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CelticLife

INTERNATIONAL

INSIDE!

Holiday Celebrations

Luka Bloom

The Gathering

Wendy MacIsaac
& Mary Jane Lamond

Holiday Gift Guide

WINTER WONDERLANDS!

Display in Lifestyles
Display until SPRING 2013



Angus Mohr, Curling, Spruce Beer
Will Ferguson, Radio Celtic Lands
Rodney MacDonald, Winter Fashion

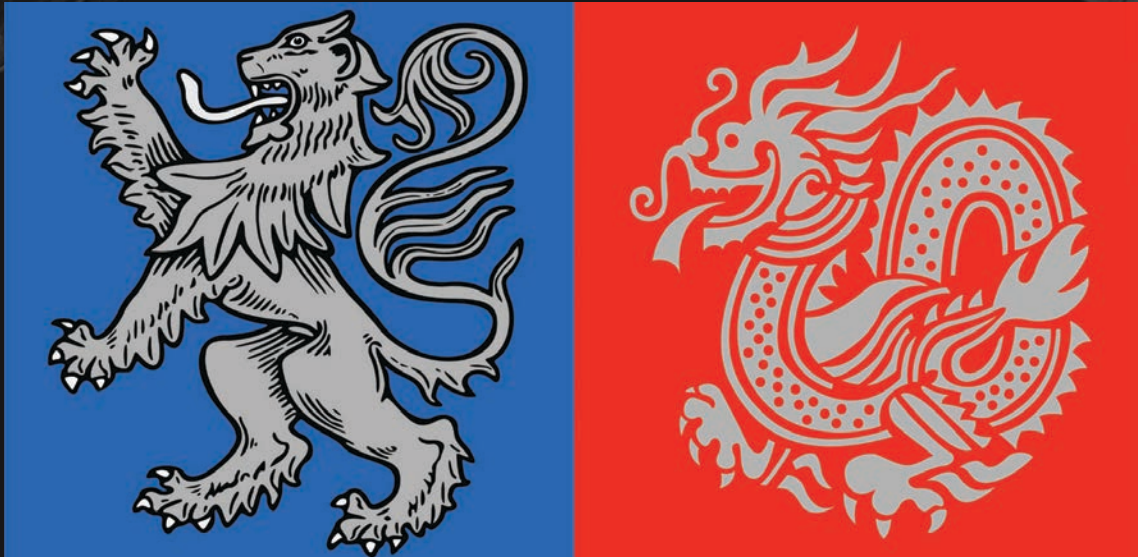


From Scot and With Love

Show Date: Monday Night April 8, 2013 • New York City, New York

A Scottish Evening of Fashion and Fun

The Scottish Lion Meets The Asian Dragon



Press & Media Quotes

“It was easy to see last night why this fashion show is the most prestigious Scottish fashion event in the world.”

“The Wounded Warriors on the catwalk brought an incredible depth and seriousness to the evening. Indeed, the soldiers who were featured in the show were the most powerful and moving models of the night.”

“Much to the happiness of the organizers who wished their 10th anniversary show would be the best yet, the audience members found the show to be a killer!”

“If you feel like you missed out on one of the highlights of the fashion world’s best-kept secret, keep in mind that there is always next year’s show, which if this year was any proof of that, it is bound to be bigger and better with unimaginable surprises that will leave you feeling downright Scottish.”

For Updated Event Information go to www.FromScotlandWithLove.net



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A year to Remember!

With this issue of Celtic Life International, we mark one full publishing year since we made several strategic improvements in design and marketing in order to reach a much wider audience. Through digital publishing, Facebook, Twitter and other social media, our Canada-based magazine is now meeting the needs of Celts around the globe.

The past 12 months have been exciting and enlightening for us. Highlights have included forging new partnerships with influential Celtic organizations, including From Scotland with Love in New York City, CeltFest Cuba in Havana, and Tourism Ireland.

In future issues, our subscribers will be introduced to many attractive subscriber-only benefits. Our current promotion of a trip for two to Ireland is just one example. In addition to this trip - available to new and existing subscribers at special discounted rates - we will be announcing additional prizes right up until December 31.

As we got to know our readers this year, our staff visited a number of Highland games, festivals and other Celtic events throughout North America. We met many wonderful new people as well as old friends. Most pleasing was the number of young people participating and volunteering at these celebrations.

It is wonderful to see so many youngsters taking an interest in their heritage and furthering family traditions. More than 800,000 people attended the Festival Interceltique de Lorient in France. On Canada's east coast, most of the venues for the popular Celtic Colours festival sold out. These events attract throngs of young, gifted musicians as well as enthusiastic crowds of visitors.

The benefits for local economies are also significant. Activities like the New Hampshire Highland Games in the U.S., Celtic Colours in Cape Breton and next year's The Gathering in Ireland bring many thousands of visitors to an area, providing an important boost to tourism and communities.

In most cases, these events would not be possible without the generosity of volunteers who give freely of their time to make each event a success. Everywhere we went, we were greeted with warmth, enthusiasm and welcoming smiles. These volunteers need to be recognized and congratulated and we take off our collective hats to all in appreciation of their generosity and kind service.

Now that the summer is behind us and the Thanksgiving turkey a pleasant memory, it is time to look forward to participating in another important celebration - Christmas and the birth of Christ. As we reflect on the past year and begin our plans for 2013, we want to take time to reflect and be thankful for all our blessings. We need to relax and renew our friendships and simply enjoy the holidays.

I would like to thank each and every subscriber for choosing to be a part of our Celtic family. On behalf of our staff, I want to wish one and all a Happy Holiday Season and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year. May God Bless!



Marcie Macquarrie, Publisher

INSIDE

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Our Winter 2012-2013 cover photo features winter revellers in Edinburgh, Scotland



DE THA DOL

Sadly, the Celtic music scene lost three special performers this fall.



Scottish singer-songwriter and musician, Michael Marra, died Oct 23th aged 60, of cancer. Known as the “Dundee bard”, Marra came to fame in 1980 with his first solo album, *The Midas Touch*. He supported the likes of Van Morrison and the Proclaimers and produced acclaimed work for theatre, radio and TV. Marra was also honoured by Dundee and Glasgow Caledonian Universities. Broadcaster Tom Morton told Dundee’s *Courier* newspaper, “I can’t bear the thought of him no longer being part of Scotland.”



Canadian musician Raylene Rankin has also died of cancer. Rankin, a solo singer and member of Nova Scotia’s Celtic-country band, *The Rankin Family*, died September 30th, age 52. A family group, the Rankins won many Canadian music awards, including six Junos and four SOCANs. Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter said Rankin inspired many people. “Her music will forever be a part of Nova Scotia’s soundtrack,” Dexter said.



Nova Scotia musician John Ferguson died suddenly on October 6th. Ferguson’s career began in Cape Breton in 1972. Best-known for his membership of the band *McGinty*, Ferguson had a rich baritone and played the guitar, fiddle and bouzouki. He was also a long-time contributor to *Celtic Life International*. His death was mourned by performers at Nova Scotia’s *Celtic Colours Festival*, where the popular musician was a familiar face and had been expected to play.

New radio series for the global Irish community

Ireland’s national TV and radio broadcaster RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta has launched a new series aimed at the Irish community around the world, including Irish-language students. *Cruinneog*, which means globe, is presented by Dubliner Cearbhall Ó Siocháin. The show welcomes listener contributions and is broadcast on Saturdays at 11 am Irish time. *Listeners can tune in online at www.rte.ie/rnag, or listen via RTÉ Radio Player, www.rte.ie/radioplayer. Listeners can also share stories at cruinneog@rte.ie, follow the show on Twitter @cruinneognag, and access Facebook on the Raidió na Gaeltachta (oifigiúil) page.*

Google launches Endangered Languages Project

Google, along with various universities and linguistic organizations, has begun an online endangered languages project that allows people and community members to post and add materials and make suggestions. In a release, Google said that languages are disappearing at an unprecedented pace, leading to the loss of unique world visions and enormous cultural heritage. “About half of the world’s approximate 7,000 languages are at risk of disappearing in the next 100 years,” Google wrote. Through the project website, users can access information on endangered languages and play a role in putting their languages online by submitting information or samples

in the form of text, audio or video files. Users can also share best practices and case studies through a knowledge-sharing section and through joining relevant Google groups. www.endangeredlanguages.com, www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/3049 (Scottish Gaelic).

Hebrides People Offers New Database

The website *Hebrides People* now includes a searchable database with information on over 22,000 emigrants who left the Outer Hebrides between 1780 and 1920. The information is drawn from records gathered over more than 50 years by genealogist Bill Lawson. In addition to his database of all island families, Lawson has researched the census and other records in the main emigration areas, to identify families of island origins. For emigrants before the 1820s, the database information is often incomplete, but after 1820 it generally has information such as spouse, parents, village of origin, destination overseas, date of emigration (often approximate) and, occasionally, the name of the emigration ship. The website works on the system of purchasing credits. All income goes to the maintenance and development of the site. Organizers hope it will eventually provide information on a quarter of a million people from all over the Outer Hebrides. www.hebridespeople.com





Daoine gun chànan, Daoine gun anam (A people without a language is a people without a soul.)

FIRST WORD

Our people deserve nothing less than to hear our language in our schools, be surrounded by it in our homes, and live it in our communities. We need to know who we are and where we come from in order to understand where we are going. Organizations such as Colaisde na Gàidhlig/The Gaelic College, along with governments, businesses and communities, share responsibility for educating our people.

As a young man, I walked into MacMillan's Market in Mabou and, standing around the counter, were John Alex MacMillan and Alex 'Danny Sandy' MacNeil; great native Gaelic speakers with the gift of the gab and a quick wit. I said, "Snowing pretty hard out there today".

Alex 'Danny Sandy' was quick to reply, "Snow! This isn't snow! I was walking to school one day, got my leg caught, and I pulled out a chimney. That's snow!" The grin on my face said it all as my heart filled with joy at the thought that I was included in their circle. The memory of that day still makes me smile.

People often accept something in life because it is easy to do so. We read something in the paper or hear a person of authority suggest it and take it at face value. The reality is that history is shaped by people, usually the victors of conflicts. As Gaels we have found ourselves in this situation for a very long time. But why are we not doing more to educate our young and ourselves about our history? Ours is a history and lineage that is not simply told by words in a book, because the authors have not always lived this history. A history told without a language is missing its soul.

Knowing why we speak, react, laugh, tell stories, work, serve, and believe in the manner we do is important for us to consider, as none of this occurs by accident.

We as Gaels are unique; unique because of our language, where we come from, and how we think; because of our beliefs, faith, culture, and our willingness to put the community ahead of ourselves. We are a people traditionally of the land and sea, we are intellectuals. Our people were fierce, bold warriors. We are also a people of music and dance; music that brings people to their feet and a tear to one's eye.

This means educating ourselves and then sharing this knowledge. It means standing up for the Gaelic language and culture. It means celebrating it and instilling this sense of pride in others. Ours is a culture and language worthy of time, respect, and investment.

During the past decade in Nova Scotia we have come a long way with regard to greater recognition of the Gaelic language. It is encouraging to know that so many people and organizations are pulling in the same direction. This being said, do we know what the destination is? Like a carpenter building a house, we need to know what the house will look like. What is our collective vision? Should our focus be on youth, adults, learners, or post secondary students? Do we focus on those with the greatest opportunity to be fluent or those who just want to say, "Ciamar a tha sibh?" and have a cup of tea? Should we focus on local people, or those in national, or international communities? These are the types of questions we must ask.

Let us never be afraid to know who we are and stand up for what is right. Our ancestors would have done so, and we should do no less.

Cha cheum air ais a bhios ann (There will be no stepping back.)

Ruairidh

The Honourable Rodney J. MacDonald, E.C.N.S. is the CEO of the Colaisde na Gàidhlig in St. Ann's, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia





Adrian Cain

UP FRONT

After two decades of determined effort, revivalists on the Isle of Man are rejoicing in a surge of public support for the Manx language. Now, they have produced the first free Manx Gaelic app for smart phones, while also making plans to use Skype to support Manx language learners overseas.

The plan for an online Skype link arose after language officers received inquiries from speakers as far away as Australia, the U.S. and Canada.

“The most successful speakers are the ones who get together with others to practise and just give it a go, so this is something that could be really helpful,” says Adrian Cain, Manx Language Development Officer for the Manx Heritage Foundation.

“There are already many things going on via social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, so Skype is just another way of creating a network of Manx speakers.”

The newly available app follows the Saase-Jeeragh adult-language programme that is working well on the island. The first 10 of 30 units are now free to access for users of iphones, ipads and android phones and the rest should be available early in 2013. The app has received financial support from telecom provider Sure, and Cain says it’s another example of the close relationship between the island’s business and language communities.

Cain, who exudes enthusiasm for his work, has been in his role for eight years and sees his job as helping to revitalize the island community of around 80,000. He aims to share the joy of Manx Gaelic with as many learners as possible.

And that number is growing. The island has Manx-language playgroups and nurseries. The Bunscoill Ghaelgagh, a Manx-medium elementary school, has been running for ten years. There are currently around 70 children at Bunscoill, another 1,000 learning Manx in mainstream schools, six youngsters taking A (Advanced) Level Manx and 100 adults in language classes. Around the island, Manx Gaelic signage is increasingly visible.

“Public attitudes are much more positive now and there are a growing number of people - especially the young - who speak and use the language,” Cain says with a grin, “It’s a success story.”

In September, children celebrated the publication of a Manx-language version of the much-loved kids’ book, *The Gruffalo*. Translated by Natalie Nic Shim, the book was supported by the Manx Heritage Foundation and Lloyds TSB.

The island also enjoyed Cooish or Manx Language Week in October. With the support of local businesses, organizers staged lectures, classes and concerts. A highlight was the annual Ned Maddrell Lecture, which was delivered by linguistic anthropologist Dr. Emily McEwan Fujita from Canada who spoke about the status of Scottish Gaelic in Nova Scotia. Music was provided by Mary Macmaster and Donald Hay from Scotland.

It’s easy to forget that until recently the Manx language looked likely to die out.

“Not that long ago when I appeared on Manx Radio, a caller asked me, ‘What’s the point of Manx Gaelic?’” Cain says. “In some sense this begged a larger question, ‘What’s the point of the Isle of Man?’”

Cain doesn’t want future historians to see his home as a footnote to European and British history – as little more than an off-shore tax jurisdiction.

“We can strive to achieve much more, and hopefully in the process, become an integral part of the cultural and political milieu of modern Europe,” he says. “And the Manx language is central to this.”

Cain says the island’s successes illustrate to the world - and to many on the island - that there is more to the Isle of Man than tax, motorbikes and tail-less cats.

“We have our own culture and a successful revival of interest in the language. Through the hard work, historically unpaid, of many enthusiasts and activists we now have a growing and vibrant language community...No-one else will look after our language; it’s up to us to do it, and not be shy of saying how good we are at it.”

www.learnmanx.com



SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

What are your own Celtic roots?

I am from Peebles, Scotland in the Borders.

Why are those roots important to you?

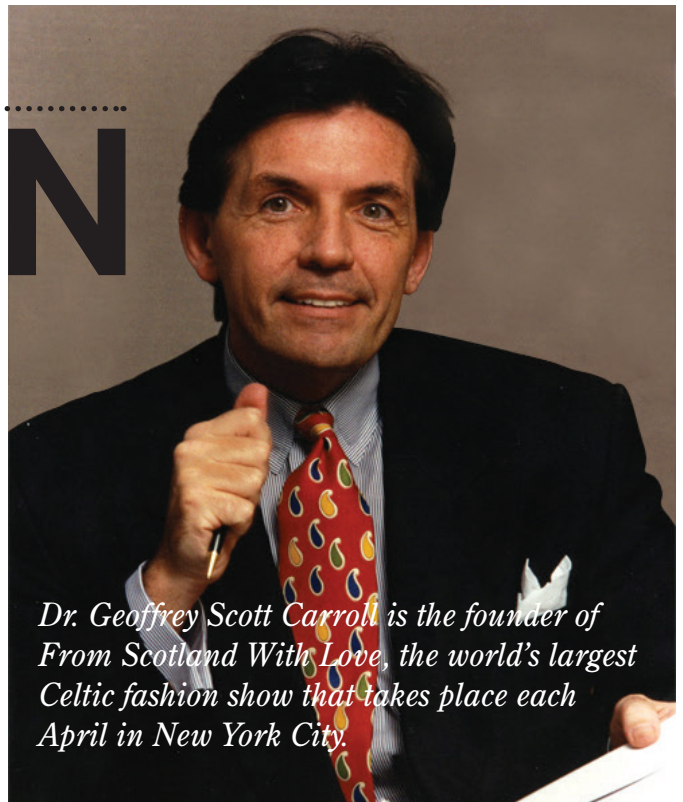
Though the United States is now my adopted country, I believe that it is a mistake to forget where you and your family come from. I still have family there, and I go out of my way to maintain contacts back home.

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

We Scots believe that we are different from others. This is certainly not a criticism of non-Scots, but my dearest and closest friends, even today, are all from Scotland. Many of them have left Scotland and created lives and careers around the globe. But there is always something between us that we share only with each other because of our backgrounds and heritage.

How are you involved with the U.S. Celtic community?

When I came to the U.S. about ten years ago, I thought there was an absence of groups trying to help young and talented Scots. There were many events and groups focusing on traditional events, but few that offered a helping hand to young Scots. I also found that the image of Scotland among many New Yorkers was distorted and focused on the past rather than the present. Prior to coming to New York, I spent time with my father before he passed away. He made me promise that I would help other Scots. As I have been fortunate in my business pursuits, I have been able to keep that promise. I was a founding member of the GlobalScot network and I started an event in my kitchen ten years ago, the Dressed to Kilt charity fashion show, which has become the biggest and most prestigious Scottish fashion event in the world. Last year was our tenth anniversary and we changed the name to From Scotland with Love. We have raised significant funds for noble and charitable causes and become a major fixture on the New York fashion scene and calendar. We have helped numerous young Scots - designers, manufacturers, entertainers, photographers, caterers - become established over here and provided them with commercial opportunities. I have helped arrange working visas for young Scots and provided financial support to Scottish organizations across the United States.



Dr. Geoffrey Scott Carroll is the founder of From Scotland With Love, the world's largest Celtic fashion show that takes place each April in New York City.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive?

We have a proud and distinguished culture and a unique one. In a world where everything is becoming homogenized and the trends are towards sameness - in clothes, TV shows, movies, etc. - it is important to highlight the differences. Also, the world is growing at a rapid rate, and our Celtic countries are not. This presents obvious problems moving forward. Therefore, I think it important to highlight the relevance and importance of Celtic cultures.

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

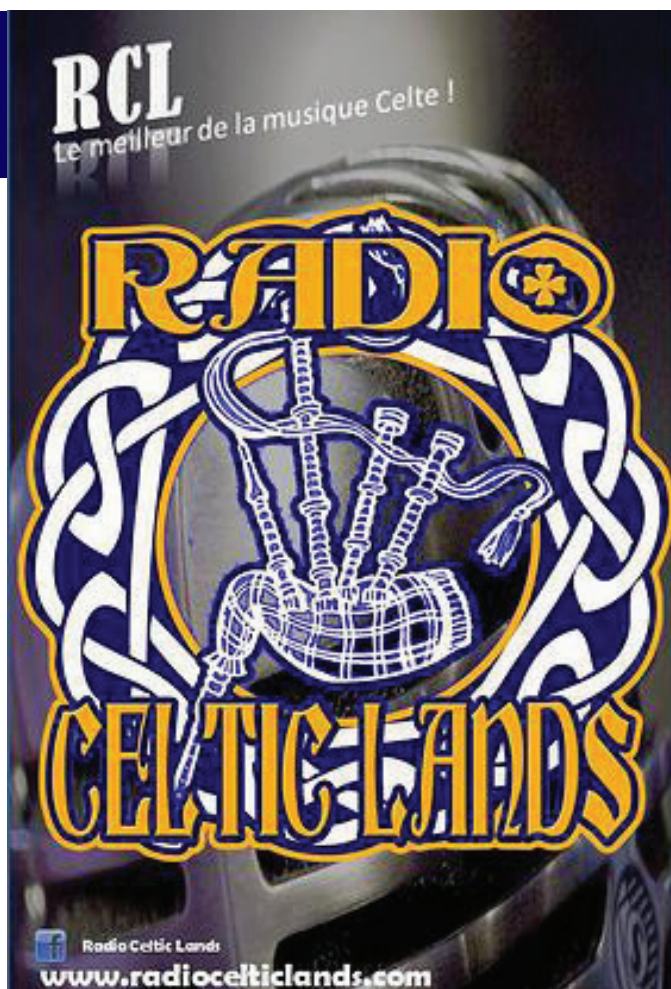
I'm not sure this is the right question. The more appropriate question may be, are we doing enough of the right and effective things to keep Celtic cultures alive? I believe there should be greater efforts to interest and engage younger generations in the culture. There are more than enough Highland games or parades, but I have noticed a diminishing amount of younger generation support and participation. This was actually a big part of the thinking behind our Dressed to Kilt event and the event attracts many youngsters around the globe. Indeed, with the theme of this year's show being The Scottish Lion Meets the Asian Dragon, we are trying to further share our Celtic culture with Asia.

What can we be doing better?

We could always do better, but I have nothing but respect for those individuals and groups that try to promote aspects of our Celtic culture.

www.fromscotlandwithlove.net





It's a long way from public office to the public airwaves, but it was a step that Bruno Douet had to take.

"I grew up surrounded by Celtic culture," explains the 29-year-old founder of Radio Celtic Lands, France's only online Celtic radio station. "My father is Scottish and my mother is Irish, so it is, literally, in my blood."

Though he was born in Bourges in the heart of France, Douet moved to Brittany when he was 18 years old, working for the French Civil Service in Lorient before daring to live his dream.

With the help of some like-minded friends, the young Francophone signed his fledgling Radio Celtic Lands onto the airwaves this past March.

"There are ten of us that currently bring it all together, and we all work on a volunteer basis. Right now, our biggest challenge is to find more people willing to contribute from both here at home and around the world; we are constantly looking for a strong variety of journalists, broadcasters, musicians, etc..."

Growing the global Celtic perspective is at the core of the station's mandate.

"Our focus is primarily Celtic folk and rock, but we also play a

Radio Celtic Lands

number of non-traditional artists who incorporate Celtic melodies and instruments, including Kalffa, Dan Ar Braz, Dominique Dupuis, Epsilon and Back West. Our playlists feature music from all Seven Celtic Nations, as well as Asturias."

A quick listen confirms the diversity of sound and style; Alan Stivell, Afro Celt Sound System, Margaux Lienard, Plantec and Oreillades are just a few of the eclectic artists featured online.

"We also broadcast a number of news and specialty talk programs," adds Douet, who lectures on a selection of Celtic topics to students and others in his spare time. "All of it has some sort of Celtic connection. Our aim is to provide our audience with the total Celtic experience."

So far, those audiences have responded in a big way.

"We are up to about 2,500 listeners during daytime hours, with that number rising to 3,500 at night. Our hope is to have 5,000 daily listeners by the end of this year.

"The wonder of broadcasting on the internet is that we can be accessed anywhere in the world at any time. The potential to grow our audience is huge, and it is only a matter of time before we have tens of thousands of people tuning in."

The question at this point, he notes, is one of visibility.

"We have made it a priority to get involved with as many events as possible this year, including the St. Patrick's Festival in Ireland and Festival Inter-Celtique de L'Orient right here in Brittany, which is the largest celebration of its kind in the world."

With greater exposure in mind, 2013 is expected to be a busy one for Douet and his colleagues.

"We are excited by the possibility of forming further partnerships and sponsorships with festivals, organizations and other media around the world," he explains.

"We will also be expanding our programming, with more Celtic music from around the world and a greater assortment of talk shows. And I am hoping to organize some sort of official association that would bring all peoples of Celtic heritage together in some capacity as well. We need this here in Brittany, and I know that many people in the other Celtic nations would jump on board. I love the whole idea of a united Celtic community."

A full-time gig on the FM dial is also in the works.

"That is a more ambitious undertaking," acknowledges Douet. "Along with a large financial investment, we will need to partake in a series of hearings with the Radio Commission here.

"Still," he smiles, "it is a step we have to take."



Fleur Mainville

After suffering cancer and meeting her nurse husband in hospital, the heartache of the old laments feels more bruising, but the joyful notes are sweeter still for Canadian fiddler Fleur Mainville.

Her jigs and reels have the same free-spirited intensity as when she toured North America with ground-breaking Celtic rock band MacKeel, but Mainville now sings as beautifully as she plays.

"I'm branching out, trying new things," she laughs, adding that a diagnosis of carcinoid bowel cancer is apt to take anyone in new directions.

A few years ago Mainville was desperately sick and cancelling appearances.

"As a performer I knew what it meant for your career when you let people down but I couldn't go on," she remembers.

She'd been ill and in pain for so long she was momentarily relieved when she learned she had cancer. The relief was short-lived, though, and her initial prognosis was poor.

"I had to learn, my family had to learn, to wake up in the morning and make the most of every day," she recalls.

Surgeries and visits to specialists followed as doctors struggled to identify her cancer and find the best treatment. Carcinoid is a rare form of the disease, generally slow growing and not usually found in someone as young as Mainville, who is 35. The fact that she became ill at a young age makes her cancer less predictable.

"I'm constantly being monitored. I've just started on a new drug that holds a lot of promise. There are some side effects but generally I'm feeling great and really hopeful," she says.

Ironically, it was at the height of her illness that she met husband Andrew Heighton.

"I was in the hospital emergency department, sick and desperate for help. The triage nurse was this young guy and he was so kind to me," she remembers.

Heighton got in touch after her diagnosis but Mainville was dismissive.

"He contacted me a number of times and I did my best to get rid of him. I remember telling him I was really sick and wanted to spend my time with my family and friends."

When Mainville made an emotional appearance at a Nova Scotia Music Week show, Heighton was there to applaud.

"We had friends in common, it was obvious he was a very nice guy, so I had to open the door a little but he was the last thing I



Scene

was looking for," laughs Mainville.

She had to be persuaded her battle was one she could share.

"It is a big decision to share your life but as I got to care about Andrew I had to ask myself if I could involve him in all this. I'm so lucky he was more than willing."

The daughter of a couple of hippies who loaded up a van and headed east from their home in northern Quebec, Mainville is not sure where her love of Celtic music came from. Initially, she played classical violin.

"I remember being in a music festival. I had played a Mozart piece and the adjudicator told me I should have put less of myself into it. It was a turning point because I knew I could play a reel or a jig, and even if I played it backwards, people would appreciate what I did with it. It has always been what I could do with the music."

She teaches private lessons, runs fiddle programs in several Pictou County schools, has a weekly radio program and is back on the summer festival circuit. Between work and medical appointments she has launched two new CDs. The first, *My Rare One*, features 13 mostly rollicking, thunderous fiddle tunes while on the latter, titled *Once*, Mainville sings 11 of her traditional favorites.

In the midst of recording *My Rare One*, she got married and the CD is close to her heart.

"I was playing music again, music that is good for the soul and the spirit," she smiles. "And I'm still playing and singing."

By Rosalie MacEachern





Angus Mohr

Seven years after a medical emergency pushed musician Paul McDaniel to explore his Celtic roots, his Highland Rock band Angus Mohr has released album number five, The Monster in the Box. Celtic Life International caught up with McDaniel as the Colorado-based band took a break between performances.

Angus Mohr has been popular ever since forming in 2005, although even fans find its blended sound hard to define. McDaniel, who is lead vocalist and bass player, describes it as “Rock and Roll with Bagpipes”.

The group draws from rock and roll’s many sub genres. “The most prevalent sound would be hard rock, but there are definite elements of punk, with a nod to metal and a hint of thrash,” McDaniel said. “We can’t forget about country either, as country has plenty of Celtic influence in it...The common thread is social commentary and the need to get a message across at a basic human level. The exception to that is music that is just too much fun to not play.”

The recording process for the new album was especially thorough, McDaniel said, and was based on experience of playing the tunes live and then deepening them in the studio.

“I always like to get as much live experience with material as possible,” he said. “As always though, there are a number of places where we were able to do more with the recording process to add depth and instrumentation.”

Although the band formed seven years ago, three of its members have been performing together since 1980, and the fourth – McDaniel’s son Matthew - since 1999. Angus Mohr arose from a six-piece band called Ricky Fire and the Red Hot Voodoo Devils, which played regular rock and blues.

“My son Matthew had been playing pipes for a while and we wanted to incorporate them into the Ricky Fire effort, but had not pressed the issue,” McDaniel explained. “Two years later, I had a medical event, which my doctor said I should not have survived. At that point in my life, I decided I wanted to honor my Celtic roots and insisted we were going to add bagpipes...One of the members refused and drama ensued. Another member decided to leave for family reasons and, in two weeks, we went from six pieces to four.”

It was a tumultuous start, but the band soon had a new sound and moniker, taking the name of a 10th century pragmatist who stopped the Vikings attacking his region by marrying the daughter of a Viking king, thus creating a family alliance.

Audiences took a while to adjust when the Ricky Fire musicians adopted the new sound but, “The non-Celtic, Ricky Fire type venues were surprised but pleased with the ringing of the cash register,” McDaniel said of those early days when Angus Mohr was emerging from the shadow of the previous band.

The child of music teachers and farmers with Scottish and Irish roots, McDaniel grew up in Oklahoma. He said the band intends to keep to their current creative path, although they are currently dabbling in material with a country influence. “I have heard many times about Celtic influence on the evolution of country music,” McDaniel said, adding that he would also like to explore ambient music, which focuses more on sound than melody.

Performing remains a thrill. “Audience response is what caused us to become Angus Mohr. It is what keeps us going. It is why we do what we do.”



Angus Mohr

The Monster in the Box - Mohr Fire Records

Colorado-based Angus Mohr brings it all to the table with their latest release, *The Monster in the Box*. Power chords and pounding drums drive Andy Renwick’s Favourite Ferret and Scotland the Brave, while the drone of didgeridoo stirs below the softer surface of Barbary Coast. The band lets loose à la Green Day on When Johnny Comes Marching Home and The Clumsy Lover. Step It Out Mary is more traditional, while cover versions of Nine Inch Nails’ Hurt and Robert Plant’s Darkness, Darkness are stirring and soulful. Fiddle, whistle, acoustic guitars, piano and percussion are well-blended, and Matthew McDaniel’s passionate and powerful piping hovers over all with memorable melodies. Good tunes and great fun from this popular quartet.

Lucky LUka



Even via email from the Swiss Alps, Luka Bloom's energy and awe are infectious.

"In three days I will climb 7,500 feet to a theatre in Switzerland on top of a mountain called Niesen. It will be my highest gig in Europe. I will sing so loud, you will hear me in North America."

It's been a long, strange trip for the 57-year-old singer-songwriter from Ireland. Born Kevin Barry Moore (younger brother to folk troubadour Christy) in Newbridge, County Kildare, he moved to the U.S. in 1987, taking a new name from the title of a Suzanne Vega song ("Luka") and the main character in James Joyce's epic Ulysses ("Bloom").

"I sat with my first guitar at age nine and felt a strange sense of homecoming. I wrote my first songs when I was 14, and did my first paid gigs in 1972 as the opening act for (Irish folk group) Planxty. I haven't stopped since then."

Nearly four decades later, Bloom is still on the road, these days in support of his 20th recording, *This New Morning*.

"I spent three weeks in Australia in 2011 singing with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When I came home to Ireland, the writing flowed, and by November I knew that an album was essential."

The result, he remarks, was a labour of love.

"The process was exhausting, and demanding, and changing daily. I invited many singers and musicians to join me with these songs; this required me to be totally open and at peace in the work. I loved every second of it and am really happy with the result."

"As an artist, the most important growth is in the area of trust. Trusting my craft, and trusting that with the right motivation, the song and the singer will be taken care of. And also accepting that I am flawed and unaccomplished and enjoying the fun that this acceptance brings. It's a relief not to need to be greater than you are."

Audiences appear to have taken to *This New Morning*.

"As I travel with these songs, each takes on its own life's journey, and in different places, people connect with different songs. In Germany it's Heartman; in Switzerland it's Riverdays; in Holland it's The Ride; in Ireland I think it will be Dignity and Backbone."

The rewards, he notes, are plentiful.

"This life is the reward. I get to sing, write, meet and connect with people. How many people get to be heard? I am blessed."

The calling is not without its challenges, however.

"I think that perhaps vocation might be too strong word to describe what I do. It implies great sacrifice, and thus the word diminishes the lives of people who truly sacrifice. Remember, I do this because I love it, and have done for ever. That said, the challenges of my work are loneliness and waiting."

"Still," he adds with gratitude, "I never imagined I would be earning a living from this work. And I still have that raw sense of urgency and wonder at the possibility of a good melody that drives me to keep looking for the word, the chord, the rhythm and the life force of the next song...."



Luka Bloom

This New Morning - Big Sky / Compass

Inspired by his time with the Dalai Lama, Luka Bloom takes his soul and songwriting to new heights with *This New Morning*. How Am I To Be and A Seed Was Sown are warm and welcoming openers, while Heart Man is a lovely stroll through spiritual spaces. Capture A Dream, Your Little Wings and You Couldn't Have Come At A Better Time are more traditional in scope and style, and The Race Runs Me bears witness to the Irish songsmith's subtle prowess on the guitar. Gaman and You Survive are some of the most haunting and beautiful melodies that Bloom has ever composed, and serve as testament that the ageless folkie remains one of the Emerald Isle's finest musical exports.

CURLING



Canada thanks Scotland for the Roaring Game of curling!

For years, Colleen Jones' curling team was unstoppable. Between 1999 and 2004, Jones, Mary Anne Arsenault, Kim Kelly and Nancy Delahunt won five Canadian and two World championship titles.

Now Jones, Arsenault and Kelly are reuniting and joining forces with Jennifer Baxter. They have one goal in mind – the 2014 Olympics. None of them has curled in the Olympics and they are determined to qualify. "I think we just felt we had more game in us," shares Jones.

"You can always learn something new about the game," continues the Canadian Curling Hall of Famer. "Somehow the sport can never let you own it totally."

Curling involves sliding polished granite stones across ice towards a target area. It's often called the roaring game because of the sound the stones make as they move over the pebble (water that's been applied to the ice).

The exact origins of curling are unclear – some historians have linked it to the Low Countries of continental Europe – but all seem to agree that it was Scotland that fostered curling and introduced it to the world.

"I always joke that the Scots invented two sports - curling and golf - that would intrigue you, captivate you and hook you in such a way that you're never good enough at either," says Jones.

In his book, *History of Curling* (1890), John Kerr concludes that curling is "Scotland's ain game". Indeed, the oldest known curling stone, the Stirling Stone of 1511, was found in Dunblane, Scotland, according to Library and Archives Canada; and the oldest recorded curling challenge took place at Scotland's Paisley Abbey in 1541.

The World Curling Federation (WCF) adds that it was Scotland's Grand Caledonian Curling Club (now the Royal Caledonian Curling Club) that first formulated the Rules of Curling; and that Scots exported the sport to many countries that had cold enough climates for lochs to freeze - from Norway and Sweden to New Zealand and the U.S.

The 78th Fraser Highlanders are said to be among the first to introduce curling to Canada, more specifically to Quebec, after they joined Wolfe's expedition in 1759.

"Why wouldn't the soldiers have curled?" asks Reverend James Armour. "They must have found the long winters hard, and it was before skiing was invented, so it seems natural."

Reverend Armour is a member of the Royal Montreal Curling Club (RMCC), North America's oldest-running curling and sporting group. He knows the club's chronology well since he saw to it that its history book be finished after the original author, Donald Wallace, passed away. (As a result, *The First 200 Years* should be released this month.)

The RMCC was founded in 1807 by 19 Scottish immigrants and one gentleman with both Scottish and First Nation blood. The founders first played on the Saint Lawrence River.

The RMCC is just one expression of Canada's love of curling. Estimates put the number of Canadian curlers at between 1 million and 1.5 million.

Canada has taken Scotland's roaring game to heart, so it is apropos that both nations are leaders in the sport today. The WCF 2011-2012 world rankings for men's teams place Canada first and Scotland/Great Britain second. Among female teams, Canada and Scotland/GB are ranked second and seventh respectively.

Both countries also seem to value the practice of stacking the brooms – a curling expression for socializing after a game. Jones explains, "When you go to a curling club, it's a gathering place, I'm sure just as it was when they first brought the game to the lakes here."

In fact, for some clubs, socializing was and is mandatory. According to the Quebec Thistle Council, after the RMCC was established in 1807, members were required to meet each fortnight at a selected coffee house (usually Gilles Tavern, near Molson's Brewery) after a match on the Fleuve St. Laurent.

Most would agree that, like curling itself, that's a tradition worth preserving.

By Michelle Brunet



Will Ferguson

Canadian author Will Ferguson was bracing to be graceful in defeat after being short-listed for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, but it turned out that Canada's most prestigious award for English fiction had Ferguson's name on it.

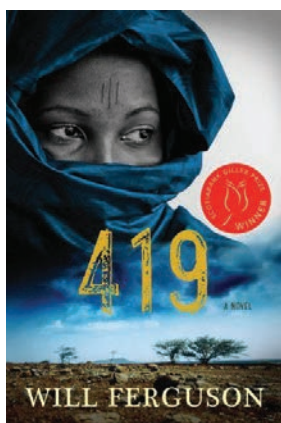
"I had been practicing my best runner-up smile all week," jokes the 48-year-old novelist over the phone from Toronto. "You know – it's the smile you see from the second place contestants in beauty pageants."

Instead, the multi-award-winning humourist and travel writer found himself center-stage, accepting Canada's literary honour for his latest effort *419*, the strange and stirring story of an insidious internet scam and a woman's quest to find her father's killer.

"Thank God I had a flask of whisky in my sporran," he laughs with a mild Scottish brogue, noting his Clan attire from the previous evening.

"I was all done up in traditional Scottish regalia," he beams; "A Prince Charlie jacket, and the Flowers of Scotland pattern, which is very similar to the ancient Ferguson Clan tartan, on the kilt."

The outfit, he admits, brought about some good-natured ribbing.



"As I was making my way to the podium, the great Irish writer Roddy Doyle, who was one of the judges for this year's event, said to me 'If I knew you would be wearing your kilt to this thing I wouldn't have given you the award.' Then he said, 'Thankfully your wife's Kimono (Ferguson's partner Terumi is Japanese) cancelled it out.'"

Centuries' old Irish-Scottish jesting aside, the Calgary native was proud to wear his Celtic roots on his sleeve.



"I'm actually Irish-Scottish myself," he beams. "My dad's family is from Scotland, and my mom's family is from Belfast. My blood is a meeting place for these two cultures, and it certainly explains my chattiness and my penchant for storytelling and humour."

They are traits that he shares with his siblings.

"We are a family of black sheep," says the wordsmith. "I have one brother who is a composer in Montreal, another who is a playwright and another who is a journalist, and my sister is a sculptor."

Growing up, the Ferguson kids were encouraged to get involved in the arts.

"My parents never told us what to do when we were young. They believed that the arts were a noble vocation and they were always very supportive of our endeavours in that field. I think they were only disappointed in me when I became a teacher."

Ferguson's years at the blackboard in the Far East were fruitful, however, both personally and professionally.

"It is where I fell in love with Terumi," smiles the scribe, "and it is where I opted to take a stab at writing full-time."

It was a decision that would pay off in spades for the aspiring author, who has produced 15 critically-acclaimed works in 15 years, including three that have won the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour; *Generica* (later renamed *Happiness*) in 2002, *Beauty Tips from Moose Jaw* in 2005, and *Beyond Belfast*, a travel memoir, in 2010.

He can now add the Giller silverware to his trophy case.

"Suffice to say that Terumi is relieved and that I have been quite surprised by all of the success," confides Ferguson. "Maybe I should start thinking about practicing an acceptance speech."



419 By Will Ferguson / Penguin / 416 pp / \$32

419 signals a well-played departure of sorts for Ferguson. Gone is the light humour of previous works, replaced with a heavy-hearted hand that follows protagonist Laura Curtis as she crosses continents in search of justice and redemption for her father's murder. En route, she encounters a quirky cast of characters that bring out both the best and the worst in her own. Despite

the newfound darkness, however - and as with the author's past works - the writing and pacing are fluid and fresh, fleshed out atop a strong narrative arc. Setting, mood and tone emerge with the subtle touches of a master craftsman, as the dialogue invites readers to dive into murky moral depths. An excellent read and one that is well worthy of all the accolades.



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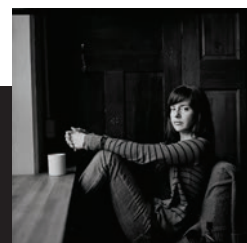
Plain Tweed Walking Hat 55 Euro



Patchwork Tweed Walking Hat 55 Euro

Ryan MacDonald

www.ryanmacdonaldphotography.com



Sights

I grew up in the community of North Shore on Cape Breton.

I was the kid on the school bus handing The Rankin Family tapes to the bus driver to play when the other kids were listening to Top 40.



I know I've taken a good photograph when I've captured something special about the subject; a moment, a mood, or an emotion.

A Spiritual Leader for Today

John Philip Newell has Canadian roots, Celtic ancestry, and often visits the United States but, although the spiritual leader and author is often on the move, his feet are firmly rooted in Celtic spirituality.

An ancient theology, Celtic spirituality emphasizes a love of nature, respect for art and travel, a sense of God as a personal presence and thin boundaries between the sacred and secular. Today, Celtic spirituality is becoming more relevant due, in part, to Newell's influential works, which include *Listening for the Heartbeat of God*, *A Celtic Spirituality*, *Sounds of the Eternal*, *A Celtic Psalter*; and *Christ of the Celts*, *The Healing of Creation*.

Newell considers himself an articulator of the hopes and yearnings of the world. As he wrote in *Christ of the Celts*:

"We can...be part of a new birthing within us and between us today. And the new birthing relates to the ancient song that we are invited to hear again...the more we become reacquainted with its music, the more we will come to know that the deepest notes within us and between us in our world are not discord. They form an ancient harmony."

Newell grew up in Canada, and worked as a chaplain at Canada's McMaster University. But, with an Irish father and a Scottish mother, he found his way back to Scotland in 1975 when he studied theology in Edinburgh.

Besides a stint at McMaster during the 1980s he's lived in Scotland ever since. Between 1988 and 1992, he was Warden of Iona Abbey, along with his wife Ali who, like her husband, is a minister of the Church of Scotland. Newell said that it was during his time on the island of Iona that he came to appreciate the Celtic spiritual tradition as a rich resource. In his work, he's tried to explore and apply the tradition's insights.

Iona, where Newell still leads spiritual pilgrimages, was the site of St. Columba's sixth century Christian monastery. Today, a restored medieval abbey and nunnery stand on the site. According to George MacLeod, the founder of the modern Iona community, Iona is "thin"; meaning it's a place where the divide between the physical and spiritual worlds is narrow.

Newell said MacLeod doesn't mean that everywhere else is thick. It's just that in some places we are more aware of the presence of God. He said that thin places are given to strengthen and bless us, to renew our perspective and to make us more aware of the thinness in our surroundings.

Newell identified other thin places, such as the desert landscape of New Mexico where he leads spiritual retreats. These wild places bring him into closer communion with the Creator. He said it's not the outer reality of these places that makes them thin but rather his inner response to them.

Recently, Newell has begun work in New Harmony, Indiana, the site of two 19th century utopian communities, where he's exploring his desire to promote peace among diverse groups.

This is a theme that Newell focused on in his book, *Praying with the Earth: A Prayer Book for Peace*, which features words from the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions. His own writings are a response to the themes he hears in these traditions. His newest book is titled, *A New Harmony: The Spirit, the Earth, and the Human Soul*, a sequel to his *Christ of the Celts*. The earlier book focused on the ancient understanding of Christ, while the new one focuses on the Spirit.

He is also working as Writer Theologian for the Scottish Cathedral of the Isles and Companion Theologian for the American Spirituality Centre of Casa del Sol (Ghost Ranch, New Mexico). He is co-founder of the non-profit organization *Salva Terra: A Vision towards Earth's Healing* and, in 2011, he received the *Contemplative Voices Award* from the Shalem Institute in Washington DC.

Newell sometimes fantasizes about being a full-time writer, but the thought is fleeting because he receives so much from the people he teaches. He sees these interactions as confirmation of his connection to the work of the Spirit in the western world. He considers this a gift, something to keep in mind as he boards yet another airplane.

By Cindy Thomson
www.cindyswriting.com



Celtic Crossroads

Steps

Committed to bringing the music of Ireland to the world

Back in 2005, Kevin Crosby was working for an Irish-themed hotel in the U.S. when he became horrified at the Irish music he heard there. Having grown up in a musical family in Galway, the business student had a deep appreciation for Irish music and its tradition, and he felt that what he was seeing and hearing in America was no more than a lot of clichés.

"I was very embarrassed in seeing how Irish culture was being portrayed in the U.S. and North America," says Crosby, who went on to co-found the high-octane, touring show Celtic Crossroads. "At the same time, my brother Eamon was in Australia and, when we came back to Ireland, he'd had a similar experience, so we decided to put on a street show and put together a unique collection of music and dance."

Although not performers themselves, the brothers teamed up with friend and multi-instrumentalist Michael McClintock, now the show's musical director, and created a fun, summer-time street performance, which soon burgeoned through word of mouth.

The show fused traditional Irish music, such as ballads, jigs and reels, with blue-grass, gypsy and jazz and traced the history of Irish music and its influence on the world. From the start, the blend was a hit.

"In 2007, we became quite ambitious and decided to take it on tour. We never dreamed that it would turn into a show of worldwide audiences at some of the biggest stages," says Crosby, who is also the show's producer.

Today, the Celtic Crossroads troupe is gearing up for its sixth tour of North America. The cast includes some of the best new talent out of Ireland. Among the seven musicians, three dancers and 32 instruments currently in the show, Lisa Canny, a multi-instrumentalist, singer and composer from Co. Mayo has won seven All-Ireland first place titles in the Fleadh Ceoil on both banjo and harp. Bodhrán player Diarmaid Hurley won the All-Ireland Championship in 2002. Other performers include Kate Moloney, an accomplished accordion and flute player, Shaunessy Sinnett, an award-winning dancer, and Charlene Morrison, a dancer and much-lauded classical pianist.

Carolyn Franks, director of the Whatley Center for the Performing Arts in Mt. Pleasant, Texas, saw Celtic Crossroads

at Arts Midwest and knew she had to bring the group to her own venue.

"I just loved what I was seeing. The amount of musicianship is extremely appealing, plus the variety of the show - being vocal, instrumental and dance - is wonderful," she says.

That's something that staff and patrons at Wolf Trap, America's National Park for the Performing Arts, have known for years. "I jumped on the bandwagon when they did their first U.S. tour and they have played here almost every time since," says Peter Zimmerman, director of program and production for the Virginia-based foundation. "We have another two shows coming up in 2013."

Many of the performers have known each other for a long time, which helps when they're on the road.

"The Irish music scene is quite a close-knit community, so quite often some of the cast members have known each other since childhood," says bodhrán-player, Hurley. "The main thing I love about it is I'm travelling, living, and playing music with a really good bunch of close friends who all come from different places and lives, but who came together through the love of the music."

Crosby says that no two shows are ever the same and he relies on the improvisational creativity of the cast. The musicians often work on fresh material as they travel.

For Marcus Donnelly, the show's dance director, the constant stream of new material is what keeps Celtic Crossroads challenging for all involved.

"Every show is live and there is an energy and excitement which comes with having to perform on time every time," he says. "Working with the boys and girls of Celtic Crossroads has been a rollercoaster ride through hell and high water, from busking on the smallest streets of my hometown in the west of Ireland to sold-out arenas across North America."

As their winter tour begins, Celtic Crossroads remains focused on bringing authentic Irish music to their audiences.

By Keith Loria
www.celticcrossroads.ie





Soul Sisters

Canada's Wendy MacIsaac and Mary Jane Lamond bring their long-standing friendship to fruition with their first recording Seinn

It has been a long time coming for the two veteran Nova Scotian musicians.

"We always knew that we'd eventually get around to recording together," smiles fiddler and pianist Wendy MacIsaac. "It was only a matter of time."

"Time was always the issue," agrees her friend and vocalist Mary Jane Lamond. "We talked about it for years, but we've both been quite busy with our lives. I'm glad we never let go of the idea, however, because the experience was incredibly profound."

Like their friendship, Seinn's soaring melodies and solid arrangements are rooted in a common cultural heritage. Both hail from Cape Breton, the ruggedly lovely island off Canada's east coast. The island is part of the province of Nova Scotia and is home to many Canadians with Celtic roots.

"I am of 100 per cent Scottish descent," says MacIsaac. "My ancestors landed on the west side of Cape Breton Island where their traditions still live strong."

"My family on both sides mostly came from the Highlands of Scotland," explains Lamond. "On my mother's side they came up to Hants Co. Nova Scotia, after the Revolutionary War, and on my

father's side they landed in Cape Breton from North Uist in the 1820s."

Each was engaged with their ancestral legacies at an early age.

"My mother taught step dancing lessons with Minnie MacMaster (mother of well-known fiddler, Natalie) at community halls in Inverness County when I was about three and I used to go with them," recalls MacIsaac fondly. "I guess I just picked it up and then took some lessons from Harvey Beaton after that. Fiddle music and Gaelic language and singing were always heard at local concerts, radio programs and in my mom and dad's and grandparents' houses. So part of my music comes from osmosis. Then when I was 12, I picked up my friend's fiddle at a concert and decided then and there that I wanted to try it. I started accompanying on the piano when I was about 15."

Lamond's lessons were also close to home.

"I grew up in a house where my mother played the piano and sang most nights after supper. I can't really remember a time in my childhood when I wasn't singing most days. My poor siblings probably wanted to kill me, but I sang non-stop growing up."

She notes that the reasons for playing music have changed only a bit over the years.

"I think two things shifted in my life. First of all I discovered traditional Gaelic singing in Cape Breton and that became my

passion, and secondly, performing for a living took some of the joy of singing for myself away for awhile. But as I found more balance in my life I found a way to fit both things in and even find myself singing around the house now for the joy of it.”

MacIsaac echoes the sentiment.

“I play music today because I still very much enjoy it,” she shares. “And also because it’s really all I have ever done as a job - I’ve been playing for nearly 30 years.”

“When I listen to very good Celtic music I get inspired. I’d say most Cape Breton fiddlers of my generation would be on the same page as me when I say inspiration comes from a tape of Carl MacKenzie or Arthur Muise with Mary Jessie MacDonald on the piano, or Howie MacDonald, John Morris Rankin and Dave MacIsaac or Buddy MacMaster and Betty Lou Beaton or Jerry Holland and Hilda Chaisson. There is something special about those old tapes. They don’t have the pristine quality that the newer recordings have, but there is something to be said about just playing at a dance or a party and not worrying about mistakes or how fast or slow you are playing. I get inspired by other Celtic musicians also, as well as musicians of other genres like blues, pop and rock, such as Lucinda Williams and Shawn Colvin.”

Lamond is motivated by an ongoing passion for her culture.

“I am still learning about Gaelic singing and the song tradition and it is such a deep well that I think I will never get to the bottom of it. So my goal is to learn as much as I can from traditional singers.

“It’s a funny thing but I never really have considered myself to have a “career” per se. I have been lucky enough to make a living doing what I love to do but mostly long to just get better at singing Gaelic songs through improving my language skills and learning from others. What is most inspiring for me is to have the opportunity to teach people about the amazing oral literary tradition that exists in Gaelic culture.”

Seinn was a natural outgrowth of the pair’s professional and personal relationship.



“Mary Jane decided she wanted to pare down from the full band sound and asked if I could play more tunes in her sets and it eventually ended up as a split show,” notes MacIsaac, adding, “For the recording we picked songs and tunes we liked and then ran them by one another. In some tracks, I picked out tunes I thought complimented the song and vice versa. Thankfully, we both like the same kind of tunes and songs.”

“I’m very happy to be making music with Wendy,” pipes in Lamond, “and the CD combines our arranging sensibilities and also the Gaelic song and tune traditions. We have been playing the music at a few festivals this year and are having a great time. With this CD I feel more inspired to get up onto a stage than I have for a long time.”

The success of the creative collaboration has them looking to future possibilities.

“Hopefully it won’t take us nearly as long to do the next recording,” laughs MacIsaac. “I think we make some pretty good music together.”



Seinn

Mary Jane Lamond & Wendy MacIsaac - TurtleMusik

From the opening chords of Yellow Coat to the closing refrains of If You Were Mine, Seinn takes listeners on a stirring and soulful sojourn into a rich musical heritage. Lamond shines on both the acapella Rinn Mi Còrr is Naoi Mile and the gentle Tàladh Na Beinne Guirme, while MacIsaac struts her stuff on Keeping Up With Calum and Boise Monsters. The highlight here, however, is Hoireann ó Rathill iù ó, where each brings out the best in the other. As such, Seinn is a magical elixir of melody; one shot of supple, one shot of swagger. A special shout-out to the fabulous fretwork of guitarist Sèph Peters, and to the plethora of players, producers and engineers for creating a palette upon which Lamond and MacIsaac have painted a poignant musical portrait.



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Style

I was born and raised in the Sudan and lived there until I was 16. My mother is Irish and my father is Egyptian/Sudanese. I had a very interesting and diverse childhood and it is this exposure to a mixture of cultures that fuels my creative fire. www.lisashawgi.com



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Barnacle Geese

The Barnacle Geese that overwinter in Scotland represent an incredible survival story, but their future is threatened by the Polar Bears that menace their summer breeding grounds in the Arctic Circle.

It is cold and in the semi darkness my breath condenses on my face. Close to the mouth of the River Nith in Dumfriesshire I crouch behind a bank of reeds, on the other side of which lie the merse and mudflats of the Solway Firth.

A faint glow in the east transforms the clouds on the distant horizon from dark grey shapes to orange-fringed morning embers. A red fireball rises slowly and dawn's fuse is lit. Burning daggers streak across the wet sand and from behind the reed bed there is a sudden explosion of life. A flock of fifty geese rises in the air, flies straight towards me and over my head. From my left come another fifty and from the right perhaps a hundred more. Now I lose count for they are rising all around; thousands of them streaking inland and I can hear the beat of their wings as well as their yapping call. It is winter and the Barnacle Geese are back.

The Barnacle Geese that overwinter on the Solway Firth, the estuarial water that divides Scotland from England on the west of the country, all come from the island of Spitsbergen, part of the Svalbard archipelago high in the Arctic Circle above Norway. These birds represent around 30 per cent of the total number of Barnacle Geese that visit the U.K. each year.

As Arctic winter descends, the Svalbard Barnacles start to head south towards the Norwegian coast before making the final stage of their journey across the North Sea to Scotland. From early October, in excess of 30,000 Barnacle Geese will begin to arrive at the

Solway Firth. This figure represents a truly amazing conservation story, for in the years immediately after WWII the number was only around 300.

Throughout the war years, there was considerable conflict between the disparate parties that held a vested interest in the land around the Solway; wildfowlers, fishers, farmers, conservationists and the military that used the area for explosives production and testing. Barnacle Geese and other species were unable to feed undisturbed.

The great naturalist Peter Scott, founder of the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT) in 1946, was a regular visitor to the area. He worked with the landowner, the Duke of Norfolk, and the various parties to establish specific zones for the different activities based on sound conservation principles. The result was the founding of the WWT's Caerlaverock reserve in 1970 which, as part of a wider National Nature Reserve, provides undisturbed winter grazing. Consequently, Barnacle numbers have increased dramatically.

Brian Morrell, WWT Learning Manager responsible for Caerlaverock's education programme explains,

"It is essential that the geese feed well with minimal disturbance in order to build the fat reserves that will enable them to survive winter and the long journey back to Svalbard in the spring. They may need to rely on these reserves even further when they arrive in Svalbard depending on the weather conditions."

The WWT has been ringing Barnacle Geese since the 1960s in order to understand where they go and what their breeding patterns are. Recently, some birds have been fitted with satellite tracking devices to show precise migration routes and journey times. This data can be used to influence planning decisions regarding such matters as the location of wind farms in the U.K. and in Norway.



"The study of Barnacle Geese by the WWT is one of the longest running migratory bird studies anywhere in the world," explains Morrell.

Barnacle Geese are a protected species and with numbers having increased a hundred fold in a few decades it would seem that all is well. Sadly, a new problem may be emerging at the other end of the birds' migratory range.

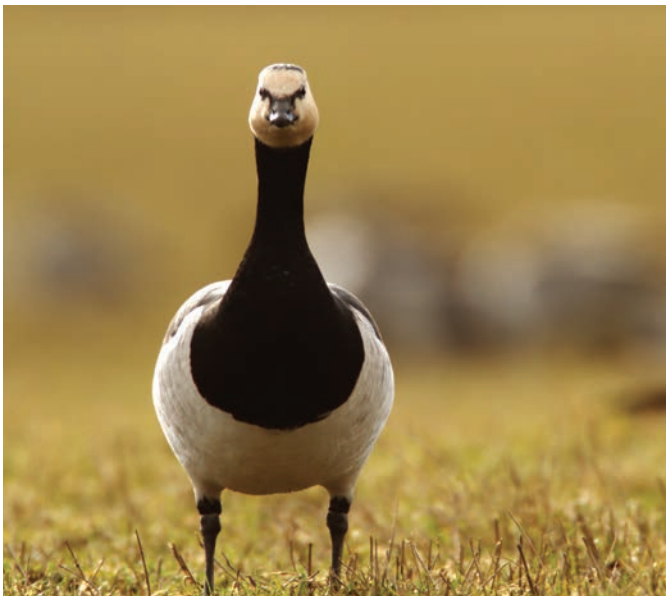
As the geese leave in spring and return to their summer breeding grounds in Spitsbergen the worst of the Arctic winter should be over, leaving them an uninterrupted breeding season in which to raise their young. Polar Bears, which also frequent these parts, should be following the colder weather north to search out their food sources of seal and other animals, but over the last decade, warming seas and thinning ice floes have caused Polar Bears to become trapped on the islands in the summer months. To avoid starvation, the bears are turning to the eggs and young of breeding birds, including Barnacle Geese. Many of the geese are ground nesters on small coastal islands and they make easy targets for the bears. A mother bear and cub can quickly destroy hundreds of nests and eggs. Thankfully, Barnacles also breed on cliffs and these ones escape the worst of the predation. However, there are limited cliff-nesting sites and it is unclear if ground-breeding geese could ever adapt.

Morrell has followed the geese to the Arctic Circle four times.

"It may be several years before the full impact of Polar Bear predation becomes evident but this year at Caerlaverock early indications are that first-time migrant numbers are down," he says.

While Barnacle Geese are not classified as endangered they are regarded as vulnerable. Sadly, Polar Bears are vulnerable too and they shouldn't be relying on an inadequate diet of young birds and eggs. The presence of Polar Bears in the summer breeding grounds of the Barnacle Geese creates a conflict of nature that simply shouldn't be happening.

As the sun climbs higher in the sky and the ribbons of geese streak further inland I wonder if the Barnacle success story can continue unabated.



Words & photos by Tom Langlands



Spruce Beer

photo credit: Lorain Ebbett-Rideout

Early emigrants to North America suffered from scurvy, but they were taught how to make spruce beer and avoid the dread disease by the native people.

Winter 1535, and the fleet of French explorer Jacques Cartier lay immobilized by thick ice at the mouth of the St. Charles River, in the area that would become Quebec City.

For Cartier, who was born in Brittany, and his men, the Canadian winter must have presented a strange and threatening landscape – the ice on the river lay almost six feet thick and the snow on the shore was four feet deep.

The sailors, who had left home in order to search for the fabled Northwest Passage to Asia, were marooned and began falling ill then dying from scurvy. Cartier wrote that by the middle of February, “out of 110 that we were, not ten were well enough to help the others, a pitiful thing to see”.

Death by scurvy is terrible – the disease, which is caused by a lack of Vitamin C, initially causes symptoms such as lethargy, bone pain, gum disease and loosening of the teeth, followed by swelling of the body, convulsions and fever. It took the lives of 25 of Cartier’s men. The rest were in peril until Cartier was told of a cure for the disease known to the native people, the Iroquoians.

An Iroquoian, who was probably Dom Agaya the son of a chief, took pity on the Europeans and told them to boil the tips of coniferous trees, such as spruce, fir or cedar, and drink the infusion.

The Iroquoian shared this knowledge despite the fact he and his brother had previously been kidnapped by Cartier and taken back to France. As instructed, Cartier’s men boiled the bark of a white spruce tree in water and found the tea it produced quickly cured the sick. Amazed, Cartier called the recovery of his men a miracle.

In the years that followed, many European immigrants drank spruce tip tea to prevent the scurvy that was often caused by the settlers’ poor winter diet. The health benefits arose from the fact that spruce tips, especially the new growth, contain up to 50 mg of vitamin C per 100 grams.

The native people of eastern Canada also prevented scurvy by chewing the spruce tree’s inner bark and sticky gum. But the early immigrants, both French and Celtic, soon learned that when blended with molasses and yeast, spruce tips made a drink they’d loved back home: beer, and one that could be easily produced at any time of the year.

Brewing beer in the New World was difficult for many years. Grain was raised for bread or animal feed not for beer malt. Hops were rarely grown and expensive to import. Spruce tips quickly became a fair substitute for hops. Molasses offered a sugary alternative to beer malt syrup. Easily fermentable and a cheap by-product of the Caribbean sugar industry, molasses was already a staple of every immigrant’s larder. Combined, spruce tips and dark molasses produced a simple healthy beverage.

The immigrants took naturally to the new drink; French fur traders, explorers and settlers appear to have begun brewing spruce beer sometime in the early 1600s. Irish and Scottish immigrants often toasted a handful of oats or bran on a hot stove then added it to the boiling spruce and molasses for a taste of home. The New England Colonies made thousands of gallons yearly and it became part of the culture, much like rum.

However, spruce beer’s low alcohol content – about five per cent – meant that it was considered a wise alternative to rum. Wives and children were allowed to drink it and even teetotalers

enjoyed it. The beer was so popular that recipes for spruce beers are found in many early household books. The Hudson’s Bay Co. instructed staff at its many posts around North America to encourage the men to “partake of the sensible sound drink that never made a drunkard”.

But it was the military that truly spread spruce beer across North America as, wherever the military went, spruce beer was made. In 1759, British General Jeffery Amherst ordered that spruce beer be issued to all ranks daily. In the same year, The Daily Order for Highland Regiments in North America stipulated that “Spruce beer is to be brewed for the health and convenience of the troops which will be served at prime cost. Five quarts of molasses will be put into every barrel of spruce beer. Each gallon will cost nearly three coppers.”

In Atlantic Canada, spruce beer was particularly popular and immigrants brewed it well into the 20th century. Joseph Banks, writing in 1766 about Newfoundland, described spruce beer as “the common liquor of the country” and Patrick Devine noted in 1900 that “Barrels and barrels of spruce beer would be sold out in a single day” in many Newfoundland towns. It was referred to as the “cup that cheers but not inebriates”.

If you’d like to sample an old-fashioned “pint o’ pitch” like early French and Celtic emigrants, try this simple recipe for Spruce Beer:

Ingredients

A couple of dozen spruce tips, about 10-15 centimeters long. Try to get the year’s fresh growth at the very end of the limb. The black spruce is the preferred species but black and white spruce can be used with equal results.

One liter of molasses,
A ten-liter food grade plastic pail,
Five plastic two-liter pop bottles with caps cleaned and dried,
A packet of baker’s yeast.

Preparation

Bring all ten liters of water to a boil and toss in the spruce tips. Let them boil for 40 minutes minimum. With experience, you will know how long to boil the tips to suit your taste – longer boiling times make stronger-tasting beer.

Carefully strain the liquid through a clean cloth into your pail, over the molasses, and mix thoroughly.

Once the mixture cools to blood temperature, stir in the baker’s yeast. After it starts frothing steadily, cover with another cloth and tie a string around it to keep out the dust.

After three-four days, pour the beer through a cloth-covered funnel into the pop bottles and screw the caps on tight. Wait a week before tasting. The flavour is unique: a smoky spruce and quite pleasant.

By Cary Rideout





The History of Highland Dance

part four

In this final part in a series, Dr. Michael Newton of the Department of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia looks at the future of Highland Dance in the Canadian Maritimes.

I'd like to make some remarks in this last installment about how the past history of dance traditions relates to our planning for the future, whether at the Gaelic College in Cape Breton, in our classrooms, or in our homes.

What do we mean by "Gaelic tradition" or "Highland tradition"? ("Gaelic" and "Highland" have essentially been synonymous since the medieval period.) This question has certainly been at the heart of some of the heated debates surrounding changes and claims about changes to tradition since well before the Gaelic College was founded – in fact, every documented music and dance innovation in the Scottish Highlands for the last three hundred years or more has been accompanied by controversy.

All tradition was invented, or introduced, by someone at sometime – the key questions, I think, are: How does the community respond to the innovation? How do they adapt and transform it to suit their own aesthetic parameters and cultural needs? How does the innovation interact with other aspects of

tradition, weakening or reinforcing them? Does the innovation get embraced and integrated because it genuinely enriches the rest of tradition, or because the society is so compromised and desperate for external validation that it accepts whatever is expected of it?

The interesting thing is that most of the elements now considered "traditional" in the Gaelic music and dance tradition of the Atlantic Maritimes – the fiddle, step-dancing, and dance music (reels and jigs) – were fairly late introductions which were initially resisted by at least some Highlanders. The fiddle, for example, only entered Highland Scotland from continental Europe in the second half of the seventeenth century. Almost all the modern dance forms now associated with Scotland – the reel, country dances, "Highland Dance," step-dancing, Nova Scotian square sets, etc. – ultimately originate (to various degrees) in France. Many of these are dances introduced by French, or French-trained, dancing masters in the second half of the eighteenth century – so, in other words, these "essential" aspects of tradition were still fairly new when Highland immigrants came to Canada.

There can be little disputing the fact that Highland Dance has not been a folk art for many generations now: it does not exist in regional variation, you will not see it performed by community members as a normal part of a céilidh, etc. Step-dancing, by contrast, still is a folk art practiced by Gaelic communities. But I also want to emphasize that step-dance is not somehow inherently "more Gaelic" in its essence than Highland Dance: it simply went through a phase of being revised, embraced and performed by a Gaelic-speaking community. There is no inherent reason why that did not or could not happen to "Highland Dance" as well,

given the right conditions. In fact, we could say the same thing about any other expressive art forms: hip-hop, tango, Bulgarian round dances, etc.

It is merely by their being adopted by and integrated within the wider body of Gaelic tradition that they become Gaelic art forms. Fiddle music was reshaped by the patterns, contours and rhythms of the Gaelic language, for example, and step-dancing followed accordingly. This is especially apparent when Gaelic *puirt-à-beul* (mouth music) is compared to the fiddle tunes and the step-dance footwork. Highland Dance could be re-Gaelicized, if there was sufficient interest and investment in the effort. The reality now is simply that it is almost exclusively an athletic activity done by non-Gaels in non-Gaelic performance contexts.

The Gaelic community itself has been undermined for generations and eroded to a very fragile state. There is a real need for some institution in the Maritimes to take the lead in revitalizing the language, culture, and arts together and in a holistic way so that the connections and synergies between them are maintained and developed. Musicians need to understand how these various aspects and genres of tradition are integrated with and related to one another, and how they evolved historically. This would aid them in renewing the tradition, finding new paths forward that honour the integrity of tradition and invigorate it without violating its essential principles.

Many of the young crop of Scottish performers today are graduates of The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly known as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama), which began a degree in Scottish Music in the 1990s. Students study not just a specific instrument (or voice), but the two native languages of Scotland (Gaelic and Scots) and the history of Scottish music. The rewards to Scottish music and culture have been tremendous. Similar benefits have come from over twenty years of the Gaelic workshops all over Scotland known officially as *Fèisean nan Gàidheal*, which allow over 13,000 youth each year to study various Highland performing arts and the Gaelic language. Cape Breton University and St. Francis Xavier University have courses that could provide some formal foundations, and the Gaelic College offers workshops to address some of these skills in a more popular format, but there does not seem to be a conscious, systematic effort to develop Gaelic tradition as a sustainable community resource in the Maritimes.



As it is, there is a growing disconnection. Few of the new generation of musicians or dancers, however virtuosic they may be and popular amongst anglophone audiences, can speak the language in which all of these art forms were developed. Rare are those who know the names and origins of the tunes that they play or dances that they perform, or who have mastered the idioms well enough to compose new ones. This should sound alarm bells. Highland Dance was divorced from its cultural roots generations ago, and now the music and dance traditions brought by Gaelic emigrants to the Maritimes and enriched by their descendants is also becoming disembodied and alienated from the rest of Gaelic tradition, a commodity to sell to tourists and consumers but not linked meaningfully to the communities which sustained them for so long.



These challenges bring to mind an idiomatic Gaelic expression collected and printed in the nineteenth century: *Ged a chuala iad an ceòl, cha do thuig iad am port* - Although they heard the music, they did not understand the tune. This is one of many endorsements within Gaelic tradition itself that music is not just meant to provoke an emotional response or an aesthetic judgement, but to be understood and appreciated in cultural and linguistic terms. Unless communities invest in the training and education necessary, it will all become a foreign jargon intelligible only to a few antiquarians and academics.



Ancestral Tourism is growing. Here, tour director Christine Woodcock offers researchers some advice.

Alex Haley once wrote: "In all of us there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage - to know who we are and where we came from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness."

Discovering who we are seems to be a fundamental need of the Baby Boomers. The family stories and oral histories that allowed previous generations to know in their souls who they were are not as accessible to current generations.

The Boomers have reached, or are approaching, retirement and can now dedicate their free time to researching their family histories. Many are fast becoming the oldest generation in their families and they're determined to ensure that the family legacy and memories will live on. Many know that the best way to truly understand their ancestors is to visit their homeland.

Genealogy vacations are on the rise as people "head home" in an effort to discover their heritage. This will have a positive impact on the economy of countries like Scotland, Ireland and Wales where the history and heritage are rich and where the repositories provide priceless treasures of their own.

Traveling to the home of your ancestors takes planning. It is not enough to show up in the village, head to the local pub and start asking questions. You need to do some research in advance.

Learn about what repositories are available, what archival materials they hold, who can access them and what is required to access them (do you need a readers ticket or special card? Do

you need photo ID? Do you need to provide passport photos so an ID card can be created?)

Learn the hours that the repositories are open, whether an appointment or booking time is required and whether there are fees.

Many archival institutions have their holdings off-site, so it is important that you know this and order ahead so that your time can be well spent.

Read up on whether you are allowed to photograph, scan, download or copy the images.

Take your laptop or tablet as well as a USB stick.

For anyone traveling to an archival repository, the most important part of their research experience is not just the interaction with the archival documents, but their interaction with the archivists themselves. Archivists provide the road map to the archives and the records contained within. It is the archivist who helps the researcher truly understand the information that can be gleaned from the records. The archivist puts the documents into perspective and helps the researcher know where to look next. And it is the archivist's enthusiasm and passion for what they do that puts the passion and enthusiasm into the researcher himself. It sparks the learning, and quells the yearning. This is particularly important if you're traveling to archives where the information you seek is not yet readily available online, such as Ireland or Wales.



Since you are likely to be traveling several hundred or even several thousand miles, take the time to create an itinerary. You will quickly tire of spending all of your days in libraries, archives, or genealogy societies reading records. As exciting as the finds will be, make sure you take the time to assimilate the information you have uncovered. Plan for a night in to re-read the information and see how it all fits into what you already know. Break up your week by planning some sight-seeing, even if only to the cemetery of your ancestors. If you can, immerse yourself in the social history and culture of your ancestral homeland. Enjoy a meal in a pub, take in a ceilidh, and try local foods. Take the time to walk the streets. Visit museums that specialize in social history to gain a better sense of the times in which your ancestors lived.

Be careful in the plans you make. Many countries run "ancestral" tours. These are travel companies, not genealogy companies, and you won't get the access to and assistance at the repositories to make the best of your trip. If you are traveling to the Isle of Man, Cornwall or Brittany, hire yourself a genealogist who is an expert in those records and work out a research plan with them. You can access these experts through local genealogy societies:

Isle of Man: www.iomfhs.im

Cornwall: www.cornwallfhs.com

Brittany: www.bretagne-genealogie.org

If you would like to travel with an organized group whose purpose is genealogy research, Richard Doherty of Celtic Quest takes groups to Ireland every fall. These trips include both Belfast (including the new PRONI center) and Dublin. Dick's website is www.celticquest.net

My company, Genealogy Tours of Scotland, takes groups to Scotland every spring to research the repositories in Edinburgh, including the Scotland's People Centre, the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish Genealogy Society. I can also make arrangements for you to visit the family history society in your ancestral part of Scotland.

These organized trips allow you to access records that are not available online and give you protected time at the various repositories where you can get professional help from the archivists. Many of these places know in advance that groups are coming and provide extra staffing.

A trip to your ancestral homeland is both awe-inspiring and humbling. It provides you with such a deep-seated feeling of reverence knowing you stand in the same place where your ancestors walked. The sights, some of the landmarks and the sounds may have changed, but the deep emotion of knowing your great, great anything once stood in the same spot you are now standing in, or worshipped at the church you are visiting, is incomparable. It helps put the dates, names and places into perspective. It breathes life into the documents. And as always, it makes you want to know more.

By Christine Woodcock
www.genealogytoursofscotland.ca



History Kilmartin Glen

Words & photos by
Tom Langlands

The site of many hundreds of ancient monuments, Kilmartin Glen is one of Scotland's richest prehistoric landscapes. Here, award-winning photographer and long-time Celtic Life International contributor Tom Langlands looks at the history and significance of this mysterious place.

In a churchyard in the village of Kilmartin, Argyll, stand some of the oldest carved gravestones in Scotland. Intricate patterns chiselled on slabs of rock 800 years ago provide subtle clues about those long departed and give death a sense of poignancy. Standing by these ancient stones and gazing across the landscape of Kilmartin Glen, it is evident that carving stones and marking the landscape is an inherent part of this special location. Journey through the mists of this glen and you travel through time to prehistory and the birth of a nation.

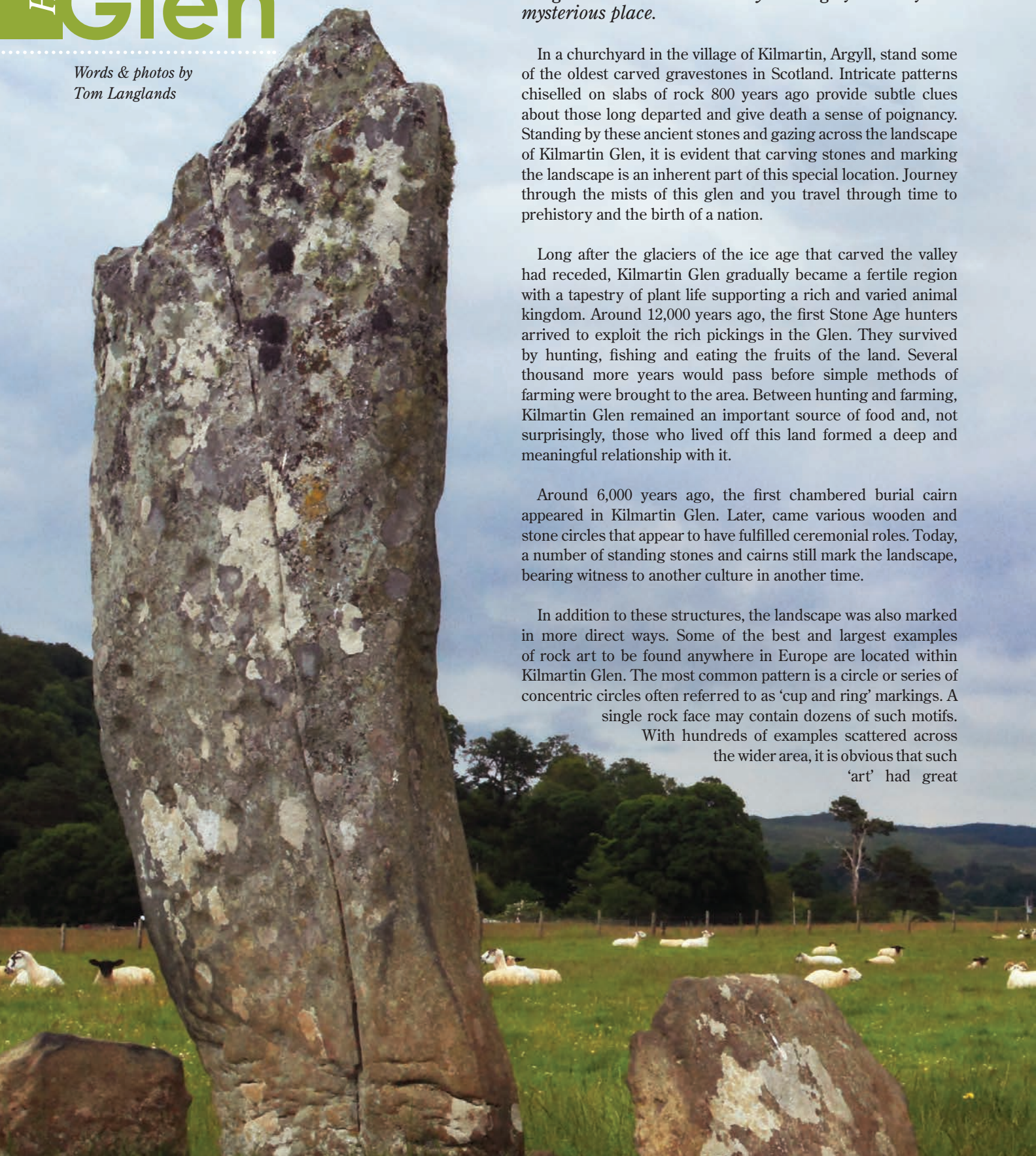
Long after the glaciers of the ice age that carved the valley had receded, Kilmartin Glen gradually became a fertile region with a tapestry of plant life supporting a rich and varied animal kingdom. Around 12,000 years ago, the first Stone Age hunters arrived to exploit the rich pickings in the Glen. They survived by hunting, fishing and eating the fruits of the land. Several thousand more years would pass before simple methods of farming were brought to the area. Between hunting and farming, Kilmartin Glen remained an important source of food and, not surprisingly, those who lived off this land formed a deep and meaningful relationship with it.

Around 6,000 years ago, the first chambered burial cairn appeared in Kilmartin Glen. Later, came various wooden and stone circles that appear to have fulfilled ceremonial roles. Today, a number of standing stones and cairns still mark the landscape, bearing witness to another culture in another time.

In addition to these structures, the landscape was also marked in more direct ways. Some of the best and largest examples of rock art to be found anywhere in Europe are located within Kilmartin Glen. The most common pattern is a circle or series of concentric circles often referred to as 'cup and ring' markings. A

single rock face may contain dozens of such motifs.

With hundreds of examples scattered across the wider area, it is obvious that such 'art' had great



significance in the lives of these people. Despite much research and many theories, there is no conclusive answer regarding the purpose or meaning of these elaborate carvings. This is still one of the great mysteries and attractions of the Glen.

Sharon Webb, Director and Curator of Kilmartin House Museum and author of *In the Footsteps of Kings: a new guide to walks in and around Kilmartin Glen*, said the carvings intrigue visitors.

“What prompted prehistoric people to begin marking rocks with motifs, and what the meaning behind these actions was, is something that fascinates many people who come to the Glen,” Webb said.

Towards the southern end of the Glen, a rocky hill stands in the middle of the flat valley floor. On its summit are other marked rocks, and one of particular interest is shaped and hollowed to accept a human foot. Standing here, with one foot placed firmly in the rock, it is possible to survey a vast area of the surrounding land, and it is in this way that kingly status was ceremoniously granted to important individuals. This was the royal fortress of Dunadd, and the kingdom of the Gaelic-speaking Dál Riata lay all around. In this place, the first shoots of the Scottish nation appear, but its roots are firmly planted in nearby Ireland.

The centre of the Gael culture was in County Antrim in the north of Ireland, although there was a Gael presence and shared language with the islands and coastline of western Scotland. The Romans referred to these early Irish and Scottish Gaels by the derogatory name of Scoti or Scotti. This term was later used to describe Gaels generally. Total Gael domination of the area is attributed to Fergus Mór mac Eirc, from County Antrim, who invaded Argyll around 1,500 years ago and established the hill fort at Dunadd as his power base. Lying in the middle of the Mòine Mhór or the ‘big bog’, the fort was a well-positioned stronghold that enjoyed connections to the wider world by way of the adjacent River Add.

As the Dál Riata influence expanded, Dunadd became a major trade and political centre within the kingdom. Strategic alliances were made on this hill.

Exotic goods, fine wines and precious metals were imported and beautiful jewellery was crafted here.

Dunadd and the Kingdom of Dál Riata were extremely important, Webb said.

“It was a kingdom that stretched over Northern Ireland and Scotland at a time when the separate nations of Scotland and Ireland were not yet conceived of. Dunadd was for many years the ceremonial, administrative and in some senses, spiritual centre of the kingdom, it was the place where kings were literally ‘made’. The kingdom was eventually united with the Pictish kingdom to form the nation of Scotland, which took its Gaelic language from the people of Dál Riata.”

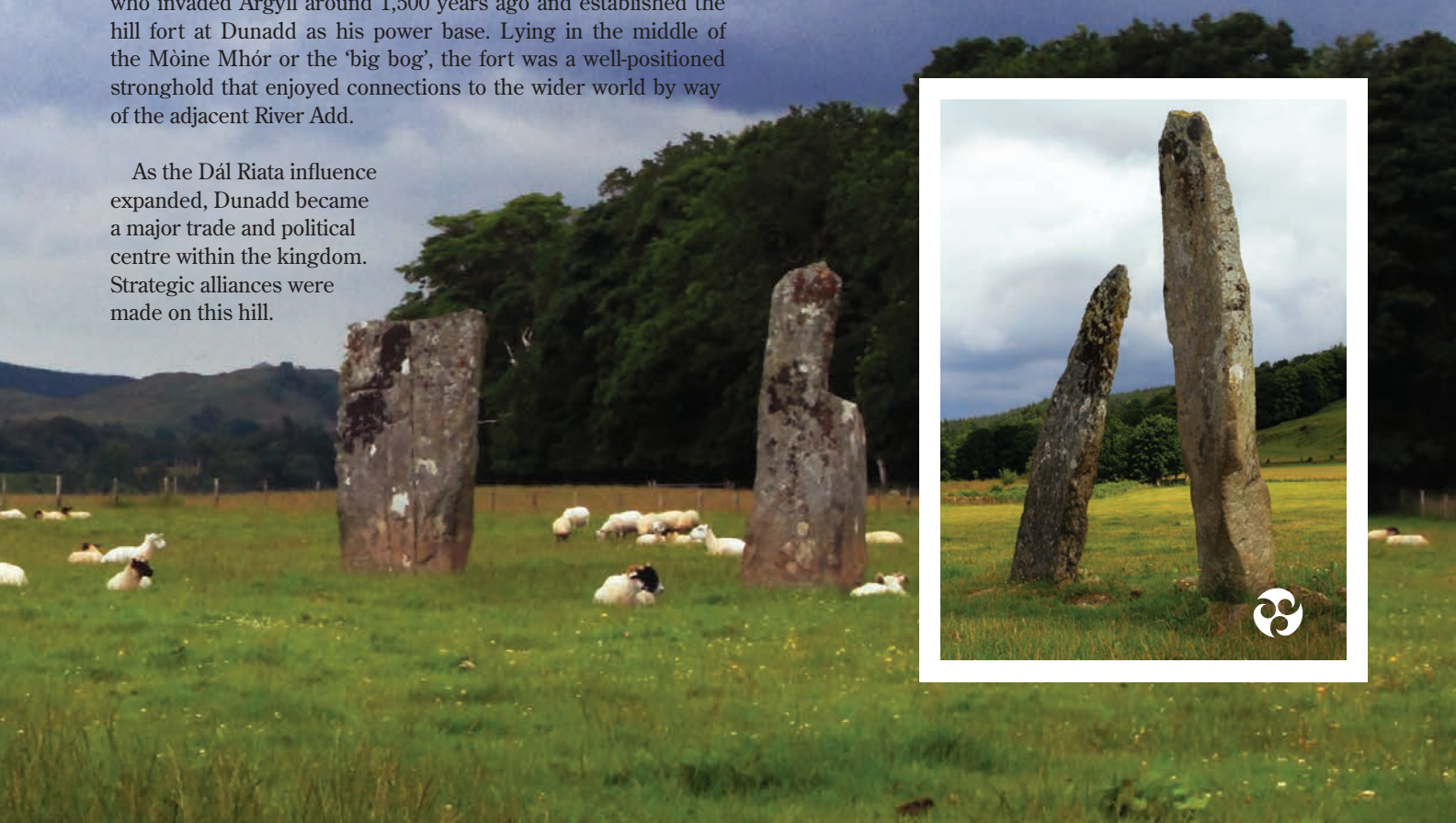
As the Gaelic influence of the Dál Riata spread, so did the more general use of Scoti or Scotti to describe the wider population, eventually giving rise to the modern name of the people and their country as ‘Scottish’ and ‘Scotland’.

Back in Kilmartin churchyard, I wondered if the Glen still has secrets to reveal. Webb has no doubt.

“Oh yes, for example, excavations in the 1990s revealed previously unknown burial and ritual monuments, including a cursus¹, and Scotland’s largest timber circle. We have a rolling research programme that continues to shed light on the history of the Glen,” she said.

Leaving, I take a last glance at this mesmerizing place and contemplate how much man has marked this landscape and how much this landscape has carved a nation.

www.kilmartin.org



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the Gathering

Next year, Ireland will invite the world to join The Gathering Ireland 2013.

A year-long celebration, The Gathering will feature hundreds of events designed to highlight Irish arts, sports, business and historic attractions. It's anticipated that the festivities will bring an extra 325,000 visitors and an additional \$200 million worth of tourism revenue to the country.

Why not get involved? As Ireland's famous son William Butler Yeats once said, "There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't yet met." Below, E. E. Hanley makes some suggestions for celebrating The Gathering 2013.



ASHFORD CASTLE — Dating back to 1228, this spectacular five-star, lakefront hotel in Mayo offers classical interiors and sporting activities that include fishing, falconry, golf, horseback riding and cruising on the lake Lough Corrib. Ashford Castle plays a role in the Academy Award-winning 1952 movie, *The Quiet Man*. A new documentary, *John Ford: Dreaming the Quiet Man* (2012) features home-movie footage from the cast and crew's time at Ashford.



BLARNEY CASTLE — Built nearly 600 years ago by the great Irish chieftain Cormac MacCarthy, Blarney Castle in Cork is home to the famous Blarney Stone, or Stone of Eloquence, which is said to confer the gift of the gab on all who kiss it. The Travel Channel lists kissing the Blarney Stone among its 99 things to do before you die, but it isn't easy. For the gift of the gab one must climb 100 spiral stone steps, queue up, lie down backwards, grip the handrails, and lean two feet into the gap in order to plant a kiss on the stone.



CROKE PARK — Dublin's venue is Europe's fourth largest stadium and home to the Gaelic Athletic Association's annual Gaelic Games, including the All-Ireland Senior Football Championship and the Senior Hurling Championship. Croke also hosted a 1972 Muhammad Ali fight and Dublin's own U2 twice (2005, 2009). The Olympic torch traveled across Croke's 17-story Skyline walkway in 2012.

DUBLIN'S General Post Office served as rebel headquarters during the Easter Rising of 1916, and remains permanently marked by British bullets. The rebellion was a turning point in Ireland's struggle for independence. Yeats wrote, "A terrible beauty is born," after the execution of the Easter Rising leaders. Previously sealed witness statements are brought to light in the 2011 book *Rebels: Voices from the Easter Rising* by Fearghal McGarry, a senior lecturer in History at Queen's University, Belfast.

EMERALD ISLE — The poetic name for Ireland comes from the island's lush, green landscape, immortalized in the song *Forty Shades of Green*, written by Johnny Cash during a 1959 visit.

FESTIVALS — Ireland celebrates many festivals, but few as unusual as Lisdoonvarna's Matchmaking Festival, which draws 40,000 romantic hopefuls each September. Romantics will also appreciate the 1997 movie, *The Matchmaker*. Set in the fictional town of Ballinagra (Town of Love) and filmed in County Galway, *The Matchmaker* features a stirring Irish soundtrack, including *Irish Heartbeat* by Van Morrison and the Chieftains (1988). See www.thegatheringireland.com for Irish festivals.



HISTORIC PUBS OF DUBLIN – This 2008 PBS production explains how many Dublin pubs came to fame. In it, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt (*Angela's Ashes*, 1996 memoir, 1999 movie) explains the stories behind well-known drinking spots. A haunted former meetinghouse of rebels, the Brazen Head, built in 1803, is Dublin's oldest pub. O'Donoghue's, where the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem played and The Dubliners' Ronnie Drew held his wedding reception, still offers live music seven nights a week. McDaid's, with its tall ceilings, once served as Dublin's morgue. Kavanagh's, which is next to Glasnevin, Ireland's national cemetery, served gravediggers their beer in jam jars during the glass shortage of World War II, and Neary's, a 1916 rebel stronghold, now caters to theatre people.

IRISH ANCESTRY RESEARCH CENTRE – based at the University of Limerick, the centre is a leading provider of research, education and training in family history and Irish ancestry.

JOYCE – Every June 16th, Dublin hosts Bloomsday to celebrate James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), considered one of the finest novels of the 20th century. In it, Joyce parallels Homer's *Odyssey* and uses the stream of consciousness technique to take the reader through a day in the life of Dubliner Leopold Bloom. Joyce's book *Dubliners* (1914), a collection of 15 short stories, is being made into short films by award-winning movie writer and director Michael Kinirons. John Huston made a short film of *The Dead* (1987), which is the last story in *Dubliners* and the forward to *Ulysses*.



KYLEMORE ABBEY – A splendid baronial castle in Connemara, County Galway, Mitchell Henry, a wealthy London doctor, built the Abbey for his wife Margaret Vaughan in 1867. When Margaret, a 50-year-old mother of nine, died in 1875, Mitchell had a Gothic church built in her memory. A miniature replica of England's Norwich Cathedral, the church's interior is made of beautiful green Connemara marble found only in County Galway.



LAHINCH Golf Club, near Ennistimon, County Clare – This natural-terrain links course is said to be the "St. Andrews of Ireland" while Lahinch Beach became famous in 2006 when 44 surfers broke a world record riding a single wave. *Waveriders the Film* (2009) shows how Irish-Hawaiian George "the Father of Modern Surfing" Freeth introduced the sport to Huntington Beach, California. *Waveriders* features the three Malloy brothers, who are surfers, filmmakers and environmentalists from Ventura, California. The Malloys say their explorations of uncharted waters around the Irish coast have revealed empty, world-class waves, like the breakers along the 700-foot Cliffs of Moher.

MUCKCROSS -- Located in Killarney National Park, opportunities for exploration at Muckcross include the famous Torc waterfall at the base of Torc Mountain, the 19th century mansion Muckcross House, a 1930s-style traditional farm, and the craft centre where artisans handcraft pottery and woven goods which are sold onsite.

NEWGRANGE – In 2008, 34,107 people entered a lottery to be one of 50 able to bring a guest inside the prehistoric passage tomb on the winter solstice - the only day of the year when light mysteriously floods Newgrange's interior. Older than Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids of Giza, Newgrange is situated near the Boyne Valley. It is listed on the World Heritage Sites of Europe and on Ireland's Seven Wonders at www.atlas.ingeniousireland.ie.

NOBEL-WINNING WRITERS – Irish literature boasts four Nobel Prize winners: Samuel Beckett (1969, for his writings including *Waiting for Godot*); Seamus Heaney (1995, for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, including *Beowulf: A New Translation*); George Bernard Shaw (1925, for his contributions to literature such as *Pygmalion* which became the musical *My Fair Lady* after Shaw's death) and W. B. Yeats (1923, for his inspired and highly artistic poetry).

PATRICK or Maewyn Succat, the patron saint of Ireland, is celebrated every March 17th. Another Patrick, Kavanagh, wrote *The Great Hunger* in 1942, a poem that describes the hardships of life in rural Ireland. Mary Pat Kelly's 2009 book, *Galway Bay*, tells the harrowing tale of how her family survived the Great Irish Potato Famine of 1845-1852. Ireland's Great Hunger Museum opened in Hamden, Connecticut in 2012. See memorials worldwide at www.ighm.org.



OSCAR WILDE – The famous writer’s statue is in Dublin’s Merrion Square. Fans may enjoy the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Oscar Wilde* (1989) and the films *Wilde* (1997), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945 Academy Award) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952, 1992, 2002, 2011).

QUEEN of Umayll (now County Mayo) – Known as the Sea Queen of Connaught, Grace or Granuaile O’Malley, was born in Ireland around 1530 and grew up to be a famous chieftain and pirate. O’Malley’s meeting with England’s Queen Elizabeth I is legendary. The two women negotiated the exchange of captured prisoners and stolen property for the cessation of Irish rebellions and piracy, but not before overcoming differences which included Grace refusing to bow before Elizabeth because Elizabeth did not recognize Grace as Queen of Ireland. Watch for the 2012 Lawson Productions film penned by noted Granuaile biographer Anne Chambers.

ROCK OF CASHEL – Also known as Cashel of the Kings and Saint Patrick’s Rock, this historic site in Tipperary showcases Celtic art and medieval architecture. Visitors can see the dry stone-built Round Tower, which dates from about 1100, and Cormack’s Chapel, the 12th century chapel of King Cormac Mac Carthaigh with its barrel-vaulted roof.

SAINT AND SCHOLARS – Christianity came to Ireland in the 5th century. Irish priests traveled to Europe to preach and teach and Irish monasteries attracted scholars from elsewhere. Irish monk Saint Columba (521-597AD) established a monastery on Iona. This has earned Ireland the nickname “the island of saints and scholars.” Thomas Cahill’s 1995 non-fiction historical book *How the Irish saved Civilization* examines the role of the clergy in preserving western culture after the fall of Rome.



TRINITY COLLEGE – The illustrious college is home to national treasures, including the 9th century Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript containing the four Gospels of the New Testament. Trinity’s alumni include Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver’s Travels*), Bram Stoker (*Dracula*), and former presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese.



U2 – the Grammy Award-winning Dublin rock group has sold more than 150 million records since forming in 1976. U2 took their 2009 *No Line on the Horizon* album on a worldwide 360° Tour, named for the stage configuration, to the tune of \$736 million. Other Irish Grammy Award-winning musicians include The Chieftains, Clannad, Enya, Riverdance: The Show, and Van Morrison. Morrison recorded his 34th studio album, *Born to Sing: No Plan B*, in his hometown Belfast in 2012.

XO PROJECT – Ireland Reaching Out, also known as the XO project, (www.irelandxo.com) began in Galway in 2010. Irish volunteers use reverse genealogy to trace descendants who have emigrated from their parish. Also, while in Dublin, check out the Shelbourne Hotel’s Genealogy Butler, a fee-based consulting service that guides you to the sources most likely to produce results.

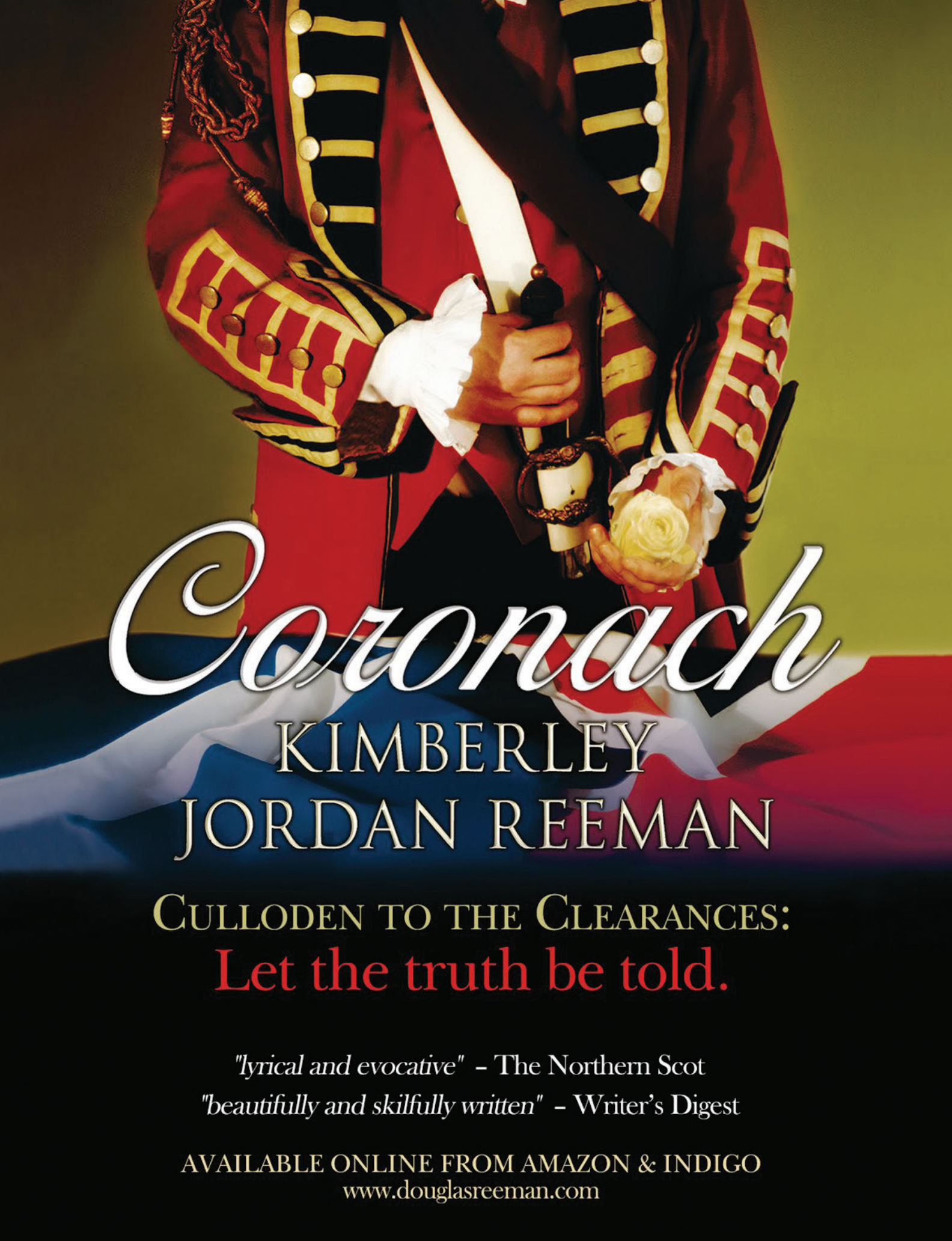
YEATS – The first Irishman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, Yeats, along with others, founded Dublin’s Abbey Theatre in 1904, also known as the National Theatre of Ireland. Memorials to Irish writers, rebels, and famine survivors line the walkways of Dublin’s Saint Stephen’s Green, a 22-acre Georgian square park adjacent to Grafton Street, one of Dublin’s main shopping districts.

ZOO – Covering 69 acres of the 1,750-acre Phoenix Park, Dublin Zoo prioritizes conservation of endangered species. The Discovery Animal Planet documentary, *The Zoo*, was filmed almost entirely on location here. Phoenix Park is featured prominently in James Joyce’s novel, *Finnegans Wake*, and imaginatively in *Ulysses*.

The Gathering 2013 has the support of some big names. Irish actor Stephen Rea, nominated for an Academy Award for his performance in the 1992 film, *The Crying Game*, tells event organizers that he rejoices in the chance “to give back and celebrate the achievements of our small island on a worldwide stage.”

By E. E. Hanley
www.discoverireland.com



A person in a red and gold military uniform, likely a British Grenadier Guard, is shown from the waist up. They are holding a sword in their right hand and a white rose in their left hand. The background is a solid yellow color.

Coronach

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WINTER WONDERLANDS!

By Stephen Patrick Clare



Scotland

It was a honeymoon to remember for David and Anne Robinson of Edinburgh.

"We both wanted to do something unique, something a little out of the ordinary," recalls David, a 29-year-old engineer. "Anne and I both love outdoor activities, so we thought why not celebrate our marriage accordingly?"

With the blessings of their family and friends, the young newlyweds packed their hats, mitts and scarves this past February, and took-off to the mountains of Scotland's scenic Northwest Highlands. There, amidst the hilly and barren Kincaid region, the couple joined thousands of like-minded adventurers for WinterFest, a three day celebration of cold and snow.

"It was brilliant," shares Anne, 28, whose family hails from nearby Thurso. "We hiked the hills, and spent a couple of afternoons scaling some pretty steep cliffs with ice picks. We also learned how to construct an outdoor snow shelter, and even got in some cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing. It certainly wasn't a typical honeymoon by any means."

"It was...exhausting," laughs David. "Exciting, but exhausting. My muscles are still sore. Thankfully, we were able to recoup at the end of each day with warm brandy and a good meal. I do remember that sleep could not have come quickly enough that weekend."

Despite the exertion, Anne says she would do it all over again given the opportunity.

"I loved it. We usually think of holidays as being about going south during that time of the year for a bit of sun, sand and surf. But events like WinterFest show that there are many amazing things to do here right in our own backyard between November and March. I would love to go back again next year."

Anne may get her wish, as WinterFest 2013 is scheduled to take place this coming February 22-25 in Glen Affric, near Loch Ness.

"We have a full-long weekend of great activities planned," says co-organizer Graeme Hall. "We start with outfitting and kitting sessions on Friday, where people can update their gear and supplies. We follow that with a meet and greet where hikers can speak with guides and other participants to ask questions and get advice."

On Saturday, Hall will lead an experienced group of climbers up the southeastern ridge of Tom a' Choinich, a challenging 1112 meter trek. A more moderate hike of 1036 meters to the summit of Sgurr na Lapaich is also available for novices.

"Neither are what you might call easy climbs," notes Hall, "but once you arrive at the peak it makes the effort all worthwhile - the views are simply spectacular."

Sunday's agenda is similar, with a snow-sheltering session scheduled for those looking to set up camps on their journeys.

"It is a lot more fun than it sounds," jokes Hall. "Contrary to popular belief, this is not only a wilderness survival tool - it is also a comfortable and unique way to experience nature."

A final sojourn on Monday to Meall Fuar-mhonaidh in nearby Drum wraps up the weekend with a shorter hike of 696 meters, giving participants a more relaxed opportunity to mingle.

"And that is really what the weekend is all about," explains Hall. "It is a chance for folks to get in some good exercise, while socializing with others. Many people have made life-long friendships here, and we often see the same groups of individuals come back each year to re-connect."

David and Anne Robinson are likely to return again this winter.

"Anne doesn't know it yet, but I have already put a deposit down," smiles David. "I thought it might be a great way to celebrate our first wedding anniversary."





IRELAND

Of the Seven Celtic Nations, Ireland is possibly the busiest during the winter months, with a varied offering of events, activities, festivals and destinations available in both the North and in the Republic.

In the South, the holiday spirit blossoms in Cork on December 26th with the Carrigaline Wren Boys' Street Carnival, a colourful gathering of musicians, singers and dancers.

Great racing, great fun and great food are all promised at the four-day Limerick Races Christmas Festival at the end of December. At the same time, you can hike the mountains of Mayo during Westport's fifth annual walking festival.

The Shannonside Winter Music Weekend in Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare heralds the year of The Gathering on January 17th, while Music for Galway celebrates the sounds of Beethoven a week later.

From February 4-8, Waterford New Music Week commemorates music composition and performance with workshops, talks, lunchtime recitals and evening concerts, while the Cork Poetry Festival takes place the following weekend. For cinema buffs, the Nenagh Silent Film Festival in Tipperary screens from February 14-17, and movie lovers won't want to miss either the Cork French Film Festival or the Dingle International Film Festival in March.

Dublin is awash with winter activities, kicking 2013 into high gear with the New Year's Eve Countdown Concert at College Green. The Temple Bar TradFest is an essential event from January 22-27, as is the ten-day Chinese New Year Festival which begins on February 8th. The Jameson Dublin International Film Festival also runs for ten days, starting on February 14th.

If arts and culture aren't your thing, then sample skiing or snowboarding with the Ski Club of Ireland, or lace up your skates and enjoy one of the many good indoor and outdoor rinks across the Emerald Isle.

Belfast is also busy with a bevy of brouhahas over the coming months.

"There truly is something for everyone here," explains Anne McMullan, Director of Marketing and Communications for the

Belfast Visitor and Convention Centre. "Each year Belfast draws more than 8 million visitors from outside the city, including 1.6 million international visitors.

"In particular, Christmas festivities attract returning families from across the globe and from throughout Ireland."

The sights, sounds and smells of the open-air Continental Market by City Hall draw many to sample enticing foods from all over Europe, from paella and German sausage to delectable French pastries, while the Christmas Fair and Market (December 7-9) at the Victorian St George's Market offers a variety of treats and unique crafts.

Elsewhere, the Odyssey's Winterfest (until January 6th) offers sleigh rides and ice skating. The city's newest attraction, Titanic Belfast, will be featuring Victorian-themed Christmas events. As well, ongoing pantomimes with Cinderella in the historic Grand Opera House and Sleeping Beauty in the Belfast Waterfront are treats for children of all ages.

"There are also Christmas themed tours at Belfast Castle and festive tea dances at the Ulster Hall," adds MacMullin.

"As well, we have several unique festivals coming up in February, including Chinese New Year Celebrations, the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, and the International Festival of Chamber Music."

Recently declared a 2013 City of Culture, Derry to the west has hundreds of events planned over the next four months, including many from December to March.

For variety, try Blokarting on the beaches of Limavady a few miles down the road, or explore the Duke of Abercorn's estate, Baronscourt, by dog-trek. Off-road hiking, biking, rally-car and horseback riding adventures are readily available across the region during the winter months also.

Of course, all of Ireland will be celebrating The Gathering in 2013, as ex-pats and the Irish at heart are called home to festivities across the country.



Wales

The weather has turned in Wales, with the residents of Cardiff now awakening to frost and light snow each morning. Shovels are already out, as children shuffle to and from school outfitted in an array of winter wear.

Breanne Lynch, 6 ½, doesn't like it.

"I can't move," says the youngster, bundled up in a pink ski jacket, snow pants, wool hat and scarf. "I can barely breathe with all this stuff on."

Her mother Alison reminds her that she and her classmates are going ice skating that morning.

"Oh yeah," remembers Breanne, eyes now smiling. "I guess it's okay then."

Thousands of elementary students will be strapping on their skates this winter - many of them for the first time - at the Cardiff Bay Ice Arena, the city's principal indoor ice skating facility.

Built in 2006 as a temporary solution until a permanent rink could be erected, the 2,500-seat, prefabricated structure offers a variety of on-ice activities for locals of all ages. The building has hosted several world ice skating championships, and is the current home of the Cardiff Devils of the Elite Ice Hockey League.

"Ice skating has really taken off here in the last decade, largely because of the popularity of the Devils," says Cardiff Council Leader Heather Joyce. "The number of minor league hockey teams in the city has increased significantly as more young people discover the sport each year."

Devils' CEO Paul Ragan explains that his players are popular within the community.

"Along with hosting a number of events for young people at the arena, our players are involved with several minor league teams, helping them at practice and games and teaching them skills. The kids really look up to them."

The game's growing popularity in Wales – it is estimated that

over 1,100 boys and girls now populate the country's minor league hockey system - has been a boon for retail sporting outlets.

"We sell more ice hockey equipment now than we ever have," says Peter Rhys Baines, manager of DW Sports Shop on Leckwith Road. "Just to give you one example, sales on skates have risen by about 65 per cent each season for the last three years. Sticks, helmets and body gear sales are also up. Once you get your kid fully outfitted to play, the costs can really add up."

For parents, it is a worthwhile expense.

"I took my 13-year-old son Robby to his first Devils' game three years ago," says Matthew Davies, 40. "He fell in love with the sport and we've been season ticket holders since then. Last year, he wanted to give it a go himself, so we bought him all the equipment and sent him for skating lessons."

Robby picked the game up quickly, and now takes a regular shift on defense for his Junior B squad.

"Sure, it's expensive," acknowledges Davies, "especially as he's had a number of growth spurts since he started. But he really enjoys it, it's great exercise for him, and it's a chance for him to make new friends."

"Those outdoor rinks can get a little cold for the parents sometimes though."

The number of open-air facilities in Cardiff has grown as well, with local parks and backyard rinks now providing over 100 ice skating surfaces in the city.

"Breanne wants me to build a rink out back of our home," laughs Alison Lynch a few days later. "She tells me she wants to be a hockey player when she grows up. Not a figure skater, but a hockey player - a goaltender."

"Just wait until she gets all bundled up in that stuff!"





BRITTANY

Brittany is quickly becoming the musical hotbed of Europe.

Along with hosting the biggest Celtic music gathering in the world each August – this year's Festival Interceltique de Lorient attracted more than 800,000 visitors for ten days of cultural celebrations – the westernmost region of France is home to Les Rencontres Trans Musicales (Trans) each December.

"Trans is perhaps the most important musical festival on the continent," says renowned French music critic Jean Bidoux, referring to the four-day happening that will bring dozens of the world's finest avant-garde musical artists – and upwards of 30,000 fans – to the province's capital city of Rennes.

"In my opinion, there is no better showcase of cutting-edge music anywhere on the planet," he continues. "Anyone who knows anything about music, and who wants to hear tomorrow's stars today, will be there."

A quick glance over the festival's past performers confirms Bidoux's assessment; Bjork, Daft Punk, Massive Attack, Portishead, Ben Harper, and the Beastie Boys are just a few of the big names that have all graced the stages of Rennes.

This year's edition, – the event's 34th anniversary – will highlight emerging artists such as Alphabet, Hot Panda, Madeon, Nick Waterhouse, Petite Noir and Shazzula – each on the verge of enjoying break-away success.

"An appearance at Trans is like a stamp of cool," explains Bidoux.

Louise Menard agrees.

"This will be my sixth Trans," says the 25-year-old Parisian photographer via email. "It is much more exciting than anything we have here in Paris, or anywhere else in France, because everything is so new and fresh. And it's not just about the music – the festival is a creative wonderland."

Menard isn't kidding; from December 6-9, Rennes will transform into a Mecca of artistry; films, exhibits, workshops,

seminars and activities of all sorts and styles will dot the local landscape like the brightly coloured pinpoints of an impressionist painting.

"For someone like me, it is an opportunity to connect with others my age about things that matter to us," notes Menard. "Art, music, life...these are all good points of discussion. And this is why I continue to go to Trans; it's a festival of ideas."

In recent years the event has become a travelling road show, taking its musical mission on tour to places like Norway and Beijing.

"The mandate since the start has been to open the doors to new forms of musical expression," states the festival's co-founder Jean-Louis Brossard. "Wherever we travel, we meet with musicians and people from the music industry and get them talking with one another and working together to further the agenda of exploring and exposing new music. It is very exciting and enlightening to discover emerging artists in other parts of the world."

The focus, however, remains firmly on Rennes.

"It is where it all began for us and it is where we will continue to develop," says Brossard. "There is something about Rennes, and about Brittany in general, that lends itself well to the creative spirit. The entire region has a long and rich history of artistry."

He points out that Trans brings much-needed funds into the local coffers as well.

"I'd say almost \$1 million goes into the economy here because of what we do. The hotels, restaurants and shops all do very well, and we are able to employ about a hundred residents for a few weeks. And with the holidays only weeks away it's very good timing for the town.

"And it's lovely here at that time of the year; the Christmas lights and wreaths are up and everyone is in a good mood. The festival is one more reason to visit."





Norman Lewis isn't complaining.

"Don't get me wrong," laughs the 59-year-old financial analyst from his home on the Isle of Man. "I love it here, but I'd rather be almost anywhere else in the middle of the winter."

While his home country still enjoys a moderate winter, temperatures can fall to as low as 5 degrees Celsius in January – and that's when Lewis plans his holidays.

"We have been vacationing in Galicia each January for the last 9 years," he says. "My wife, Deborah, and I both love the culture and the scenery, and the weather is far more favourable than it is here at that time."

Lewis' interest in the northwest corner of Spain began more than a dozen years ago when he began digging up his past.

"My family's roots are Irish," he explains. "My great, great, great grandfather was a sea-trader from Cork who made regular trips down the coast to Spain. From what I have learned, he was a bit of a scallywag, and it is entirely possible that I have some second and third cousins in and around Galicia. You know how seductive those Spanish women can be."

Deborah rolls her eyes.

"My story is similar," she pipes in. "My family were originally merchants from Dublin City who peddled their wares all across the European coastline. We actually have old naval records of their trips to Galicia."

Fascinated by their shared heritage, the couple first travelled to the Spanish province – now considered an autonomous nationality – in the winter of 2004.

"We were there for 10 days that year," recalls Deborah, noting that much of their time was spent scouring public records and local libraries. "Interestingly, it wasn't until we returned home that we both realized how taken we had become with the place."

The appeal is understandable; along with a warmer winter climate, Galicia is a scenic gem - a smorgasbord of seaside

beaches, running rivers, rolling hills and sweeping country landscapes - all richly wrapped in history.

"For me it was the people," continues Deborah. "Everyone was extremely warm and helpful to us on that trip, but what impressed me most was how deeply involved they are with their families and communities. The love they have for one another was a real eye-opener."

Norman's perspective is perhaps more masculine.

"The food," he laughs. "I've never had better fish in my life – fresh off the boat daily. The Sangria is pretty special too."

Both felt a sense of familiarity on their subsequent sojourns.

"I didn't expect Celtic culture there to be as strong as it is," admits Norman. "You can see it in the art and architecture for sure, but even among the residents there are signs in their mannerisms."

"I hear it in the music," notes Deborah. "The melodies are similar to the ones I heard growing up. The pipes and whistles are very much like those you might hear in Ireland or Scotland."

Side-trips to neighbouring Asturias and Portugal have also been a revelation.

"What has become obvious is that the Celts took the Good Lord seriously when he said go forth and multiply," chuckles Norman.

Deborah is more serious.

"We met a lot of people there who are as interested in our culture as we are in theirs," she says. "We've made many good friends from the entire area."

The Lewis' will be joining those new-found friends this coming January for the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage route to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, where the remains of the apostle St. James are said to be buried.

"It will be great to reconnect with everyone," says Norman, "especially in a warmer climate."





*Traditional Celtic
Holiday Celebrations
are alive and well
in Cornwall and the
Isle of Man!*

Cornwall



In Cornwall, residents are getting behind the revival of some ancient and very colourful traditions...

Led by a skeletal dancing horse and the eerie music of the Turkey Rhubarb Guise Band, the costumed revelers wend through the streets of old Penzance. In the glow of hand-held lanterns, their masks shine black and gold, while beneath a gleaming image of the sun the Lord of Misrule twirls his ribboned umbrella and laughs.

Montol Eve is a strange and special time in Penzance. Held every winter solstice, usually on December 21st, Montol Eve sees processions of masked and disguised residents, known as guisers, parading and dancing through the narrow streets of this old port town. The evening is the highlight of the Montol Festival - a revived and re-interpreted celebration of Cornwall's ancient midwinter and Christmas traditions.

Helen Musser, secretary and drummer in the Turkey Rhubarb Guise Band, said traditional Celtic festivals are dear to Cornish people.

"Cornish heritage is hugely important to communities and to individuals who are keen to be seen as having a very separate and distinct identity from their English neighbours," said Musser, who also leads workshops in guise dancing. "We have our own language, traditional music and traditional dance, which have been revived and are still evolving."

Throughout the evening, guisers dress in shabby black and tattered ribbons, known as mock posh, and carry large, bell-shaped lanterns that turn the processions into rivers of fire, designed to symbolize the death and rebirth of the sun. Leading the main parade, the Lord of Misrule wears a battered top hat and tail coat. As he dances and twirls his umbrella to the rhythmic Celtic tunes, he represents the spirit of fun and mischief.

The lantern-lit processions pass through the town and then assemble to watch the Lord of Misrule light the beacon at Lescudjack Hill Fort, one of the most ancient sites in Penzance parish.

Celebrations culminate in the ceremony of the chalking of the Cornish Yule Log or Mock, where the skeletal horse, known as Montol 'Oss, chooses a reveler to mark the Mock with a stick man. The stick man's origins are unclear but he's believed to represent either the Christ Child or Old Father Time. The festival's symbols are the spear and square of St. Thomas, whose feast day coincides with the winter solstice, and the Sun Resplendent, a traditional image popular with guise dancers.

Montol Eve's giant skeletal horse is often accompanied by a skeletal turkey. Some guisers also wear smaller bird masks. Simon Reed, a founder of the revived festival, said the animals symbolize nature.

"Right back to the Iron Age, horses have been symbols of the wild and unpredictable spirit of nature. You can see similar images in Wales (Mari Lywd) and Ireland," he said. "I have also seen pictures from Brittany showing the same kind of thing. The bird masks are from the descriptions from the 19th century celebrations - in times past there were far more animal images on display, including lions, horses, bulls - they all represent the power of nature."

Reed, who is also author of the book, *The Cornish Traditional Year*, said that six years ago, when organizers began the revival work, they were immediately buoyed by public support.

"When I read about the traditions of guise dancing, I knew this would be a great way for people to celebrate together in a distinct Cornish way," Reed told *Celtic Life*.

"We initially guessed that about 700 people would take part in the first event, but in the end we had



Photo credits: Peter Carter

over 3,000 participants. Every year, we see more and more people dressed in the guise dance costumes and masks, which is fantastic. When communities celebrate together in unique ways, based on their real history, then they become stronger and better places to live."

The Montol Festival offers special events throughout December. During the days that precede Montol Eve, groups meet around the community to learn traditional skills such as guise dancing and lantern making. Also becoming popular, the revived Cornish Candle Dance (Dons Cantol) sees children dancing after nightfall around painted lighted candles placed in boxes of sand. Traditional guisers' plays, such as St. George and the Turkish Knight, have also been revived, while Cornish Christmas carols are always favourites.

Reed said that in order to recreate the festival, revivalists researched the area's traditions in the books of well-known Cornish antiquarians such as M.A. Courtney, William Bottrell and A.K. Hamilton-Jenkin. The texts revealed how Cornwall's winter celebrations revolved around guise dancers and musicians, who created masked mayhem and merriment.

In his book, *Cornish Homes and Customs*, historian Jenkin described the guise dance processions and performances of 1831 as "like an Italian carnival" and noted that "everyone including the rich and the great came masked and disguised on to the streets".

William Bottrell gave a colourful account of Penzance guise dancers in *Traditions and Hearthside Stories of West Cornwall* (1870-80).

"During the early part of the last century the costume of the guise dancers often consisted of such antique finery as would now raise envy in the heart of a collector," Bottrell wrote. "The chief glory of the men lay in their cocked hats which were surmounted with plumes and decked with streamers and ribbons.

The girls were no less magnificently attired with steeple crowned hats, stiff bodied gowns, bag skirts or trains and ruffles hanging from their elbows."

Reed said that in times past, the Cornish people considered Christmas, or Nadelik, the principal feast of the year. "It is, in fact, thanks to a series of Cornish folklorists and historians, that many of the British traditions of Christmas were retained and not lost following the puritan zeal of the civil war years (1642-1651)" Reed wrote in his book.

The singing of Cornish Christmas carols or curls has an especially interesting history. Cornwall has a rich tradition of carols of all types, which includes a wide variety of unique melodies, arrangements, and songs known around the world, said Reed.

Many carols were collected in the West Cornwall area in the 19th and early 20th centuries, including such famous tunes as the First Nowell, which was often sung at the bottom of Cornish mines on Christmas Day when miners said they could hear the knockers, or mine spirits, singing along with them. Reed said that other Christmas songs with Cornish origins include, I Saw Three Ships, God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen and While Shepherds Watched.

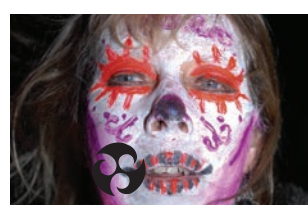
"Even now, carol singing in pubs on Christmas Eve is a popular activity in some places. Many of the Cornish male voice choirs hold sessions in pubs every year over the Christmas period," he said.

"Montol has become a focus for many of the revived Nadelik customs and a welcome break from the never ending commercial Christmas of the 21st century."

"When communities celebrate together in unique ways, based on their real history, then they become stronger and better places to live."
– Simon Reed.

www.montol.co.uk

By Carol Moreira





Isle of Man

Visit the Isle of Man in winter and you'll have the option of joining in many colourful celebrations. Here, Valerie Caine offers readers a glimpse of the island's festive season.

Cammag sticks raised as if in battle, the players lean in to swipe the crick, or ball, that's being whacked toward the far goal. Warmly wrapped against the cold, spectators holler for their teams as the sound of clashing sticks and players' cries intensifies.

"I think somebody's died," a player calls, and there's a rush of laughter, an acknowledgement that cammag is a tough game, which sometimes takes players to the local hospital rather than to the Tynwald Hill Inn, where a lively music session usually helps everyone unwind after a game.

Closely linked to the Scottish game of shinty and to Irish hurling, cammag is the Isle of Man's traditional sport. It died out in the 20th century, as soccer (football) became popular, but in the 21st century it's back. Now, each Christmas, the island's two teams – North and South – meet near Tynwald Hill in the village of St. John's to compete. The match attracts a crowd, both on and off the field, for cammag is a game of few rules and historically the number of players can range from four to two hundred.

Players wear ordinary winter clothing and few bother with protective equipment, although the cammags and the crick fly high and players cheerfully push and shove each other.

The annual match is played every December 26th, known as St. Stephen's Day (Laa'l Steaoín), and the game becomes more popular each year.

In July, when Islanders celebrate National or Tynwald Day, Tynwald Hill is used for the reading of new laws in both Manx Gaelic and English. But on St. Stephen's Day, the hill is given over to battle-hungry warriors. Unfavourable weather does not deter these hardy men and women who play a game of three 20-minute 'halves' and who are spurred on by a wee dram of whisky at suitable intervals.

"The game has developed into a friendly rivalry," says Roy Kennaugh, of the Michael Heritage Trust. "People of all ages and ability take part, although the more aged participants tend to let the younger ones do the running and simply get in the way of the opposition."

The Manx word cammag comes from the Gaelic 'cam' meaning bent, and traditionally players used gorse sticks taken from the yellow gorse bushes which brighten the island during the summer. Historically, a gorse cammag of suitable size and shape would have been a treasured possession. These days, anything goes and players use cammags that are little more than blunted sticks. Other cammags resemble brooms and rudimentary axes – players have even swiped at the crick with umbrellas.

The danger increases for both participants and spectators as the players become absorbed in the game. Forgetting there's an audience, they pursue the crick into the crowd. Unsurprisingly, the traditional expression 'cammag leg' described a lame person.

St. Stephen's Day is also known for Hunt the Wren (Shelg yn Drean) which, although not unique to the island, is often quoted as a Manx custom and has been noted on the island since before 1790.

At one time, a real wren was hunted down then fastened to the top of a pole and carried about before being plucked and buried in a churchyard. Its feathers were distributed for money as a charm against evil, but this part of the ceremony has long been obsolete.

Today, groups of enthusiastic dancers and musicians still gather to perform this annual ritual, armed with a colourful wren pole decorated with evergreens. Instead of feathers, ribbons are now distributed, and the ritual is distinguished by both an energetic dance and a lengthy song detailing the capture and fate of the wren – to limit the detail, rules require that the dance and song be finished by noon.

Breesha Maddrell, of the Manx Heritage Foundation, is a Hunt the Wren enthusiast.

“It’s usually cold, it may even be snowing, but you shake off sleep and head down to the meeting place,” Maddrell relates. “Sometimes there’s a wren-pole competition...Then it’s time to move around the village or town, stopping at different points to show the dance off to new audiences. For the musicians, it’s a cold business, but the enthusiasm of the dancers – of all ages – makes up for it. Everyone usually ends up in a local hostelry or café to warm up with hot drinks and more tunes.”

Christmas Eve was traditionally a time for Islanders to visit the parish church for prayers. After midnight, the vicar would depart and leave the clerk in charge, at which point the men in the congregation would sing carvals. Largely un-associated with the Nativity or English carols, carvals are religious songs of inordinate length, some as many as forty verses, and as the night wore on the girls would become restless and throw dried peas at the singers.

Nowadays, the island’s two Manx Gaelic choirs - Clogaree Twoaie (Northern Croakers) and Caarjyn Coidjagh (Friends Together), which include both men and women singers, keep the spirit of the Manx carval alive through their performances and recordings.

Towards the end of the festive period, comes the Eve of the Feast of Mary or Oie’ll Verree, which has survived in different forms in the rural districts.

Kennaugh says the Oie’ll Verree is a great opportunity to experience traditional poetry, music and dance as well as the Manx Dialect play.

“This is one of the very few times to hear the Manx dialect being performed,” Kennaugh says. “The rehearsals are demanding and time-consuming, but the participants appreciate the importance of keeping an old tradition going. A good sense of humour helps.”

Over time, the term Oie’ll Verree also became a mantle for an evening of entertainment held at varying times of the year, but the village of Michael has set a benchmark by holding their celebration around the time of old Christmas Day (January



5th), reflecting the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

Initially run by the Manx branch of the Celtic Congress and now adopted by Michael Heritage Trust, this annual event at the Ebenezer Hall attracts a good-sized audience on a cold January evening. It’s a real Manx affair with dialect poetry, traditional tunes, songs and dances, new poems or sketches, a little hymn singing and a fine Manx supper, but it’s the revival of the hilarious dialect plays that make it special as they bring the old Manx ways of the countryside back to life with local humour, good-natured banter and the lilt of a rich Manx accent.

Like Kennaugh, Maddrell loves the dialect plays.

“It’s a time to hear wonderfully rich Manx accents and ways of speaking, a time to forget the hassles of the modern world and to chuckle – or even belly laugh – with the players themselves,” says Maddrell of the performances of the Michael Players. “Oh, and there’s usually some communal singing so that everyone gets to be involved.”

Singing and belly laughs – both integral parts of the Manx winter. Merry Christmas or, as we say on the island, Nollick Ghennal.

Words & photos By Valerie Caine

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Guide



Sgian Dubh

Classic and contemporary at once, the Sgian Dubh is a must-have accessory for any and all well-dressed Celts. This small, single-edged knife is worn as part of traditional Scottish Highland dress, tucked into the top of the kilt hose with only the upper portion of the hilt visible. An ideal gift for the man of the Clan.

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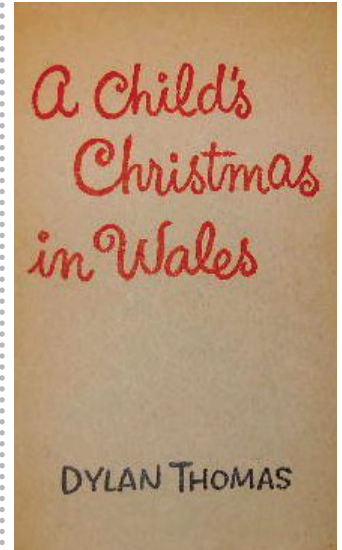
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A Song for Father Francis

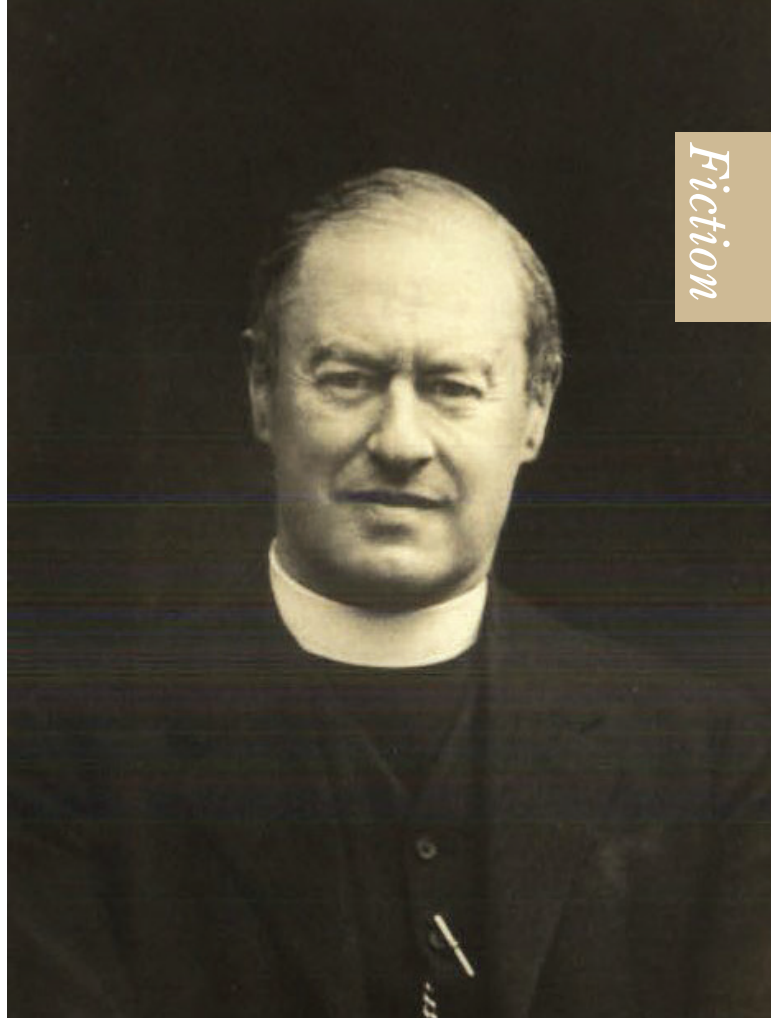
My mother believed she would sit in purgatory, a fiery spot located between heaven and hell, for a good long time being purged of her life's sins before she could enter, in a glorious resurrected state, into the kingdom of heaven. So it is nothing short of reprehensible that I have not delivered this money, given for masses at the wake and funeral to be said for her early release from there.

I am feeling embarrassed and guilty. Though, I suppose, the guilt had to grow to outweigh the reticence I feel for going to the monastery. An ancient reticence composed of old furors - actually, young furors grown old; the most virulent kind. An adult can speak her mind or at least absent herself from an onerous situation. A child, vulnerable without forum or options, must endure, which is why exorcising childhood neuroses is like uprooting hundred-year-old trees, and often requires the personality equivalent of a bulldozer or an end loader.

When my father was alive we went to the monastery for mass and to drop him off or pick him up from retreats. Men made retreats there. Boys, (my bratty brothers) were allowed to tour the monks' cells, the refectory, apiary, bakery, (sample fresh bread and honey), wine cellar, orchard and barnyard. Women and girls were not permitted past the religious goods store and chapel, where the monks were singing the Gregorian chant whenever we arrived. Never a woman's voice was heard.

The only priest with whom I am on speaking terms these days explains, "The church has changed vastly." And I am unable to make him understand that does sweet nothing to ameliorate the feelings of helplessness and furor I felt standing in the corner next to the shelves in the monastery store between the stacks of missals, boxes of medals, rosaries, bottles of holy water and statues of Theresa, Anthony, Joseph, and all the rest, biting my lower lip, locking my knees hard and hating being kept out.

The human object of my hate was the tall, alabaster-faced, tonsured Father Francis, who had the same kind of eyes nuns at school had—stare-you-through eyes, always blue, the cold-sky blue of a below-zero day. I figured they set him as a guard to keep us from going where we weren't allowed because he had white



skin like a woman. But he was a man and a priest with all the prerogatives that implied. He wore a cream-colored cassock, in place of the black one most priests wore, and over it, a brown scapular, which reached to the floor and had a little hood on the back which would never fit over his big, ugly head. No, he was a man - I always knew that when he laid his heavy, sweaty man's hands, like ten-pound sacks of sugar, on our heads to bless us. And I shuddered.

I'll be honest: I have chosen this day because I am feeling mean, because now the enervating heat of summer has passed, the air has that sharp, crisp edge of autumn that energizes, and I am ready for him.

New Truroe Abbey, less than ten miles from this village, is an enclave of stately limestone buildings which, when I was a child and a history idiot, I always imagined resembled a castle. Turning left off the highway, I find myself on a gravel road through a walnut grove. The lands of this Cistercian abbey extend all the way to the county line - twenty-five hundred acres. After a few miles, the grove gives way to hilly hayfields, golden in the fall sunshine. In another mile or so, the neat fields become gardens with expanses of squash, prodigious stands of onions, broccoli, carrots, and Brussels sprouts, all surrounded by white board fences that look more as if they should restrain Kentucky thoroughbreds or at least Connecticut cows. Fat-cat fences. Iowa farmers use barbed wire. This only augments my anger.

A right turn by a large horse-chestnut tree brings me onto the circular, tree-lined drive of the monastery. The place seems deserted. Then I realize, with a metallic ping of disappointment someplace in my brain, that I probably won't get to tell Father Francis to stuff his blessings. It's been thirty-five years; he's probably dead. I park the car and get out, kick a stone onto the grass and turn toward the stained glass entry door, listening to my heels click acrimoniously against the tarmac.

Inside, I hear only echoes of silence, not chanting, and make my way down the short hallway to the store, pausing before the door to pull myself up to full height. An old, bald monk seated at the center of the room looks up from the missal on his knees and smiles as if he's totally delighted; as if, indeed, he has been waiting for me.

"Come in, Child," he says in tones so rich and warmly Irish, I am momentarily caught completely off guard.

"I'm Bridget McMahon's daughter," I say, smiling coldly, standing stiffly erect behind the chair he's indicated. I produce the money, leaning forward from the waist to hand it to him.

"Ah, yes, we heard she died in June. She was with us on Paddy's Day."

She was. Women not only are allowed in the refectory now, they eat there.

"It was one of the last days she really felt well; she enjoyed herself immensely," I say, and on seeing him smile, become angry I've given him that and grip the back of the chair with new resolution.

"Now would you hand me the mass book over there? The feet aren't what they once were, sure," he says pointing toward the shelves back and to the left of me.

Glancing at the shelf to reach the red spiral notebook with MASSES hand-printed on the front cover, my gaze falls into the corner where I used to retreat with my anger, and for a moment, I visualize myself there, a stiff-kneed and furious little girl in a plain homemade dress. I look back, about to say, "Get it yourself, Father Francis!" Then I spy his red, swollen, buniony feet with their thick yellow nails protruding from beneath the accumulation of cassock and scapular - clearly too painful for shoes, they are in open sandals. Reflexively, I dash across the room, fetch the notebook and hand it to him. While he counts the money, records my mother's name and the amount in large hand beneath the names of two others recently deceased, I stand regretting having done it.

"Ah-hah, so you are Michael's eldest daughter," he says, when he's finished and closed the mass book.

It has been thirty years since my father died, and I'm astonished he remembers his name, but he has a reputation for this. "Do you really remember my father?" I ask, suspicious.



"Michael McMahon, a fine and decent man, and a great one for a story."

"What—what sort of stories did he tell, about what?" I am curious in spite of myself.

"Sit, Child, and I'll tell ya."

Reluctant, and inflexibly, holding my purse for a quick get-away, but unable to resist hearing about my father, I take a chair.

"With such a gift from God, 'tisn't so much a matter of the subject, the magic was in the telling. You'd have to have been there, but ah, yes, we laughed."

"During retreat?" I ask, pointedly mean.

"Yes," he admits, casting his eyes sheepishly downward, and I am surprised by my response: not gloating, but remembering my own college retreats, when after a day of silence, we would gather in each other's rooms and talk. And I smile in spite of myself.

"Ah, Michael... Your father would be proud of such a grand girl as yourself."

"Father Francis, are you from Ireland?"

"Do you know the town of Clonmel?" His face lights up at the name. "Ah! Many's the time I walked to mass at St. Mary's in Clonmel."

Well, I am not about to tell this old priest about the affair I had with a handsome Irishman who played in a band—the reason I happened to spend a week in Clonmel. "I've spent some time in Ireland, Father," I say, "working on a publishing project," and this is not a lie. "I had a friend from there. We used to go to the singing pub on the green."



He is amazed and elated. "Sing me something, then, Child."

"I have been to Truroe Abbey too, Father. Bought Mom a rosary of Connemara marble there. We buried it with her," I say, as a way of putting him off, but he begins singing himself, something about the pheasant making homes for their young on the cliffs of Dineen.

His is not a good voice, and certainly not the melodious sort you would imagine singing Gregorian chant, but very much him - large, ungainly, verging on the ugly, but redeemed the way his face is, by the lovely blue eyes and superb skin he still has, even though he's certainly past eighty.

"I do so want a song from you," he urges.

Now, I don't know what possesses me to sing this one. I know plenty of others—drinking songs, protest songs, folk songs, but I give him a love story.

*Harking is bonny and there lives my love
My love lies on him and cannot remove
For Annachie Gordon he's bonny and he's bright
He'd entice any woman and so he has done me
And I never will forget my love Annachie*

I hope he can forgive me, but it is the only song that comes to mind. And at first it seems peculiar, sitting here in the religious goods store of the monastery singing a love song as if it were a pub in a little town in Tipperary. And as I sing, I watch his clear blue eyes become slowly clouded with some dark sadness. And then, I begin to sense my voice, high, light, and pretty—my voice reveals me quite as much as his does him—pervading the whole place. For a woman's voice can do that: travel on the air like an aroma. Men's voices, dense and heavy, fill up whole rooms, obliterate other sounds, but women's traverse great barriers.

*Down came her father and he's standing at the door
Saying Jeannie you are trying the tricks of a whore
You care nothing for a man who cares so much for thee
You must marry Lord Sultan and leave Annachie*

I stop at the end of the verse and he begs, "Oh no, do go on, please do," and I see he knows this song, so I continue, telling the Romeo-and-Juliet story of Jeannie, who was forced by her parents to marry a man for his lands, and I feel my voice going all the places women never go in this monastery even now: the monks' cells, the bakery, the apiary, flowing like an immense crock of spilled honey on a summer's day.

*With Annachie Gordon I beg for my bread
And before I marry Sultan his gold to my head
With gold to my head and straight down to my knees
And I'll die if I don't get my love Annachie*

As I sing, I watch his eyes fill slowly with tears, and I wonder, as the water collects heavy in the corners for much of the verse, and finally overflows and inches its way down the smooth white cheek, what made him leave Ireland well over half a century ago.

*The day that Jeanne married was the day that Jeannie died
And the day that young Annachie came home on the tide
And down came her maidens all wringing of their hands
Saying oh it's been so long, you've been so long on the sands
So long on the sands, so long on the flood
They have married your Jeannie and now she lies dead.*

*You who are her maidens come take me by the hand
And lead me to the chamber where my love she lies in
And he kissed her cold lips till his heart it turned to stone
And he died in the chamber where his love she lies in.*

As the last high, light notes die, Father Francis leans forward and whispers to me, as if it is a secret and no one else should hear, "There is nothing lovelier than the sound of a woman's voice. Your father would be so proud."

I had not come to sing and chat, but to attack and flee, and a glance at my watch tells me I am already late for an appointment in the next town.

"Father, I must go."

"Please come again and sing, Child," he says, "Promise me ye will," he entreats, taking my hand gently in his two huge, warm ones when I lean forward.

"Yes, Father Francis, I will," I promise as I rise and kiss his smooth, white cheek and then head out of the monastery store. Evening vespers fill the vestibule as I pass the chapel and follow me out the door and down the old limestone steps.

By S. Keyron McDermott
For Vincent A. & Helen B. RIP



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with Greg Davies

Comedian Greg Davies' dad so wanted his son to be a Welshman he made his poor, labouring wife travel across the Welsh-English border to St. Asaph from her Shropshire home so that the boy could be born under the Welsh dragon and be eligible to play for the Welsh national rugby team.

"Being born Welsh was incredibly important to my father, he wanted his heritage to live on," the internationally popular comedian says. "...I don't know how my mother put up with it, or even said yes in the first place, but it all led to me today being able to say I am a Welshman."

Davies may not have played rugby for Wales, but the popular performer drew on his father's influence for his last stand-up tour. "My father was typically Welsh in his conversation and his actions. He held on to the traditions fiercely...When I speak about him in my act, I think I end up painting him as a mental patient, but it was just his Welsh side that made him that lovably eccentric. All my family in Wales are just the loveliest, barmiest people you could meet. They all gave me so much inspiration to work with, and still do."

Physically, Davies demands attention before he's said a word; he's a towering 6'8" tall and his scrunched facial expressions and baritone shrieks helped make him a breakout star from the 2008 British comedy, *The Inbetweeners*, where he played teacher Mr. Gilbert.

Now, his stand-up tours sell out. His projects include a new BBC panel series with comedian David Walliams and a comedy with Saturday Night Live star Andy Samberg, which will build a bridge to a potentially lucrative US/Canada crossover.

Next up, in sitcom *Cuckoo*, he plays an overprotective father, enraged by his daughter's hasty nuptials to an American freeloading drifter. Add to that an autobiographical sitcom, *Man*

Down, which draws upon his experiences as a teacher who hates his job, and there's no shortage of work.

"Man Down is an interesting one - it's like looking at the lost years of my life, when I was a teacher, floating along in limbo. It's an exaggerated version of a period in my life when I felt like a lost soul," Davies says of the 13 years he spent as a secondary (high school) teacher in southern England.

"In a way, I think we all need to go through those times when we maybe weren't as happy or as contented as we are now... For most people, regrets will come and go, and there are always things you wish you'd invested more in that you maybe left behind too soon. And I guess I feel like that about Shropshire and Wales. They are fantastic places to be, and coming to the south of England to teach maybe wasn't worth the compromise.

"Of course, now as an actor and comedian, I can look back on that and say it was worth leaving the place behind, but I get back there as soon as possible, and like all proud Welshmen, I'm pretty vocal in my passion for the dragon."

Reliving past experiences seems to be the secret to the funnyman's success. His last stand-up show, the fantastically titled, *Firing Cheeseballs at a Dog*, took a wry look back at his early days growing up in the small town of Wem in Shropshire.

His new stand-up tour, the equally barmy sounding includes anecdotes from his time as a teacher and beyond.

"Firing Cheeseballs was very parent-centric...But I guess now I've to come to the realization that I'm actually an adult, and I have to stand on my own two feet... which, of course, is something worrying to admit at the age of 44. But I'll give adulthood a shot, y'know..."

By Stephen Milton



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Stumptown Kilts

If you've ever struggled to squeeze your expanding girth into a favourite kilt you'll know it's a depressing feeling. Kilts are unforgiving garments and their inflexibility highlights weight gain. But now, StumpTown Kilts (STK) is creating kilts that solve this problem by expanding as their wearers do.

Founded three years ago by three American kilt enthusiasts of Celtic descent, the kilts are catching on among kilt-wearers of all proportions due to their practicality, aesthetic appeal and value for money.

The StumpTown team includes co-owners John McClain, who is of Scottish-Irish descent, Tim Gallagher, who's of Irish descent, and Cyd Gann, who also has Irish roots.

"All of us enjoyed wearing modern kilts but found some things either lacking or annoying," McClain explains. "For example Timmy 'out grew' three of his kilts."

McClain says the STK is both fashionable and functional. The team is proud of the fact that the women's kilt is not just a cropped version of the men's but is designed for a woman's curves, and the range includes the StumpTown MiniKilt.

The basic StumpTown Kilt (named after Portland, Oregon, where the company is based and the kilts made) is a box pleat, based on the original military kilt. It's unlike most other kilts, which are knife pleat.

"The box pleat was the first tailored kilt, with sewn-down pleats, worn by the Scottish army circa 1790, but not tapered as ours is," says McClain.

"We thought the box pleat accentuated and flattered the physique as it lies upon the hips and falls away. It can be easily dressed up or look casual. It also has great flow, sort of an accordion effect, as it moves with the body. Our design also allows for costuming or warm layers to be worn underneath on cold nights."

The STK is easy-care wash-and-wear and offers six adjustable waist sizes for men's kilts and five for women. The kilt also has attachable pockets by way of a pocket strap system that looks stylish even when no pockets are attached.

The company's client base includes old-school kilt wearers, who enjoy tradition but want an easier-wear kilt, and fashion-conscious youngsters. STK's prices compare favourably with others.



"Most modern kilts of quality cost well over \$200 and the lower quality are \$150 and don't wear well, in my opinion," McClain says. "Traditional kilts can run over \$1,000."

"The StumpTown Kilt is quality and durable. Our men's kilts cost \$185, from sizes xsmall to large, and our women's are \$145 from xsmall to large. We do have xlarge, which is priced higher and a cotton duck that's also more expensive, but we keep our prices low by averaging costs."

Being a relatively new small business at the current time is tough, but McClain says the team is fortunate to have talented people who believe in them and the StumpTown Kilt. "They put in quite a bit of 'free' time in key areas that allow us to get some sleep at night," he says.

"We also make donations to various causes and will be joining in this year to help Breast Cancer Awareness with pink STKs and Colon Cancer fund-raising with brown STKs. It's important to keep the humor. My genuine pleasure, or I suppose it would be pride, is seeing someone else enjoying our kilt, it is a satisfying feeling."

Now, the team is focused on increasing STK's market penetration in North America – a Portland retail store is planned for fall 2013 – and expanding into Europe.

"The hardest part is letting people know we exist and that there is an alternative to both traditional and modern kilts," McClain says. "Because of our kilts' features and high quality our business is really starting to get traction. It's very exciting."

"Next, we intend to expand our product line with items such as men's fitted pants, hats and vests. Diversification will continue to be a priority."

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Today's Great Ideas


The ChronicleHerald



Christmas Cake

It's not found in the music that plays in all the shopping malls and it's not in the hours spent shopping for the perfect gift which just doesn't cut it on Christmas morning. Nor is it found in the decorating that appears directly after Hallowe'en. No, one of the true markers of the festive season is the rich and full-flavored fruit cake that celebrates the holy birth of Christ.

When I got married, I made my own wedding cake with the help of my eldest sister, Mary. After it was removed from the oven, we wrapped the fruitcake in gauze, which had been soaked in brandy, and then put it in an 80 lb. steel milk can to age for a month. (The milk can was the same one we used to place in the little spring to keep the milk cool.) As you may not have an 80 lb. milk can in your cupboard, this cake uses fruit marinated in brandy and the top is brushed with brandy after baking.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 1/4 cups finely cut dried apricots
- 1/2 cup candied orange peel
- 1/2 cup candied lemon peel
- 1 cup candied pineapple
- 1/2 cup brandy
- 2 2/3 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup butter cut into pieces
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 6 large eggs separated
- 1/4 cup whipping cream
- 1 small apple shredded
- 1/4 cup shredded almonds
- 1/4 cup candied cherries
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 275 degrees.

An hour before baking the cake, marinate the raisins, apricots, orange and lemon peels and pineapple in 1/2 cup of brandy in a closed jar. Shake it several times.

Combine the sifted flour with the salt and baking powder and sift again.

Cream the butter and 1 cup of the sugar thoroughly with an electric mixer. Add the egg yolks and beat until the mixture is smooth.

Add the flour mixture in batches, alternating with the cream. Beat it with an electric mixer on low speed.

Fold in the marinated fruit and brandy. Fold in the apple, almonds, candied cherries and vanilla.

Beat the egg whites until they hold a peak. Add the remaining sugar and beat until they hold a stiff peak but are not grainy. Fold a few spoonfuls into the batter by hand with a rubber spatula then fold in the rest. If the batter looks the least bit curdled, fold in two or three extra tablespoons of sifted flour.

Spoon the batter into a 10-inch tube pan that has been greased. The pan should be no more than three quarters full.

Bake the cake until it springs back when touched, about 2-2 1/2 hours.

Remove the cake from the oven and brush the top with 1 1/2 tablespoons of brandy.

Let sit for 10 minutes in the pan and unmold it onto a rack to cool.





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THE KERRYMAN

The Kerryman Irish Bar and Restaurant, 661 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL, USA

Cuisine

Chicago is a Mecca of multiculturalism; a myriad of ethnicities mixed across a mega-metropolis. As in New York, African-American, Hispanic, Arabic, Jewish, Asian and European quarters are woven like threads into a colourful mosaic of culture. In particular – again akin to The Big Apple - the Windy City's Italian and Irish communities are exceptional, each enjoying a long, storied – and sometimes dubious - history.

At the core of Chicago's hearty Irish heritage are a number of excellent eateries, including The Curragh, Fado, The Gage and Mrs. Murphy & Sons.

Nestled in the city's River North neighbourhood, at the corner of North Clark and East Erie streets, The Kerryman Irish Bar and Restaurant is renowned for both its comfortable ambiance, and its clever combination of classic and contemporary cuisine.

The cozy Irish pub attracts a cross-section of clientele; from regulars who drop by for an after-work beer (think Cheers), to the infamous Notre Dame Fighting Irish football fans, and international celebrities (both actor Johnny Depp and singer Rod Stewart have graced the grounds). In addition, the site's sidewalk settings are ideal for people-watching - always attractive to locals and those from away.

Along with a prized selection of domestic and imported beers and spirits, The Kerryman offers an array of wholesome, home-style pub grub.

For starters, whet your whistle with the jumbo Claddagh Wings (\$10); succulent and spicy, the heat is off-set by the cool of ranch and blue-cheese dipping sauce. Be prepared to get messy however.

Also recommended is the Irishman's Quesadilla (\$9), a savoury slice of Irish cheddar, Irish bacon and spinach, all topped with tomato, red pepper and scallions and served up with a side of salsa and guacamole.

A shared salad is a good way to go, and the Warm Salmon Pear & Brie (\$14) - mixed greens, cherry tomato, brie, and pear,

sprinkled with saucy raspberry vinaigrette – is both fresh and flavourful.

If greens aren't your thing, then bring on a bowl of Galway Seafood Chowder (\$6), a rich and creamy blend of fresh fish, clams, shrimp, potatoes, bacon, root vegetables and fresh herbs beautifully brewed in a roasted fish stock.

While the list of entrees is not extensive – along with a smattering of sandwiches and burgers there are eight main dishes to choose from – the options are strong and include classic Fish and Chips (\$16), zesty Curry Chicken (\$16) and sweet Salmon Lemon Dill (\$18).

Traditionalists will want to try the in-house Shepherd's Pie (\$15), a generous gourmet of ground beef and vegetables smothered in gravy, crowned with mashed potatoes and three cheeses and oven-baked to a golden crust. Though a tad heavy, the plate is well worth its weight.

Similarly, the Chicken and Mushroom Pot Pie (\$15) – tender and tasty white breast of chicken mixed with carrots, peas, celery, onions and mushrooms in a white wine sauce, all seasoned with a splash of oregano and served in a puff pastry shell – is more than a mouthful. And while you might not make it all the way through the meal, you are sure to enjoy each and every bite.

A simple dessert of home-made apple pie à la mode and freshly-roasted coffee topped off a fine autumn feast; warm and welcoming - much like both the staff (kudos to server Maggie O'Brien for the hospitality!) and the patrons, many of whom

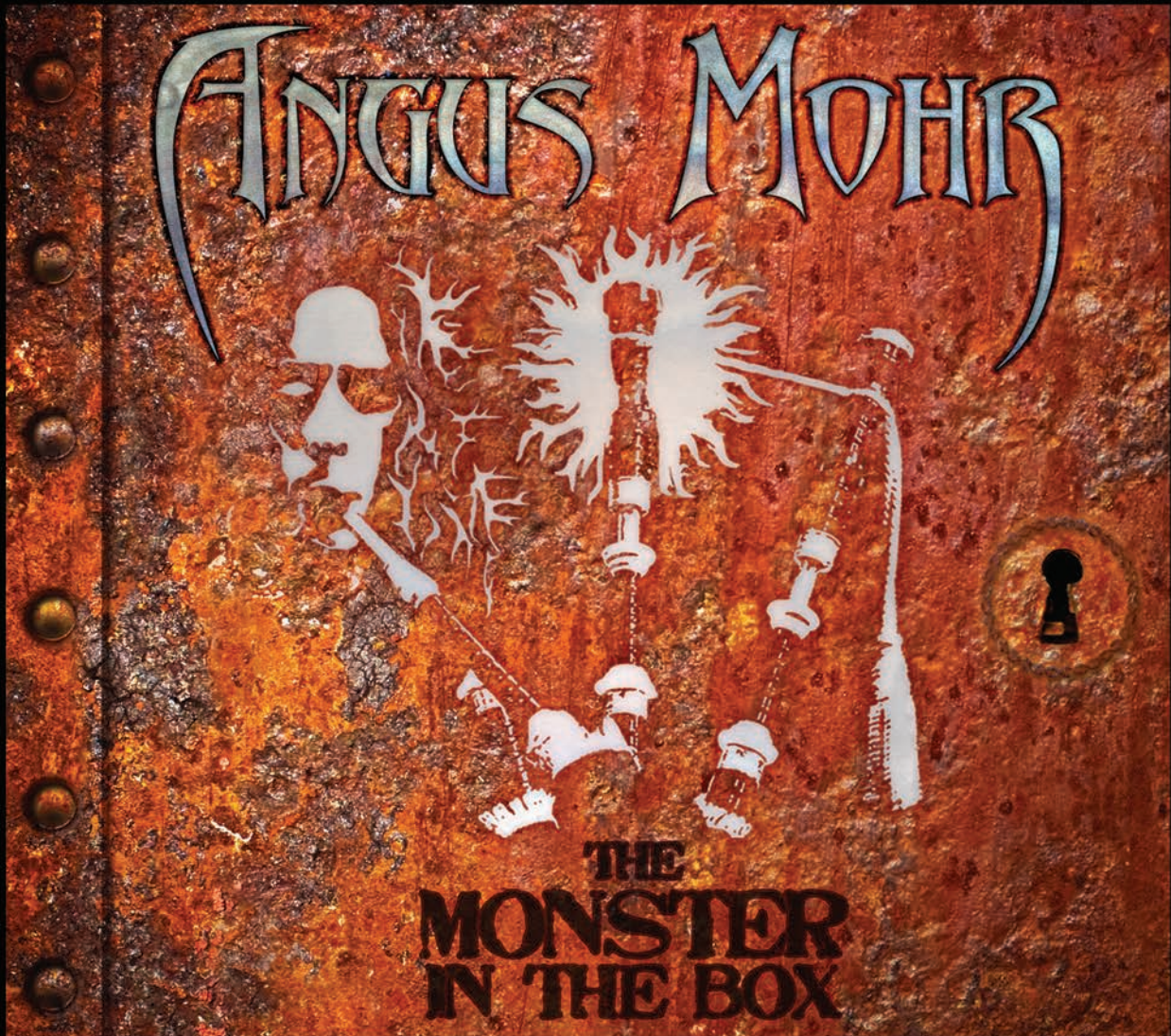
are chatty with opinions and advice for wide-eyed travelers.

As such, I have an outstanding invitation to sample the facility's famous Sunday Brunch, which features the Gaelic Skillet; Irish sausage, Irish bacon, red onion, green pepper, breakfast potato, Irish cheddar, eggs and toast – reason enough to revisit the Windy City! - SPC

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The Irish Embassy Pub & Grill on Toronto's Yonge Street brings the old country to the Canadian city's financial district and to the hearts of expatriates and visitors.

The last two years have seen an influx of young Irish expatriates into Toronto, Canada's largest city, and they have added a fresh energy to the already strong Celtic community, says Gavin Quinn, co-owner of the Irish Embassy Pub & Grill, a venue beloved of many new arrivals.

Opened in 2000 on St. Patrick's Day, the Yonge Street establishment is situated in a lovely, old bank building with vaulted ceilings and beautiful marble floors.

"It's like a grand old Dublin or London city pub as it has great architecture and design circa 1873 and is very unique here in Toronto," says Quinn. "We expanded into the next building about four years ago and had a classic Dublin Victorian bar and furnishings imported from Dublin."

Here, guests enjoy authentic Irish dishes, sip Irish beers and partake of one of the largest selections of Irish whiskeys in the city. Music is important. The venue features many Irish artists and holds traditional and Celtic music nights on Fridays and Saturdays. Quinn also hosts traditional performers from the city's Irish dance schools, as well as screening Gaelic sports and soccer and rugby games.

Situated in downtown Toronto, the venue attracts a wide range of clients. "On any day you can see local financial district types, Irish expats, tourists and guests from all over the city having dinner before a concert, a hockey game or a show (the Air Canada Centre is just a three-minute walk away).

"There are also some vibrant neighborhood communities around us and we enjoy a good following from local residents, who are increasing in number as the condo boom has helped create residential density."

The Greater Toronto area has roughly 60,000 Irish expats, and another 400,000 residents who claim some Irish heritage. The city has many Irish organizations that promote Celtic culture and offer support to the community.

Quinn's establishment and its sister Toronto pubs, P.J. O'Brien's and Quinn's Steakhouse and Irish Bar, are popular social hubs for those involved in the Irish Chamber, Celtic Studies, the Ireland Fund of Canada, the Ireland Park Foundation and the St. Patrick's Parade Society, so there is always a genuine community atmosphere. P.J. O'Brien's hosts regular Celtic music sessions on Friday and Saturday evenings.

"New arrivals are enjoying linking up with Celtic cultural associations," Quinn says. "The established Irish community has been good at helping to set up meet-and-greet events with the newly formed Irish-Canadian Immigration Centre."

Himself born in Ireland, Quinn moved to Toronto from Dublin with his parents and six siblings in 1986.

"The Canadian economy was doing much better than Ireland's at the time and my father Pat had some business opportunities here. My father was originally from Leitrim and my mother Anne from Cavan but they lived in Dublin for many years where they were in the retail and hospitality industry, so we all grew up learning business," he explains.

"We remain a family business, and my brothers Ben, Pat, Paul, our mother and myself operate our various pubs and restaurants, which also include a restaurant in Montreal.

"Our father, who passed two years ago, was known for promoting well-known Irish musical artists here in Toronto, such as Paddy Reilly, Phil Coulter, Daniel O'Donnell, The Dubliners and local harpist Eithne Heffernan. We are very lucky to have a wonderful team of staff, many of whom are Irish expats who also like to perform," he adds.

"It's important for us to celebrate Celtic culture. Any day of the week you can find the pubs lively with plenty of good characters, Irish and all sorts, enjoying their favorite Irish beverage, which is not always tea."

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Joanne MacIntyre - interpreter of Gaelic culture



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

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with Andrew Ferguson

Dram

The Speyside may be the heart of the Scotch whisky industry, but the Isle of Islay is its soul. Known as the Queen of the Hebrides, the whisky isle juts into the Atlantic on Scotland's west coast. Many pilgrims make annual visits to the home of their favourite drams. By road, the journey takes at least six hours from Glasgow and involves a two-hour ferry ride, ensuring that only the most serious of whisky drinkers make it to Scotland's whisky Mecca.

Legend has it the Irish invented whiskey and the Scots perfected it, and that it arrived in Scotland via Islay. Though small (239 sq/miles), Islay has played an important historical role. For nearly four centuries, beginning in 1098, the island was the capital of an independent kingdom. The Lords of the Isles, leaders of Scandinavian-Scottish clans, ruled the islands of Scotland's west coast, the Kintyre peninsula and Northern Ireland with their long ships.

Kilchoman, the island's westernmost distillery is located at Rockside Farm and is a micro-distillery, making about 1/100th the volume of spirit that Glenfiddich and Macallan do. It produces two styles: 100 per cent Islay, made from barley grown on the estate; and the standard Kilchoman, which is considerably peatier.

South of Kilchoman is the cult distillery of Bruichladdich, reopened by new owners in 2001. The distillery makes a number of distinct whisky styles with varying levels of peating and degrees of distillation. The standard Bruichladdich is unpeated. Their two heavily peated styles, which are more in keeping with most of Islay's distilleries, are the heavily peated Port Charlotte and Octomore, the most heavily peated whisky in Scotland.

Bowmore is the island's capital. The town was purpose built, beginning in 1770, after the Laird of Islay, Daniel Campbell, insisted that the town be moved as its original location spoiled his view of Loch Indaal. Established in 1779, Bowmore Distillery is one of the oldest surviving distilleries in Scotland. Its No.1 Vaults warehouse is the holy of holies on Islay, and may be the oldest building in the Scottish whisky industry.

On the northwest corner of the island, whisky lovers flock to Caol Ila and Bunnahabhain distilleries. Caol Ila is the older of the two but has been modernized and is now the island's largest distillery, with most of its production going into the Johnny Walker blends. Established in the 1880s, Bunnahabhain mainly produces an unpeated style of spirit leading to its nickname, The Gentle Giant of Islay.

Islay's southernmost shore is called the Kildalton coast for the important Celtic cross found at the ruined Kildalton Chapel. The area's whiskies are increasingly old, rare and expensive, but are sought after for their elegant, peaty style. Next, heading east, is Laphroaig, easily the most medicinal of malts, famous for being the only legally available whisky during prohibition. (The authorities considered it so offensive they thought no one would want to drink it.)

Down the road, Lagavulin produces The Aristocrat of Islay, a smoky and popular dram. Last, there is Ardbeg, Islay's other cult distillery. Though very heavily peated, its spirit is delicate and complex.

Try Kilchoman Machir Bay – The distillery's first permanent bottling. Sweet, grassy and chocolaty with briny sea breeze and crisp smoke.

Try Bruichladdich Laddie 10 Year – The first 10 year distilled and bottled by the new owner. Very honeyed and creamy with soft fruits.

Try Bowmore Tempest III – A cask strength, first fill ex-Bourbon cask matured Bowmore. Very creamy and fruity with salty smoke.

Try Bunnahabhain 18 Year – White fruits with spices, soft earthy sherry notes and a lovely rich malty-oak character.

Try Caol Ila 12 Year – Green grassy malt, chunky peat and toffee with hints of a fisherman's wharf at low tide.

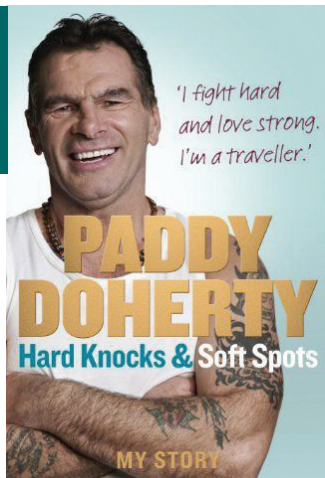
Try Old Malt Cask Port Ellen 27 Year – The last relatively inexpensive Port Ellen. Big candied fruit, firm leather, dark chocolate and oily peat.

Try Laphroaig 18 Year – 18 years in the oak have mellowed the medicinal notes and added chocolate, stewed fruits, syrup and spice.

Try Lagavulin 16 Year – Elegant clean smoke, thick peat, rubber tubing and spice with anise and chocolate.

Try Ardbeg Corryvreckan – A big spicy, sweet and peaty malt with notes of oranges, briny grass, cracked pepper and espresso beans.





Hard Knocks and Soft Spots: My Story

By Paddy Doherty

Ebury Press/ 305 pp / \$16.99

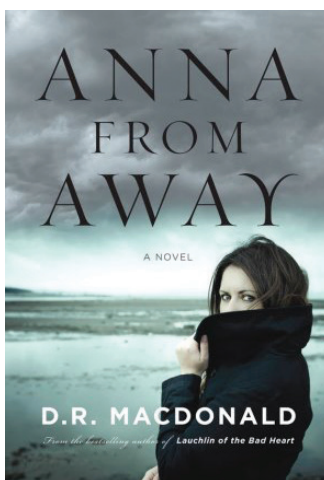
Irish traveler Paddy Doherty's memoir is both a tale of personal resilience and an absorbing look at a unique and threatened way of life. Now a reality TV star in Britain, Doherty was born in 1959 into a Catholic Irish family that traveled around England. Young Doherty loved the traveling life but never knew the identity of his real parents until young adulthood, when he discovered his sister was his mother and his father was legendary bare-knuckle boxer, Simey Doherty. This was unsurprising as the young Doherty already knew how to vanquish schoolyard bullies and compete with other travelers in bare-knuckle boxing – the travelers' traditional way of settling scores and asserting dominance. Doherty's life has been unusually tough. He's suffered many beatings, a car crash took his oldest son, and a genetic disease four of his babies. His story is often gruesome, but his grit demands respect. – CM

Anna from Away

By D.R. MacDonald

Harper Collins / 304pp / \$32.99

Personal definitions of loyalty are shaped by heritage and experience in this Canadian author's latest novel. When Anna Starling leaves California to renew herself and her art, her life intersects with various characters in the rural Cape Breton community where she decides to winter. The relationships she forges with Red Murdock, a lonely, grieving cabinet maker with deep ties to the land, and Livingstone Campbell, an otherwise unemployed drug dealer, illustrate how inextricably past and present are linked. MacDonald, a lecturer emeritus at Stanford University, writes in a resonating, quietly lyrical style, with careful attention to physical setting as well as to the contradictory elements that make a character truly interesting. He also employs an unusual technique of closing some chapters with the colorful observations of engaging locals who are peripheral to the main story as well as being the last of their kind. – Rosalie MacEachern



Country Girl: A memoir

By Edna O'Brien

Faber and Faber/ 339pp / \$20.00

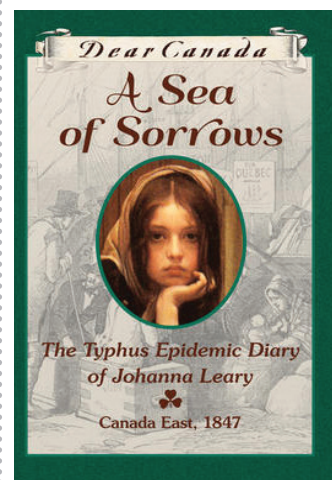
Irish novelist and playwright Edna O'Brien never wanted to write a memoir. Indeed, it must have been painful to re-live her many heartaches, which include an abusive father, marriage to a jealous fellow writer, condemnation of her work by many of her compatriots and the Catholic Church and a love life full of disappointments. But O'Brien has also had fun. For the last 50 years, the writer, who was raised in rural County Clare, has lived in London, where she's mingled with movie stars, musical icons and literary giants. The many famous names in her address book include her close friend, the late Jackie Onassis. O'Brien is most interesting when she writes of her creative process – like most writers she often dreads the waiting page. She considers herself lucky to have been able to go on reading and writing – “to live in these two intensities that have buttressed my whole life.” – CM

A Sea of Sorrows: The Typhus Epidemic Diary of Johanna Leary from Ireland to Canada East 1847

By Norah McClintock

Scholastic/ 175pp / \$16.99

A Sea of Sorrows tells how thirteen-year-old Johanna Leary and her family fled Ireland's potato famine, hoping for a better life in Canada. But on board their ship, typhus spread and many people died. Johanna loses loved ones to typhus and meets unkind people who take advantage of her. She has to learn to survive in a new country where people are prejudiced against the Irish and don't speak her language. But she's an inspiring character because she's brave and self-reliant. I've read and enjoyed almost all of the Dear Canada books, but this one may be my favorite. I've visited Quebec City and was able to picture Johanna in the old parts of town. Also, this book kept me in suspense and I didn't want to put it down. – Olivia Riesgo, aged 13





Mark Knopfler

Privateering - Mercury Records

Former Dire Straits front-man Mark Knopfler hits pay-dirt with *Privateering*, a crisp collection of 25 tunes. As with his past soundtrack work for the movies *Cal* and *Local Hero*, the soulful six-stringer paints a myriad of musical moods with his nimble fingertips. A mélange of electric and acoustic guitars ring out on *Corned Beef City* and *Why Aye Man*, uilleann pipes spice up the sensuous *Haul Away*, while *Don't Forget Your Hat*, *Hot or What* and *Gator Blood* signal a return to Knopfler's bluesy JJ Cale-era roots. As such, the real treat here, as always, is the fretwork; finger-picking, slide and Dobro shine in the hands of this Glasgow-born virtuoso, creating an eclectic and engaging treasure chest of songs for both new and long-time listeners. ~ SPC



Le Vent du Nord

Tromper le Temps - Borealis

Fiddles, accordion and the bodhran have had a huge impact on Quebecois culture since the Irish and Scots first settled in la belle province in the 1700s. *Le Vent du Nord* succeeds at keeping those customs alive with *Tromper le Temps*, a stirring 13-song selection of traditional Celtic tunes. *Le Dragon de Chimay* wouldn't be out of place in an old Irish pub, and *Toujours Amants* could easily be cut from Cape Breton cloth. The Franco-Celtic stylings of *Le Souhait* and *Dans les Cachots* pay homage to the group's Breton roots, and the spirited sway of both *Le Winnebago* and *Le Soiree du Hockey* are pure Acadian-Canadiana. Warm and wonderful melodies from this young, multi-award winning quartet, and an ideal soundtrack for un vrai bon reveillon! ~ SPC



Great Big Sea

XX - Warner Music

Newfoundland's prodigal sons Great Big Sea kick off their 20th anniversary celebrations with *XX*, a 60-song anthology available as either a two-disc collection or a four-CD, one-DVD boxed set. From the opening chords of *Born to Believe* to the closing chorus of *Parade*, this gathering of GBS goodies runs the musical gamut from classics like *Paddy Murphy*, *Old Black Rum*, *Mary Mac* and *Ordinary Day* to a small sampling of rarities and oddities – including *Josephine the Baker*, *Le Bon Vin* and a rollicking version of Pete Townsend's *Let My Love Open the Door* – making the collection even more appealing for diehard fans. A smattering of live tracks will likely lure listeners to check the band out in concert over the coming months as they take to the road across North America. ~ SPC



Wilber Calver

Diaspora - Alex Wilson Records

Although the Cuban-born Calver now resides in Switzerland, this cross-cultural collection of pipe-infused melodies cuts a wide musical swath across the global Celtic circle. Funky Caribbean bass 'n' drums anchor *Cork Hill*, *Jota Parabela* and *Clumsy Lover*, and even the traditionalist leanings of *Eicho De Bar* and *Amazing Grace* get the world beat once-over. The self-proclaimed 'Ebony Piper' is at his best, however, on the jazzy *Foliada De Berducino* and the reggae-infused *Cumbanchero*, both fantastic forays into uncharted musical territory where the pipes are as at home as they might be anywhere. Adventurous and inspiring, *Diaspora* is not only a frontrunner for Celtic recording of the year, but also a reminder that the Celtic influence is now both global in scope and greater in scale than the sum of its parts. ~ SPC

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TRADfest

Now in its eighth year, Dublin's Temple Bar TradFest is a favourite on the Irish festival calendar.

The 2013 festival will take place from January 22 – 27, and feature over 200 free events, headline concerts, a music trail, a singers club, open sessions, two outdoor stages, the international Celtic Irish Dance Show, master classes and showcases, gigs for kids, a children's club, cultural workshops, pipe bands and street performers.

Organised by the Temple Bar Traders' Association with the support of local businesses, the yearly musical celebration has proven to be a social, cultural and economic boon for the Irish capital since its inception.

In 2012, more than 44,000 people visited, including over 13,000 from overseas. Organizers expect that number to grow to 15,000 in 2013.

"This past year we saw a huge increase in international visitors from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, Spain and Germany," says festival programmer Kieran Hanrahan. "Already this year we have also seen bookings from the U.S., Canada and throughout Europe."

He adds that the 2013 event has an international feel to it.

"As part of the country's celebrations for The Gathering 2013, internationally renowned Irish artists living all over the world - England, Scotland, Spain, Poland, Latvia, America and Canada - have been invited to 'come home'.

"We are actually kicking off the festival with an extraordinary Musical Gathering concert in Christ Church Cathedral, which will bring together some of the most progressive and influential traditional groups of the past fifteen years, including Karen Kasey, Donal O' Connor, John Spillane, John McSherry, Lumiere, Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh and Donogh Hennessy."

Other main-stage musical performers scheduled to appear at Temple Bar TradFest include Stephen Rea, Maighread Ní Dhomhnaill, Martin Hayes, Dennis Cahill, Joanie Madden, Sharon Shannon, and former DeDanaan vocalist Maura O'Connell.

"In our headline concerts we have assembled a line-up of some of the most iconic figures in Irish traditional music coupled with some of the most exciting names in emerging Irish talent," shares Hanrahan.

Along with historic Christ Church Cathedral, other concert venues include St. Patrick's Cathedral, St. Werburg's Church and The Irish Stock Exchange.

City Hall - considered one of Dublin's most beautiful and iconic buildings - will be the scene of a series of intimate lunch-hour performances.

A string of evening concerts will celebrate Irish music and its influence in Europe, Canada, New York and London, and a special concert to mark Ireland's presidency of the European Council in 2013 will feature artists from across the European continent.

TradFest will also see the world-premier of The De Cuellar Suite, a new composition written by Michael Rooney, featuring over 60 musicians and dancers from Ireland and Galicia, Spain. This concert will celebrate the interconnectivity between Irish and Spanish culture.

A closing night spectacle will celebrate the unique contribution made by Barney McKenna to Irish traditional music. McKenna, who died in April, was widely acknowledged as one of the most important figures in the development of the tenor banjo in trad music and was a founding member of The Dubliners, with whom he played since the legendary band's early days on stage at O'Donoghue's Pub in Dublin in the 1960s.

Families will not be disappointed with the festival either, says Hanrahan. "We have outdoor stages with an emphasis on young Irish music and dance talent; street entertainment and a children's club are just some of the many free events taking place during the festival.

"I have no doubt that everyone will enjoy a truly exciting celebration of our culture."

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Carlos Núñez

The Piper

World-renowned Galician musician Carlos Núñez is celebrating the fact that he's finally getting to collaborate with English artist Philip Pickett. The two are promising that their show, *Two Pipers Piping*, will blow fresh life into Scottish and Irish tunes not heard in more than 300 years.

"This music's been asleep for centuries, and will be born again on the stage," Núñez, a master of the recorder and the Galician bagpipe (the *gaita*) told Celtic Life. "What I love about this music is that you can feel London's spirit pulsing through it."

Accompanied by two musicians who work with Núñez and others from Musicians of the Globe, a troupe Pickett founded in 1993, the duo will play five performances in England and one at Glasgow's Celtic Connections between January 29th and Feb 6th. The shows will blend jigs, reels, hornpipes and ballads as they might have sounded in the streets, taverns and theatres of Restoration London.

The tunes have great vitality and complexity, reflecting the energy of the Restoration era, which began in 1660 with the return of King Charles II to the throne. The Restoration was a time of cultural exploration after the strictures of the puritan years. Theatre burgeoned, supported by the new king and his mistress, the actress Nell Gwyn. Many Scottish and Irish people worked in London. Their interest in Celtic tunes was natural, and Londoners also romanticized Celtic culture.

Those years were also a time of geographic exploration. Núñez said that some of the harmonies and rhythms heard in London were created on the boats of pirates and adventurers – famous names like 16th century English sea captain Sir Francis Drake, who always took at least five volunteer musicians on an expedition.

"Some of this music was born in the galleons," Núñez said. "It holds the tone of battles, of travels to North America."

Other popular melodies and rhythms were medieval but they were re-interpreted in the 1600s with new harmonies and techniques.

Pickett, who is a recorder player, conductor, and interpreter of lost performing traditions, said Londoners would have heard Scottish and Irish musicians perform and then interpreted

the tunes in their own style. While researching the music, he uncovered many Scottish and Irish tunes published in London in the late 1600s that blend Scottish and Irish idioms, still heard in today's Celtic folk music, with a London/English influence in the harmonies and rhythm.

"The fashion continued well into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with composers such as Haydn and Mendelssohn writing pieces inspired by Scottish and Irish music heard in London," said Pickett.

He was excited by the tunes as soon as he began researching them, and Núñez's involvement heightens that excitement. "It's extraordinary to hear what Carlos does with these simple pieces - adding ornaments, altering rhythms, bending notes, you name it."

Núñez said Pickett is a rare breed – a classical musician with a sensibility for traditional music. The two have long wanted to collaborate. They first met in the 1980s, when Pickett visited Núñez's home town of Vigo to perform songs by the medieval Galician composer Martín Codax. Sixteen-year-old Núñez was amazed when Pickett began to play the *gaita*.

"When I met Phil I saw this serious musician, who was performing all over the world in big concert halls, head straight for the *gaita*, for my instrument, and start to play it... He was playing this monster, this non-domestic animal. I couldn't believe it!"

It was a shock to see Pickett play the Galician pipes, but Núñez realized that the *gaita* resembled the pipes played in England in the Middle Ages – an era Pickett understood intimately.

For Núñez, the music he and Pickett will soon perform is a perfect fit for the earthy, ancient sounds of the 1,000-year-old *gaita*. He said his interpretations will be guided by the innovative spirit of the Restoration and the reactions of audiences.

"Traditional musicians know that it's never one genius composer who creates the music; it takes many individuals, many generations," he said. "Music is energy and it changes, music moves. We will play with the freedom of traditional musicians and bring our personalities and variations to the music."



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Duncan Chisholm



The Fiddler

One of Scotland's most accomplished fiddlers and composers, Duncan Chisholm is currently celebrating the release of *Affric*, the third work in his Strathglass Trilogy in which he evokes the wild landscape that has been home to his family for 700 years. The fiddler told Celtic Life that he takes inspiration from many family stories, including his great grandmother's account of the time when her house was surrounded by threateningly lovely flood water.

"She and my great grandfather lived in one of the remotest areas of the Highlands, a place called Athnamullach, which lies west of Loch Affric on the old drove road to Kintail," Chisholm said. "In 1900, there was a heavy snow and then a very quick thaw with heavy rain. The river Affric broke its banks and flooded over the meadow. The house in which the family lived was completely surrounded by flood water. Miles from anywhere and anybody, they were marooned. My great grandmother used to say that when she looked out of the house in the moonlight the water was very frightening but very beautiful."

The story inspired the tune *The Flooded Meadow*, one of the tracks on the *Affric* album, which follows the earlier parts of the trilogy, *Farrar* and *Canaich*. In all three, the music blends traditional tunes with contemporary sounds. Finishing the trilogy is a career highlight for Chisholm, who spent six years on the project.

"Landscape and history have inspired all the recordings in *The Strathglass Trilogy*," Chisholm explained. "Overall, I wanted to give a flavour of this beautiful part of the world."

Since its September release, *Affric* has received much praise, including being named one of *Songlines* magazine's Best Albums

of 2012. Chisholm has also been nominated for Instrumentalist of the Year by the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards.

The sought-after composer is also known for his collaborations, notably with the award-winning trad/rock fusion band, *Wolfstone*, which he co-founded in 1989. He has been playing the fiddle since the age of eight when he took lessons from Donald Riddell, a great exponent of Highland fiddle music. Chisholm thinks that all children should get the chance to express themselves musically and feels fortunate to have started his career early. He advises other musicians to get experience before family commitments arrive.

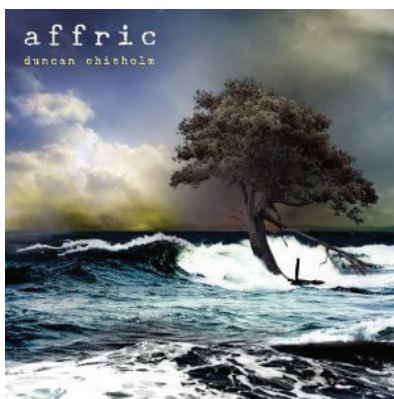
"It would be a huge challenge to do that with a family to support and I always encourage good young musicians to take the plunge early to at least experience being a musician for a while."

He said he likes to write songs that allow listeners to escape and enjoy a few moments peace. As he gets older, he feels that life's experiences make him a better fiddler.

"I understand now the ability of music to lift the soul and to connect with people. For me it is a cathartic experience, I can share my emotions and feel better as a result. It is a true representation of who I am and where I come from and to be able to express myself in such a way means the world to me."

"I am working on a few projects at the moment," he continued. "Foremost in my mind is touring the *Affric* album and looking at creating an orchestral piece set around *The Strathglass Trilogy*, the future is full of possibility."

www.duncanchisholm.co.uk



Affric Duncan Chisholm *Copperfish Records*

The third and final component in Chisholm's acclaimed Strathglass Trilogy, *Affric* expands on themes previously explored in both *Farrar* and *Canaich*; longing, family, home, tradition, history and heritage. The beautiful yearning of *An Ribhinn Donn* opens the work, setting mood and tone for the remaining 10 tracks, including the warm and welcoming *Night In That Land*, which closes the recording. The gentle lull of *Rubha Nam Marbh* takes us home to the rolling Highlands, while the rollicking *The Flooded Meadow* lets its hair down and kicks its feet up. Chisholm's skill comes to full-force, however, on *Running the Cross*, where he lets loose overtop a lean and muscular backing band. Sometimes tender, sometimes tough, *Affric* is a fine and fitting closure to a sweeping trilogy.



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Gyula Glaser

Growing up in Budapest in Hungary, Gyula Glaser never expected to make a career in Irish dance, but a mesmerizing show by Michael Flatley set the young man on a path that has already included winning multiple awards, performing in New York and fostering Irish dance in his new hometown, Berlin.

The life-changing moment that began Glaser's career as an Irish dancer occurred ten years ago, when he was just 16.

"Like many others at the time, one of Michael Flatley's productions got my attention on television," he recalls. "I was fascinated by the footwork of those dancers and I wanted to try it myself."

He began lessons with Budapest-based teacher Ronan Morgan, a former dancer in high-profile shows such as *Lord of the Dance* and *Dancing on Dangerous Ground*. Morgan had opened his school in 2000 and it was making waves, being the first Irish-run school in Hungary.

"Ronan was not just able to teach me how to dance, but also how to prepare for the challenges and the highs and lows of show business," says Glaser.

One year after his first dance class with Ronan, Glaser attended his first Feis in Munich. "There was no stopping me after that," he says with a grin.

Since then, his career highlights have included working with innovative Irish dancer and choreographer Breandan de Gallai who handpicked Glaser to perform in his groundbreaking show, *Noctú*, in which he blends traditional Irish dance with other dance styles.

Dancing with de Gallai's *Noctú* for five weeks in the off-Broadway Irish Repertory Theater in New York was a huge experience for the young dancer.

"Though the dance language that Breandan created is strongly based on traditional Irish dance, our upper bodies became just as important as our feet," explains Glaser. "We had eight shows a week, but it was also so easy in a way because we all loved every minute of it. The show was received very well and, later in 2012, it was nominated for the prestigious Drama Desk Awards for Unique Theatrical Experience and Outstanding Choreography."

In 2010, Glaser enjoyed another formative experience when he danced with *Magic of the Dance* at the Cinema for Peace Gala in Berlin. Leonardo DiCaprio and Liam Neeson were among the star-studded audience and Glaser met Neeson afterwards. "We were all very excited," he recalls. "I love dancing and I am very happy about the fact that I made my hobby into my profession. I think it's important that people do what they love."

Doing what he loves includes hosting Irish dance workshops in Berlin and performing with the Irish Beats Dance Company. It is good to work in a city and country where Irish dancing is popular and becoming more so.

"In 2010, we started Camp Rince Berlin, a week-long Irish dance camp that helps dancers improve their technique, repertoire, and just get together to enjoy Irish dancing. Since then, it has grown into an international event, with dancers coming from the USA, Ukraine, Russia, Poland and the Netherlands to take part; the number of participants is growing every year."

Next year, a new program organized by the German Netzwerk Irland called 500 Days of Irish Life in Germany, will showcase 500 Irish cultural events taking place all over the country, including readings, lectures and performances. "These projects are playing a key role in making sure that Irish culture gets closer to people," Glaser says.

As a dancer, he continues to evolve and improvisation interests him. "I often find myself just messing around, dancing to music that is nothing to do with Irish dance. Hopefully, this will eventually turn into a new piece for our dance company...I put on the music and just wait to see what happens next."





the Clan Graham Society of North America



Bill Richardson was more interested in bringing in the harvest on his Canadian farm than in joining a family holiday to Scotland, but he went along and found himself embarking on what has become a lifelong dedication to Clan Graham.

"In the early 1980s my mother, Marjorie (Graham) Richardson and my sister, Bette Staley, were promoting North America's Clan Graham Society after doing a lot of research into our Scottish roots," recounts Richardson, who is now the clan's VP and Commissioner in Canada.

"They invited my wife and I on a trip to Scotland. At the time, I was farming and really didn't care if I had come out from under a cabbage leaf, being concerned more with getting the crops off in time."

The family farm was at Vandorf, Ontario.

"It was a Century Farm, having been in the Richardson name for over 100 years. It had been Graham land prior to its purchase by the Richardson family - part of a military land grant to my Loyalist ancestor, Captain William Graham," Richardson relates.

But he reluctantly agreed to go as his mom had located the graves of the family's ancestors, as well as the small croft where they once lived in the Ochil Hills of Perthshire in central Scotland.

His unwilling visit had a profound effect on Richardson.

"Upon seeing this country, I felt a deep sense of belonging and have returned many times to learn more about my Graham story," he says, adding that he became actively involved in the society in the mid-1980s when his mom gave him a membership as a Christmas present.

The Grahams have a fascinating history, and the Clan Graham Society of North America is involved in many activities such as piping, dancing, genealogy, history, re-enactment and travel. The society began in 1975 when it was founded by Harry Graham, and now has a membership of about 1,500, mostly in the U.S. and Canada.

Every 5th year, members of Clan Graham travel to Scotland or Ireland for their AGM and to visit with the current chief, James Graham, 8th Duke of Montrose, who resides in Stirlingshire near Loch Lomond. This year, the chief also visited the clan

in Tennessee to attend the AGM and to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of his ancestor, James Graham, first Marquis of Montrose and fifth Earl of Montrose.

Known as The Great Montrose, James Graham supported King Charles I during the Civil War. When the king's side was defeated and the king subsequently executed in 1649, Graham met a gruesome fate, being hanged, drawn and quartered on May 21st, 1650 in Edinburgh. Many years later, his remains were gathered from where they had been dispersed around Scotland and buried in Edinburgh's St. Giles Cathedral, where a memorial to him remains.

Other well-known Grahams include Sir John Graham of Dundaff, "the right hand of Wallace" who fell at Falkirk in 1298, and John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, known by some as "Bonnie Dundee" and by his enemies as "Bloodie Clavers" (1648-1689).

These personalities have become famous, but the origins of the clan are disputed. Some think the Graham clan began with the Graeme who led the armies of Fergus II in 404 AD. Others claim Flemish or Danish roots.

Most accept that the clan's origins go back to 1066 when the French Duke of Normandy conquered Britain. William de Grahame arrived with or shortly after the Duke, and was given land in England at Grantham. The Grahams also received land in Scotland at Abercorn and Dalkieth. Over time, they acquired lands in the Montrose area of Scotland, giving rise to the tartan known as Graham of Montrose.

Many Grahams settled in the Scottish Borders. The ancient seat of the Grahams was Mugdock Castle in Stirlingshire, which has been partially restored with assistance from clan members in Scotland and North America and Scottish historical groups.

Whatever the precise details of the clan's past, Richardson is now happy to be involved. "Clan Graham Society will continue to promote the aims and objectives of the society, the history and heritage of the Graham family in Scotland and of those Graham families in Canada, the USA and wherever interested Grahams may be found," he pledges.

www.clangrahamsociety.org





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LASTword

Winter came, and frost webbed the windowpanes and veiled the heather on Mount Leinster. I was helping Gran make the Christmas pudding when we heard the novel putt-putt sound everyone in Graiguenamanagh talked about. I rushed to the window as Farmer Michael O'Shea's new black car stopped outside our gate. I ran to open the door.

"Mornin' Mrs. Earls," the farmer said, pulling off his cap. "I'm driving into Bagenalstown on Christmas Eve. Would yourself an' the child like ta drive - ya could see your daughter, Eileen, an' the child could see her mother..."

"Oh, what a grand surprise," Gran said, flashing her wide smile. "Now only for you Mike, we wouldn't be able to see Eileen. It's just too far for our old ass and cart and the bus doesn't get back 'til late."

The next few days we worked to get Mammy's presents ready. I was delighted with myself because I knit a pair of red mittens with round, wide thumbs for Mammy, who had just left hospital after a long sickness.

When Farmer O'Shea arrived, Gran chose the car's front seat, where she sat looking regal in her black, Napoleon-style-hat. Her grey eyes widened as the trees and hedges flew past, and she and Farmer O'Shea talked about Ireland having just been declared a Republic. They agreed times were hard and that we must remember that Ireland could quit the British Commonwealth in 1949.

When we arrived at my mother's, the door flew open and Mammy reached out and hugged me. "Come in!" she said, her green eyes glowing.

I placed Mammy's mittens in their special red wrapper on the hearth ready for Christmas Day.

"What's in the boxes?" Mammy asked Gran after she'd poured her a whiskey.

"Eileen, I've an apple dumpling in one, fresh cut holly in another, and two of the loveliest Rhode Island Reds in the big one," Gran said as she opened the large box and lifted the hens onto the kitchen floor.

They were handsome birds, with short crimson combs atop their heads and full mahogany skirts over white petticoats. They fanned their deep red plumed tails and cocked their heads nervously until Gran circled her hand over them, clucked her tongue and called their names. Then they relaxed, and sunk their necks into their shoulders, the shutters dropping over their eyes.

"This is Rosie, all eight pounds of her, and here's Jane, just as plump! They lay those lovely brown eggs you love," Gran said.

"The man from the council said we can't have hens in town," Mammy said, looking anxious.

"But they're for your Christmas dinner! Rosie'll make a lovely roast an' Jane'll make a bountiful chicken stew..."

"But, who'll kill 'em?" Mammy's voice rose.

"There's nothin' to it! 'Just stretch their necks out nice an' long an' snap..." Gran said, miming.

"Oh I couldn't! Could you?" Mammy said.

"No." Gran shook her head. "Not me Eileen. Not a' tall. Sure they know me too well. Eileen, just ask Jimmy Farrell, the grocer... or Jim Jordan, the butcher. Even Tommy the postman would do it."

"I feel strange asking people to help me with my Christmas dinner," Mammy said, her eyes brimming.

"I'll ask Mike O'Shea when he comes back." Gran's face was growing flushed from the talk and the whiskey.

When the farmer returned, Gran asked him to kill the hens so Mammy could have a lovely Christmas dinner. I felt sad because the hens were my playmates. There being no other children around, I'd often pick them up, tuck their heads under their wings, twirl them around and they would sleep standing up. Farmer O'Shea looked down at the hens, then at Gran.

"Well ya know... I'm a hunter. The only way I could kill them hens is with a gun... after a fair chase."



Gran gulped her whiskey and pinned on her hat then swooped down and lifted the hens back into the box. "Girls, we're goin' home!" she said.

It was dark as we bumped over the Tinnahinch Bridge and into Graiguenamanagh. We passed the Anchor Hotel and saw silhouettes laughing beneath the purple-grey pipe and cigarette smoke. The long narrow street was thronged with shadowy people carrying parcels. We passed the Abbey and drove up Wood Road under a bright moon.

Back home, Gran lifted Rosie and Jane from their box.

"You've had a narrow escape, girls," she said. She glanced at me and we exchanged a long, relieved Christmas grin.

By Veronica Breen Hogle





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