dance. She shone on that stage. She had talent. Real talent. Aileen could see it clearly, especially next to that home-schooled robot. How could she think of selling the kilt and forcing her to quit something she loved?

Margot skipped back to her mother’s lawn chair, pleased with her performance.

Aileen kissed her forehead.

“Beautiful, darling. But don’t forget your turn-out on the reel. The judges see you from the side this time. They’ll know if your knee isn’t flat back. And so will I.”

The first three dances normally exhausted Margot, but she was on a high. Backstage, she practised the eight-step reel with three other dancers she knew. The girl from Ontario walked through her steps alone. Margot imagined linking arms with her for the pivot turn and wondered what she’d be like. Would the girl pinch her elbow? Would she overpower her? They were nearly the same size.

She approached her cautiously. “Hey. Do you want to practice the pivot turn with me? We’re going to be partners.”

The girl shrugged. “Sure.”

Margot gripped the girl’s elbow with her right hand and felt her grab her own. The girl’s hand was firm and steady. Margot pointed her left foot and circled her, daintily stepping into second positions. Then they went the other way, finally breaking apart to do sixteen split high-cuts, legs flying out to the side. Confidence filled Margot’s chest.

In the line-up, she visualized the steps the way her mother had taught her. This was her last chance to impress the judges. The piper started, tapping out the reel with his foot, pumping the pipes. Margot faced her partner and bowed, smiling beyond her, not wanting to betray any anxiety. Then the four girls began the swirling Strathspey Reel. Margot watched the other pair of



dancers pivot together then stepped forward to take her partner’s arm. She felt the girl’s hand like a claw at her elbow. The powerful grip lifted Margot and she struggled to maintain her smile. The Reel was supposed to be fun, a party dance.

Aileen gasped when she saw Margot start the pivot. The Macalvy girl overpowered her. Aileen wanted to cry out, to say it wasn’t fair. She looked at the judges to see if they’d noticed. How could they miss it? Margot’s feet were flailing. Aileen’s heart pounded. Margot could win this championship. She’d receive a letter from Scotland and her name would go into the registry of Champions. It would make her a winner. Aileen had promised herself she wouldn’t make a scene. Other mothers already gave her a wide berth. No, she wouldn’t say a word. Margot needed to dance defensively. The girls would only be bigger and stronger next year.

She felt tears in her eyes as Margot spun out of control. When Kenzie let go, Margot stumbled. Aileen sniffed. She had to be strong for Margot.

Margot felt paralysed in front of the judges. How did this happen? She glared at Kenzie and when she came off stage, she burst into tears and ran to her mother.

“I know. I saw what she did,” Aileen rubbed Margot’s back. “Why didn’t you defend yourself?”

“How?” Margot asked. She couldn’t think of a way. Neither could Aileen.

Relieved her mother had seen the lift, Margot relaxed and waited for the scrutineers to calculate the results. Her group was first, and soon the announcer called six of the girls back onstage, including herself and the girl from Ontario.

“First in the Highland Fling, number 227, Kenzie Macalvy.”

Aileen’s stomach dropped. Is this how it would go? Kenzie would place first in everything? This sport was so biased. Maybe crooked.

“Second place, number 228, Margot MacDonald.”

Aileen reached for the camera in her bag. Her daughter in second. At least she’d beat the others.

“In the Sword Dance, first place, number 228, Margot MacDonald.”

A smile crept across Aileen’s lips and she looked around to

make sure everyone saw her daughter receiving her medal.

“Second place to number 227, Kenzie Macalvy.”

Margot’s smile froze as she watched Kenzie collect her second medal. Maybe it wouldn’t matter.

“In the Seann Truibhas, first place, number 228, Margot MacDonald. Second place, number 227, Kenzie Macalvy.”

Aileen bit her lip. Margot had it in the bag. But the Reel? That girl had practically cheated. What would the judges say about that?

“In the Highland Reel, first place goes to number 227, Kenzie Macalvy. Second place, number 228, Margot MacDonald.”

What was this? A tie? Who won this goddamn championship anyway? Aileen scribbled the winning numbers in the tiny boxes provided on the programme. How many points did Margot have? Only the scrutineers would know where each of the judges had placed her.

Margot clenched her toes and tried not to squirm as she faced the crowd. Her teacher would be pleased. Two firsts and two seconds. But had she won a title?

“The nine and under champion of the 120th Highland Games is number 228, Margot MacDonald.”

Margot grinned and stepped forward to collect the massive silver-plated trophy being held out to her. She shook hands with the presenter and curtsied to the crowd, resting the trophy on her hip. Her mother would be happy. She could see her mom next to their umbrella, snapping photos.

Margot ran to show her mother the plaque. “Look!” Margot pointed. “They’re going to put my name right here.”

But her mother didn’t look pleased at all. Her lips contorted, her eyes squinted, holding back tears.

“What’s wrong?”

Aileen tried to smile, balancing the plaque on her lap. “I’m sorry, Margot. I’m so proud of you, honey. I knew you could do it.”

Then she shook the plaque over her head for all to see—just as if she’d won it herself.



By Melanie Furlong



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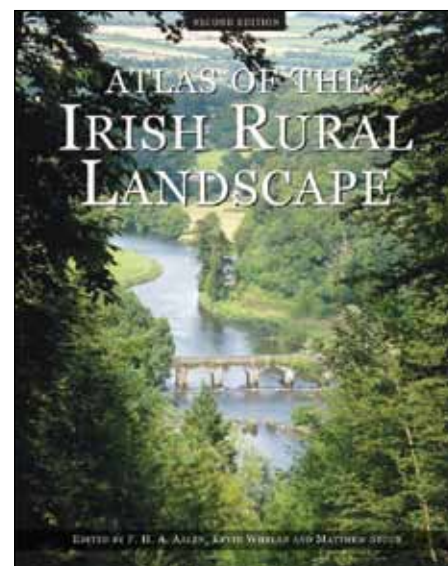

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With **Mike
Fitzpatrick**

Humour

Back in a more innocent era, I think, perhaps, it may well have been last Tuesday, around lunchtime, or quite a number of decades earlier, even, Ireland had a far higher ratio of regular people to newsworthy and noticeable (not to mention nonsensical and numb-skulled) individuals living there. That's to say, there were far fewer well-known folks, than, for want of a better word, normal, people in Ireland. That whole ratio business, it has me dreadfully confused on a good day, never mind a barely adequate day such as today (isn't any 24-hour period that isn't Pancake Tuesday a poor one?). And you know something? Back then, things weren't so bad.

Villages, towns and counties around the country, from Dungarvan to Donegal, Derry to Dublin and Down to, em, somewhere else beginning with 'D' (Dexford, Dilkenny and Dongford don't really exist, much to my dismay), were considered fortunate to boast a historical hero, a literary genius, a musical icon, a political giant, a financial wizard or even one of those who've entered the public conscience for reasons other than good, a kidnapper say, or a killer even, or perhaps a self-taught accordionist who failed to turn up to his own lessons due to his strict regime of kidnapping and killing. West Cork had Collins, Wicklow had Parnell, Dublin had Joyce. Nowadays, sure we all (practically) know someone who's clinched some degree of fame. Whether it's because they lived in a house with strangers, married a big fat gypsy, didn't know they were pregnant, showed the nation how talented they were by doing something an unconscious baboon with a liking for tedium could do, or allowed scary things to be done to their person by the less cuddly members of the animal kingdom, we all know, or know of, one. Messrs Beckett, Yeats, Wilde and the guys, would surely wonder what's happened.

Ireland is no longer the land of the romanticized hero, fighting often vainly for his (or her) noble cause, or the poet, agonizing over a stanza that will inspire warriors, lovers, travellers and thinkers for generations to come. Now, besides those pulling the strings in Government (maybe they should try pushing the strings instead) and the regular Joe Soap and his pal Finbarr Shampoo and Conditioner on the street, our beloved, proud nation seems to be filled to the brim with eejits and amadans.

You see, fame, success and financial or spiritual rewards are no longer the results of talent, perseverance and hard work. For every insanely clever quip from Oscar Wilde, we've now got 114 banal ramblings or profanity-laced tirades from an ostentatious, forgettable, egotistical, talentless, ubiquitous, extraordinarily desperate 'housewife', celebrity who got out of here, or indeed, someone who (gasp) lived in a house with strangers, and perhaps wore an unusual hat or tongue-piercing to distinguish his or herself from the other residents. We've swapped genius for mind-numbing moronic activity.

Whereas once we were entertained by Behan, O'Casey, Shaw and Kavanagh, now we've 862,912 (or thereabouts) individuals who'll do anything, or anyone, to be famous. Throw a bag of big fat gypsy weddings over a hedge, or down a sewer-drain, or round the old oak tree, and you'll hit somebody who's appeared on television. Just throw fast and hard. Maybe they'll get the message.

—
Michael Fitzpatrick was born in Dublin and now lives in New York City. He is the entertainment columnist for The Irish Examiner.



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Brendan James Maher

*“While I was
working at the
design companies,
I became fascinated
with marketing,
advertising and
brand development
and decided I
wanted to run my
own business.”*

Celtpreneur

After starting a career in graphic design, Brendan James Maher decided his calling was to market Scottish smoked salmon and founded the award-winning St. James Smokehouse.

Proud of his Irish ancestry, Maher was born and raised in Liverpool and became interested in brand development and Scottish smoked salmon after he moved to London and worked for some of the top design companies in the British capital.

“While I was working at the design companies, I became fascinated with marketing, advertising and brand development and decided I wanted to run my own business,” Maher says.

In the early nineties, he moved to Cumbria in northern England to work with a smoked salmon company, and realized there was a niche for artisan-produced Scottish smoked salmon. In 2003, he established St. James Smokehouse with his wife, Alexandra.

“St. James was founded as a brand,” he said. “At first, we outsourced our production to small Scottish smokers. Although the product was strong, we couldn’t achieve consistency in flavour without more control over production.”

Eight years ago, they established the first St. James Smokehouse at Newton Stewart in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, but they soon outgrew that premises and relocated to nearby Annan.

“The business has grown exponentially,” Maher says. “We now have a sales office in Miami as approximately 60 per cent of our exports go to North America. We supply some of the most

prestigious retailers, restaurants and hotel groups in that region.

“We also export to over 15 other territories. Over the next 12-18 months, we plan to increase our international presence. We have British Retail Consortium Grade A status, which will help in that.”

Last year, the company achieved sales of US \$25 million, an increase of about 20 per cent over 2010.

Maher says that success is due to “the distinct and delicate taste” of the smoked salmon. That taste has been recognized with a slew of national and international awards.

Last year, the company won recognition around the globe, winning awards at Gulfood in Dubai, the International Boston Seafood Show and at the Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards. This year, Monde Selection International Quality Institute awarded them three gold medals in the World Quality Selections.

Maintaining high product standards and the integrity of their brand as they expand into new markets is the biggest challenge currently facing the company, Maher says, but it’s satisfying to see the business grow.

“It’s also immensely rewarding to support the community in Annan and to employ a team of fifty artisanal workers who are integral to our success.”

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Cabrini's
Kitchen

Summer Salads!



For nearly thirty years we have been battling the bulge in our house; one round for us and one for the bulge. It is friendly warfare, but it is warfare just the same. These recipes use light flax seed oil, which is high in omega fats, and they also take advantage of the fresh fish, fruit and vegetables available to us - all designed to help us win the battle of the bulge. One for our side!

AVOCADO AND SHRIMP SALAD

- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- ¼ cup light flax seed oil
- 1 cup of corn
- 1 red onion thinly sliced
- 1 lb. small, cooked, peeled, and de-veined shrimp
- 3 ripe avocados
- 1 12 oz. package of baby spinach
- 3 tbsp. roasted walnuts
- 3 tbsp. chopped chives
- 4 tbsp. dried cranberries
- Fresh ground pepper

METHOD (Serves 6)

Combine oil, vinegar, and red onions in a bowl. Add shrimp to this mixture and drench. Cut avocados in half and remove pits. Chunk avocados and add to oil and shrimp mixture. Cook corn on the cob and remove corn from one ear and add to the mixture. Add baby spinach and toss. Garnish with chopped roasted walnuts, chives and cranberries. Grind fresh pepper over entire salad. Enjoy with a glass of chilled white wine.

COOL CUCCUMBER SALAD

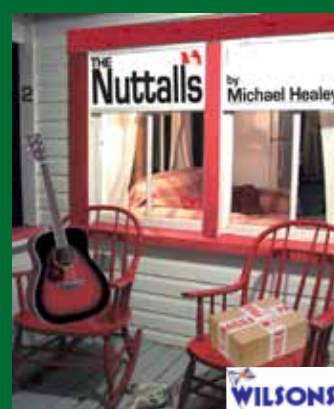
- 3 tbsp. light flax seed oil
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- ¼ cup chopped chives
- 1 tbsp. freshly ground pepper
- 4 cups peeled and chopped cucumbers
- 1 19 oz. can of chick peas, rinsed
- 2/3 cup diced orange bell pepper
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup slivered red onion
- ½ cup chopped black and green olives

METHOD (Serves 6)

Whisk oil, lemon juice, vinegar, chives and pepper in a large bowl until combined. Add cucumber, chick peas, bell pepper, onion and olives. Toss to coat. Sprinkle with feta cheese.



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With Andrew Ferguson

Scotland has more than 100 malt whisky distilleries, encompassing a broad range of flavour profiles and styles. Let's taste our way across Scotland, with a sampling of regional malts.

West of Glasgow, off the A82, Auchentoshan is the only distillery in Scotland which continues to practice fulltime triple distillation. At one time, most Lowland whiskies were triple-distilled, but all the region's remaining distilleries employ double distillation, save Auchentoshan.

Auchentoshan means 'in the corner of the field' and the distillery's house style is light, citric and floral - the truest embodiment of traditional Lowland single malt. **Auchentoshan 18 Year** is an ex-Bourbon bottling and best exemplifies the distillery's soft, gentle style.

Just off the A9 heading north, in the hills above the scenic town of Pitlochry, is the Edradour Distillery. Edradour is Scotland's smallest distillery, yet one of the most visited.

Edradour produces both peated and unpeated whiskies, always in small batches. The Highlands are a vast region, and no whisky

could be said to embody a regional style, but **Edradour 10 Year** is a typically honeyed and malty dram, with notes of apples, nuts and syrup.

The A95 leads to Grantown-on-Spey a town at the northern edge of the Cairngorm Mountains and the gateway to the Speyside, Scotland's most important whisky region and home to most of the country's distilleries. As with the Highlands, no whisky could encapsulate the region, but if you were to pick one it would be **Glenfarclas**.

Owned by one family since 1865, the Glenfarclas Distillery is Scotland's second-oldest family-owned distillery. Its whiskies rely heavily on European oak sherry casks, which impart a spicy, Christmas-cake fruitiness. Some of the area's other well-known distilleries, like Macallan, Aberlour and Glendronach, also conform to this style. **Glenfarclas 15 Year** is a very sherried Speyside dram with rich, spicy candied fruit notes.

To the southwest, the town of Campbeltown sits near the bottom of the 100-mile-long Kintyre Peninsula. Today, there are just three distilleries still operating, foremost among them Springbank, Scotland's oldest family-owned distillery (1828) and also its most traditional.

Springbank malts its own barley by hand and bottles on site. The distillery produces three distinct styles of whisky: Springbank, a traditional Campbeltown style, lightly peated, with a distinct salty-fishy character; Longcrown, more heavily peated and closer to Islay whiskies and Hazelburn, a triple-distilled whisky, which has more in common with traditional Lowland whiskies. **Springbank 15 Year**, the distillery's flagship malt, has notes of BBQ sauce, smoke, salt and dried fruit.

From Campbeltown, the A83 or the B842 lead up the peninsula to the ferry terminal at Kennecraig, the gateway to Islay, Scotland's whisky Mecca. It takes two hours to cross to the 239-square-mile island, which is home to 3,500 people and eight active distilleries.

Islay is famous for its smoky, peaty malts, but whiskies from Bunnahabhain and Bruichladdich are not peated. The island's three southern distilleries: Ardbeg, Lagavulin and Laphroaig are the peatiest, with Bowmore a little more restrained. Bowmore is one of Scotland's oldest distilleries, having been established in 1779. Its No.1 Vaults warehouse is believed to be the oldest operational building in the whisky industry. **Bowmore Tempest 10 Year** Batch III, matured in First Fill Ex-Bourbon casks, is creamy, citrusy and smoky with sea spray.

Andrew Ferguson is a Scotch Whisky Expert and co-manager of Kensington Wine Market in Calgary, Alberta.



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Slainte!

Sydney's Cock 'N' Bull *is home to the traveling Irish*

Running an Irish pub in the hood that's home to the largest concentration of Irish in Australia must be easy, right? Just import Guinness and Magners and play some fiddle music and everyone will be happy.

Not quite. Sydney's Bondi Junction is so Irish it's known as the 33rd county of Ireland and, when your clientele is that authentic, you'd better be authentic too. Luckily, that's no problem for the Cock 'N' Bull.

"We are not a dime-a-dozen plastic pretend Irish Pub - our customers are the real deal, and so are we," marketing manager Teejay Ryan told Celtic Life.

"Regularly, at least 80 per cent of our customers are Irish and, on our big trad nights of Thursday and Sunday, it can be as high as 95 per cent."

The stats prove what he says: The Cock 'N' Bull has been voted Australia's best Irish Pub in each of the last two years by readers of the Irish Echo, which bills itself as Australia's Irish newspaper.

Music is key to the pub's success, says Ryan. "Our resident trad band Bacon & Cabbage play twice a week on our biggest days, and at all our major events. Our traditional Sunday Sesh has grown into our biggest night of the week.

"Wednesdays and Saturdays, we have our Shamrock Sheilas, Cara Kavanagh and Siobhan O'Donnell, playing guitar and fiddle, and all of our DJs have the Irish

playlists down pat, and yes, that includes Maniac 2000 and Shipping up to Boston."

International acts regularly drop by. The pub has hosted the Rubberbandits, Aslan, Gary Og and numerous travelling Irish trad artists. Customers still recall the time, in the early 2000s, when Shane MacGowan came in on an Easter Monday, had a beer and joined in with Bacon & Cabbage.

"We also promote a traditional Irish Menu," says Ryan. "We proudly support Clan Na Gael football and Camogie teams. We regularly put on Irish dancing shows - always using customers as performers!"

Located inside local landmark the Grand Hotel, the Cock 'N' Bull has been pulling them in for 20 years now.

"We've been the focal point for the travelling Irish for all these years," Ryan says. "We've helped Bondi grow as people come out having heard about us, and settle in Bondi off the plane. The pub then becomes a centre for these people as they get to know Sydney, find jobs, make new friends and enjoy our world-famous craic!"

This last St. Paddy's Day is already legendary.

"We put on 14 hours of free entertainment," Ryan says with a grin. "The hotel was heavily supported by Guinness and Magners - both of which were enjoyed by plenty!"



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Cuisine

St. Andrews Restaurant and Bar, New York City

Amidst the multicultural mayhem that is downtown Manhattan, where human traffic is as dense and diverse as anywhere on the planet, the taste and temperament of traditional Scotland awaits at St. Andrews Restaurant and Pub.

Renowned for its fine and full selection of Scotch (and its exclusive Scotch Club), the longstanding eatery has established itself as the premier place for pairings and tastings on the eastern seaboard.

The stylish, secluded milieu also makes for an idyllic lunch-hour escape from the midday hustle and bustle of New York's Broadway district.

A seating of four, our culinary quest began with scrumptious Scottish Smoked Salmon (\$13), served with red-onion, capers, chopped egg and crème fraîche. A handful of hearty Homemade Haggis (\$11) disappeared quickly, as did the platter of Cornmeal-Crusted Fried Oysters (\$12), gently spiced with horseradish aioli.

Our palates were equally pleased with the ensuing entrees; the Roast Chicken Roulande (\$18) was evenly seasoned and stuffed with spinach, Portobello mushrooms, prosciutto and Fontana cheese, and accompanied by whipped potatoes and red pepper coulis.

The Almond Crusted Striped Bass (\$20) was a tender, tasty treat, lightly swathed with Yukon Gold potatoes, haricots verts, cherry tomatoes, leeks and lemon-thyme emulsion.

Likewise, the Grilled Yellowfin Tuna (\$22) was true-to-form as gentle and flaky, perfectly accented with fingerling frites, and marinated artichokes and Portobello mushrooms in a roasted tomato vinaigrette.

Keeping to theme, the Crispy Skin Scottish Isle Salmon (\$20) stole the show. Slight, subtle, savoury and succulent, the plate was well-paired with scallion potato cake, and caramelized baby carrots and spinach in a parsnip and leek broth. The flavor-filled fiesta left a mild, though distinct aftertaste, and sat well in the belly.

An array of soups, salads, sandwiches and traditional pub fare was also on the menu, but would have to wait for another day. Our meal was not yet complete, however, and the best was yet to come with dessert.

The sweet Sticky Toffee Pudding (\$9) was, to quote one of my compatriots, "just like Mum makes it back home." 'Nuff said.

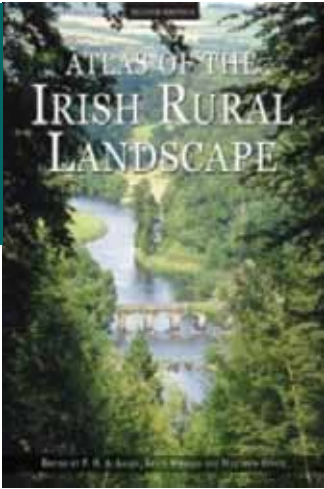
A selection of the Chef's homemade shortbread, oatmeal and raisin, chocolate chip and cinnamon cookies (\$7), served with an ice-cold glass of milk, had all of us reminiscing about our childhood, but la piece-de-resistance was the Cranachan (\$9), a bountiful blend of Scotch Whiskey and oatmeal folded into whipped cream and topped with fresh berries – simply irresistible and the talk of the table.

Of course, what end-of-meal experience would be complete without a Highland Coffee (\$9), replete with Grouse and cream, or a strong Irish Coffee (\$9) well-juiced with Jamieson's, or even a Hot Scotch (\$8), peppered with chocolate, Butterscotch Schnapps and fresh cream? Alas, our quartet enjoyed all of the above (and more!).

Our afternoon was made all the more pleasant by the curious and courteous nature of our server Michael. Two weeks fresh from the Emerald Isle, the young man was personable and professional, and already well up-to-speed on the options of offerings. His tidbits of trivia were a nice touch too, as were his warm and welcome observations on his new environs.

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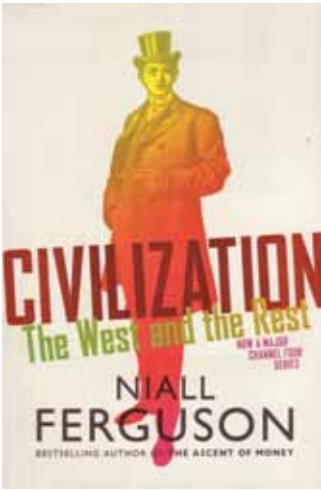
 Stephen Patrick Clare



Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape: Second Edition

Edited by F.H.A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stou
University of Toronto Press / 360 pp / \$75

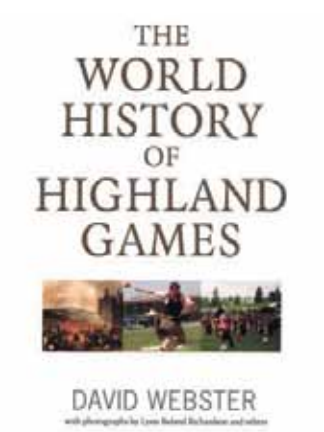
Beautifully bound, and richly embedded with photographs, illustrations, maps, diagrams and terrific tidbits of accompanying text, the Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape includes insightful information on archaeology, field and settlement patterns, houses, demesnes, villages and small towns, monuments, woodland, bogs, roads, canals, and a myriad of other topics. As a bonus, the second-edition of this table-top tome includes new sections on Tory Island (Donegal), the Wicklow Uplands, Inistiogue (County Kilkenny), Aughris (County Sligo), Clonfert (County Galway), and Point Lance in Newfoundland, Canada. By book’s end, readers will feel as if they’ve travelled back in time and will be reminded that, like the dutifully-detailed digest itself, the Emerald Isle is more than the sum of its beautiful parts. ~ SPC



Civilization: The West and the Rest

By Niall Ferguson
Penguin Press / 402 pp / \$35

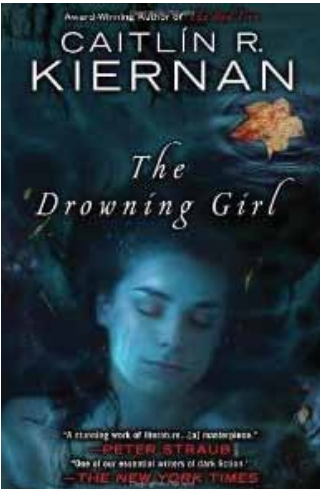
To his credit, Niall Ferguson neither apologizes for nor downplays the West’s cultural dominance of the last 500 years. Rather, he asks why Western culture has been so pervasive. His answer is that six characteristics of Western culture – killer apps, he calls them –allowed Europe and her North American descendants to impose their civilization on the world. The apps are competition, science, property rights, medicine, consumption and work ethic. Ferguson, a Glaswegian now teaching at Harvard, doesn’t argue that the Western nations monopolized these assets. He constructs a compelling argument that the West applied them more successfully than others, often with surprising results. Always interesting, forever probing, Ferguson shows how property rights aided the development of democracy, how consumption powered the Industrial Revolution and why Christianity is so powerful in modern China. Civilization is a worthy corollary to Ferguson’s The Ascent of Money. ~ Peter Moreira



The World History of the Highland Games

By David Webster
Luath Press Ltd. / 288 pp / \$40

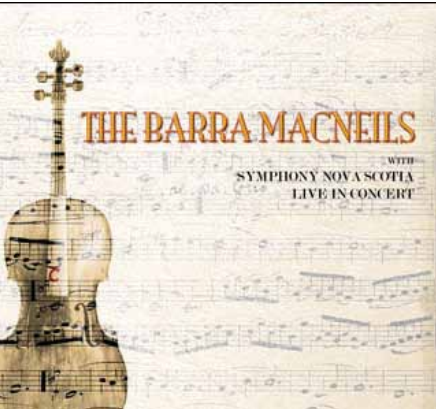
The Highland Games have a rich and storied tradition that goes back centuries. Scottish-born historian David Webster does an excellent job separating fact from fiction in piecing together a comprehensive volume of Highland Games history that is enlightening, engaging and entertaining. Thoroughly researched, and well-peppered with captivating colour and black and white prints and photographs, the author covers everything from dress and dance to sport and trivia in both old and new world settings. The real treats, however, are the myriad of personalities at play throughout the account; Donald Dinnie, Roderick (Rory) McLennan and others are larger-than-life figures that give the tome added weight, personality and a strong narrative arc that acts like a backbone upon which past and present Celtic heritage is fleshed out. ~ SPC



The Drowning Girl

By Caitlín R. Kiernan
Penguin / 336 pp / \$17

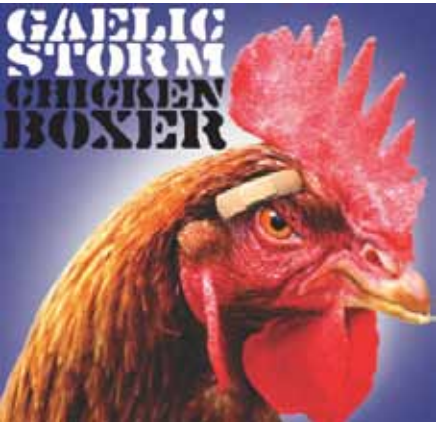
Caitlín R. Kiernan, an Irish writer living in the United States, further establishes her reputation for masterful dark fantasy in her new novel, The Drowning Girl. Narrator India “Imp” Morgan Phelps believes a ghost, Eva Canning, is tormenting her. She turns her experience into a ghost story while also attempting to coherently describe her paranoid schizophrenia. Set in Providence, Rhode Island, the book quickly transforms into a mesmerizing mix of myths about mermaids and sirens, and all-consuming obsession. Imp quits her medications, immerses herself in her paintings, and tells stories-within-stories as good as the novel as a whole, creating an unbalancing and hypnotic sum. Kiernan nimbly uses different voices, vivid imagery, and strong characterization. Songs about the sea, and a smattering of Gaelic folk music, play a particularly creepy role in the jolting finale. Imp’s heroic struggle to exorcise what could be a supernatural creature will, in turn, haunt audiences. ~ James K. Moran



The Barra MacNeils

Live in Concert with Symphony Nova Scotia

Recorded over two nights at the Rebecca Cohn Theatre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in April of 2011, this 12-song selection is a fitting homage to the band’s 25th anniversary celebrations. From the up-tempo opening notes of The Longest Day to the closing notes of a greatest-hits Medley, the band weaves its way through a strong cross-section of material, including the classics Caledonia, Dougie Mac and My Heart’s in the Highlands. Kudos go to SNS Resident Conductor (and fellow Cape Bretoner) Martin MacDonald for knowing when to accentuate the positive, and knowing when to hit the brakes. By keeping the strings and brass in the background, the small swells and flares only served to keep the spirited soiree what it should be - a family affair. ~ SPC



Gaelic Storm

Chicken Boxer

If the album title and cover art and any indicator, then Chicken Boxer lives up to billing. No-frills fun and frolic are aplenty with this one, as Highland Games mainstays Gaelic Storm get toes-a-tappin’ and hands-a-clappin’ with this rollickin’ collection of Celtic melodies. One More Day Above the Roses is pure-Pogues, while both the pipes-heavy Marching Free and the fiddle-infused Dead Bird Hill are strait outta’ Cape Breton. My Lucky Day and Where E’re You Go are light and playful, but the real treat here is Rag Dog Bone, replete with congas and lyrics that will leave you smiling, tongue-firmly-in-cheek. With strong material, solid arrangements and a wicked sense of humour, it is no wonder that the band is in such high-demand on the summer festival circuit. ~ SPC



Tradition, Tartan and Tears

Tradition, Tartan and Tears

Producer Paul McDaniel brings out the best in his Colorado-based musicians with this crisp and compelling collection of old-school Celtic melodies. Vocalist Tamra Hayden soars sure and soft over Gregg Hansen’s acoustic guitars in Wild Mountain Thyme, Rare Auld Times and Greensleeves. The cello of James Hoskins runs deep on the haunting Black is the Color (of my True Love’s Hair), and the Irish influence is strong in both the fiddle finesse of Kailin Young in Parting Glass and Bonnie Carol’s rolling, rhythmic bodhran on Foggy Dew and Step It Out Mary. Ultimately, traditional tunes like Scarborough Fair, Shenandoah and Loch Lamond are the heart and soul of this excellent and engaging compilation. Hopefully music lovers won’t have to wait too long for McDaniel and co. to work their musical magic again. ~ SPC



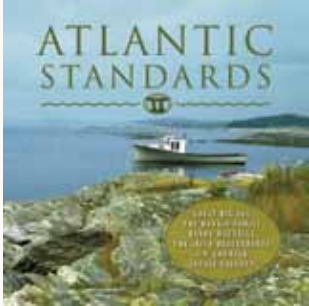
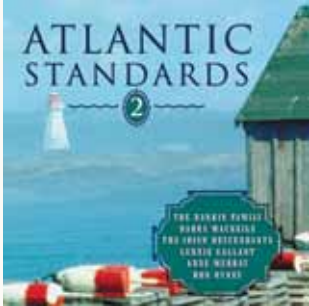
Sprag Session

Sprag Session

The young quintet from Nova Scotia is making a name for themselves both at home and away with their unique brand of rock-infused Celtica. There is talent aplenty with their debut, eponymous recording, especially on standout tracks Digsy’s, Good Ship Tommy Fun and ‘S nice-a-tron (brilliant story in the liner notes on this one!). Other pieces, including An Dro and Jenn & Anthony’s highlight a musical maturity beyond the band’s tender years. And while the production quality is thin and fails to capture the energy of their live performances, the right hands at the mixing board will bring this band to life and aid them to reach their full recording potential in the years ahead. Still, a strong and encouraging start for the five lads from Cape Breton. ~ SPC

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Sergey Romanenkov

There aren't many pipers in Sergey Romanenkov's Russian neighbourhood, but the 36-year-old with a passion for Celtic music is fostering the genre's growth in his homeland, while he dreams of competing in Scotland.

Romanenkov lives in the city of Zhukovsky, near Moscow. He began playing an eastern European pipe in 1999 and he's been devoted to the Great Highland Bagpipe since 2001. But his passion was born many years ago when he saw a TV program about Scotland.

"There was a piper, of course. I was amazed by the instrument and the sound of it," he told Celtic Life from his home. "Since then, I wanted to play the pipes.

"Pipe music in Russia is very young," he explained. "It started in the mid-90s when Celtic music became known in my country. The musicians from Ireland and Scotland started to come over - people such as Anna Murray, Burach, Paddy Keenan and Solas. The Russian bands which played Celtic music appeared.

"Currently, we have bands which play traditional Celtic folk. They have Irish and Scottish pipes in their line-up. There are bands that also play medieval European music and they use European pipes...The influence of European folk music from Germany, France and Scandinavia is very big."

More Russians are learning to play Celtic pipes. "Russian pipers know each other very well," Romanenkov said. "We are always glad to meet each other at music festivals or gigs."

Romanenkov calls himself a traditional piper.

"I am studying piobaireachd (a genre associated with the Scottish Highlands) and the Lowland piping tradition. I am a member of the Lowland and Border Pipers' Society of Scotland. This is very interesting part of Scottish piping. The interest in Lowland and Border piping arose in the early 80s, and it's still growing. Apart from Scottish folk music, I play in a band called Hysteria Orchestra, which plays very challenging instrumental music."



The Piper

His piping influences include John D. Burgess, Donald MacLeod and Donald MacPherson. Among modern pipers, he prefers Gordon Duncan, Fred Morrison, Angus MacColl, Hamish Moore and Iain MacInnes.

"I listen to their records very often - these guys impress me with their skill and talent. I also listen to such traditional Scottish folk bands as Battlefield Band, Ossian and The Tannahill Weavers."

Romanenkov treasures his Highland pipes, made by master craftsman David Naill.

"I have some chanter's made in the 60s, 80s and 90s. But my favourite chanter was made by David Naill in 1980. I prefer the low, old-fashioned sound. I also play Scottish smallpipes, a combo A/D set, made by Ian Kinnear."

He has often played in Belorussia and Ukraine where he was thrilled to perform for people who had never heard live pipe music before. And he dreams of playing in Scotland.

"Piping is a big part of my life. I practice five or six hours every day to improve my technique. But still I have to learn more. I am very critical of myself. One of my dreams is to take part in one of the biggest piping competitions in Scotland."



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Chris Stout

Growing up on the tiny rock-bound community of Fair Isle in northern Scotland, Chris Stout learned to love the fiddle after it earned another lad a place in the spotlight.

"My father played the accordion and the organ. However, it was another boy called Ewen Thomson who I saw play the fiddle and I immediately wanted to be him. I think maybe because he was getting all the attention and I wasn't getting enough," Stout said with a grin. "Ewen was, and still is, a great fiddler but he went on to learn how to make violins, and it is now three of his instruments which I play."

Stout was talking to Celtic Life while in Canada to play with Symphony Nova Scotia. He and his long-time collaborator, harpist Catriona McKay, were introducing Canadians to music from their acclaimed *White Nights* album, a 2010 production forged from experience of *The North*. Having toured Scandinavia with the music, the musicians naturally thought that Canadians might also relate.

"The music is all inspired by The North - places and landscape but also climate and the huge variations between summer and winter," Stout explained. "The title refers to the long summer nights we get in Shetland. It's a time of great productivity. People work and play hard, personalities are more on show and everything is exciting."

Fair Isle was a unique place to grow up. One of the Shetland Isles, Fair Isle has an area of only three square miles and is the most remote inhabited island in the U.K.. Its western coast consists of inhospitably steep cliffs and today's population has dwindled to just 70. It was here that Stout learned the traditional style

that he now blends so successfully with his classical training to create distinctive solo music and international collaborations. Most recently, he worked on the album, *Chris Stout's Brazilian Theory - Live in Concert*, with musicians from home as well as four from Sao Paulo.

Stout has recently become more comfortable as a musician. "I find it easier to communicate my musical feelings to an audience," he said. "I have learned how to channel my nerves and use them positively."

And he remains passionate about the fiddle.

"A fiddle, or a violin, can speak to anyone. It's capable of mind blowing virtuosity as well as achingly beautiful simplicity. It is comfortable in almost any music type you can think of. That's why I continue to try and discover all that it has to offer."

Soon, he will be getting on another plane to perform solo with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra.

"I played with them a few years ago and it was one of the most fantastic experiences of my life," he said. "The Orchestra is entirely made up of ethnic Chinese instruments, so it looks like a conventional orchestra but the sound is other-worldly."

Then, he'll return to Scotland. "I will go home to Shetland for some time off and go fishing as much as possible."



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Marielle Lesperance

Goals are important to Marielle Lesperance: The Ottawa-born highland dancer is focused on this season's big competitions despite bringing home much gold last year. The young dancer is also studying medical physics with the aim of helping cancer patients.

Lesperance is keen to fight the disease that took the life of her mother, physicist Wendy Ewart, when Marielle was just 11.

She is pursuing her joint Masters program in medical physics at Ottawa and Carleton Universities. Her academic research project will focus on radiation therapy for cancer treatment.

She also has her sights set on the Worlds, which will take place in Scotland in August, and which Lesperance won as a juvenile in 2003.

Success in dancing takes a lot of dedication, says the twenty-three-year-old who last year won the North American Championship and the Canadian Inter-provincial, which she has won many times before.

"That's the thing with anything in life really," Lesperance told Celtic Life. "You learn that at a young age competing in highland dance. It's very good for self-discipline - that's the biggest thing, along with being able to take the losses as well as the successes to work to be better."

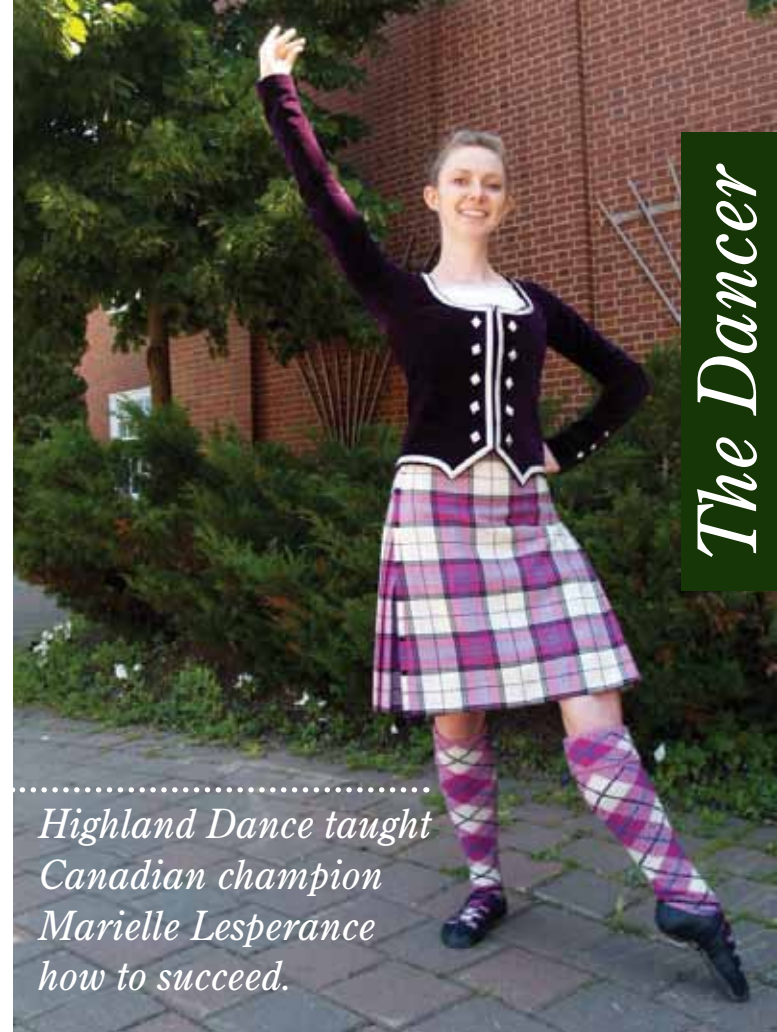
The dancer practices five days a week. "Even if you're on top, you're always trying to be better. You know that the competition is working just as hard."

Her long-time dance teacher, Ellen Maloney, says becoming a champion is a long process.

"It's all about the drive. It takes countless hours to get to the world level. You need passion, as in any other sport," Maloney explains by phone from Ontario, where she teaches.

"Dancers have to build strength in their thighs and calves," she continues. "They need to develop turn-out in their hips. They need great core strength to be able to elevate in the air with no motion in the body. They have to be able to perform extended high cuts (leaps) and land into a dance movement."

You might wonder how Lesperance combines intense competition with academic excellence. Maloney says she has huge natural talent.



The Dancer

Highland Dance taught
Canadian champion
Marielle Lesperance
how to succeed.

"Marielle is brilliant, she's lovely. But she's humble; you would never guess she's as talented as she is."

Lesperance began dancing at age four.

"I started after my sister did. I was at her recital, saw the other kids and wanted to be on stage with them...I've made a lot of good friends and had a lot of fun."

In Canada, her success stems from her mastery of four key dances: Seann Truibhas; the Sword; the Fling and the Reel.

"They're the most athletic and they're definitely difficult," she says. "I've worked on them so much I just enjoy doing them now."

Each dance holds a different appeal.

"I like the Seann Truibhas for performing and engaging the audience. The Reel is nice because you're dancing with other dancers and interacting more. The Sword is challenging because you have to be so precise. You can't hit the swords. It's an extra level of stress, but I enjoy the challenge."

Competing at Highland Games is always meaningful, she says. "You feel like you are keeping on the Scottish tradition."



By Melanie Furlong



The Lamonts are one of the oldest families in Scotland, tracing their lineage to the ancient kings of Ireland.

Some say the line goes back to Niall Noigiallach, a king who lived between the fourth and fifth centuries. The line certainly reaches Aedh O'Neil, "the splendid" twelfth century King of Tara, whose descendants and next of kin left Ireland for Scotland. The family badge still features the red hand of Ulster, in memory of their Irish roots.

In the early 13th century, clan ancestor Laumanus is recorded as granting land in Argyllshire, west central Scotland, to monks from Paisley Abbey. But there was trouble in Argyllshire between the Lamonts and their neighbour, Clan Campbell.

"There was much conflict back and forth," says Jean MacKaracher-Watson, the founder and president of the Clan Lamont Society of Canada.

Over time, the Lamonts tried to escape the strife by changing their name to colours like Black, Brown, Blue, Lemon, Lemond, White and Whyte. The current name is believed to come from clan ancestor, Laumanus.

With the collapse of the weaving industry in around 1800, followed by the hemp industry, many of the clan emigrated. Today, the Lamonts who remain in Argyllshire have a strong Clan Society, and there are also many Clan Societies around the world.

Since 1929, the Clan Chief's residence has been in Australia. Father Peter Noel Lamont is the 29th hereditary chief.

Born and raised in Nova Scotia, MacKaracher-Watson is typical of the clan's scattered but passionate members. She is a third-generation Canadian who fell in love with her Scottish heritage as a child while reading her mother's encyclopedia of Scottish history.

MacKaracher-Watson has been dubbed, "The Mother of Tartan Day" for her commitment to having Tartan Day, April 6th, celebrated around the world, and she has prioritized getting to know her ancestors homeland.

"I saved and scraped money together and visited Scotland seven times, backpacking around, travelling by bus and with the postman in different areas," she says. "They were surprised to find a 65-year-old grandmother roaming the hills and by-roads. The best tourist guides are the mail men and the bus drivers in small communities."

Like other Canadian Lamonts, MacKaracher-Watson looks forward to the annual Clan Lamont Memorial Day, held each year at the Fultz House Museum in Nova Scotia. The museum has three flowering crab apple trees, which were donated by the clan and are the clan's tree emblem.

"We love to see the other clans join us for this event; our bloodlines make us love a ceilidh. I think being in a room full of Scots can enliven the soul and keep you on the alert all at the same time," Jean says with a smile.

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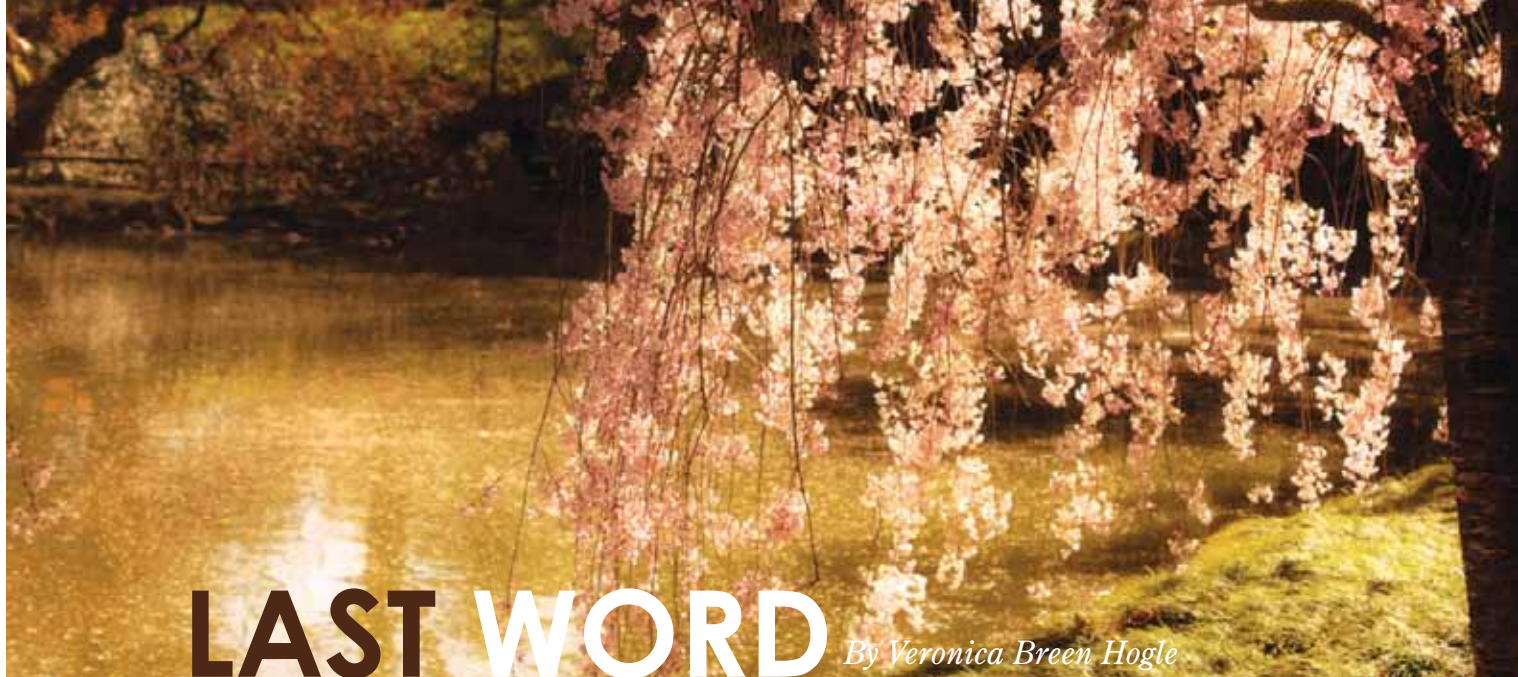
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LAST WORD

By Veronica Breen Hogle

When my brother Tony died in Donegal, his daughter Ciara called me at home in Buffalo, New York.

Although there'd been daily calls across the ocean, the news shocked me. I've lived in America since 1965, but I longed to be in Donegal.

In Ireland I'm at home. I understand what people are saying – really saying beneath the words. We Irish take turns listening and talking. Centuries of colonization have made us great listeners. Listening is gathering information, about knowing what's coming down the pike. It's about safety.

I've adapted well to America, but I love to fly across the Atlantic at night and, through the plane's window, watch the lush fields of Ireland emerge with the dawn. I have not become an American citizen. I find American conversations competitive. Sometimes, I yearn for a complete conversation where I can tell someone something and know they will just listen.

Tony had been urging me to get on Skype. I felt guilty I had not. He was the one who met me at the train when I went home, ready to drive Miss Daisy all over.

The last time I saw my brother was at our mother's funeral in May 2006. Like the ancient Celts and Egyptians, Irish people are interested in death. We value "a good send-off." But, when my loved one dies, I'm not there to console people and they're not here to comfort me.

After Tony's death, I called daily and his wife, Mary, told me the funeral arrangements as they evolved.

During the three-day funeral, I set the clock in my living room five hours ahead so I could visualize what was happening at a given time in Donegal.

Mary told me the family waked Tony in an open coffin. Mourners followed his hearse to the cemetery where our mum is buried and watched as Tony, the family man, drama teacher, Celtic scholar, and Irish speaker, was tucked in beneath the clay.

On the day of the burial, I called a florist in the town where Tony lived. The florist said she was busy with two weddings. When I hung up I didn't know what kind of flowers she would send, or even if she would get them there.

After two weeks, I decided to buy a tree in Tony's memory.

Arriving at my local nursery, I saw a weeping Japanese cherry tree, its cascading branches cloaked with white blossoms. The tree was perfect for Tony, who loved opera, especially Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

"Who's it for?" asked the saleswoman.

"My...brother," I started to cry, "...who died in Ireland..."

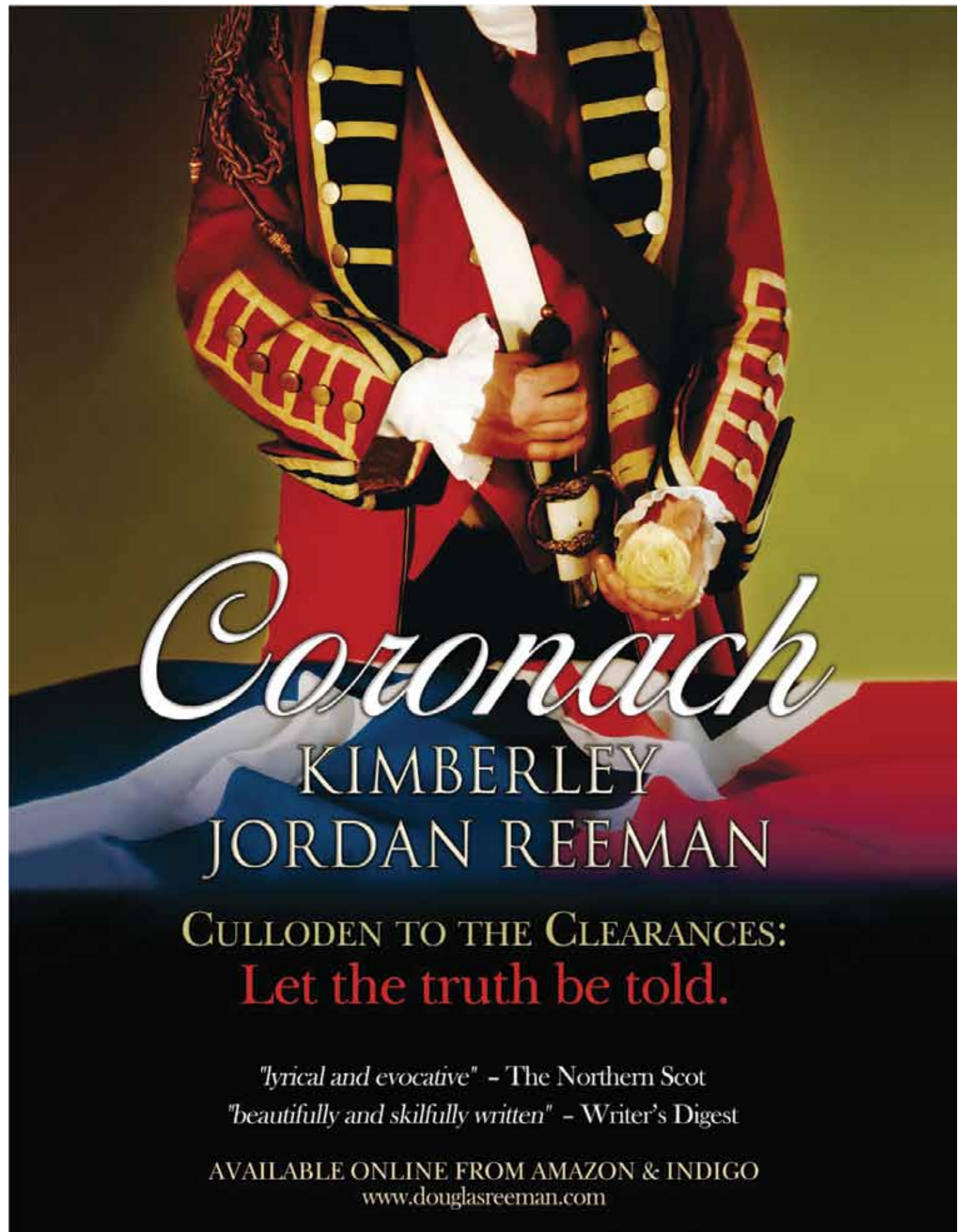
"It must be awful to be away from home just now," she said.

It was a relief to feel the loss of my brother in the company of another person. My friends had never met Tony. There was no "Remember when...?" to share.

I still call Mary often and she tells me how she's feeling. I understand what she's telling me. She understands what I'm saying to her.

The Japanese cherry tree stands in my garden in Buffalo, attracting butterflies, birds, bees and passers by.

"It's in memory of my brother Tony, who died in Ireland on March 9th," I tell people who stop to admire its tumbling white blossoms.





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