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The Best of Celtic Life International 2019

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Up With Gaelic

In the fourth instalment in a six-part series on prominent women in the Celtic community we speak with two youngsters from Nova Scotia...



When Abby and Ella Hanson sat down with Celtic Life International at the beginning of May, it was the start of Gaelic Nova Scotia Month. The siblings had just wrapped up a presentation at the Halifax Central Library.

Although young (Abby 16, Ella 14), the sisters are having an important impact on Gaelic education in their home province. As the founders of Up With Gaelic, the pair visit schools around mainland Nova Scotia, promoting the preservation of Scottish Gaelic culture and tradition.

"Both our parents are in the education system," says Abby. "We had heard a lot about how Gaelic culture was on the social studies curriculum in grade schools, but there were almost no resources to actually teach it. So, with the help of our mom and what we had learned from our Gaelic teachers, we put the presentation together."

At first, one of the biggest challenges was getting people to take them seriously.

"A couple of times in the beginning we would go into classes and people would say, 'Oh, we didn't think you would actually be students,'" shares Abby. "They were expecting adults."

Abby and Ella's maternal great-great grandmother only spoke Gaelic when she first emigrated to Nova Scotia. As the language was frowned upon at the time, Gaels were discouraged from using their mother tongue outside of their own homes. Over time, that led to a loss of the language in Gaelic households, including that of Abby and Ella's family. However, the pair are now working their way back to Gaelic fluency - and their mother has started learning the language as well. Up With Gaelic is their chance to share their heritage.

The duo balance their own schoolwork with their elementary school visits. They started off with 30-minute presentations, but soon bumped them up to an hour after realizing that they needed more time to cover everything properly. Though the sessions vary slightly depending on the students' ages, the core is always the same: Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. The teens take their audiences from the Gaels' lifestyle in Scotland - residing in blackhouses, spinning wool and caring for cattle - to their journey to Canada. They bring interactive elements to the classroom as well, including a milling song.

The two weren't always as enthusiastic about learning Gaelic as they are now, but in 2014, after participating in Na Gaisgich Oga (a Gaelic

mentorship program for youth) run by the Gaelic College in St. Ann's, Cape Breton, they grew curious. Already violinists (soon to be fiddlers), they were drawn by the musical side of the culture.

"I really liked learning the singing," smiles Abby. "I had a faint idea that it was part of my family heritage - that my ancestors had spoken Gaelic - and I slowly became more interested as I went along and started taking more classes."

For Ella, it wasn't until the second year of participating in the Caidreamh na Cloinneadh (Summer Youth Gaelic Immersion program) that she became invested in learning to speak Gaelic.

"I really enjoyed learning the language and figuring it out. Like with friends, I got to speak with them in Gaelic and they got to speak back, which is pretty cool."

"We did it as well this past year. It was also fun because I could completely understand what everyone was saying, and I could hold a conversation - which was really neat and special because I was speaking the language of my ancestors."

Ella has also taken to step-dancing, which she happily demonstrates during the Up With Gaelic presentations.

While neither have immediate goals of teaching Gaelic full-time, they want to continue sharing the culture with students for as long as they can. Based on their experience, they believe that young people today are still interested in learning about Gaelic culture.

"We went to the Gaelic College one year and one of the organizers said, 'We had a family here last week and they came because their daughter had heard about it through your presentation,'" recalls Abby. "That was so amazing that they had remembered it for that long."

Abby and Ella say that, if they have children of their own, they will be happy to pass the language along to them.

"Just look around," says Ella. "Gaelic might not be an active part of our everyday culture, but it is still a huge part of our life."

www.upwithgaelic.ca

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Wild at Art

Art is at the heart of one woman's business

Ute Amann-Seidel believes that art is “a very authentic way of connecting with a location” and feels that Scotland is the perfect creative travel destination.

Originally from a small town in Germany, Amann-Seidel has lived in Scotland for more than two decades.

“I am totally in love with this country and always keen to share my passion for it with visitors,” she shares via email. “I have always been into creative things and doing art. Scotland has so much to offer in terms of talented artists, interesting galleries, stunning locations, a vibrant music scene, wonderful history, and a strong cultural heritage.”

Amann-Seidel co-founded Wild at Art with Ellen Colingsworth in 2012. In the beginning, the company put on an annual program of two or three group “painting holidays” during the summer months. At that time, both women had other day jobs. However, as the program evolved, Wild at Art became a full-time venture.

“In a nutshell, our mission is to create unique art experiences for visitors, and opportunities for them to take part in courses and workshops while on holidays in Scotland,” explains Amann-Seidel.

“Travelling in general is a form of personal development. Creative travel takes the experience to another, and more enriching level.”

“More and more, visitors are looking for experiences that give them the opportunity to learn and create. Being creative allows us to really understand a place and connect with its culture and the people. Wild at Art has become a portal for visitors from all over the world who are looking for transformative, creative experiences.”

As such, her role, she explains, is very much “hands on.”

“One of my favourite tasks is designing a new art experience - researching the location, planning the workshop part together with the tutor, picking the best accommodation, and adding bits that further enrich the package. This could be, for example, a visit to a gallery and a local artist's studio, a themed walking tour, or something like a Celtic folk music night in a local pub.”

Currently, the company's workshops include drawing and painting, photography, printmaking, weaving, pottery, creative writing and more via group tours to customized individual experiences. A 10-day, artist-led Outlander Art Experience, during which guests stay in Linlithgow and Inverness - visiting many of the filming locations featured in the smash STARZ TV series - has become very popular.

The dynamic duo is looking to expand both their destinations and activities, always growing their team of artists and partners.

“The latest addition to our program is a singing holiday in traditional Scottish song with the amazing Robyn Stapleton - one of the



country's most respected folk singers,” says Amann-Seidel. “I am very excited about developing this new side of the business, where people from over the world can come together to share the joy of singing right in the heart of Scotland.”

The position is not without its challenges, however.

“The days are too short; I always have so many ideas buzzing around in my head and, as director of the company, I have the freedom to put into practice whatever I want. Because I absolutely love what I do, and work doesn't really feel like work, I often find it hard to switch off.”

Along with Wild at Art, Amann-Seidel also owns and operates Fire & Rain Soul Spa, which offers retreats for people who have lost their partners.

“Following the sudden death of my fiancé I went through a major life crisis. Once I felt stronger and able to function better again, I decided to set up a project where I can share some of the things that had helped me on my grief journey with other widows and widowers.”

The rewards of both vocations, she notes, is beyond measure.

“First and foremost, I really enjoy meeting happy and inspired guests from all over the globe, and getting to know the fantastic Scottish artists, the accommodation hosts, gallery owners, minibus drivers, café staff and shop owners. Of course, I love taking part in the workshops and being surrounded by creative spirits.

“And I get to explore more of this beautiful country; the wilderness, the buzzing cities, historic towns, dream beaches, the rugged hills, vast open spaces and the many glens. There couldn't be a better workplace anywhere else in the world!”

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Chef Gary MacLean

*Scotland's national
Chef Gary MacLean
savours his humble
beginnings*



“My inspiration to become a chef came from my sheer love of cooking,” shares Chef Gary MacLean via email from his home in Scotland.

“I wasn’t great at school, and I found home economics classes to be very easy - it was something I was good at. When I became a chef, it certainly was not the popular profession that it is today and, truthfully, it was probably not a great career choice. However, I was very lucky to get a job in a good hotel; I was only 15, and the chef was embracing new styles of cuisine. Today, over three decades later, I still love what I do, and I am very proud to be a chef.”

MacLean was born in Glasgow, and now resides in nearby Robroyston, best known as the historical location of William Wallace’s capture in 1305. He shares his slice of idyllic Scottish countryside with his wife Sharon, and their five children, who range in age from 5 to 23.

“The location is incredible; when I take the kids and the dog for a walk, I am totally surrounded in countryside within two minutes. On a clear day, I can see Ben Lomond from my bedroom window.”

Given the demands of his vocation, he cherishes every precious moment with his family and friends.

“My choices over the years have totally taken over; long hours, working six days and five nights a week. So, I have missed stuff on occasion - important stuff, like birthdays and anniversaries. A Saturday night out has been an impossibility for most of my career. But that was my choice. I went down that route, and I know it is not for everyone, but that is what I did.”

What keeps him going is the excitement of being creative behind the grill each day, ensuring that the job never feels like work. Over the years he has run over 100 restaurants, hobnobbed with the rich and famous, and travelled the world while slinging dishes.

“I sometimes have to pinch myself - just recently, I was at an event with Princess Anne in attendance at a top-secret nuclear submarine base.”

A career highlight was winning MasterChef: The Professionals in 2016.

“MasterChef is a wonderful platform; it is very unique in that you can show your friends, family, and 4 million other people what you do for a living every night of the week for 6 weeks.

“It totally changed my life - I have been non-stop since the win; travelling to India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Colombia, doing

pop ups in New York, and dinners in Los Angeles and Ottawa for the First Minister of Scotland. I also was asked to do a very special Burns Supper at Number 10 Downing Street.

“In addition, I have participated in food festivals from the Shetland Islands to London, been involved with raising money for charities, and I also have published my first book - Kitchen Essentials, The Joy of Home Cooking.”

Along with his current role as Chef Lecturer at the City of Glasgow College, MacLean is working on establishing partnerships with similar institutions in the USA and Canada. He is also currently in the process of putting together a television series for the BBC, which will be launching later this year.

His biggest honour to date, however, was being named Scotland’s first-ever national chef.

*“Being asked by my Government to represent
the industry I love has been both amazing
and humbling at the same time.”*

“Scotland is a world giant when it comes to food and drink; our chefs are now embracing the country’s wonderful natural local produce and celebrating all things Scottish. We are in the middle of a food revolution, where chefs are bringing their own regional flavours into the world of fine dining.”

Somehow, through all of this, he also finds time to teach up-and-coming chefs a thing or two in the kitchen, and has a few words of wisdom for those looking to launch a career in the world of cuisine.

“My advice to any person starting out in the industry is always the same: get qualified. As a young chef, qualifications might not seem important, but the older you get and the bigger your job becomes, paper qualifications are essential.

“Put your career in the hands of the very best. Surrounding yourself with exceptional people rubs off. Work with nice people. Do not chase cash. Invest in your future by working in the best places, not for the biggest pay cheque. And, perhaps most importantly, stay humble.”

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Còig brings it all together on their latest recording Ashlar

Atlantic Canadian Celt-rockers Còig first got together in 2010 at Cape Breton's annual Celtic Colours International Festival.

"At the time we were all solo acts playing at the festival," shares fiddler Chrissy Crowley via email. "The idea was that we would take turns during the show, backing each other up as we went around the stage, with each person getting the spotlight. We just had so much fun playing together that we decided to keep doing shows as a group whenever we could."

It wasn't long before the quartet made it official. Along with Crowley, band members include multi-instrumentalist Darren McMullen, fiddler and vocalist Rachel Davis, and pianist Jason Roach.

"We all contribute tunes to the sets," explains Crowley. "We all write and arrange songs together, as opposed to the original format where one person would develop their own sets of tunes and have others 'play along.' The vocal aspect of the band has also grown; now, about 40 per cent recordings and live shows feature vocals."

Crowley describes the award-winning group's sound as "unique."

"There is certainly a strong traditional Cape Breton element to the band. We have both female and male lead vocalists, and both English and Gaelic songs on the record. There are a lot of different musical ingredients we can work with.

"It is traditional music in a non-traditional way."

The band's first album, *Five*, was released in 2014, and picked up Album of the Year honours at the 10th annual Canadian Folk Music Awards. A Christmas album titled

Carols followed in 2015, and a full-length album titled *Rove* arrived in 2017.



The band recently released their fourth recording, *Ashlar*.

"There wasn't a particular theme in mind to the music, it just happened naturally," explains Crowley of the 12-track production. "We saw how quickly everything came together despite the music having so many different influences, so in hunting for a word that described this, we found *Ashlar*. *Ashlar* is a type of masonry where rocks of a different size and shape are refined and fitted together. It described the album, where we are varying between themes and genres, but each song fits together. We go from darker folk tunes like *Deep Down in the River*, to these 'raise the roof' Celtic instrumentals like *Time and Tide*. The moods are varied, yet it's all 'Còig' and it all works."

Crowley admits that piecing the production together was not without its challenges.

"For this record we tried to write more than we had in the past, which leaves less room for 'trad' tunes. Sifting through 'trad'

tunes and deciding which ones not to play was tough. With four melody players in the band, it doesn't take long for the list of song options to get quite lengthy.

"You get pretty close to the material throughout the recording process, and quite often get very picky about it," she continues. "It can be easy to get wrapped up in so many little details surrounding the recording, the graphics, release dates, upcoming concerts, and so forth."

Despite those issues, the rewards are immense.

"We often get messages from folks telling us which tracks their favourites are, and which remind them of home. It feels great to know people are listening and enjoying what we have worked on."

Although Crowley believes that Celtic music is here to stay, she is concerned with the state of Celtic languages.

"Great incentives have been taken up by both Nova Scotia and Scotland to promote and preserve the language. Nova Scotia has an Office of Gaelic Affairs, which includes Bun is Bàrr (a Gaelic mentorship program) and Gàidhlig Le Luathas, which is full Gaelic immersion. We would love to see more of these programs and more overall inclusiveness. Bringing awareness to the language and making sure these programs are welcoming to everyone is what will ensure Gaelic remains a vital part of the Celtic tradition."

The band is currently gearing up for gigs in Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

"By the end of this year we will have a new Christmas record to release, and we have already started booking shows in Europe and Australia for 2020."

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James Kennedy

James Kennedy's DIY philosophy serves both him and others well

James Kennedy grew up surrounded by the sounds of Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Kate Bush, Jimi Hendrix, and Frank Zappa, and those early jams continue to influence the young Welsh musician.

He first dabbled in music at age nine, plucking the strings of a guitar given to him by his father.

"After he showed me some basic blues riffs, I was hooked," recalls Kennedy via email from his base in Cardiff. "I seemed to have a natural talent for it and picked it up really quickly - by my early teens I was already playing gigs in bands."

The singer-songwriter now has three solo albums to his name and has recorded three other albums as frontman for the alternative rock band KYSSHERA. Not only does Kennedy perform on the albums - he wrote and produced them to boot, penning lyrics about political issues, love, death and more, and exploring a variety of genres, from acoustic to experimental.

"The moment that you try to craft an idea into something it is not, you make it worse. Inject raw honesty into your content and it will resonate with the listener. When it comes, it comes from nowhere. My job is to capture it somehow - paper, voice note, whatever. From there it is all perspiration - building upon that seed of inspiration and turning into something people can listen to."

He admits that - as the music industry has "changed beyond all recognition" - it can be tough to stay afloat.

"There are more means of artistic freedom and empowerment available than ever before, which is awesome, but the challenge is how to be heard over the crowd and how to maintain a living. What has kept me going until today has been just an insatiable 'need' to do it - it is in my blood. It is actually a curse or sorts as it causes all sorts of other problems in my life!"

Kennedy broke ground with his 2017 solo album, *Home*. The success of the record is one of the proudest moments of his career to date. It became "a Top 50 bestseller and is going over a million streams, without any PR, record company, radio play or press - just sheer fan power."

He is active on various social media platforms, where he engages with fans from

around the world. He affectionately refers to his fanbase as "Misfits."

"For artists, it has been a saviour of sorts," he says of social media. "Before the internet, if you couldn't get a deal with a label, it was game over. A band could not afford to make their own record, never mind releasing and promoting it. It was impossible. These days, you can literally record it all at home, release it for the whole world to potentially discover, and connect directly with fans over social media. You might not make any money, but at least you are not sitting on the shelf."

On top of his musical ventures, Kennedy writes opinion pieces on current affairs and personal experiences. He also does public speaking and is an ambassador for the British Tinnitus Association.

"I have always written blogs and articles for my website on whatever subject was interesting to me at the time and eventually, some started to get published. The public speaking started when I began doing charity work."

Kennedy himself experiences hearing loss and has had tinnitus - chronic ringing, buzzing or "whooshing" in the ears - since he was 10 years old, but that never stopped him from pursuing his passion. As his story gave other people hope, he began sharing it openly.

"I have since done talks for other organizations on mental health and the music industry."

For those looking to break into that industry, Kennedy has some advice: "Do everything yourself for as long as you can. Utilize all the free tools available to you and treat it professionally. With hard work, resilience, patience and creativity, you can make a career for yourself doing what you love. If you are on to something, the industry will come sniffing in good time."

As for himself, Kennedy is currently working on a solo album which he hopes will be released later this year.

"I believe that the music industry is in the best place it has been for a long time."

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Scrán *Scrán seeks to preserve traditional Manx culture with their debut recording*

The Isle of Man's cultural organization Bree has been promoting the country's creative edge through music and dance since 2006.

This year, Bree "super group" Scrán is releasing their long-awaited debut album *Nane* (the Gaelic term for one), a terrific ten-track recording that seamlessly blends old-school Manx melodies with more modern sounds.

"This album is a collection of upbeat re-workings of traditional music with various other genres blended in occasionally," explains Paul Rogers, Scrán's seasoned mentor. "Songs include everything that the group has been playing in concerts, plus a few pieces specifically created for the studio. About six tracks were recorded as a live band performance and the others were multi-track studio recordings. This enabled some members to play more than one instrument."

Rogers, who is of Welsh descent, says the ensemble is constantly evolving.

"Every few years the older members go off to university and new members come up from the Bree group," he explains. "As I am a teacher, I sometimes find possible members in school bands too. The original Scrán line-up had two brothers, Callum and Fraser Rowe, on guitar and bass, respectively. They were both from a rock background, so they brought that rocky element to the music. The group currently sounds a bit more traditional, as Callum is away at university."

In addition to the Fraser brothers, the band's current lineup includes Aeerin Roberts (vocals and fiddle), James McNulty (banjo), Mera Royle (harp and fiddle), Owen Williams (button accordion, whistle and percussion), and Raygee Dolloso (whistle), many of whom began performing music at a young age.

"I started playing the fiddle when I was six, but I have always sung," explains Roberts, a Manx native. "A lot of my influences came from the Manx-speaking primary school I attended (Bunscoill Ghaelgagh) in St John's. We were always encouraged to get involved with music and dance."

"I also started playing music at school," adds Royle, who has lived on Isle of Man since he was two. "My primary school was really good at encouraging people to play the penny whistle in our folk group. I loved it because I got to do it with all my friends. It was almost like a game to see who could play the next tune first."

Similarly, band-mates McNulty and Williams took to music as children. Both believe that it is music like Scrán's - and albums like *Nane* - that help keep Manx culture alive.

"The state of music in Isle of Man is strong, and that is all thanks to the local support from folks on the radio, and organizations like Culture Vannin," says Williams, who is of both Irish and Manx heritage. "All that needs to be done to preserve it is to show young people that bands like Scrán play Manx music and speak the Manx language. They will view culture as something 'cool' and want to partake in it themselves."

"We should start teaching Manx to more children at an earlier age," adds Liverpool-native McNulty. "We need to get them interested in Manx music by listening to albums like *Nane*, and having them involved with groups like Scrán."

Scrán is a labor of love, though it is not without its challenges.

"It is not always easy," admits Rogers. "The main challenge is to cope with a wide range of ages, abilities and languages, as we operate in both Manx and English. I generally do everything by ear and let the members play something that fits their ability. I will suggest accompaniments or harmonies sometimes if they aren't sure what to do. As mentioned, the group is constantly changing, so I have to adapt pieces to suit the current members."

Williams echoes the sentiment.

"You have to listen to yourself and others to fit into the sound and know your place. It can be difficult."

With that in mind, the band-mates remain passionate about their involvement.

"I think Scrán is a revolving door of great musicians that we take in from a young age and send off to do amazing things," says Roberts. "I am so proud to be a part of Scrán and how every set we play has been adapted to our own individual styles."

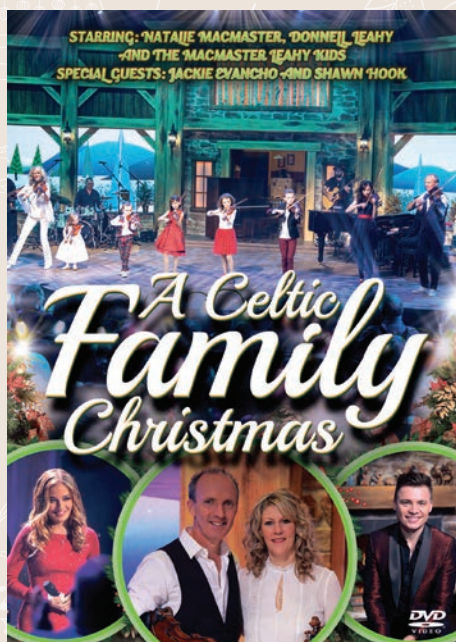
For Rogers, it is all about the future.

"Seeing the younger generations grow in confidence is brilliant," he smiles. "Seeing them take what they have learned in Scrán and form their own groups independently brings me hope for tomorrow."

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Kizzy Crawford

A Welsh speaker with Bajan and English heritage, Kizzy Crawford is a multi-talented singer-songwriter

Since breaking into the Welsh music scene as a teenager, Kizzy Crawford has picked up a variety of instruments and tapped into a fusion of folk, jazz and soul. With a new album set to release this fall, the bilingual songstress sat down with Celtic Life International via Skype to discuss her past, present and future.

Crawford was born in England, but her family moved to Wales when she was just three years old. That's when she first began learning the Welsh language.

"Welsh is really my second language, but because I was so young when I started speaking it, it feels like a first as well as English," she shares. "It's really great for me, because I have two languages to express myself in."

Currently living in Merthyr Tydfil, Crawford started writing songs the at age of 14 and hasn't stopped.

"We were going through some hard times with the family and I discovered song-writing as a way to process my feelings. It became a hobby and I was composing pretty much every day."

At the encouragement of her mother, Crawford decided to take the stage: by the time she was 15, she was showcasing her talents by performing at open mic sessions, where she started garnering interest. For many people in the area, it was a surprise to see a mixed-race person who was also able to speak Welsh.

"Growing up, I didn't have any examples of black or mixed-race musicians on the Welsh music scene," she says, adding that she "wanted to inspire other mixed-race girls in Wales."

Crawford hit her stride in 2012, when she won the Arts Connect Original Singer-Songwriter prize. Soon after, a manager came on board and the gigs started piling up.

"It has been really amazing - the amount of support that I have had and continue to get."

Over time, Crawford wanted to create a "fuller sound" onstage and began incorporating effects into her live performances, including a "loop" pedal - a device that records short segments of music and plays them back repeatedly. She bought one specifically for another competition and entered with an original song called "Caer o Feddyliau" (Fortress of Thoughts)

- an intoxicating tune filled with layered vocals, guitars and percussive sounds.

"I love the opportunity to add different sounds into the loops that I make," she notes. "For example, recently, I've just got a saxophone and it is a great way of adding more sound and production into my shows."

She also plays violin, bass and more.

"I try to add as much as I can to create that full band sound. It is a lot of fun onstage, as I am always doing something. The audience finds it really interesting as well."

Crawford's musical influences include Joni Mitchell, Fleetwood Mac, Massive Attack, Omar Lye-Fook and Steely Dan. She draws themes from Welsh poetry and history, with a particular penchant for writing songs about strong women. Her 2013 debut single - "The Starling" - tells the tale of the Welsh legend of Princess Branwen. After being mistreated by her husband, Branwen trains a starling to send a message to her brother, asking for rescue.

That interest in female empowerment is inspired, in part, by her mother.

"My mom is so strong and amazing, really. The fact that she has been able to bring up five kids on her own. There are a lot of places in the world that women are not recognized as strong figures, so I am really keen to bring that message to the forefront."

At 23, and though with plenty of accolades and experience already under her belt, Crawford believes that she is just getting started. She has been prepping for the fall release of her first full-length album, *The Way I Dream*, which will be followed by a tour.

"Another massive thing in my life is that I have just received an autism diagnosis. That is opening a lot of doors for me in terms of knowing myself better, and I am excited to explore that in my music."

"Music plays a huge role in inspiring people and my hope is to help make the world a better place through my songs."

www.kizzymerielcrawford.com



A close-up photograph of a person in a red and gold military-style uniform. The person is holding a sword with a dark hilt and a scabbard decorated with a gold ring. In their other hand, they hold a yellow rose. The background is a blurred mix of red and blue fabric.

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Award-winning journalist Patrick Radden Keefe will not be ignored

Although Patrick Radden Keefe graduated from law school - and later passed the Bar Exam - he never actually practiced the profession. Instead, the young man chose to dedicate his time and efforts to his first passion - writing.

"I loved reading, writing, and doing research," explains the 42-year-old scribe via email. "I enjoyed going out to meet and interview fascinating people."

Radden Keefe is best known for his work as an investigative journalist, primarily as an award-winning staff writer for The New Yorker. He has also published a few long-form research pieces, including Chatter: Dispatches from the Secret World of Global Eavesdropping (2005) and Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream (2009).

The vocation, he admits, is not without its fair share of challenges.

"This is a difficult time for journalism. Newspapers and magazines are shuttering; the industry is contracting. It is not the stable career it was twenty years ago. At the same time, journalism and non-fiction writing - especially the kind I write - are needed more urgently now than ever."

The rewards, however, still far outweigh those issues.

"It is satisfying to highlight stories that might otherwise be ignored, and bring new details into the public realm that might otherwise have remained secret."

Radden Keefe has just published his third book, Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland, which takes readers back to Northern Ireland during the Troubles, when Jean MacConville, a mother of 10, was torn from her home in Belfast by a group of masked intruders.

"I was inspired by the ways in which the lives of a handful of real people intersected

in dramatic fashion and seemed to provide an opportunity to tell a larger tale about the Troubles. What I truly learned was that there are very few villains in this tale.

"It is the story of ordinary people who were caught up in the currents of history and forced into the most tragic and intense situations."

After four years of research and seven trips to Northern Ireland, the author was satisfied that he got it right.

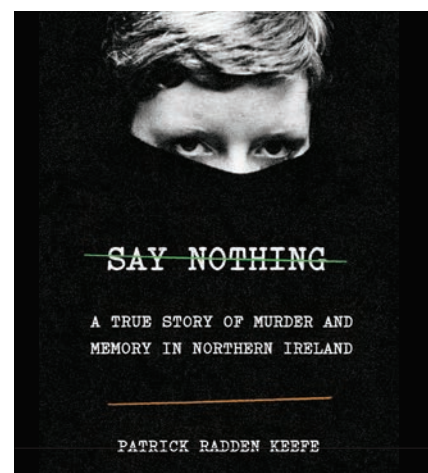
"I interviewed over one hundred people. And there is a significant revelation at the end of the book about the 1972 murder at the heart of the story, which was enormously cathartic."

Since its release in February, the book has enjoyed both popular and critical acclaim.

"I have been hugely gratified by the response from readers and critics, both in Ireland and in the United States. For me - as a reader - it is strange and wonderful to see endorsements and reviews from Irish writers I grew up revering, people like John Banville, Colum McCann, and Roddy Doyle. I have also received notes from Irish-Americans, and from young people in the Republic of Ireland, who have said that they found the style of narrative storytelling in the book approachable enough that they were engaging, in some instances for the first time, with some of this troubled history."

The work has even caught the eye of Hollywood.

"The rights have been optioned by some very smart producers who are hoping to turn the story into a limited series for television. I have very high regard for these people, so I am cautiously optimistic."



The author is deeply concerned about the U.K.'s political climate, specifically the state of Brexit.

"If we get a return to a hard Irish border, there will almost certainly be a return of certain tensions. I dearly hope that will not include new violence, but who can say? Having said that, I could also see a scenario in which, in the long run, Brexit ends up achieving an unintended outcome that three decades of awful violence did not - the eventual reunification of Ireland."

Radden Keefe has already started working on his next book, an in-depth look at the Sackler family, an American philanthropic empire and owners of Purdue Pharma.

"It is the company that produces OxyContin and is responsible for sparking the opioid crisis. I've got my work cut out for me. One virtue of this line of work is that I don't have to attend meetings or spend much time at all doing things that I find boring. Writing can be a precarious way to make a living, but it is never dull."

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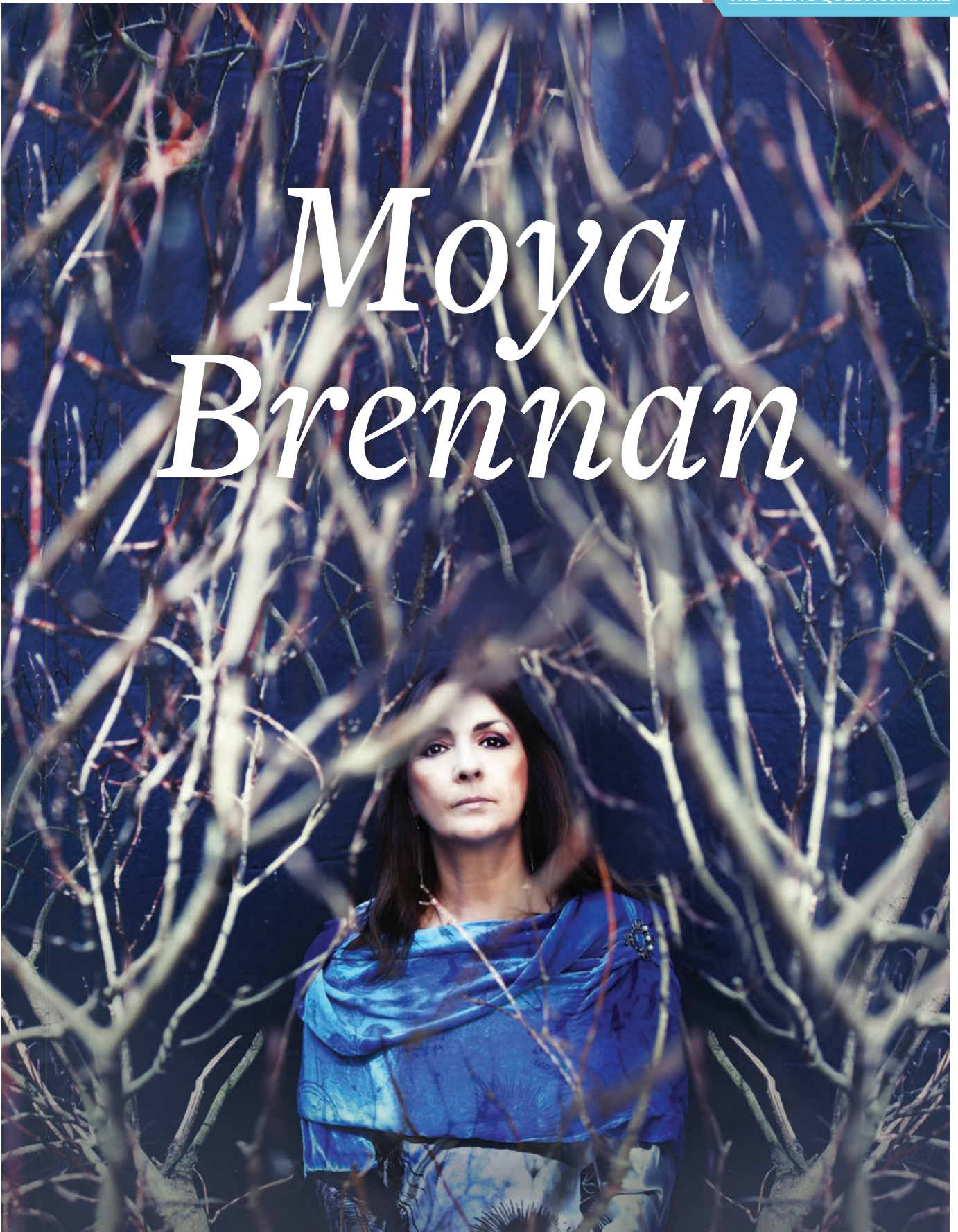
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Moya Brennan



The First Lady of Celtic Music, Moya Brennan, is holding court in Leo's Tavern, the world-renowned pub and musical landmark that her father built more than 50 years ago in Meenaleck, Crolly, Co. Donegal. Despite the array of accolades that adorn the walls celebrating the many successes of her musical family - including gold records, concert posters, and photos with celebrity friends like Bono, Bob Geldof, Chris de Burgh and countless others - Brennan is heartfelt and at home, a warm cup of tea at her side.

You seem very comfortable here.

At this point I am part of the furniture. It is home, this place, these four walls, and I suppose it always will be. So long as there is tea and a fireplace and family and friends, I am comfortable.

Your father's presence is still very much felt here.

Oh his spirit is here, there is no doubt. It is a little like having a "phantom limb" in some regard I suppose - that part may be gone and sorely missed, but you can still feel it attached to you. Most nights I can still see him up on that tiny stage, leading a band through its paces. It was where he was happiest and at his best.

Leo loved the stage.

Indeed he did. He had performed in show bands for many years, but it was a rough go for traveling musicians at that time - the mid-1960s we are talking about here, long after these acts had enjoyed their post-war heyday - and with eight children to feed, and another soon on the way, he thought that maybe it was best to settle down.

He took a chance on the pub.

Well, not many here gave him much of a chance to succeed. There were a number of establishments already pretty embedded in the area, and the location is fairly remote to begin with, so he had his doubters. I am sure he himself had doubts. But the venue quickly became a Mecca for both musicians and music fans. Much of what you would have heard here then was the popular music of the day. After a while you might hear all sorts of styles on any given night; country, rock, blues, traditional Irish music. However, he would be up there, night after night, just playing for the sheer love of it. He was the thread that kept it all stitched together.



When did you and your siblings first start performing here?

It would have been around 1970. Dad would have us open the shows for him, getting us to play a few numbers to warm up the crowd. To be honest, we weren't very good, but we were having fun and kept at it. But he never put any pressure on us to do anything we didn't want to do. Both of my parents supported us in whatever interests we took up. They just wanted us to enjoy a happy and healthy childhood. I think he was pleased that we were all passionate about music and found great pleasure in performing. But, then again, how could we not in this kind of environment?

And then the band began playing in and around the area?

Yes, there were a number of local talent contests that we submitted entries to. There was a big one I remember quite clearly, not far from here actually, and we were all so excited when we were chosen to be involved in the competition. The problem was that we needed a proper name for the act. My grandfather suggested Clann as Dobhar, to reflect who we were and where we were from. That was a bit of a mouthful, so we simply shortened it to Clannad.

Did you have any inkling at that point that you would have a career in music?

No, not really. I mean, we were kids. Surely we all loved music, and with so many of us around the house you can't imagine how noisy things could get and how many different styles of music wafted through the place on any given day, but we were all much more focused on more important matters like school, boyfriends, girlfriends, television, movies, and the like.

At what point did you decide to give it a real go?

In all honesty, I can't really remember an exact moment that it hit me that this could become a full time gig. There was never any real talk amongst the band members - my brothers Ciarán and Pól, and our twin uncles Noel and Pádraig - about making it big or becoming rock stars or whatnot. I suppose at some point we were able to take it to the next level, but it was never our goal; we just did what came naturally and what we loved to do, which was to write and perform our own music. There were a number of early milestones along the way - getting signed to a major record label, and doing those first albums and tours - that should have tipped us off that it was moving forward for us. But it really wasn't until the success of Harry's Game (1982) that the reality that we could really make a go of it hit us.

What was it about that song that resonated with listeners?

There was a lot of added interest at that time about the Troubles in Northern Ireland, likely because of all the publicity surrounding Bobby Sands and the hunger strikes the year before. So, when the TV series came out (Harry's Game), the song just sort of rode its cinematic coat-tails. On top of that, it is really just a beautiful and unique piece of music, and there was nothing like it on the radio back then.

Many credit you with helping to forge a new musical genre.

There were a number of artists from Ireland at that time who could easily take credit for that. There was an explosion of new music coming from here, much of it inspired by the popularity of punk and nu-wave. MTV had just come on the air also. What we were doing with Clannad was a bit more unique. However, I wouldn't call what we did simply Celtic. Aye, the music we were making was rooted in traditional Gaelic melodies and rhythms to be sure, but we had other major influences; the Beatles, of course, and the American west-coast harmonies of The Beach Boys had a huge impact on us as well. And with the new technologies available to us - electric instruments, electronic keyboards and so forth - our sound became a fusion of styles that you might call Neo-Celtic or Nu-Celtic.

How much of that sound came from living here in Donegal?

We grew up just down the road in Gweedore, which is truly a magical place, especially for children. The landscape here in this part of the world is rich and dark, the soil is pure and deep, the sky is big, and there is something about being by the sea that just opens the door to creativity. If you listen closely enough, you can hear Donegal - there is an earthy and ethereal hum of sorts in the air. That sound just showed up in our music organically.

There are some who say that you single-handedly saved the culture.

Oh I wouldn't go that far. We have done our bit, certainly, and I suppose we are still doing it. But, really, we are just passing along what we grew up with. I mean, my grandfather was the town Shanachie, a fine storyteller, and sort of a modern day hedgerow teacher; many people in the area turned to him for local lore and history. He was proud to carry on our customs and traditions. And I believe that Dad did the same by making a space where younger musicians could gather and perform and create. He was very instrumental in preserving and promoting Celtic and Gaelic culture.

It is a tradition that you carry on here at the pub.

Yes. We have been hosting a showcase for amateur musicians here pretty regularly for the past six years or so. We take names, provide the instruments and sound production, and open up the stage to a few folks from around the area and beyond. There is no cover charge at the door, but we have a raffle to raise a few funds. I love it. It's a grand time, and there are always a few pints to be had. More importantly, it helps to carry on my father's good work and legacy.

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Paul Walker

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After studying in Dundee, I moved to the Scottish Highlands, which has been hugely formative and inspiring for me - the harshness and beauty in the environment means one has to have practical and warm clothing.

In the Scottish Highlands I saw local people - game keepers - wearing tweed and I believed that it could be reinterpreted for more general use. If the weight was right, a tweed suit was something many people would see as a welcomed addition to their wardrobe.

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Paul Loverling

www.500px.com/loverlingarts

I was born in Tiverton Devon, in the south west of England. I have lived in different places in Scotland since 1976. My Scottish wife Anne and I both moved to the beautiful city of Edinburgh over 30 years ago. It is the ideal city with lots of interesting architecture, gardens, people and performers during the festivals. Everyone is inspired to take photographs when they visit.

My portrait art and mixed media photo sales took off a couple of years ago. This made it easy to "retire" from the world of work and dedicate more time to photography and painting.

I have always had an interest in photography. More recently I started adding layers of my watercolor and acrylics to my photographs to give a more unique composition. The challenge of blending photo and art washes is very exciting. I love each moment as you never know what the result might bring.

My inspiration comes mainly from music; I listen to music throughout the day, mostly late 1960s and early 1970s albums. I like to blend old with new and then use amazing shapes and colour to reflect the song title or lyrics.

I love black and white portrait photography that makes use of light and lots of detail.

The current state of visual arts in Scotland is alive and kicking. We have fantastic galleries and inspirational exhibitions. The Scottish Portrait Gallery has several really good photography exhibitions throughout the year.

The next chapter for me is to create more of my large portrait canvas acrylics. And, more striking images for my 500px mixed media photography shop.





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In his 1690 work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, English philosopher John Locke argued that it is our memories that define us. Salvador Dali's 1931 surrealist painting, *Persistence of Memory* - with its famous melting clocks - challenges us to consider the meaning and illusory nature of time. While many of us may not consciously think about who we are, nor ponder time beyond practical applications, it has not escaped the notice of Laura Hudson Mackay, a photographic artist based in South West Scotland. Some of her earliest memories, and a fascination with time, have shaped who she is and brought direction and focus to her art.

I caught up with Hudson Mackay at The Stove - the premises of an artist-led collective in Dumfries. With auburn hair hinting at a distant Celtic ancestry, her large, hazel eyes sparkled as she recounted fond memories of her grandfather.

"I loved spending time with him. When I was seven years old he made me a wooden clock and taught me how to tell the time. When I was in my teens he asked me for 'a little box of time.' Unbeknown to his family he was ill and died soon after. My fascination and exploration of time began with him."

That interest grew alongside a passion for storytelling - something she attributes to her mother.

"She inspired my love of fairytales, folklore and all things otherworldly. I would sit bewitched as she told me stories of secret forests where castles stood, worlds deep under the sea and magical places far, far away."

In her mid-twenties, Hudson Mackay visited the Isle of Iona - a trip that would shape her future life. While there, she felt a timeless spirituality - one that preceded St Columba and Iona's Christian heritage - awakening within her a fascination with the Celts, their stories and their culture. It was

here, by the sea, that her boyfriend proposed marriage. Five years later and married, they returned to Iona, where - with her first camera in hand - she began to understand that the essence of great photography is not solely to create a record, but also to capture a sense of something beyond what the eye can see. This would lead to an Advanced Diploma in Illustrative Photography from Glasgow Metropolitan College in 2006, a Diploma with Distinction in Art History from London Art College in 2013, and membership of the Royal Photographic Society.

In 2010, Hudson Mackay and her husband visited Morocco, a world of vibrant colours, music, sounds and storytelling steeped in Arabic traditions and culture. A melting pot between Europe and Africa, it was a far cry from the peace and tranquillity of rural, South West Scotland. Jemaa El-Fnaa is the main square in Marrakech where the hlaykia - traditional storytellers - have been reciting





Laura Hudson Mackay



Houssain Belabbes

tales for a thousand years. Captivated by its vigour, the couple built a property in Marrakech. Now, with a base in Scotland and one in Morocco, Hudson Mackay embraces two cultures with her love of photography and stories, bridging the two.

It was during her first international exhibition in Marrakech in 2016 that she met Mehdi El Ghaly, a traditional Moroccan storyteller. His enthusiasm was intoxicating; like Celtic storytellers of old, El Ghaly had memorized tales handed down through generations of Moroccan hlaykia, bringing them to life again and mesmerizing listeners with each retelling.

In 2017, an art and craft development organization based in Dumfries and Galloway called Upland sought expressions of interest to participate in a program encouraging international development between artists.

Hudson Mackay proposed a collaborative project between El Ghaly, Houssain Belabbes - a Moroccan photographer that she had come to know - and herself. It was an ambitious project based on the premise that there are similarities to be found in Celtic and Arabian stories. Titled *Confluence*, the proposal would test this premise, and identify and document any such stories before they are lost through the passage of time. The creative use of photography would enhance those stories, helping to give them permanence. Her bid was successful and *Confluence* was born. She sought out a Celtic storyteller to complete her team and enlisted Anne Errington, whose father also happened to be a passionate Arabist.

Headed by Hudson Mackay, the four-person *Confluence* team began the process

of gathering stories. Initially using social media to communicate, they quickly inspired one another with their stories and images.

Before long it became evident that Celtic and Arabic stories often share similar themes.

Thus, the group set about identifying those thematic similarities. From an initial list of forty-two they whittled it down to seven specific concepts that could be considered as common to the tales of both cultures; Water, Happiness, The No. 3, Old, Time, Silence and Money. After this, the group held public meetings in Scotland and Morocco, spreading stories, gathering more stories, making images and distributing information about the project in both English and Darija (Moroccan Arabic).

In 2017, Hudson Mackay was appointed Artist in Residence at Scotland's Wigtown Book Festival, and from that grew the idea of a book to celebrate *Confluence*. With Celtic tales, including *The Kelpie* and *The Fiddlers of Strathspey*, along with Arabian stories such as *The Barber and the Merchant* and *The Princess and the Donkey*, the 190-page hardcover book includes twenty-nine stories from Celtic and Arabic cultures spread across all seven themes. The stories are accompanied by beautiful images in monochrome and colour, many with a distinctly timeless quality. Launched in Wigtown in May 2018, and followed by a second launch at the British Ambassador's residence in Rabat later the same year, the book is testament to the success of *Confluence*.

The work is only part of the story, however; in the true meaning of *Confluence* there is now a fascinating flow of stories, and an exciting mingling of ideas, emanating from both Scotland and Morocco. Cultural barriers are being overcome, and shared workshops in storytelling and photography - as well as art exhibitions and installations - have been taking place in both countries, with more planned through 2019 and 2020. In addition, the Australian Ambassador to Morocco has commissioned a project to explore links between the two nations and similarly to produce a book.

Each year, Hudson Mackay embarks on a journey to explore cultural overlaps between Celtic lands and other nations. Two years ago she toured the coastline of Brittany, Asturias and Galicia, and last year she travelled through Denmark, Sweden and Norway. As a result of her efforts, Scandinavian storytellers have engaged with the project and events and workshops have been organized for the Shetland Islands, Norway and Denmark. From a small idea inspired by memories and time *Confluence* has gone global.

Through all of this Hudson Mackay never forgot her grandfather's request, and two years ago she finally created his 'little box of time' which contains a collection of photography, other time-related items, and his old pocket watch. It may have taken her three decades and a soul-searching journey to create it but - as Einstein is purported to have said - "time is just an illusion."

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Celtic Folklore

*Do we really need
Celtic Folklore in the
21st century? Celtic
Life International
correspondent Kitty
Phelan answers the
question...*



We are awfully clever, aren't we? With our touchscreen technology, circling satellites and cyber networking, it seems the only limit to our ingenuity is imagination.

This is certainly an interesting time to be alive. Few of us could guess what our societies might look like in a year, never mind in a decade, such is the rapid speed of change. Just as we get used to one gadget, the next 'must have' is available.

We are adapting to change at an extraordinary rate, and not only to accommodate the various forms of technology; industries too are expanding to sizes once unthinkable.

For many of us, the world we grew up in bears little resemblance to the world our children know. Industrial farming, mass production and global communication are the new normal and the 'good old days' we carry on about, live somewhere in the mists of our memories.

Or do they?

I find myself pondering how our Celtic ancestors would view modern societies, and wonder too, how this 'technological age' we are so proud of will be viewed by our descendants hundreds of years from now.

But how will they know us, the people who were pushing the buttons, and swiping the screens? Data downloads? Selfie museums?

More likely our descendants will recognize and, with any luck, understand us by knowing the stories we told each other. Just as we recognize and understand our Celtic ancestors by sharing the stories they told each other - their folklore.

Celtic folklore reveals much about the people and communities which created them.

It tells us who our ancestors were, their greatest fears, the values they measured themselves against and the importance of humour and community in their everyday lives. If we take the time to look, we can

even recognize their quest for an understanding of the spiritual.

Is it possible, in the 21st century, that folklore can remind us who we really are, where we came from and perhaps even, where our ancestors hoped we might go?

To those unfamiliar with Celtic folklore, be assured, it is far from a bunch of dusty, irrelevant tall tales: Celtic folklore is a collective voice. Sure, some tales are a little lofty, but most have at least a couple of toes dangling in the truth, and all have something to teach us. If only we take the time to scratch beneath the surface.

Take Irish giant Fionn mac Cumhaill (also known as Finn Mac-Cool), for instance. His tale of defeating an enemy using cunning - not brawn - has echoed down the ages as an example for all of us. But it must be said, he didn't work alone.

Someone once said "Behind every great giant is a great giant's wife" - and if they didn't, they should have, for in truth, it was Fionn's wife Oonagh who really defeated Benandonner, the Scottish giant known as 'The Red Man'.

This tale of Fionn mac Cumhaill began one dark and gloomy day, not so very long ago. We find Fionn and the Red Man trading insults over the Irish Sea. Fionn standing on the northern shore of Ireland, and the Red Man on his homeland of Scotland.

Sure, the Red Man enjoyed a group melee as much as the next giant, but it was one-on-one combat where he gained his mighty reputation. He fancied himself to beat that pesky Irish warrior Fionn mac Cumhaill without raising a bead of sweat. So there and then, he decided to kick off.

"Tis said yev the strength of a wee lamb," he hollered over the dark grey sea.

Now Fionn was a bold fellow, always on the hunt for adventure and never one to back down.

"Is that so now? Well yer wife says I've the stamina of a wolf, so she did!"

"She never did!" yelled the Red Man.

Fionn taunted the giant Scotsman, "Aye, she also said yev the face of a cut haggis and ye smell like one too!"

The Red Man was known for his ferocious temper and once lit, his fury burned as long as his face glowed bright red, and this is how he earned the name the Red Man after all. Twas said the only thing could quash his fury was exhaustion - that he would fight until his rival was dead or he himself collapsed to the ground. But this could not be known for certain, as he had never failed to kill a rival.

Well, the Red Man growled and stepped into the sea between them. Mighty waves began to lash the shore at Fionn's feet and he rubbed his hands in delight. It was on, and they would do battle on Irish lands, giving him every advantage. He stood and watched as the Red Man strode across the sea toward him.

The smile soon fell from Fionn's face. As the Red Man trod ever closer, Fionn could see that his rival was much greater than him in size. Perhaps three to four times the size in fact. He had no chance of defeating him with his fists and knew he had to think fast, for the Red Man was more than halfway across the sea, and with a scarlet face of fury upon him.

Most folk up and down the land knew Fionn mac Cumhaill as a great warrior, brave and cunning. Fewer knew that he was also a great joker, and charming too. Twas said he could charm the birds from the trees, and manys the time he had used this skill to save his skin. But Fionn knew that no manner of joke or charm would get him out of this.

So, he did what any canny giant would do, he turned and high-tailed it for the hills. The Red Man saw Fionn run and knew the battle had begun. With only three more strides he put his giant foot on the Irish shore and took chase.

Fionn flung himself through the door built into his mountainside home and panted heavily to his wife Oonagh, "I've gone and done it again Oonagh. I've only got a giant the size of a... well...GIANT on me tail."

Oonagh, long used to Fionn's imprudence, sighed long; "Here" she said wearily. "Get in among these blankets and don't say a word ye hear me? Not a word, no matter what ye hear me say."

Just at that moment the door banged so hard the wood cracked its full length. "Let me at him, the coward Mac Cumhaill," the Red Man roared.

Oonagh calmly opened the door and smiled at the giant, "Ye'll be after me husband then. He's away tending the sheep as it happens but yev the scarlet on yerself, sit doon for a cup of tea while ye wait."

The Red Man sat and drank the tea while Oonagh busied herself about the cottage. She could see he was not going to budge until he had his mighty hands around Fionn's neck and when his stomach growled loud and low, she had an idea. "Ye look hungry," said she. "I'll make you a cake here, the same cake my Fionn eats three times a day."

"Well, if it's no trouble, I see yer a busy lady with a bairn to care for," said the Red Man as he glanced over at Fionn laying upon the floor wrapped in a mess of blankets.

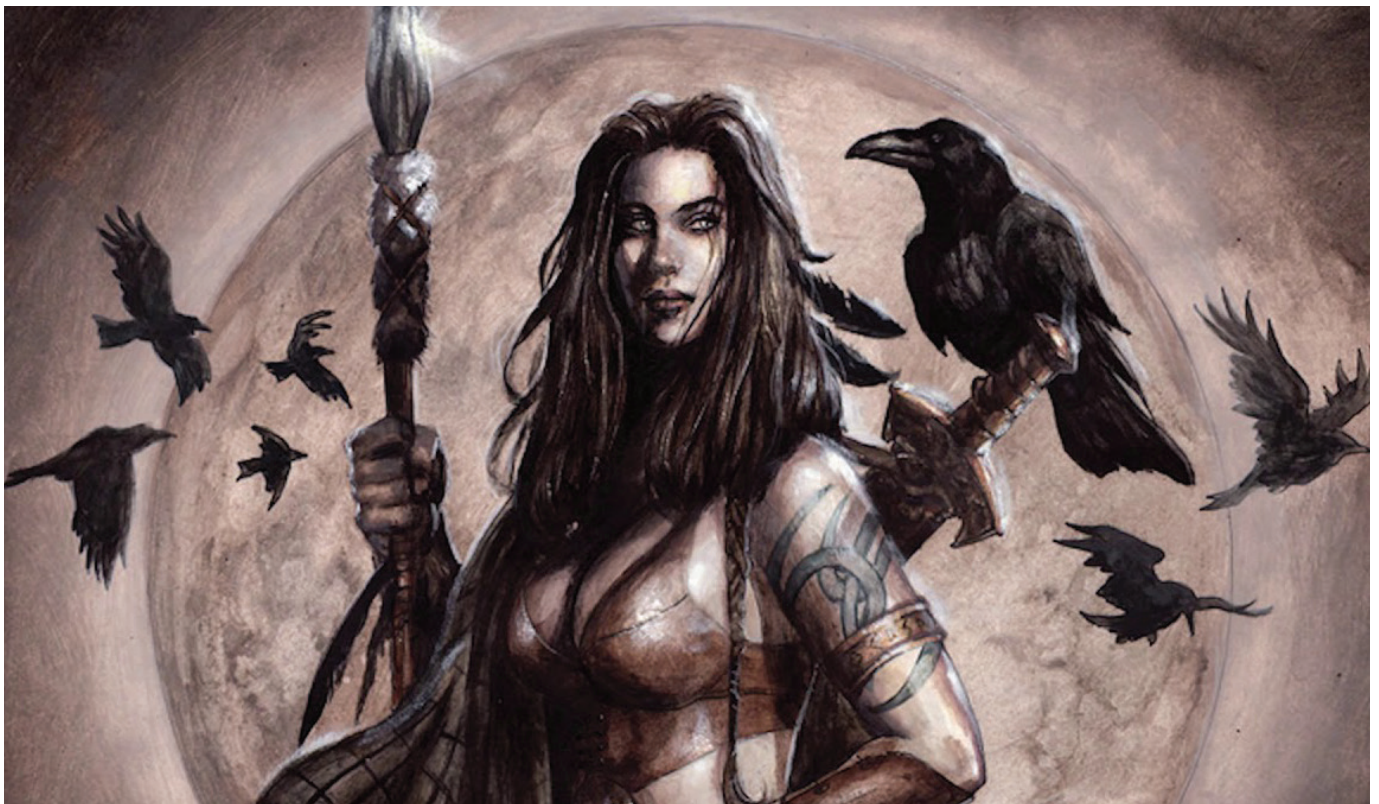
"Not at all, ye just sit tight there." Oonagh set about making two large cakes on the griddle. When they were cooked, she placed the metal griddle between the two cakes and handed it to the Red Man.

The giant bit down on the cakes and broke six of his huge teeth, right there in half.

"Oh dear," Oonagh cried, "sure Fionn's teeth have no trouble biting through my cakes!"

Blood poured from the Red Man's mouth as he picked out pieces of broken teeth. "Here now, take this," she said as she handed the Red Man a massive sword as tall as her own self. "It's Fionn's own tooth picker, he's very particular about having clean teeth for to bite his enemies."

Now twas the Red Man got to thinking. "How big was this Mac Cumhaill scoundrel? With teeth can bite through steel and a mouth big as a mighty tree trunk."



Seeing the fear growing in his eyes, Oonagh called on her last trick. "But where are me manners? Come take a look at our wee baby. Not a moon-month old so he is."

Oonagh led the Red Man over to where Fionn lay in the corner, with his broad smiling face and great hands bursting through layers of blankets.

"Not a moon-month ye say?"

"Aye, he's a bonny boy, so he is."

The Red Man had seen enough. If that was the size of his baby son, he had no desire for to meet the man himself. He turned and hightailed it back to his Scottish home as though the devil himself were on his tail.

The sky opened as Fionn chased behind the Red Man, at a safe distance of course. Through mud and puddle, the two Giants wound their way back to the sea shore.

When he was satisfied the Red Man was far away at sea, Fionn picked up a huge clump of earth and threw it after the Red Man, along with some sage advice to never come back.

And here's a thing you might not know - that simple old plod of earth, an afterthought if you will, is now known as the Isle of Man.

In truth, this tale owes as much to the wit and grace of Oonagh as it does to the cunning of Fionn. Make no mistake, however - Fionn mac Cumhaill was a man of very many tales. He was known as a great warrior who slayed many monsters, and was very popular with the ladies, oh and if he sucked one of his thumbs, he was instantly possessed of all the knowledge and wisdom in the world. But that is another story.

This old tale of Fionn mac Cumhaill is a popular one and serves as a reminder that none of us, no matter how grand, is an island.

No matter your past glories and victories, size or strength, courage or intelligence, we all get by with a little help from our friends.

Fionn is far from the only character from Celtic folklore who continues to speak to us. Consider Morrigan, the infamous Celtic Queen.

Morrigan plays a starring role in many of the great Celtic folktales, but she was a woman of many characters. Literally. She is known as a shapeshifter and frequently appeared as a crow, wolf or old woman. Perhaps her most impressive incarnation is as a triad of sisters, Badb, Macha and Anann. It is said that each sister served a purpose distinct from the other.

Badb, for example, is known as a Prophetess with a penchant for war. She could not only foresee who would die but choose who would die and, not content to observe the fray, she often took to the bloody battlefield herself. It is understandable, then, that Badb's presence in combat caused great fear and confusion among her enemies, many of whom were said to have fled at the very sight of her. But this was not the end of her work. Badb was blessed to live with 'one foot in this world and one in the other' and often accompanied the spirits of those who had perished on the battleground to the place of everlasting rest.

Macha is a complicated woman too. Although she was known as a noble and stable leader, she is best remembered for laying a desperate and deadly curse. It is said the King of Ulster forced her to run a race while heavily pregnant. Macha gave birth to twins moments after crossing the finish line and there died after two days of excruciating pain. What else could she do as she lay dying but lay a curse on the men of Ulster? Macha afflicted the men of Ulster for 'nine times





nine generations' - that whenever facing danger on the battlefield they would suddenly be struck by the debilitating pain of childbirth. The pain would last for four nights and five days, leaving the warrior utterly vulnerable to attack and doomed to certain death.

And what of the third sister, Anann? She is associated with fertility and comforting those in sorrow, illness or injury. Anann is the mother figure who encompasses the cycles of birth, life, death and rebirth.

Between the three sisters, Morrigan covers all the bases and, all-in-all, was one heck of a woman.

It is a reminder, perhaps, that none of us are one dimensional beings - but rather a combination of a very many things.

Morrigan speaks to women in particular - that the noble can also be vengeful, and that the nurturer can also fight. She serves as a warning to never underestimate any woman on account of her gender.

If heroics and revenge are not your thing, why not check out the dark side of Celtic folklore: The Faerie. But leave your glittered Tinkerbells and jolly Leprechauns at the door, these Faerie Tales are not for the faint-hearted.

Our ancestors were kind enough to pass on many stories, reminding us to live virtuous lives or risk retribution from the Good People. The greatest, and most terrifying, of these is the cautionary tale advising us to watch over our children and pregnant women with all care and diligence, lest they be stolen by the Good People and replaced with a grotesque Changeling.

But not all Celtic Faerie folklore is filled with terror or fear. The suffering of Banshee - also known as the 'harbinger of death' - reminds us of the burden carried by those in noble vocations. Banshee suffers great physical and emotional distress as she performs her duty of alerting loved ones to an impending death and then accompanying the spirit of the deceased to the other side. Perhaps in Banshee's suffering, we might better understand the challenges facing those in our society who care for the dying and those who grieve for them.

The beauty of our Celtic folklore is that it is here for us, all the time.

We can enjoy folklore without sacrificing our Netflix binge. In fact, we can enjoy folklore entirely at leisure. Unaffected by ratings or subscriptions, it is timeless, always ready to speak to us. And, if you listen closely, you will surely find that these stories are amazingly similar to the ones we find on Netflix: lust, loyalty, duty, betrayal, conflict, humour, resilience and death.

But who did our ancestors listen to? It is wise to check our sources after all. Well, they listened to their own ancestors of course, each generation looking forward but paying heed to the knowledge of previous generations. Over time, their voices have become one. For many of us, as we get a little older, perhaps becoming parents or facing unique challenges - be they health, personal or professional - we find ourselves looking not only inward, but back. Our thoughts turn to our parents, and grandparents, the ancestors alive in our memory, and we wonder - 'Did they know something I have forgotten?' - leading us to ponder things they said, the ways they connected with their communities, their understanding of the spiritual, their greatest fears, the things they valued above all else and of course, the stories they told of their own ancestors. We might even find ourselves being impressed by our ancestors. Discovering that they were brave, innovative or resilient people and, perhaps, even inspiring...

Celtic folklore is as important today as it has ever been.

Indeed, it could be argued that folklore is more important than at any time before. As we bask in the glow of this 'technological' age, Folklore can connect us, get us talking, share ideas and ask questions about who we are, what we believe and how we want to be remembered. Sure, Celtic folklore may be rich in symbolic meaning and a fine subject for academics and scholars to dissect, but more importantly, here in the 21st century, it continues to offer an entertaining insight into the ideas and values of our Celtic ancestors.

So, go on, take a closer look, you just might find we are not so very different from those who came before us.

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Celtic Genealogy

Are direct-to-consumer DNA kits providing the whole story? Celtic Life International Senior Writer Chris Muise digs deeper.



The history of the Celtic people is long and storied, as fortune, famine, and the hands of fate have guided their steps across the globe for millennia. Thus, there are many whose veins run red with Celtic blood, and may yet not know. There are even more of known Celtic heritage who wish to track that blood back as far as they can.

It is no surprise, then, that genealogy is an area of interest for many people with Celtic roots. Today, with the commercial availability of direct-to-consumer DNA ancestry kits - like those available from Ancestry.com or 23andMe - finding out where you come from seems easier than ever.

Or is it?

The abundance of commercially available DNA testing kits now on the market should not be considered an easy answer to all your heredity questions. According to genetics and genealogy experts who spoke to Celtic Life International, these services can only offer so much.

Take for example a recent story published by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), where a reporter and her identical twin took five different direct-to-consumer ancestry kits and got different results between them. Charlise Agro of CBC's Marketplace program, along with her sister Carly, submitted genetic material to AncestryDNA, MyHeritage, 23andMe, FamilyTreeDNA and Living DNA. Having practically identical DNA, they should have expected identical results.

Instead, 23andMe showed that Charlise had one per cent more Italian heritage than Carly, three per cent more Eastern European heritage, and expressed a fraction of French and German DNA where her sister had none.

How is it possible for siblings - identical twins, no less - to differ even slightly in their ancestry results? This outcome is a little less

shocking when you learn that the methodology of these types of kits are more of an estimation than a comprehensive list detailing your own particular gene pool.

"A lot of the information is looking at a reference population," says Nicole Snow, a genetic counsellor with the IWK Children's Health Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Snow explains that when you have one of these direct-to-consumer tests done, your DNA is being checked against the company's own private genetic database, mostly made up of other people who have taken their test. A proprietary algorithm then decides how much of your genetic make-up likely came from different population groups - and that can only take you so far.

"There are going to be some groups that have a smaller reference population," says Snow. "European ancestry tends to be very well-represented, as compared to some other ancestries. If someone is buying this testing, and they have a small amount of an ancestry that is not well-represented in that database, they might miss out on that diversity within themselves."

"People can get very excited and carried away by their ethnicity results, but these can be misleading," adds Rosaleen Underwood, a genealogist with Accredited Genealogists Ireland, via email. "A typical Irish result could give a mix of Scandinavian, Western European, and Germanic as well as Celtic, maybe Iberian, and maybe even some Mediterranean - all of which is easily explained if you know your Irish history. For example, some of the earliest settlers in the south-west of Ireland are believed to have come from Spain."

Thus, a result that says your background is 50 per cent Scottish, or Irish, or of any ethnicity really, doesn't tell you a lot.



Lynn Brady



Nicole Snow



Rosaleen Underwood

It might tell you even less if you are investigating your lineage for medical reasons.

As a genetic counsellor, Snow's job is to identify genetic risk factors and use clinical testing methods to determine the cause or potential risk of any hereditary medical concerns, often using a mode called Next Generation Sequencing.

"It is a form of genetic testing that spells out a number of different genes at one time, and makes sure that there are no spelling mistakes in that gene, so to speak. We would order a panel of genes - that might be hundreds of genes that are all associated with something like epilepsy - and look to see if there is a spelling mistake in any of those genes that might explain a child's epileptic condition."

Make no mistake, the science of genetics has reached an all-time high in recent years. But Snow says that when it comes to the usefulness of that amazing technology, human understanding is where the buck stutters.

"The technology has improved faster than we can interpret the data that we are getting back. There are still genes whose function we still do not fully understand yet, or perhaps they have never been associated with human disease before. As good as the technology is, it is our knowledge that is the driving force for us to be able to make a diagnosis."

In most cases, the ability to properly decipher results from direct-to-consumer kits independently is nearly impossible. Snow notes that many companies keep their databases private.

"Not only do we not know how accurate the testing is in the first place, from a direct-to-consumer database, but even if it is

accurate, we still don't know how valid those results are. It depends on the direct-to-consumer test itself, but with a test like 23andMe, there are specific mutations that they test for.

"For example, BRCA1 and BRCA2, which are the two most well-known breast cancer-associated genes; a direct-to-consumer test is not actually spelling out the entire gene and looking for mutations in that gene - it is just looking for some well-described mutations."

In short, these tests aren't looking for all the possible warning signs that you might have breast cancer - only the most common. A study from the genetic information company Invitae recently showed that 88 per cent of samples from families with a background of hereditary cancer would have had warning signs go unnoticed by most commercial testing, and worse, that about 50 per cent positive results from these tests were determined to be false positives when scrutinized under clinical testing.

"Getting a negative result from that is not reassuring to me," continues Snow. "If you have a strong family history of cancer, or you yourself had a young onset of cancer, there might be something else going on that this type of testing is missing.

"I do worry about people getting a false sense of reassurance when they do a direct-to-consumer test, because they are not getting the full picture."

Most of these companies will explain their methodology and their findings if you read through, but most consumers aren't doing that.

"If you look at 23andMe, they do have an explanation if you click through all of your results," says Snow. "However, we live in a world where we run into terms and conditions daily,

and we automatically skip over lots of extra information without reading. When it comes to genetic testing, I really urge people to read the fine print."

"Genetic testing is not straight-forward, it is not an easy yes-or-no answer."

"People still want short cuts, especially as we have become used to almost instant results with computers," notes Underwood. "Genealogy doesn't work like that."

How does it work, then? As it turns out, a lot like it did in the old days; with quill and parchment, and a lot of research.

Lynn Brady is the resident genealogist with The Glasnevin Trust, a museum associated with Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin. She admittedly doesn't know much about genetic science, as she has been practicing genealogy the old-fashioned way since she started.

"Our cemetery opened in 1832, and we have burial records going back to that year," says Brady over the phone from her office in Dublin. "My job is to help people trace their families that are buried here. We could have three, four, sometimes five generations of the same family buried in the one grave, and people would not be aware of that. That is why they come in to me, and I go through the records and see what I can find for them.

"There's nothing science-based at all. It is just their burial registers."

Over 1.6 million folks rest at Glasnevin, and each one of them has a paper record detailing the person who owns the grave, who is buried there, their age, address, place of death, date of death, gender, religion, occu-

pation, marital status, cause of death, and even the name of the person who arranged the funeral. This even holds true for people buried there today - both electronically on a computer database, and on the same paper register they have used for centuries.

For those seeking their Celtic roots, these jotted notes are far more useful than a mail-away genetics test, according to Brady.

"You literally start with yourself, and work backwards, generation by generation. I always tell people, the first thing is to talk with your family members. Get all the stories out of them. These are things that will have been handed down. Once you start your family research, you uncover the truth to those tales."

As direct-to-consumer kits become more popular, Brady has had to disappoint many amateur genealogists who come to her certain that they must have a relative buried at Glasnevin Cemetery, which, she points out, was the only Catholic facility of its kind in the region for 100 years.

"I see people coming in, telling me that they have had their DNA test done. Sometimes it confuses people, and sometimes people will come to me and say they definitely have Dublin ancestors, and then we will get to the point where I can't find anything. If anybody died that was living in Dublin in those hundred years, then there is a good probability that they are buried here at Glasnevin. So, if I don't find anything, they can be disappointed because of what they had been told with their DNA results.

"People presume that, once they are told that they have, say, 50 per cent Irish blood in them, that I am going to be able to automati-

cally find their relatives. That obviously isn't the case, because they don't have enough information. I can point them in a few different directions, but especially when you go pre-registration, which is 1864, you need to know where in Ireland the person came from, in order to be able to look up baptism and marriage records."

So, does that mean that direct-to-consumer ancestry kits are bogus, and shouldn't be bothered with?

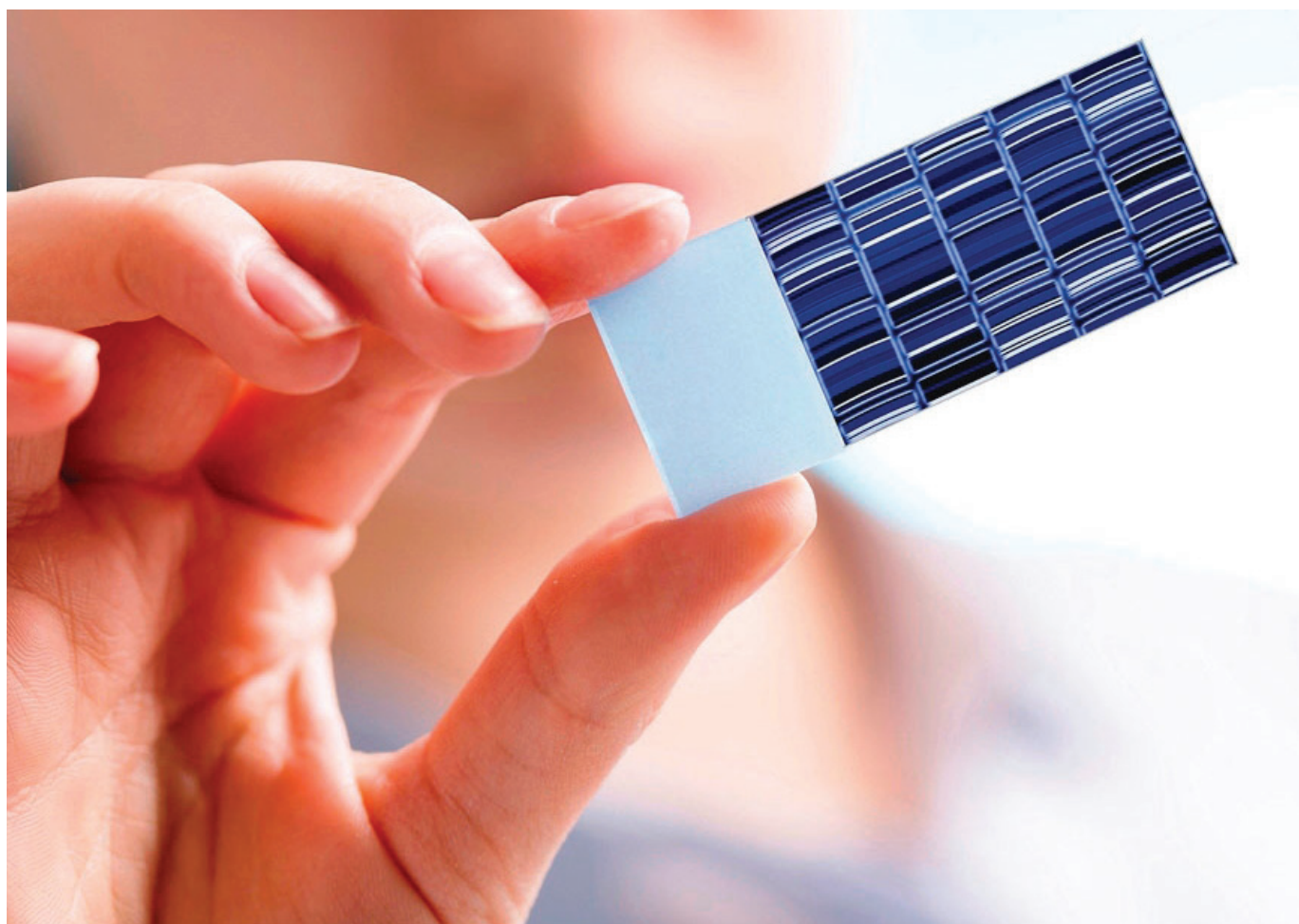
Not necessarily.

What is more important, our experts agree, is in understanding what these tests are good at, and what their limits are. And, if nothing else, the popularity of these tests is getting more people interested in genealogy that might not have been otherwise.

"I have had people that wouldn't have come to me, but did because they had their DNA testing done," says Brady. "Sometimes, I have been able to help them, and sometimes I haven't. I think a lot of people that get the test done don't actually understand the results, or how it works, but they are still asking questions."

"I see amateur genealogists all the time," adds Snow. "There might be people who would not be interested in going through archives and being a genealogist from that perspective, but might be interested to spit in a tube and get their result back."

Of course, if your genealogical journey involves unknown parentage, DNA tests are great for that.





“For adoption cases, they can be fantastic,” says Underwood. “Where the written records are poor, they can be very helpful, and give positive links with suspected families and relations.”

And even though the possibility of false-positives appears to exist, any positive result you get on a direct-to-consumer test is still worth investigating with a clinical lab as it still could uncover a yet-to-be-detected ailment.

“I don’t tell people, ‘absolutely do not take this test,’” says Snow. “I think you just need to be informed about what it is going to offer, and that there are certainly limitations.”

If you do want to take a direct-to-consumer test, Snow urges being a smart shopper; looking for companies that employ genetic counselors like herself, who share their databases with the genetics community at large, and are up-front about what exactly they can and will do with your information.

“Some of the companies will sell consumer DNA information to other companies,” warns Snow. “At that point, you are no longer the sole owner of your DNA anymore. Try to think about what the actual information that you want is, then, rigorously research the various different companies. There are a lot of different companies offering a lot of different things right now.”

You might also want to prepare for the very real possibility that your test results could include some unexpected and potentially upsetting details. You could discover that your parents aren’t your parents, or that you have a secret half-sibling you never knew about. According to an article by Scottish Field magazine, unexpected DNA

results could even uproot long-held titles for people belonging to Scottish clans.

“In Ireland, there was always a great tradition of fosterage going back centuries, if not millennia, where local kings fostered each other’s sons as hostages,” adds Underwood. “This was continued until a generation or two ago as unofficial fosterage among families where a childless couple would take in a relation’s child, especially if one of the parents had recently died, who would later inherit their farm. Very often, the neighbours would know more about the parentage of the children, legitimate or otherwise, than the children themselves. But they would be the last to know, as no one would ever tell them.”

“Although you are the one consenting to getting that information, it might have big implications for people in your family,” adds Snow.

No matter which company you may get your DNA tested with, and no matter the reason you may be exploring your heritage with them, all of our experts agree on one thing - don’t just leave it at that.

“At least have the recognition that it is not the full picture,” says Snow.

“Get it done, by all means, but don’t take it as gospel truth,” says Brady. “It is more of a guide than actual fact, but it is one of many tools, and not the only tool.”

“Get a DNA test, but stick with the old reliables of the paper trail and talking to the family,” says Underwood. “And read up on your history from all angles. We are all mongrels somewhere back along the line and that is one of the things that makes us all so interesting.”

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A woman is the central figure, wearing a large, elaborate headdress made of white lilies, red roses, and green leaves. She has white face paint with black dots around her eyes and a small black symbol on her forehead. She is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, garment with intricate Celtic knotwork patterns. The background is a warm, golden-brown color with soft, out-of-focus lights, suggesting an indoor setting with warm lighting.

Celebrating Celtic Culture

*As Celtic Life International Senior Writer
Chris Muise tells us, Celtic culture can be
uncovered in all corners of the world...*



Romania

I am lucky to live in Nova Scotia. I could trip and land in a celebration of Celtic culture.

It isn't hard for folks to find a way to connect with their Irish, Scottish, and Gaelic roots here in Canada's ocean playground. From the strong Gaelic ties in Cape Breton, to the rich shipping heritage of my hometown of Yarmouth, there is at least a little Celtic in every corner of Nova Scotia. Heck, even the name means "New Scotland."

But the province is hardly unique in that sense. Of course, Scotland and Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom all have their own cultural celebrations - that goes without saying. But every year, this magazine also highlights the myriad of Celtic festivals and celebrations that happen around the world. Seemingly, communities across Canada, and many pockets of the United States, have a chapter in the epic story that is the Celtic Diaspora.

But it can be easy to forget that the net of the Celtic people has been cast much wider than just North America and the U.K. It may be easy to find some Celtic history in those parts of the world, but it is also hard to find a place on this rock that hasn't been touched by the Celtic people.

Trust me. I've been looking.

Readers of Celtic Life International will recognize a few examples of far-reaching celebrations of Celtic culture, as we have featured plenty of them over the years. In 2019 alone, over 51 countries around the world have, or will, host Celtic festivals of some sort, including in such unlikely spots as Bra-



Brent Cassidy

zil, Sweden, Italy, Senegal, Indonesia, Argentina, Russia, New Guinea, and many more.

The Festival Interceltique de Lorient, held in France each summer, is among the many festivals we have showcased. A southern port city in Bretagne, the country's ancient Celtic region, the annual ten-day gathering is one of the most prominent events on the global Celtic calendar, and across Europe in particular.

Beginning in 1971 with the region's first bagpipes festival, the festivities open with a

Kaoteriad - a traditional Breton stew of seafood and potatoes topping a baguette - held in the Porzh Pesketa harbour district, with Breton music for ambiance. A huge draw is the Parade of Celtic Nations, which invites more than 3,500 artists from across the Diaspora every year.

Beyond the borders of the traditional Celtic nations, the town of Beclean in Bistrița-Năsăud County, north-eastern Transylvania, Romania, hosts a Celtic festival altogether different.

According to archaeological findings, the history of Celts in Transylvania goes back to the 4th century BC. Radu Zagreanu is a Romanian archaeologist, who also helps keep Beclean's annual Celtic Village re-enactment portion of its Festivalul Celtic Transilvania historically accurate.

"The Celts exercised politico-military rule over Transylvania between the 4th and 2nd century BC and brought with them a more advanced iron-working technology," he explains. "Located geographically on the edge of the Celtic world, we created this concept at the festival, called the Celtic Village, a recreation of a hypothetical Celtic fair, where people from different parts of the Celtic world gather together and spend an unforgettable weekend together."

You would be surprised where Celtic history pops up when you look hard enough. Even as far afield as Cuba and Barbados - festivals which we have also covered in depth - the celebrations make sense given the patterns of voluntary or forced emigration to the Caribbean. So while it may not be obvious, there is Celtic culture there to celebrate.

What about places where Celtic connections are few and far between?

How do people of Celtic lineage who live in more remote regions - where the Diaspora is not as prominent - honour their heritage?

With "passion, persistence, and professionalism." At least, that is how Brent Cassidy manages it.

Cassidy, an Irishman of Donegal and County Fermanagh by way of North Carolina, explains how he wound up living in Oulu, Finland, just 300 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle.

"I arrived as an exchange student back in 1997 and studied Scandinavian culture. I returned to America to get my degree, before coming back here to work as a kindergarten teacher."

Most of Ireland's connections to Finland in history are relatively recent - the two nations first established diplomatic relations in 1962, according to Ireland's embassy in Finland. It's not like they go a-ways back, like Celts in France or Spain or even North America and the Caribbean. So...what, if any, is the connection?

"I believe it is more of a mentality," says Cassidy. "Both cultures are, in my opinion, rather relaxed. I suppose it comes from this rural culture, where the city life is still pretty new. A lot of the people in this city actually come from the countryside."

There is another, more concrete connection: music.

"Irish music has been here for prob-

ably about 30 years," says Cassidy, himself a musician. "When I started getting into the scene, I might have played music occasionally. But I really wanted to play music and listen to music, so I started organizing sessions. The sessions started once a month, and then they grew to twice a month. Then I decided to start a festival."

The Irish Festival of Oulu debuted humbly in 2006, hosting about 2,000 people. It didn't take long to catch on, however.

"It just kind of took off," Cassidy recalls. "2007 was a really big year. We even had (renowned Irish piper) Paddy Keenan perform. Today, the gathering has evolved to include a wide range of events, including theatre, poetry, storytelling, and film."



Marc-Ivan O'Gorman

It's been slower-going for Marc-Ivan O'Gorman, a Co. Carlow transplant living part-time in New Delhi with his Indian wife. Whereas Cassidy connects to people with music, O'Gorman speaks the language of cinema, which he has tried to share with his Indian neighbours.

"I was working for a TV channel there and I had been involved in film and the arts since I was a teenager, so this is always my way of interacting with other cultures," O'Gorman explains from Los Angeles.

"I noticed that there was a real dearth of interaction, or general understanding, between Irish and Indian cultures. And I felt there was actually quite a lot of common ground there - similar experiences and attitudes to life than perhaps they were aware of. But, even just geographically, they hadn't really explored those overlaps.

"Both countries are former British colonies that had successful national independence movements in the 20th century."

"They kind-of bounce off each other, communicating on a sort of philosophical

and cultural level."

O'Gorman notes that most Indian people's awareness of Ireland is through the country's literary lineage; writers such as W.B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, and James Joyce. Aiming to grow that awareness, he founded the first Indian Film Festival of Ireland.

"The first iteration of the festival was picking movies that featured Irish writers, either as adaptations of plays like *Dancing at Lughnasa*, or adaptations of short stories like William Trevor's *Ballroom of Romance*. I picked famous Irish writers, found movies that featured them, and called it *The Writing Irish*."

The most recent festival in 2018 explored Irish animation, including the classic 2009 film *The Secret of Kells*.

And though film is a huge industry in India, it has been hard to grow the festival as O'Gorman finds himself competing with both Bollywood and popular global cinema.

"India has a thing called Parallel Cinema, which is what we might call independent cinema or art house cinema. It is still quite small, however. What they think of cinema is popular cinema, like Hollywood stuff. As such, the people who are taking in a film festival in India are going to be the literary type. It is a smaller audience to be sure.



Rob Hennessey

"I can't say that it is growing," he continues. "I would say the audience is more numbers of the same groups of people. In India, festivals like this aren't a popular thing. If I was going to put an Irish film on in Canada, let's say, I could go, oh Colin Farrell is in it, and Kelly Murphy. People would react with, 'oh, international Hollywood movie stars - let's go'. But if I put that same film on in



India, Indians wouldn't know who either those guys are, so even that wouldn't draw the audiences. It's going upstream a little bit, trying to convince the Indian people to come and enjoy these movies."

Robert Hennessey might have an even greater challenge. Living in the largely rural region of Fukui Prefecture, Japan, many of his neighbours have never even heard of Ireland.

"Being Irish in Japan, I can tell you that most Japanese don't know anything about Ireland," says Hennessey, an English teacher at the Fukui University of Technology.

"If you tell them that you are Irish, they think that you are from Iceland. They have heard more about Iceland than they have heard about Ireland: both countries are in relatively the same region, but as the Japanese have an interest in hot springs and thermal this-and-that, they know about Iceland. However, they have little or no idea about Ireland."

A native Dubliner, Hennessey has been living in Fukui City for the last nine years. You might think that being surrounded by people who have almost no clue what or where Ireland might have him feeling alienated and discouraged. But it has had quite the opposite effect. As he explains, it inspired him to share his culture more vigorously.

"Yes, we are worlds apart. That said, it gives us a great opportunity to show them something different."

Hennessey helps to organize the Fukui St. Patrick's Day parade -

now three years running - though it is more of a small march around the park, followed by a tight-knit shindig at the local train station.

"The majority of the fun goes on in this event space, which has a big screen, and a load of food tents set up on two stages. And on the two stages, we feature Irish musicians who have come to join us from all around Japan for the weekend. We have a local sake brewery sponsoring us, with a local glassblower providing tri-colour green, white, and orange sake cups."

"It's a nice little event, but it is not quite New York."

Despite the lack of cultural knowledge, the event is usually a smashing success because it is a novel experience for the locals.

"The Japanese love anything new, whether it is a new cell phone, or a new drink, or a new car - they are all about new. They were very keen to partake, and I didn't have to really convince them much at all."

Besides a chance to revel in his native culture with a few other Irish ex-pats in the area, Hennessey sees the festivities as an opportunity to share more than his history and heritage with his neighbours - it is also a chance to share a whole new kind of world-view.

"The initial reason for starting it was basically just to have a bit of





Ortigueira Celtic Festival



The Irish Festival of Oulu

fun. I could get into the cultural importance of this-and-that, but basically, where we live here is a very rural, conservative, underpopulated place, so there is not a whole lot of fun to be had sometimes.

“What the Irish can offer them is a bit of spontaneous amusement; street busking with the music or breaking out into Irish dance here and there. The Japanese can’t do that. They need to practice everything, and get everything perfect, and run it through over and over until it is just right.

“The St. Patrick’s Day thing is kind of needed here, and something that the people appreciate. I guess I saw it as a bit of a payback; I have been treated very well here - the locals have been very kind to me and have always looked out for me.”

For O’Gorman, sharing his heritage not only gives locals a chance to learn something from his culture, but he learns a lot from viewing his own heritage through their eyes.

“You have unexpected realizations when you take things out of context. When you are looking at Northern Ireland, and there is a movie about that, an Indian audience, unexposed to that, might say, ‘I don’t get it. What’s the problem? Is it religious?’ Oh, well, partially. ‘Well are they both Christian.’ Well, one is Protestant, one is Catholic. ‘OK what’s the difference?’ It is kind of subtle. It makes you examine your own culture. Seen from afar, that does seem like a rather nuanced distinction. If you get a little bit of distance on your own culture, it helps you understand it better.”

For Cassidy back in Finland, the clash of two unique cultures highlights the ways in which they are similar.

“Irish music in northern Finland - people ask, so how does that

work? But it works. An Irish festival in Ireland is an Irish festival in Ireland. But with an Irish festival in Oulu, Finland you are actually inside of two cultures; amidst the Finnish language and architecture, you throw in some Gaelic and ‘trad’ tunes and voila; it is kind of like a very tasty milkshake of blueberry, strawberry, and banana.”

And it is here, at the edge where the different cultures connect, that the magic happens.

“Last year, the very last evening of the festival, we were finishing up with music, playing a session, and somebody called us outside. The whole pub cleared, and there were these green northern lights in the sky. Maybe there was a little bit of Irish luck or something in that. Those are the type of experiences that we have.”

If you are still wondering how Celtic celebrations can germinate, seemingly from nothing, in the far corners of the world where the cultural climate may seem anaerobic to Celtic growth, it should be obvious by now how it works. It is not by design, but by the passion of individual people.

“It is worth putting together,” says Hennesey, as the bell chimes at Fukui Tech. “People like it and appreciate it and it always goes over well. Sometimes I think that I am crazy for doing it, but it is beyond rewarding. It’s just fun.”

“I always go back to the simple question - why do I do this?” Cassidy adds. “And I truly believe that it is because of my love for Celtic music and culture. Whatever happens on top of that is extra.”



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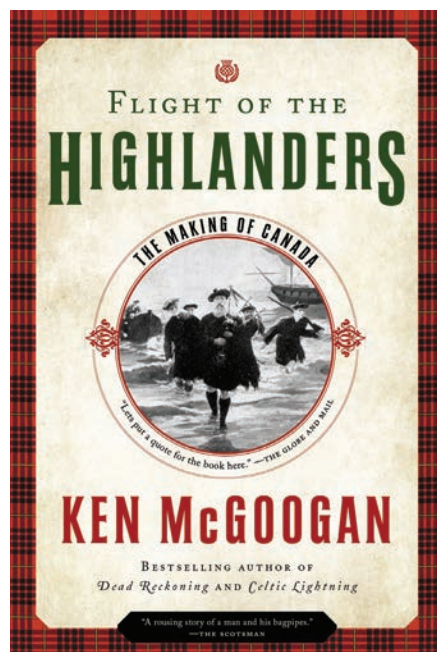


Flight of the Highlanders

In this exclusive excerpt from his forthcoming book *Flight of the Highlanders: The Making of Canada*, author Ken McGoogan looks at The Old Way of Life...



In his bestsellers *How the Scots Invented Canada* and *Celtic Lightning*, Ken McGoogan wrote about how, in the 18th and 19th centuries, Scotland (and Ireland) sent Canada numerous talented, high-energy figures who led the way in forging a nation. In his forthcoming book, *Flight of the Highlanders: The Making of Canada*, Ken turns to the common people, and particularly to those who came to Canada as a result of the Highland Clearances. He tells the story of those forgotten Scots who, frequently betrayed by their own chieftains and evicted from their ancestral lands, found themselves battling hardship, hunger, and hostility in a New World they could scarcely have imagined.



The Old Way of Life

In the Celtic tradition, “Thin Places” are sites where the natural and spiritual worlds meet and intermingle, separated by the merest veil. The ancient Celts would visit these sacred sites, among them Stonehenge in England and the Ring of Brodgar in Orkney, to experience the presence of their gods. For avowedly secular types, the concept works better historically. I think of the reconstructed Gaelic village in the Highland Folk Museum 45 miles south of Inverness, where you can wander in and out of blackhouses and see people at work in the clothing and spirit of another time. The same goes for Auchindrain Township, six miles south of Inverary. It is the only stone-built settlement to survive essentially unaltered from among hundreds that existed before the Highland Clearances. And what of the Gearrannan Blackhouse Village at a beautiful waterside location on the Isle of Lewis?

All three of those sites provide a sense of how most Highlanders lived in the decades before and after the mid-1700s, when the Battle of Culloden marked the beginning of the end for the Old Order. Political and military historians of the Middle Ages focus on kings and aristocrats and the battles they fought, won, or lost. But most Highlanders were farmers who stayed home in small townships made up of extended families.

They lived in “blackhouses,” so-designated because they were dark, windowless, and blackened by peat-fire smoke. The term distinguishes them from the “white houses” which came later and introduced such amenities as windows and toilets. In *Thatched Houses*, author Colin Sinclair identifies three types of blackhouses according to their roof styles. The Hebridean has four walls of

the same height and a ledge running around the edge of the roof. The Skye has four similar walls but no ledge: the thatch runs over the edge. And the Dailriadic has a Skye-style roof but pointed walls at two opposite ends providing for a pitched roof.

The common features among these three types tell us more about how people lived. Besides their thatched roofs and walls made of stone or peat slabs, blackhouses were usually oblong and divided into three compartments. You would enter the house through a flimsy door that opens into the byre or cow-house that forms one of the two end compartments. You would see two small black cows reclining on a bed of straw. But the place stinks of cow dung and chicken droppings so why tarry? You turn right and, through an opening or pass door, step through an internal wall into the main apartment. The third compartment is straight ahead, divided from this room by a wooden partition containing another pass door covered with a blanket.

You can’t help but notice the smoke, which gets thicker higher up, and you crouch to avoid the worst of it. The smoke curls upwards from a peat fire which sits on a stone slab in the middle of this dirt-floor apartment. It drifts eventually through a hole in the thatch located off-centre so that heavy rains do not douse the flames. A three-legged iron pot hangs over the fire from a chain attached to a beam in the roof. You sit down on a bench that occupies a side wall and notice a dresser neatly displaying rows of plates. Beneath it sits a washtub and beside it a wooden bucket.

Welcome to the house of the Gael in the Old Highlands. It allows for conversation and conviviality around the glowing peat



fire, but mainly it provides shelter from the storm – though the roof of the blackhouse is not water tight. In rainy weather, heavy drops of inky black water make their way through the thatch. This happens often enough that people have a name for those falling drop-lets: snighe.

When weather permits, not surprisingly, the common folk spend most of their time outdoors. They tend their crops and their cattle. When James Boswell passed this way with Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1773, he wrote, “we had not rooms that we could command, for the good people here had no notion that a man could have any occasion but a mere sleeping place.”

Like Ireland, but unlike England and the Lowlands, the Scottish Highlands successfully resisted the invasion of the Romans and never formed part of Roman Britain (AD 43 to 410). The Gaelic-speaking Highlanders on the islands and along the mainland coast belonged to a sea-faring world - one without roads until the 18th century. No coach system reached Inverness until 1811.

And yet, for generations, people survived in this rugged landscape, enduring sporadic famines.

What gave them the strength and ability to do so? Historians are well-nigh unanimous: The clan system: all for one and one for all. Many clansmen were not related to the clan chief by blood, but took his name to show solidarity, to obtain basic protection, or to acquire foods. Loyalty to the clan was paramount.

Highlanders are often thought of as “crofters” who owned and farmed a plot of land. But that crofting organization did not

emerge until the mid-19th century. Before that, under a collective “runrig” system of land tenure, farmers lived in their blackhouses in townships that comprised between six and twenty dwellings adjacent to an “infield” of arable land and an “outfield” more suitable to rough grazing. They divided the infield into strips or “rigs” which were reassigned every two or three years so that everyone had a turn working the best land.

Collective ownership and co-operative activity don’t come easily. In the Highlands, the clan system made them work. That system highlights kinship and shared membership in a welcoming social entity. Clan members share a common ancestor, or at least subscribe to the notion that they do. You are all brothers and sisters and cousins.

The clan chieftains, whose ancestors acquired estates from the crown, grant long-term mortgages on large holdings or “tacks” to faithful kinsmen. The “tacksman” serve as a military officer when required, and rents sections of his large tack to sub-tenants. He keeps the best section for himself. While the

chief lives in a castle some distance away, the tacksmen resides among the people, albeit in the best house in the township.

The relative status of the chieftains depends on the number of men they can bring to a battle. They recognize that they have reciprocal responsibilities and obligations to members of their clan. During periods of famine and hardship, they are known to remit rents and distribute grain. Clan members, while clearly interdependent, belong to one of three main classes. The chiefs are supreme leaders. Next come the gentlemen of the clan, the “tacksman” who take care to educate their sons, who can then enter the professions or the military. The third class comprises sub-tenants and cottars or servants, who live in the humblest dwellings and do the hardest work of farming.

The tacksmen lives in a traditional blackhouse, a low-lying building with dry-stone walls, wooden rafters, and thatched roof. But his place might be set apart from the others and larger than usual, with one or two extensions and perhaps a separate byre for cows, sheep, goats, and chickens. Instead of hard-packed earth, his floor might be built of flagstones.

Most Highlanders are subsistence farmers who eat what they grow - turnips, corn, potatoes. They keep a few small black cows and chickens, sometimes a goat, and use workhorses to till often rocky parcels of land. Everyone in the township is a jack of all trades and women are full partners in the collective enterprise.

Except during winter, everyone works round the clock, doing whatever has to be done.



For townships situated on a coast, one of the hardest jobs is collecting kelp, an acidic seaweed useful to the era's chemical manufacturing. Men waded into the freezing cold water to collect the seaweed and then carry it ashore. Because of the cold and constant wetting, many suffer from acute rheumatism. Women dry and burn the seaweed into a slag-like mass for transportation.

For a couple of months, most of the women, girls and young lads remain at the shielings to care for the cattle and to make cheese and butter. Around the end of July, when the cows have cleared the grass, the women return to the township. The men are already hard at work harvesting grain, desperate to finish before autumn brings the rains.

Woodworkers come into their own as fishing grows more efficient, responding to the need for boats and barrels in which to store salted herrings. Boatbuilders make boats out of hollowed logs, but also draw on the Norse tradition of stretching hides over a wooden frame to make larger craft. West-coast Highlanders and Hebridean Islanders have adapted the wooden galleys introduced by the Vikings. In the 16th century, clan chieftains like MacNeill of Barra keep a galley and a crew of men at the ready in case a chance arises for piracy. The MacNeills produce one especially memorable clan chieftain who every evening has one of his minions poke his head out a top-floor window in Kisimul Castle. "MacNeill of Barra has dined!" the servant cries, "And now the world may dine."

But in Highland Folk Ways, ethnologist Isabel Grant tells us that they enjoyed a mental life “proud, vigorous and beautiful, which has existed in continuity from the days of the supremacy of the lordly Gaelic society.” Grant traces that intellectual life to the Lords of the Isles, those champions of Gaelic culture and patrons of poetry and music who launched a tradition that refused to wither and die.

Again, Grant points to the Lords of the Isle, descendants of the sea-lord Somerled. Country folk even in remote districts enjoyed “a wealth of stories and traditions handed down by practised story-tell-

[illegible]

All this had ancient roots. In the 1500s, trained professional poets wrote in the elaborate, stylized metres of old Ireland. The classic *Book of the Dean of Linsmore*, begun in 1512, collected the poetry of wandering bards or “strollers” who recited lengthy pieces in the classical metres of the Old Irish that had spawned the Gaelic language.

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Driven

**Sir Jackie Stewart is
driven to make a difference.**

Story by Stephen Patrick Clare



It is a little more than halfway through the 2019 Formula One racing season and U.K. driver Lewis Hamilton is poised to win a 6th world championship - his third in a row. The 34-year-old enjoys a significant lead in the driver standings, and his team - Mercedes-AMG Petronas Motorsport - has set the pace to take yet another Constructors title.

Racing enthusiasts bemoan the sport's predictability at times; the same drivers and teams consistently lead the field year after year - most notably Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull - while the rest settle for scraps of places and points. Many believe it is a mere matter of money; those with the most can afford more research, innovation and manpower - all of which lead to better on-course performance and results. Others point to solid management - both on and off the track - and the sheer skill of individual drivers.

Each side is correct, of course. At the end of race day, however, there is still plenty of high-speed excitement and drama - so much so that the sport continues to draw record audiences on-site, online and on television. Merchandise sales have never been higher, as hard-core fans throw their team hats into the collective racing ring.

"It's big business," says Sir Jackie Stewart over the phone from his U.K. office. "Make no mistake; there is a lot at stake at each race, and in each season, for everyone involved.

"Mercedes looks like the team to beat again this year," he continues. "They have those cars running very well, they have a strong crew, and they have two excellent drivers in Hamilton and (Valtteri) Bottas.

"I am not sure what has happened with Ferrari. They looked like the favourites in pre-season testing, but it just hasn't come together for them. Leclerc (Charles) has been quite consistent, however; he is a good young driver with a strong future ahead of him."

Stewart, now 80, nods to another rising star; Max Verstappen of Red Bull Racing.

"Max is fast, and he is only going to get faster. He is aggressive out there, and he isn't afraid to take the car right to the very edge of its capabilities. Because of that, he has had a few incidents - and some bad luck - but as he matures, he will likely be a world champion sooner than later."

Winning, after all, is the name of the game.

"Yes, but it is more than that," explains Stewart. "When you get right down to it, these are men, alone, in high-powered vehicles, making split-second decisions that will have a large impact on the lives of many people."

SECOND GEAR

Stewart knows something about having an impact. His racing resume alone is adorned with so many accolades and awards - including three F1 championships (1969, 1971, 1973) - that it would take several Wikipedia pages to document all of the details.

"I didn't start out with a racing career in mind," he admits. "Actually, I was a pretty good clay shooter as a young man growing up in Milton (15 miles west of Glasgow). I won a competition at the age of 13 and was invited to join the Scottish shooting team. I did fairly well with it."

By the age of 16, Stewart had left school, due in large part to his then-undiagnosed dyslexia.

"It was a very difficult and unpleasant time. I was picked on and bullied quite a bit because of my condition. I remember feeling ashamed and guilty, though I had no idea why, nor what the problem was. I just assumed that I was stupid and unlucky."

As fortune would have it, a chance encounter put his racing wheels in motion soon after.

"I was working on cars at my father's garage," he recalls. "He owned a dealership, and both he and my brother were involved in motorsports. The owner of one of the cars I had been working on offered me the opportunity to test, and later race, one of his vehicles. I finished 2nd in my first race, and in my second race I finished 1st."



The rest, as they say, is racing history; the "Flying Scot" - as he would come to be called - worked his way up the grid of junior racing until landing a Formula Three ride with Tyrrell in 1964. A year later he made his F1 debut in South Africa, finishing 6th. That rookie season was highlighted by his first F1 victory at Monza, Italy.

From 1965 until his retirement in 1973, Stewart competed in 99 F1 races, winning 27. During that same period, he also took part in the Le Mans 24 Hours, the European Touring Car Championship, the Can-Am Series and the Indianapolis 500.

He was scheduled to complete his 100th F1 Grand Prix at Watkins Glen in 1973 - the final race of the season, and of his career - when his teammate François Cevert was killed during practice sessions. Out of respect for their fallen comrade, the Tyrrell Team withdrew from the race.

"It was horrific," recalls Stewart. "I was the last of the drivers to pull up to the scene of the accident and I walked over to his vehicle. They had left him in the car, because he was so clearly dead."

While great in its glories, the high-speed sport has not been without its share of tragedies; since 1952, dozens of F1 drivers have died behind the wheel. In Stewart's nine years, he lost a handful of his closest friends to the perils of the profession.

"After François' death, I realized that it was only a matter of time before I would be killed as well."

"These accidents - these terrible tragedies - were senseless and violent and, as far as I was concerned, completely avoidable."

After his own horrendous crash at the 1966 Belgian Grand Prix - Stewart was trapped in his fuel-leaking car - he began exploring ways to make the sport safer.

Over the next decade, and despite much opposition, he lobbied his fellow drivers to pressure the sport's governing bodies, owners, track officials and others, to implement new safety measures, including modernizing circuits, the fitting of barriers and run-off, improved medical facilities, as well as better trained and better equipped on-track marshals.

"It just kind of took off after that," he notes. "The sport really shifted its focus to improving safety conditions - for the drivers, the crews, the fans - and we have only had a few fatalities since then."

"You see, we had the money and the technology and the resources - all we needed was the will and the consensus to make changes."

THIRD GEAR

Stewart's passion for motorsports is perhaps only eclipsed by his adoration for his beloved wife Helen. The childhood sweethearts married in 1962, later raising two sons, Mark and Paul.

Helen (née McGregor) has been at Stewart's side throughout his career; first during his tenure as a driver, and later as he plied his trade as an F1 team-owner, as a sports commentator for various television networks, and as a celebrity spokesman for a number of public and private initiatives.

"She is as much a part of my story as I am," he says. "Without her, I wouldn't be the man I am today. She is both the love of my life and my best friend."

In 2014, Helen - now 78 - rolled her Smart car near the family home in Ellesborough, England.

"Physically, she was fine," shares Stewart. "A few scrapes and bruises and what not, but no major injuries. What was baffling, however, was that she showed absolutely no recollection of the accident. It was as if, in her mind, it never happened."



Upon the advice of medical professionals, the couple visited the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota later that year. It was there that Helen was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD) - a cluster of progressive disorders that affect cells in the brain's temporal and frontal lobes. The condition usually strikes people in their middle years but can afflict anyone of any age at anytime, impacting mental skills for communication, reasoning, social awareness and memory. The changes in personality and judgment eventually leave the person feeling confused and helpless.

"Honestly, I knew very little about dementia at the time," confides Stewart. "I remember asking the doctor, 'Ok, so what is the cure?' and he told me there wasn't one. I was simply stunned. 'What do you mean there is no cure?'"

After the initial shock, Stewart suited up and put the pedal to the metal. Helen was relocated to the couple's specially equipped apartment on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland - just down the road from a private hospital - where she continues to receive round-the-

clock care from some of the world's finest doctors and nurses. He then began researching the disorder, meeting and networking with neuro specialists and other professionals around the globe.

“What struck me the most was how little attention dementia was receiving in comparison to other major illnesses.”

“The amount of funding and public awareness for cancer is astounding. And look at what we were able to do with AIDS; at one time, not very long ago, this disease was at the forefront of public attention and seen as a death sentence. And while there is still no cure for AIDS per se, through huge funding for research and treatment the illness has become much more manageable and people afflicted with HIV are now living longer and healthier lives. Surely we can do the same thing with dementia.”

The numbers on dementia are indeed staggering; it is estimated that 50 million people around the world are currently afflicted with the disease, and one in three people born today will develop the condition in their lifetime - meaning a new diagnosis every three seconds.

Driven by a desire to make a difference, and the lifelong love for his wife, Stewart formally launched Race Against Dementia (RAD) in 2018.

“It took a couple of years to get all of the pieces in place,” he explains. “If we were going to do this, we were going to do it right. It is a culture shift - a change in paradigm and the way we view the disease - so it will take time.”

According to the organization's website, “Race Against Dementia raises and allocates funds to accelerate global research and development in the race to find a prevention or treatment for dementia.”

The not-for-profit group identifies four key areas to fulfill its ambitious mandate: New Talent - identifying and financially backing the most talented early-career researchers; Innovation - providing catalyst funding, enabling researchers to pursue higher risk, innovative ideas that might not get funded by the mainstream; Speed - aiming to instil a ‘Formula 1 attitude’ in attention to detail and urgency, to accelerate the pace of solutions development; and Global - forming strong alliances with research centres of excellence on a global basis.

RAD has already partnered with both Alzheimer's Research UK and the Mayo Clinic to drive the initiative. A Board of Directors is in place, and Stewart has drawn upon his lifelong friendships with the likes of past and present F1 drivers Emerson Fittipaldi, George Russell and Lando Norris to help raise awareness.

“Much of our philosophy comes from what I witnessed in my years with Formula One.”

“The dedication to research, the use of leading-edge technology, the commitment to innovation, and the importance of mentoring. We actually have PhD graduates working alongside people at McLaren and Red Bull to share best practices and better understand processes.”

Like F1, funding is key.

“Our initial goal was to raise \$2.5 million. We have already far surpassed that amount, and the contributions continue to grow significantly each week. The pace has really picked up.

“Like it was with the safety issues in Formula One all of those years ago, we have the money and the technology and the resources - all we need is the will and the consensus to make changes.”

FOURTH GEAR

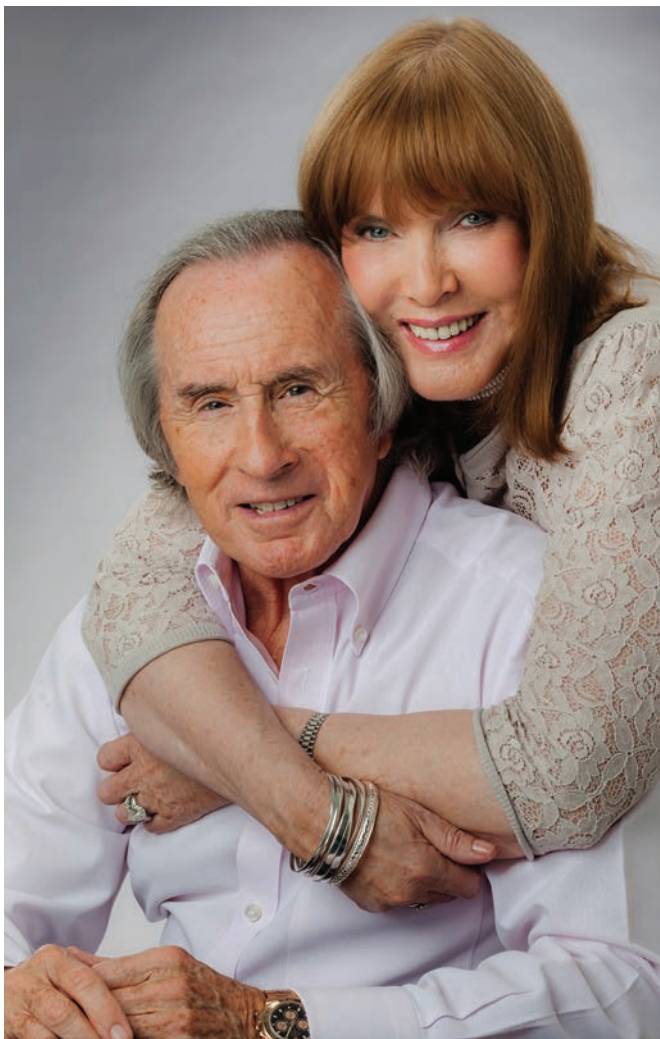
Though he continues to travel the globe for RAD and other commitments, Stewart is in constant contact with his wife.

“When I am not at home, I speak with Helen three or four times a day by phone. It isn't easy; while her long-term memory is quite strong, her short-term memory is declining. So, even though we may have spoken in the morning, she might not remember our discussion when I call again later in the day.”

He is comforted in knowing that, even in his absence, she is well-cared for.

“Along with all of the medical help, Helen is surrounded by family members and friends. There is no shortage of company or love. And, when I am home, we try to get out to dinner and events with people a couple of times each week.”

Stewart is not unaware of the challenges faced by families of those afflicted.



“It takes quite a toll; emotionally, mentally, physically and, of course, financially. We are in a very fortunate position in that we can afford to have a team of professionals on-site every day. Helen has 24-hour-a-day attention from a total of seven nurses, with two working at a time. The average family today simply can't afford that kind of care.”



He notes that what they can do is educate themselves on the disease, access local and regional resources, attend or create support groups, and contribute more time and money to the cause.

“And it is vital that we keep the conversation going with our family members, friends and others who are going through the same experience.”

“Most importantly, though, we must show our love and support for the people in our lives who are living with this terrible disorder.”

“What Helen needs most are lots of hugs and kisses and reassurance. I hold her hand as often as I can. I talk to her. I tell her jokes. We laugh and cry. She needs to understand that, no matter what, I am by her side and that everything is going to be alright.”

It is said that great leaders make others better by their sheer presence. And it was another great man, Martin Luther King Jr., who noted

that a “genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus.”

“We need as many people involved with this project as possible,” says Stewart. “The only way we are going to take the chequered flag on this is if everyone is clear on what the goals are and how we are going to achieve them.”

The similarities between his work in F1 safety and RAD are obvious, and Stewart has been as driven in his approach to each as he once drove the world’s greatest circuits - with purpose, passion, precision, performance and persistence.

“People,” he adds with a long pause. “This is a race against time. Not just for Helen, but for millions of people around the world, today and in the years to come. It is a race that we can and must win.”

www.raceagainstdementia.com

Read: Jackie Stewart; Winning Isn’t Everything ~ The Autobiography

Watch: Weekend of a Champion



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Home to Donegal

*Celtic Life International
Managing Editor Stephen Patrick Clare
pieces together the puzzle of his family's past*



Our story begins nearly three years ago, with a casual, off-hand remark made by my mother, Joan Smart.

"My brother seems to think that the Smarts were once Magees, and that there is some sort of historical connection there..."

With deep roots in Newfoundland - birthplace of her parents, Stan Smart and Caroline Dunphy - Mom is one of six Smart siblings (three boys and three girls), each of whom sired children, leading to generations of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Joan Smart

Along with being the "runt of the litter," Mom is, for the most part, the self-appointed family archivist. Now retired, she spends much of her spare time scouring through old letters and photographs, connecting with distant relatives by telephone and email, and collecting clues here and there through a myriad of sources in an effort to dig up the family roots.

"It's so fascinating," she shares. "And it's important; knowing where you come from helps you better understand who you are now, and who you are going to be..."

While those intentions are unquestionably noble and beyond reproach, piecing together the puzzle of the past is not without its challenges; an overload of information comes from all directions, be it from family members weaving wild tales and waving historical documents, or via a wave of ever-expanding and accessible online resources such as surname searches, ancestral forums, home DNA kits, and the like.

Ulster-based genealogist Brian Mitchell confirms that my mother has been moving in the right direction.

"Quite simply, start from the present and work backwards and build up a picture of your ancestor in their home country, looking for clues as to where they came from, before conducting research through record source."

He adds that the first, and perhaps most crucial, step in compiling your family tree is to quiz relations and family friends.

"Names, dates, places of birth and any anecdotes should be recorded. Family memories and knowledge should not be underestimated. There are many instances where family folklore, passed down

through the generations, extends beyond what is written in historical records or captured in databases."

Historical research and storytelling should not be separated.

"They are both crucial in any attempt to construct your family history. The information and anecdotes relatives can provide help bring the family tree to life, as well as providing much-needed clues for its construction. The oral traditions within the family circle are, therefore, of immense interest and value."



Caroline Dunphy
and Stan Smart

To that end, Mom has done well to sift and sort through her mother's family history; originally from County Kerry on Ireland's plush southwest coast, the Dunphys scattered like seeds in the wind across Eire, into the U.K. and, later, North America. I have written extensively about those roots in previous editions of Celtic Life International.

But what of her father's lineage? Truth be told, we have but tidbits of information - at best, scraps and snippets of the Smart saga, held together with numerous, albeit much unsubstantiated, family lore.

This much we know; Stan Joseph Smart, my grandfather, was born in 1901 in Kings Point, Newfoundland, the son of Michael Patrick Smart (b. 1863) and Maggie Jackman (b. 1863).

Michael was the son of James Smart (b. 1822) and Margaret Flynn (b. 1831), both of Harbour Grace, Newfoundland.

James was the son of Amos Smart, who married Elizabeth Wilson on November 1, 1805, in St. Paul's Anglican Church, Harbour Grace, Newfoundland. Including James, they had eight children; William, Thomas, Michael, Joanna, Jane, Bridget and (Captain) Martin.

That narrative is supported by online research, including everything from Google queries to accessing parish and census records to deeper dives through sites like Ancestry.com.

From there, however, the trail goes cold. Thus, to further unravel the mystery of the Smart family's origins - and their possible connections to the Magees - I have enlisted the help of Brian Mitchell and other professional genealogists.

And though these portals into the past are essential components to better understanding one's heritage, there is simply no substitute for the real-life, real-time experience of visiting the land of one's forebears.

Alas, here I am, in the magical, mystical kingdom of Donegal along the stunning and serene northwest coast of Ireland, looking for that long-lost link.

I have been here before; first for a few days in 1989, then again

briefly in 2015. On both occasions, a few breadcrumbs of my family's past were tossed my way - just enough to temporarily satiate my desire, but not enough to quell my drive to know more.

More than facts, it was then - as it is today - a feeling of belonging that brings me back; a 'familiarity' of 'family' that runs in my blood.

*This is my homeland, the place I was born in
No matter where I go it's in my soul
My feet may wander a thousand places
But my heart will lead me back home to my Donegal...*

Geographically, Donegal is nestled in the upper northwest corner of Ireland, where the land, sea and sky collide in a kaleidoscope of colour and culture.

Spiritually - and perhaps as it only shares six miles of southern borderland with the Republic of Eire - the region is closer, both in heartland and heart-space, to the six neighbouring counties of Northern Ireland to its immediate east.



As such, and like its cultural counterparts across the Province of Ulster, Donegal's past casts a long - and often dark - shadow of English influence.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than at Donegal Castle in the county's capital. Once a home to the powerful O'Donnell Clan, the ominous 15th century stone structure was captured by English invaders after the Flight of the Earls in 1607 following the bloody 9 Years War.

Interestingly, the Gaelic name Dún na nGall translates to "Fort of the Foreigners."

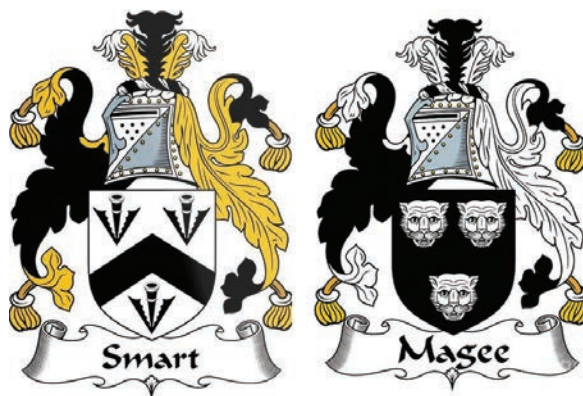
With a fortified beachhead in place, the new rulers brought tens of thousands of Scots and English to the region, starting in 1611, in what is known as the Plantation of Ulster.

While some still argue that the ensuing years were a form of cultural genocide - Celtic and Gaelic customs were mostly outlawed - others believe that England's efforts to secure the location for its strategic importance were better served by social assimilation.

Local records suggest that the Smart clan - my possible ancestors - were among the families that settled in the area at that time. According to HouseOfNames.com, the Smarts were originally a long-standing Anglo-Saxon tribe from the Suffolk region of England.

More records note that 12 members of the Smart family were counted in the Donegal area census of 1616, burgeoning to 27 by 1630. By 1652, there were 51 Smarts in the area, most living in and around the town center. Some were merchants, while others plied their trades as labourers and farmers. Local documents indicate that almost all of them were involved with the building of the town's first Protestant churches, some of which still exist today.

By 1696, there were 74 Smarts on record in the region, though that total would dip to 18 by 1731. As there is no reason given for the dwindling numbers (the region's overall population remained steady), one could speculate that disease, war, famine and other calamities may have taken their toll, or that perhaps the family "fell-out" with local authorities or with the church.



In any event, outmigration to greener pastures was a likely source for the Smart's complete disappearance from Donegal by 1762. Even now, one would be hard-pressed to find anyone with that surname in the region.

The first mention of Smarts arriving in Newfoundland - the birthplace of my maternal grandfather Stan - was the landing of an A. Smart in Placentia (on the then-country's southeast coast) in 1724, most certainly via merchant ship. Others were to follow over the next century, and by the mid-1800s the family name was firmly entrenched on "The Rock."

As census and church records for Newfoundland at that time were nearly non-existent, it is difficult to gauge who A. Smart was, where he (presumably he) arrived from, or if there is any connection to Amos Smart, my great-great-great grandfather. However, given the huge Irish presence in Newfoundland at that time (many stayed on after being employed by departed English settlers), and the emerging influence of the Catholic Church there, one could estimate that this individual arrived from Ireland.

So where is my family's Celtic connection in all of this?

As noted previously, an off-the-cuff remark by my mother's brother that "the Smarts were once Magees, and that there is some sort of historical connection there..." got me thinking.

Also, as a youngster, I often heard my grandfather (Stan) refer to my grandmother (Caroline) as "Mother Magee" - a common term of affection for members of that clan, unconsciously passed down through generations of aural tradition. In fact, I still use the term with my own mom to this day, something I surely picked up from my grandfather.

Magee is a native Irish name - derived from the Gaelic "Mag Aodha," or "son of Hugh" - and was first found along the border of counties Donegal and Tyrone. They are thought to be descended from the Colla Uais of the 4th century.

And then there is the element of religion; my grandfather (Stan) was Catholic. As the Smarts were originally Protestant, his ancestors would have converted at some point...but why?

It is possible that, upon reaching the shores of Newfoundland, there would have been greater social and cultural acceptance and economic opportunities amongst a strong Catholic community.

Another scenario is that - as with so many Celts and Catholics under English rule at that time - the Magees opted to change their name to Smart, as well as their religious affiliation, given the choice to convert or die ("taking the soup") - thus ensuring the preservation of their lineage.

Or, perhaps - and like some families did in Donegal in the early 1700s - it is possible that there was a point of assimilation, where two families were joined by forces beyond their control. Alas, it begs the question; would true love - in this case a passionate, albeit forbidden romance between a Protestant and a Catholic - be reason enough for both religious conversion and emigration to the New World?

*We prayed that God would guide us and keep us by his hand
And send us fair wind while at sea bound down for Newfoundland*

As the puffin flies, it is 3,163 kilometres (1,965 miles) from the every westernmost tip of Donegal to the extreme eastern edge of Newfoundland.

As stated previously, both of my grandparents were born and bred on "The Rock." My grandmother, Caroline Dunphy, is of Irish stock, with roots in Kerry. My grandfather, Stan Smart, was also a proud and devout Irish Catholic, though his ancestry remains unclear.

*And though my grandfather's link to Eire remains
uncertain, there is no doubting the connections
between "ye' old country" and the New World.*

For starters, both are islands, each awash in a spirit of resiliency and independence.

Geologists now believe that, millions of years ago, Ireland and Newfoundland were once joined. In fact, if pushed together, the two land masses fit like puzzle pieces.

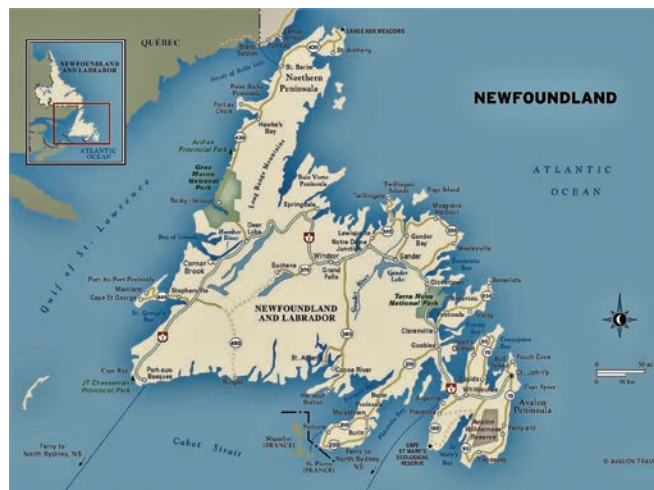
As such, much of the topography is alike; rugged hills and valleys, craggy coastlines, glacial divides, sub-strata and so forth are similar. Likewise, the top-soil, flora and fauna share commonalities, as does the dampish climate for much of the year. To that end, agricultural opportunities would be familiar for settlers, as would those for aquaculture.

It is easy to understand the appeal for long-ago Irish emigrants looking to build a new life for themselves; Newfoundland was, for many, a "home-away-from-home."

The first documented voyage between the two countries (Newfoundland did not join Canada until 1949) was in 1536, when the sea vessel Mighel returned to Cork carrying fish stock. The next recorded trip was in 1608. After that, traffic lanes became busier.

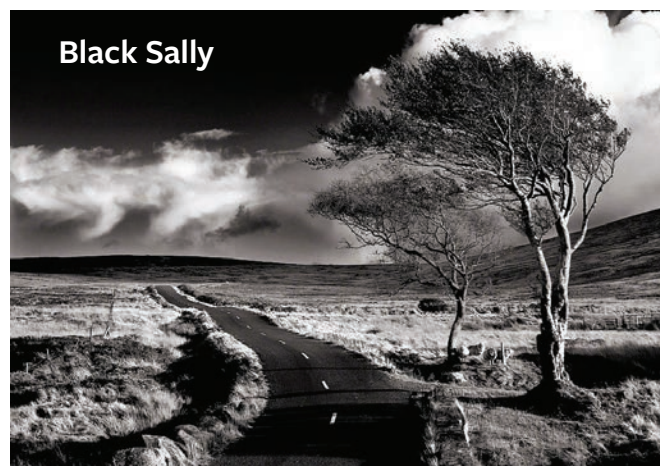
According to Wikipedia, "beginning around 1670, and particularly between 1750 and 1830, Newfoundland received large numbers of Irish immigrants. These migrations were seasonal or temporary. Most Irish migrants were young men working on contract for English merchants and planters. Migration peaked in the 1770s and 1780s when more than 100 ships and 5,000 men cleared Irish ports for the fishery. "Virtually from its inception, a small number of young Irish women

joined the migration. Many stayed and married overwintering Irish male migrants. Seasonal and temporary migrations slowly evolved into emigration and the formation of permanent Irish family settlement in Newfoundland. An increase in Irish immigration, particularly of women, between 1800 and 1835, and the related natural population growth, helped transform the social, demographic, and cultural character of Newfoundland.



"In 1836, a Newfoundland government census listed more than 400 settlements. The Irish, and their offspring, composed half of the total population. Close to three-quarters of them lived in St. John's and nearby, in an area still known as the Irish Shore."

Today, the Irish influence in Newfoundland remains strong, with 21.5 per cent of the population claiming ancestry from the Emerald Isle. It can be heard in the language and in the accent across the island, and in the fiddles and bodhrans in homes and pubs. It can be read in the literature, where the custom of traditional storytelling continues. It can be tasted in the cuisine, where the Jiggs Dinner (salt beef, boiled together with potatoes, carrot, cabbage, and turnip) still nourishes. It can be seen in the art and architecture and in the Aran-esque sweaters worn by many. In some areas the Irish turf still burns, scenting the landscape with familiarity.



Like Ellis Island, St. John's - Newfoundland's colourful capital - was a gateway for the Irish into North America. And while many of Eire's emigrants chose to embed themselves on "The Rock," many

more used it as a springboard to build new and better lives for themselves across Canada, in places like Halifax, Charlottetown, Fredericton, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver, and - in my case - Montreal.

And - like the Black Thorn and Black Sally trees that dot the landscape in Donegal, forever swaying eastward from the strong westerly winds - there are millions of Irish-Canadians, like me, with a deep and natural leaning to come home.

*The time has come when I must go, I'll bid you all adieu
The open highway calls to me to do the things I do
And when I'm wandering far away, I'll hear your voices call
And please God I'll soon return unto the homes of Donegal...*

Across Donegal, a handful of dedicated Irish have kept ancient Celtic customs alive for future generations.

In a tiny thatched-roof cottage in St. John's Point, a small seaside community near Killybegs, Cyndi Graham pumps the pedals on a 200-year-old loom, weaving wool and tweed threads into sweaters, throws, hats, mittens and other accessories.



"Some of these pieces can take days, and even weeks to complete," she explains. "The ancient art of weaving grew out of necessity here hundreds of years ago; the damp and cold of winter months would have taken their toll in an area like this. And even if you had a turf-fire going in the homestead, you would have had to bundle up."

Just a few miles up the road, the Glencolmcille Folk Village Museum, a bundle of six small cottages - known as a clachán - is perched on a hillside overlooking the sandy curve of Glenbay beach. Each cottage recreates a different era of Irish history, from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

"The homes have been refurbished to appear as they would have back then," notes curator Margaret Cunningham. "Many of the furnishings - the beds, the tools for the fire, the loom, and so forth - are original era pieces, donated by residents from in and around the area."

The revamped village grounds are stunning, awash in colourful foliage.

"Conditions then would have been challenging - the weather and climate along the coast can be unpredictable, and a wild storm can still sweep in very quickly. Inhabitants would have had to be quite resourceful and work together as a community just to survive the elements."

Those conditions would have been even more pronounced at nearby Slieve League (Sliabh Liag), along the region's 2,600-kilometer Wild Atlantic Way route. At 601 metres, the stunning bluff has some of the highest, and most rugged, sea cliffs in Ireland - almost three times higher than the better-known Cliffs of Moher in County Clare.

"It offers some of the best coastal views in the country," shares

local guide Paddy Clarke, who - along with his wife Siobhan - runs the Slieve League Cliffs Centre. "In past times, people climbed up here to look out over the sea, sending prayers to recently departed or long-gone family members who sailed to the U.K., North America, Australia, or New Zealand."

Similarly, prayers were often spoken aloud at the "Bridge of Tears" near the holy mountain of Muckish in the district of Cloghaneely, a crossroads where villagers said goodbye to their children during the Great Famine as they parted for better lives abroad.

Prayer continues to play a role in Irish life, though - like elsewhere - interest in religion, and thus church attendance, is dwindling.

"The older generations still attend Mass on Sundays here," says Donegal born-and-bred tour guide John McGroary, outside of The Church of the Holy Family in the picturesque village of Ardara.

"At one time, a place of worship like this was the hub of the community; from baptism to burial, the Church was where the local population gathered to celebrate or mourn."



Area graveyards remain peppered with Celtic crosses.

"The majority of the population would have been Catholic, with Celtic roots," he continues. "The two movements assimilated over time, and the cross is an amalgamation of their respective symbols. Most people don't know this, but many of our current religious rituals find their roots in ancient Celtic rites."

After mass, it would not have been uncommon for the families to gather at a pub for food and drink.

In nearby Teelin, The Rusty Mackerel serves up scrumptious seafood chowder and hearty soda bread.

"So, this is very much what the local diet would have been here for generations," says pub manager John (the Miner) Byrne. "People would have harvested the soil and the surf for basic ingredients, and most of the meals would have been some sort of variation on fish, wheat and potatoes."

A proper Sunday meal would not have been complete without a proper beverage.

"Poitín would have been quite popular," he adds, referring to the long-imbued illegal Irish moonshine. "Over time, more refined spirits like whiskey and beer would have replaced that on the menu."

Inevitably, fiddles, guitars and bodhrans would have led patrons through now-classic melodies.

"Aye, that still happens," smiles Byrne. "We've a full house of locals and tourists here most nights, enjoying a wee bit of the 'craic' with traditional tunes."

As if on cue, I am handed a guitar and Byrne joins in on fiddle.

With the first few bars, I am carried away to another era - magically and musically transported from present to past and back to present - where time still stands still.

*This is where we walked and swam
Hunted, danced and sang
Take a picture here
Take a souvenir*

Ask visitors to name the most “Irish” part of Ireland and they will likely list the obvious; Dublin, the country’s bustling capital city in the east, or perhaps Kerry in the southwest, where the landscape is plush and pure, or maybe Galway on the western coastline, where culture, claddagh and “craic” collide.

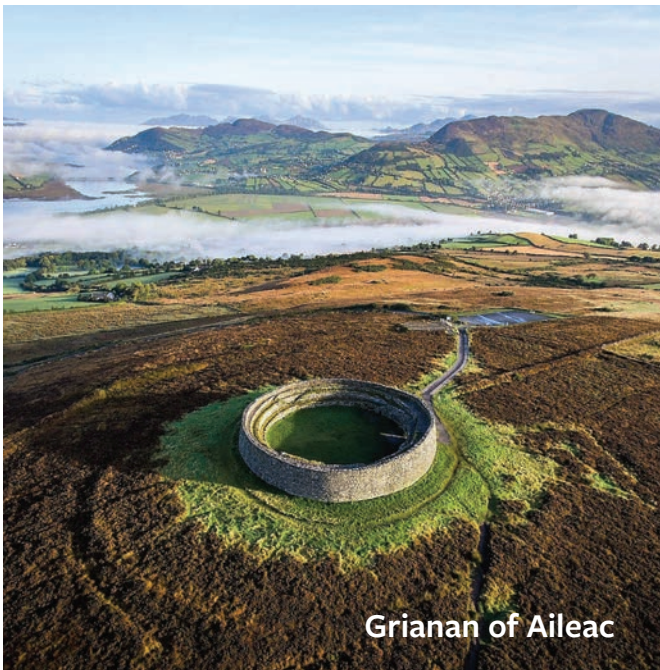


Inishowen

Ask the Irish, however, and they will say that you won’t find greener pastures than in Inishowen, Co Donegal.

Known as “The Forgotten County,” Inishowen’s present population is a mere 40,544. It is the largest peninsula in Ireland, measuring 884 square kilometres (218,523 acres), bordered to the north by the Atlantic Ocean, to the east by Lough Foyle, and to the west by Lough Swilly. Though joined at the south to the Republic, the southeastern part of the region rests in Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

Despite those geographical ties, Inishowen’s Gaelic name is Inis Eoghain - meaning “own island.”



Grianan of Aileac

“The name is quite fitting actually,” shares area tour guide Henry Doohan. “Inishowen has always had an independent spirit. It is sort of its own little world, and folks here have always kind of just done their own thing. Our slogan for years was ‘up here, it’s different.’”

I reply that, as a native Montrealer with Newfoundland roots, I am familiar with the idea of a ‘distinct society.’

Doohan nods and smiles, acknowledging the quirky and curious nature of “islanders” - like we are members of some sort of secret society.

Though just 36 years-of-age, my guide for the day is wise beyond his years. Personable and professional, he is more knowledgeable about the region than most.

“My family roots here go back generations,” he notes. “I don’t see why that would change with me and my children. We are happy here.”

That solid sense of self-identity, he adds, runs in the blood.

“It gave us, as a people, both the will and skills to survive during some very dark and troubling times. In that way, Inishowen is kind of a microcosm of Ireland.”

As we wind our way along the craggy coastline, passing old stone homesteads, farms and makeshift roadside shrines before visiting rugged Malin Head and Fanad Head Lighthouse - two of the four signature stops on Donegal’s Wild Atlantic Way route (the others being Sliabh Liag and Glenveagh National Park) - wind and rain lash against land and sea.

*“There is no such thing as bad weather
here - only bad clothing.”*

I remind him that, as a Canadian - and a seasoned traveller - I am prepared for any environmental scenario. As such, I step out of the vehicle often to snap as many pictures as possible. The photo opportunities at the mainstay tourist stops are spectacular, of course. However, I am more interested in the “in-betweens” - the lesser-known, out-of-the-way spots - where the hidden soul of this land and its people reveal themselves. It is here that the sea is a wee bluer, the pastures a wee greener.

The exception is Grianan of Aileac, an ancient Celtic ring-fort, thought to have been built by the Northern Uí Néil dynasty in the 7th century. Sitting atop the 800-ft high Greenan Mountain, the 16-ft high stone structure offers panoramic views across hills and valleys, overlooking both Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle.

We stare in silence for a few moments, before the talk turns to Brexit.

“At this point, no one really knows what is going to happen,” says Doohan. “It will likely be a pain in the arse more than anything to be honest, especially if they end up going with a hard border; no-one really wants the hassle of waiting in line or going through the paperwork.”

Another area tour guide, John McGroary of Donegal, believes that Brexit will be bad for business on both sides of the border.

“Derry is the hub of the north, where the Wild Atlantic Way meets the Causeway Coastal Route. The city, and the whole region, has enjoyed a lot of traffic since the Peace Accord was signed in 1998. A hard border would probably reduce that flow significantly.”

Lesser numbers, of course, would have a major impact on local and area economies.

“We rely heavily on travellers and tourists,” notes James Huey of the Walled City Brewery in Derry’s hip, burgeoning Waterside district. “Fewer visitors hurts us all and could mean trouble for a lot of young entrepreneurs like myself who chose to settle down and set up shop here.”

Trouble of another sort is also a concern, especially given the area's painful political past.

"There are a lot of people here who are scared that it will push things back to the way they were before - back to The Troubles," shares Eugene Coyle, a sixty-something cabbie who shuffles back and forth between Inishowen and Derry several times each day. "And we have already seen some fallout with the recent car-bombing here in the city-centre. I mean, if I were a young person, perhaps with a new family, I might start considering my options."

As we cross the border from Donegal into Derry, under both rain-clouds and a cloud of political uncertainty, my thoughts turn to those, whom - like my own ancestors possibly did generations ago - might now again depart this plush, picturesque northwest coast in search of a better life.

In truth, one would be hard-pressed to find greener pastures.

*Will we treasure all the secrets with life's changing scenes?
Where our hearts were warm with love, so much love
Will the flowers grow again as I open out my hand?
Precious time, time for healing the beauty of this land...*

Upon my return to Canada, I received extensive notes from Ulster genealogist Brian Mitchell.

An Amos Smart - possibly my first recorded family ancestor in Newfoundland (1805) - was born in 1784 in Wimborne Minster, Dorset, England, and was the son of Martin and Jane Smart.

Martin Smart, his father, was born circa 1757, and died May 28, 1835, at Wimborne Minster, Dorset, England.

Amos' wife, Elizabeth Wilson, daughter of Thomas, a sailor, and Mary, was born in East Lulworth, Dorset, England, also in 1784.

"There is very strong evidence of Dorset-Newfoundland connections in the early 1800s," says Mitchell, "including many oral traditions of merchants in Dorset recruiting young men each spring for seasonal fishery in Newfoundland, and other customs of young men leaving farms and villages of Dorset in the early 1800s and heading for Newfoundland. It is clear that extensive research has been carried out and the evidence you have gathered to date does raise a strong possibility that your Newfoundland Smarts originated in Wimborne Minster, Dorset."

"Strong traditions of forenames being passed down in families, the birth of an Amos Smart in Dorset in 1784, and the strong evidence of links between Dorset and Newfoundland in the early 1800s does mean, that until further evidence comes to light, it is very reasonable to assume that Amos Smart, who married at Harbour Grace, Newfoundland in 1805, originated in Dorset, England."

*Alas, as it is for so many who attempt to piece
together the puzzle of their family history, I am left
with more questions than answers.*

The logical next step would be a visit to Dorset, with my mother, to scour local and area church and census records.

I have already begun researching those links online.

Interestingly, and as I draw this journey to a close, one small bit of new information has come up via an obscure Dorset-based genealogy website;

"Between 1607 and 1620, following the Flight of the Earls, many Irish Catholic families from Donegal crossed the Irish Sea to the southern coastal region of England. Most notable of those families were the Magees, who settled in large numbers in and around the Dorset area."

*Oh come away, I say, I say
Oh come away, I say
Tonight we'll build a bridge
Across the sea and land
Oh don't sorrow, no don't weep
For tonight, at last
I am coming home
I am coming home*

-Stephen Patrick Clare, 2019



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Chicken and Berry Salad



As the days get longer and the weather turns warmer, everything is starting to feel lighter. Recently, I felt lighter after receiving this clever ode from Maggie Nutt.

Woman's Poem

*He didn't like the casserole
And he didn't like my cake,
He said my biscuits were too hard
Not like his mother used to make.
I didn't perk the coffee right
He didn't like the stew,
I didn't mend his socks*

*The way his mother used to do.
I pondered for an answer
I was looking for a clue.
Then I turned around and
Smacked him one
Like his mother used to do.*

It is time to put a tablecloth on the picnic table and serve up a scrumptious salad. Best enjoyed outdoors with seasonal foods and fresh bread, wine, beer or lemonade - and topped up with roasted chicken breast - it makes for a light and nutritious meal.

Ingredients

4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (4 ounces each)
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 package (6 ounces) fresh baby spinach
1 cup fresh raspberries
1 cup halved fresh strawberries
2/3 cup crumbled goat cheese
3 tablespoons chopped pecans, toasted
1/4 cup prepared fat-free raspberry vinaigrette

Instructions

Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. On a greased grill rack, grill chicken, covered, over medium heat or broil 4 inches from heat for 4-7 minutes on each side, or until a thermometer reads 165°. In a large bowl, combine spinach, berries, cheese and pecans. Cut chicken into slices; add to salad. Drizzle with vinaigrette and toss lightly to coat. Serve immediately. To toast nuts, bake in a shallow pan in a 350° oven for 5-10 minutes or cook in a skillet over low heat until lightly browned, stirring occasionally.



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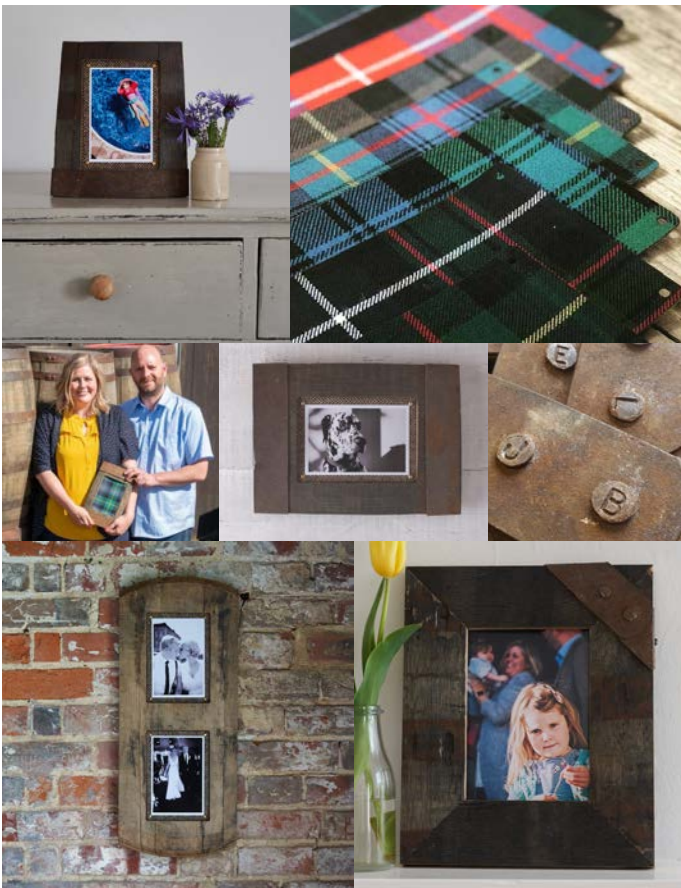
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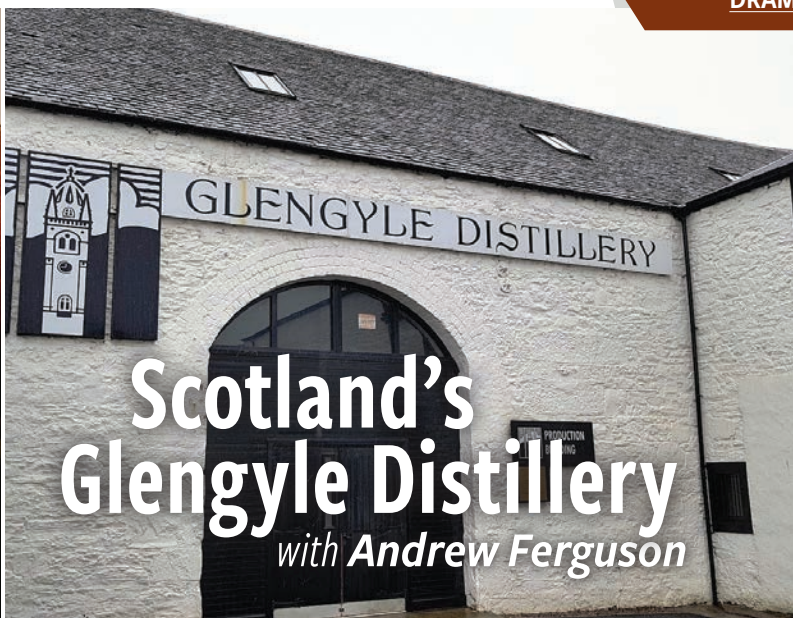
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To the best of my knowledge (and when it comes to whisk(e)y I like to think I am reasonably informed), Scotland's Glengyle Distillery is the only distillery opened solely to settle an argument.

The dispute in question related to Campbeltown's place in the Scotch whisky industry. In the late 1800s, the area was a major center of production, with 34 distilleries operating in or near a town with less than 5,000 inhabitants. By 2000 there were but 2 operating distilleries remaining, Springbank and Glen Scotia. In the late 1990s, the Scotch Whisky Association, an industry lobby group, was codifying the Whisky Regions of Scotland into EU Law. The Speyside, Highlands, Islay, and Lowlands would be the only four recognized regions.

This didn't sit well with Hedley Wright, whose family had been in the whisky business at least since the opening of the Springbank Distillery in 1828. Hedley was incensed that the Scotch Whisky Association would not grant Campbeltown a similar designation, given its significance in the 19th century. The SWA noted that, in their opinion, two distilleries did not warrant the granting of regional status. However, as Hedley argued, the Lowlands only had three distilleries, and were Campbeltown to also have three active distilleries, the SWA would have to acknowledge it as a whisky region in its own right. The Scotch Whisky Association conceded the point and likely assumed that was the end of the matter. It was not.

The Mitchell's Glengyle Distillery was opened in Campbeltown in 1872 by William Mitchell. William was the son of Springbank Distillery founder Archibald Mitchell. After

Archibald's passing, William and his brother John ran the Springbank Distillery in partnership. The family was from a farming background, which was quite common for distillers at the time, and many facilities turned their surplus production into whisky.

The spent grains from making beer and/or whisky were then - and still are - a popular animal feed. Over time, it became apparent that making whisky was far more profitable than farming or rearing cattle. William and John's other siblings ran another Campbeltown Distillery, Reichlachen.

When William and his brother John had a falling out - allegedly over sheep - William left Springbank and opened Glengyle. Less than 100 meters separated the two distilleries!

In the last decades of the 20th century the Scotch whisky industry was booming, nowhere more so than Campbeltown; the fastest place from which to ship whisky to the burgeoning markets in the Americas. At the end of the 18th century there were no fewer than 31 illicit stills operating in the area. When the great Victorian whisky writer Alfred Barnard came calling in 1885 the town had 21 operating distilleries. At the height of the boom Campbeltown was said to have more than 32 distilleries, only eclipsed by the number of churches. The vestiges of this history can still be seen today whilst walking the town's streets; the lochside and hills are lined with the mansions built by whisky barons.

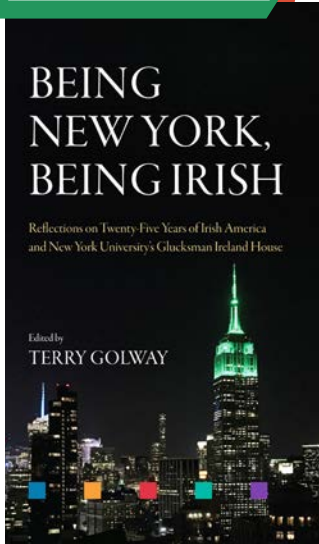
But boom turned to bust in the first years of the 20th century, and many of Campbeltown's distilleries closed. Glengyle was sold to West Highland Distillers in 1919, and then again in 1924 for just £300. The distillery closed altogether in 1925, and the remain-

ing stocks of casks were put up for auction in April of that year. The buildings remained rather miraculously intact for the following 79 years, used as a shooting range, a depot, offices for an agricultural firm, and eventually a cooperative. Several attempts were made to revive the distillery both before and after World War II, but none of them came to fruition until 2000 when Hedley Wright, chairman of J&A Mitchell and Co Ltd (Springbank), reopened Glengyle and settled his score with the Scotch Whisky Association.

Glengyle Distillery started producing in 2004, and Campbeltown was re-recognized as a whisky region. Campbeltown is often overlooked by whisky pilgrims on their way to Islay. Just 45 minutes past Kennacraig - the gateway to Islay - Campbeltown is worth a visit. All three distilleries - Glengyle, Springbank and Glen Scotia - offer great tours. The town is also home to independent bottler WM Cadenhead, and their Warehouse Tour is one of the best whisky experiences in the world.

Glengyle Distillery bottles its whisky under the name Kilkerran, the name of the original settlement around Campbeltown Loch. The anglicized Kilkerran is derived from 'Ceann Loch Cille Chiarain' - Scots Gaelic for the Loch of St. Kerran's Church. The Kilkerran 12 Year and 8 Year Cask Strength are each very limited in production and not always easy to come by - all the more reason to visit Campbeltown, Scotland's smallest whisky region.

www.kilkerran.scot
www.kensingtonwinemarket.com



Being New York, Being Irish Edited

by Terry Golway
Irish Academic Press
210 pp / \$29.99

Like the Italians and Jews, the Irish arrived in New York City with little other than the clothes on their backs. More than a century later, those of Irish descent are now firmly entrenched in the city's vast human ecosystem.

With contributions from both sides of the Atlantic - and from the likes of renowned writers Seamus Heaney, Colm Tóibín, Alice McDermott, Colum McCann, Dan Barry and more - Being New York, Being Irish is a collage of contemporary stories, essays, poems and the like that merge to mold a modern perspective on The Big Apple. The result is a brilliant and bold book that may be long on longing, but short on nostalgia. Alas, that ache from afar continues to flow in both directions.

~ SPC

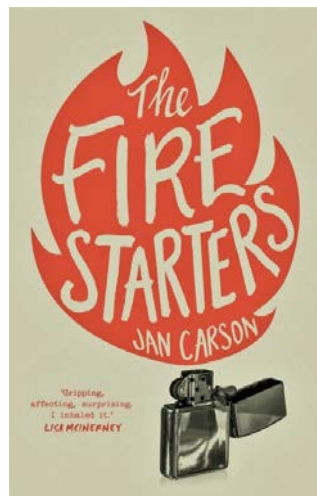
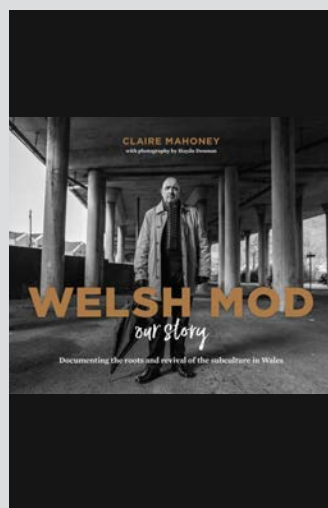
Welsh Mod

By Claire Mahoney &
Haydn Denman, Dovetail
Communication
152pp / £25

Perhaps the finest work to detail the Mod movement of the 1960s since The Who's masterful Quadrophenia, Welsh Mod is more than a mere retrospective indulgence. Subtitled "Documenting the Roots and Revival of the Subculture in Wales," this table-top tome is a powerful, profound and poignant portrait of a people and place in transition.

Author Claire Mahoney and photographer Haydn Denman have succeeded in capturing a culture at a crossroads as this Celtic nation came of age in the mid-20th century - a clash of identity that opened the door on the reinvention of a nation. As it is in neighbouring England, Ireland and Scotland, those reverberations are still being felt today. As such, Mod is living proof that style is never out of fashion.

~ SPC



The Fire Starters

By Jan Carson
Doubleday
304pp / \$19.95

Given the threat of renewed violence in Northern Ireland with the advent of Brexit, the timing could not be better for this captivating work of magical realism. Set 16 years after "the Troubles" amidst the political and spiritual vacuum of Loyalist East Belfast, The Fire Starters tells twin tales - one of a man's difficult relationship with his activist son, and the other of father's bizarre back-and-forth with his newborn daughter. Surreal in scope and scale, the narrative does well to explore the ideas of both personal and community identity - as parents and as members of a time-honoured tribe. Like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carson challenges readers' perspectives, enticing us into a brave new world with a compositional style that is both bold and unique.

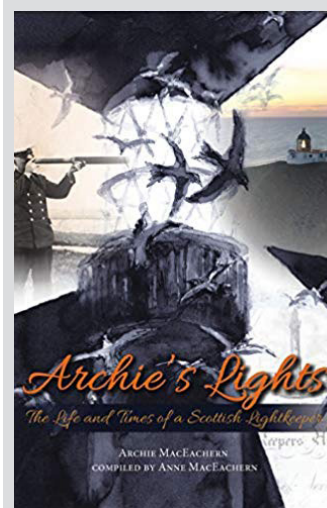
~ SPC

Archie's Lights

By Archie & Anne MacEachern
Whittles Publishing
208pp / £18.99

Subtitled The Life and Times of a Scottish Lightkeeper - and illustrated with 25 colour photos, eight drawings and water colour sketches, 40 black and white photographs, and a detailed regional map - Archie's Lights chronicles one man's 67 years of service by the sea, the last of three generations of family lighthouse keepers. A selection of short stories, personal musings, unique observations and more, the quirky work covers everything from astounding accounts of shipwrecked sailors and WWII espionage to lively encounters with both locals and local livestock. All the while, MacEachern dutifully manned his post and raised a family. Warm, witty, wise and wonderful, the book is akin to sitting by the home hearth listening to Grandfather's tall and terrific tales of bygone eras.

~ SPC





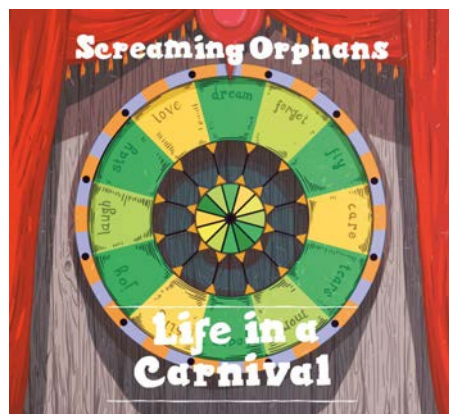
Siobhan McCrudden

Icarus Girl

Whilst Wales might be renowned for its multitude of magnificent men's choirs and marvellous male vocalists (Tom Jones, Bryn Terfel, etc.), Cardiff-based singer-songwriter Siobhan McCrudden is set to shift perspectives, due in large part to her debut release *Icarus Girl*. The short-but-sweet 9-song EP is evocative and emotive, moody and melancholic. Both *Following You* and *The Forest* showcase earthy, ethereal vocals, while *Iron Goddess*, *Fragile* and *The Mermaid in Your Glass* reveal the broken, beaten, bleeding heart of a romantic poet à la Rimbaud, Beaudelaire and, of course, fellow countryman Dylan Thomas. The title track is a masterpiece of musical simplicity with which McCrudden displays an artistic maturity that belies her age, making her one to keep eyes and ears on in 2019 and beyond. ~ SPC

Feeder
Tallulah

One of the perks of being a reviewer is receiving advance copies of new music and books. That sounds better than it is, actually; much of what crosses my desk isn't worth my time (nor yours.) Recently I received the new release from longstanding Welsh rockers Feeder, and I simply must share. 25 years into their stellar career, the trio from Newport have released their tenth recording, *Tallulah*, featuring 12 terrific tunes. Ok, this isn't Celtic music per se, though the band hails from a Celtic nation, and that is enough for me to blow their horn as this album will certainly blow minds. Fans of QOTSA, Foo Fighters, and the Doughboys will love the first single *Fear of Flying*, a 4-minute salvo of smart-pop-rock. ~ SPC



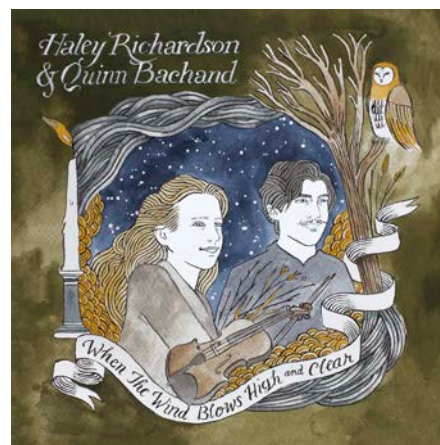
The Screaming Orphans

Life is a Carnival

Once upon a time there were four sisters from Ireland; Angela, Joan, Marie Thérèse and Gráinne Diver. The Diver siblings came of age in the community of Bundoran, Co. Donegal, home to the soulful, ethereal sounds of Enya and Clannad. After years of paying their dues on smaller stages across the Emerald Isle, the quartet signed both a publishing contact with Chris Blackwell and a major label deal with Warner Music, and soon began performing and recording alongside the likes of The Chieftains, Christy Moore, Liam O'Maonlai, Sinead O'Connor, Babbalanja and Peter Gabriel. Life is a Carnival is the band's 14th studio recording; 12 fresh, Celtic-fused folk-rock-pop tunes - where "honey and gravel collide" - that are sure to leave listeners happily ever after. ~ SPC

Haley Richardson and Quinn Bachand
When the Wind Blows High and Clear

Kudos to Haley Richardson and Quinn Bachand for collaborating on this Celtic collection of creative compositions. Bachand, though still quite young, might be the genre's finest six-stringer in his native Canada. Richardson, only 17, is the principle fiddler for Riverdance, a multiple All-Ireland champion, and has shared both stage and studio with the likes of The Chieftains and Altan. The dynamic duo plays to their strengths on their debut release, showcasing their respective talents on both traditional arrangements and original tunes. Along with producing the album, Bachand plays guitar, piano, bass, drums, banjo, mandolin, bouzouki, and sings. Richardson's vocal melodies are as sweet and sure as her fiddle lines. If this recording is any sign, then the future of Celtic music is in good hands. ~ SPC



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Brighde Chaimbeul

*Scottish piper
Brighde Chaimbeul
looks back to look
forward*



It is no surprise that Brighde Chaimbeul developed a passion for piping.

"While my mother was pregnant with me, she was working on a sculpture based on the Ceol Mor Lament for the Children," she recalls via email from her home on the Isle of Sky. "Dr. Angus MacDonald was playing the tune as she worked on it, and it was likely the very first time I heard the pipes!"

By the age of seven, Chaimbeul had picked up a set of her own.

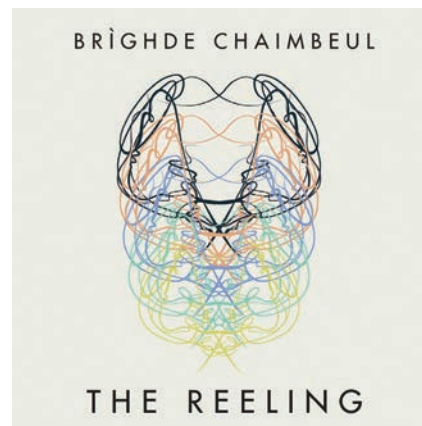
"I was inspired by the legendary Rona Lightfoot from South Uist, who I heard play in Dublin when I was very young and, almost amazingly, she continues to be an inspiration to this very day. It was my neighbour, however - who had taught himself the pipes - that gave me my first ever chanter lessons."

Currently, Chaimbeul wields a set of Scottish small pipes - fashioned by Perthshire pipe maker Fin Moore - and describes her musical style as "traditional."

"My music revolves around the traditional make up or drone sound of the small pipes. I love playing and finding old traditional tunes, because they fit so well with this type of sound. My listening taste is quite traditional as well, and I love basic or solo set ups which simply lets the melody and rhythm of the tune make its music."

"One of the techniques I often use is changing the key of the chanter by covering some holes with electrical tape. This allows me to play a slightly bigger range of tunes. Many of the older songs are in minor keys, and using the tape gives me an opportunity to work with these pieces."

Chaimbeul has enjoyed many career highlights over the years; in 2016 she won the Young Folk Award from Radio 2, and in 2018 she performed at the Cambridge Folk



Festival. Most recently, she released her debut recording *The Reeling*.

"I had the chance to work with some legendary musicians on the new album, including Rona Lightfoot, Aidan O'Rourke and Radie Peat. To record it live amidst the amazing and beautiful setting of Cromarty East Church was beyond memorable."

Equally rewarding, she adds, is touring.

"It is all about the people I meet and play with, and also the experience I get from traveling to different places to play music."

"I love hearing different styles and having the opportunity to perform tunes with different people - it is never mundane, and not one gig is the same."

The vocation, she admits, is not without its challenges.

"Because of all the travel and scheduling involved, I sometimes feel a little less

grounded and settled in terms of my routine and day-to-day activities."

Still, she cherishes the chance to work with younger pipers.

"As someone who plays and spends time with many musicians, I would say younger people are still very interested in the pipes. In the world of folk music piping is loved and respected. But, even for those who have never played the pipes, or might not be that familiar with their sound, there is something very earthy about the instrument that can be quite appealing."

"That said, we still need to reach a wider range of people. Piping should not necessarily be constricted to any particular genre - like, for example, 'folk music' - so that we can better reach audiences who might not normally listen to piping or traditional music."

In addition to both a European tour and a follow-up recording, Chaimbeul plans to focus her attention on the preservation of Gaelic language and culture over the coming while.

"My first language is Gaelic. There are some fantastic groups and individuals who are promoting the music and language around the world, and there is a rich archive of traditional songs, music, poems, literature, and artwork here in Scotland that is being collected and preserved. It is vital, however, that we promote Gaelic culture in everyday life, especially with regard to young people. One of the ways that we can best do that is by sharing this wonderful music that has been passed down through many generations."

www.brichaimbeul.com



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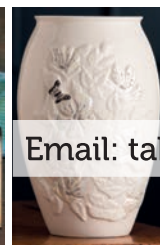
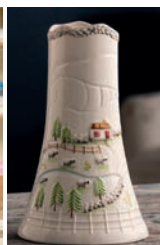
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Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh

Fiddler Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh's sound is rooted in the plush countryside of northwest Donegal

Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh has carried her music around the world with her for more than 30 years.

As fiddler and vocalist with Altan - one of Ireland's most iconic touring bands, which she formed with her late husband Frankie Kennedy - Ní Mhaonaigh has performed at the Sydney Opera House and the Hollywood Bowl, recorded with the likes of Dolly Parton and Bonnie Raitt, and shared the stage with Ricky Skaggs at the Grand Ole Opry.

There have been many highlights along her musical journey. For the moment, however, she is content to be at home in her native Gweedore, Donegal, where she lives with her teenage daughter.

"I love the simpler highlights more and more nowadays, such as playing with older Donegal fiddlers, including Danny...and the Campbells of Glenties, or teaching at Donegal Fiddlers' Week every August."

As a native Irish speaker, it was the call of motherhood that drew her back to the Gaeltacht (Gaelic-speaking) area, which is rich in both artistry and scenery.

"I came back to live here about 12 years ago, a few years after my daughter Nia was born, to raise her with the language, the music and the culture."

Ní Mhaonaigh's interest in the fiddle was sparked at age 10, after singing in Dublin and discovering musicians her own age who were playing traditional music.

"I heard people like Paddy Glackin on the fiddle, Mary Bergin on whistle, Máire Ní Chathasaigh on harp, Gay McKeon on pipes, Antóin Mac Gabhann on fiddle, and many others. They brought music alive for me and made it relevant in my life."

She immediately began learning from her father and other Donegal musicians who visited their home regularly. Soon, she was delving into more obscure, archival music - much of which was no longer being played.

"I was lucky enough to meet some of Donegal's master musicians - people like John Doherty, Danny O'Donnell, Con Cassidy, Francie 'Dearg', Mick Byrne and James Byrne."

Ní Mhaonaigh believes that, over time, Donegal wove itself into her sound.

"My location has influenced my style - topographically, aesthetically, sonically."

"I think your environment influences you as a folk musician, more so than if you were classically trained. Formal training creates a different sound and technique, and over-steps a person's locality to a degree."

She still plays the fiddle by ear, and thus still considers herself a traditional musician.



"My parents always encouraged me to be myself and, whilst listening to the best fiddlers, to find my own voice, which I have always tried to do, and is something that I am still pursuing."

Her fiddle, a 1947 Collin-Mezin made in Paris, is played daily.

"It is an incredible instrument. I am also lucky to have a Noel Burke bow, which plays itself. Noel is a good friend, and he realized that my bowing style was rather unorthodox, so made the bow to suit me."

Though she never shirks on practice, she admits that she is not able to play music if she thinks too hard about it.

"I have to be inspired and be totally engrossed in what I am doing. It is like my lifeline, my breath, my food, and my solace."

Strong melodies that depict the Irish sensibility and psyche are among her favourites.

"I love the Farewell to Erin reel, which takes up the range of the whole fiddle, or a slow air like Bean an Fhir Rua (The Red-Haired Man's Wife) or Port na bPucail (The Tune of the Spirits)."

For the better part of three decades, Ní Mhaonaigh has been part of County Donegal's Cairdeas na BhFidleirí (The Friendship of the Fiddlers), a non-profit organization established to preserve and promote the instrument and the genre.

"I am glad to say the fiddling tradition in Donegal is healthy, with many young fiddlers playing amazing music, so our work has been worthwhile."

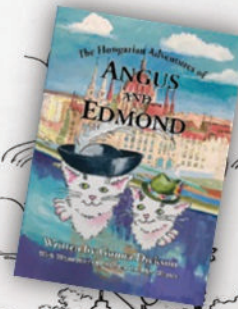
Ní Mhaonaigh's own musical taste runs the gamut; from classical to blues, jazz, folk, and world beat. She was recently introduced to the Irish singer/songwriter Hosier by her daughter.

"I am also listening to field recordings of old Donegal singers like Róise Nic Ghrianna, from Aranmore Island, who was recorded back in the 1940s, and Kitty Gallagher, a local lady who is alive and well in her nineties."

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Sabra MacGillivray

One Nova Scotia dancer is taking big steps

Celtic culture runs in Sabra MacGillivray's blood. "There is a strong musical heritage in my family lineage," shares the long-time native of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, via email.

"My grandfather, Hugh A. MacDonald, was a well-known fiddler here in Antigonish County. He was also referred to as the 'Polka King,' and recorded Scottish fiddle music with the Celtic Music label on old 78 records. His mother spoke fluent Scottish Gaelic and sang in Gaelic. His wife - my grandmother - Winnie MacDonald, played the fiddle as well and accompanied him on the piano at dances, concerts, and ceilidhs. My mother, Janice, learned to play the fiddle and piano and later passed those down to me, my sister Kendra, and my brother Troy."

MacGillivray took her first dance steps at the tender age of five.

"At the time, my older sister (Kendra) was a Highland dancer, and I, of course, tried to copy whatever she did. When I was old enough, I was put in dancing lessons. I was also brought to Highland dancing competitions when she started competing, and I would soon do the same. As we were a very musical family, there were melodies around us all the time. We were brought to places where we could see and hear music from a very young age; concerts, square dances, ceilidhs and house parties. It was very natural to be inspired by the musicians and dancers that we were exposed to."

Today, she is considered one of Atlantic Canada's leading ambassadors of Celtic culture.

"I like to think that I am inspiring the next generation to continue in the traditional styles of both Highland dancing and Step Dancing."

When she isn't flinging and lifting, MacGillivray dedicates her time teaching the ancient art, and is considered one of the premier educators in the field.

"I started teaching when I was 16, so I have more than 25 years of instructing under my belt. It was a nice little job while I was in high school and university, but over time, it has become much more than that. Working with my own group of dancers not only gave me a creative outlet, but also offered me the opportunity to develop dancers to the point where they could join me on stage. I love to learn the 'old stuff' and pass on what I have picked up. It feels like I am doing my part in preserving the tradition."

"I have a wide range of students, between the ages of four and 18," she continues. "I get to watch them grow from early school ages to the time they head off to university. They become poised, athletic, strong and graceful dancers, with solid work ethics."

Recently, she took her career to the next level, releasing an online step dancing video series.



"It was a challenging start to say the least," she admits. "I spent 2 years collecting and buying the right equipment and technology to record the videos and audio. Then I had to learn how to use it! I made a lot of mistakes, often having to re-record several times before getting a product that I was happy with."

The series consists of 15 instructional videos, including both a Strathspey and Reel step dance solo routine. Additionally, students receive audio tracks, a PDF outline, and direct access to MacGillivray for additional support.

"Connecting with the students is one of the biggest benefits of this video series. With my online teaching, I have heard from people around the world - folks who are excited to reconnect with their roots through traditional dance."

She will continue to teach, both in person and via her online platform, and believes that it is the best thing that she can do to promote and preserve Celtic culture.

"As long as we can keep our young people interested and excited to learn the craft, we won't be at risk of losing our heritage. I think there is room for the older stuff - like traditional step dancing from years ago - while also creating new and innovative steps and collaborations. This is vital for keeping our customs alive and well for future generations."

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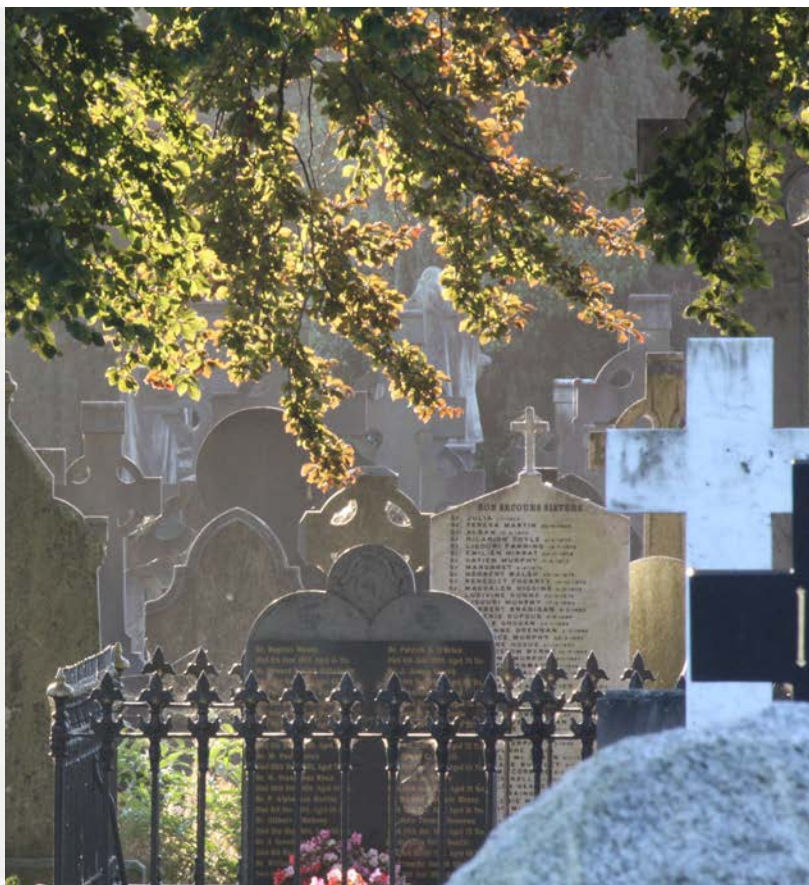
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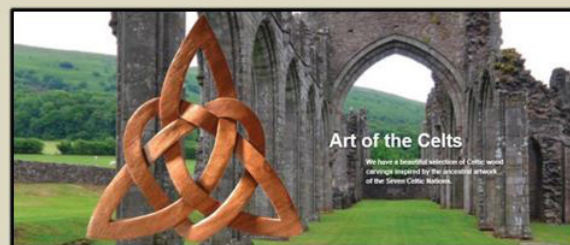
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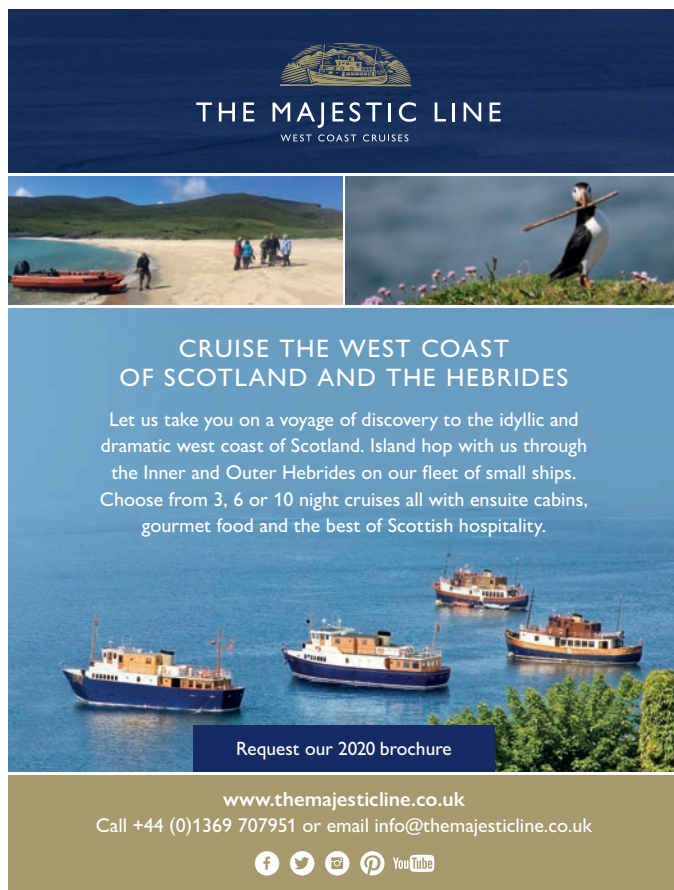
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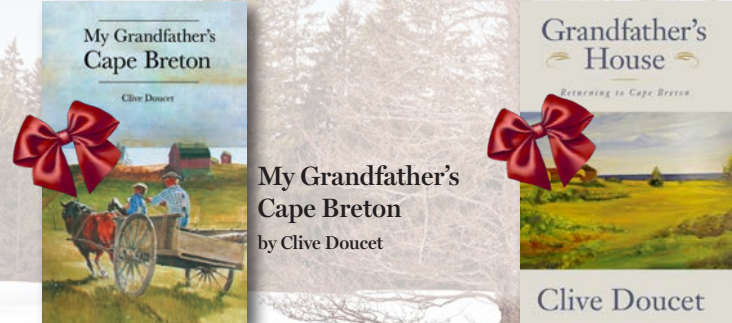
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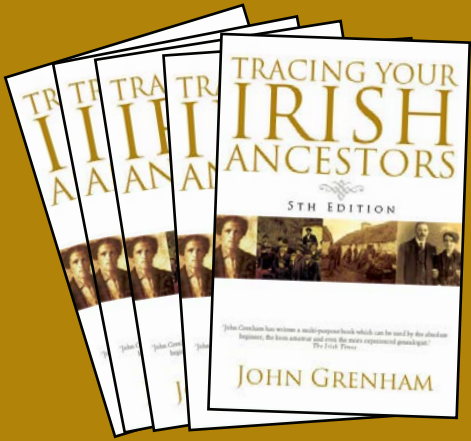
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Lyra McKee;

1990-2019



Lyra McKee was a bright young journalist on the rise. Hailing from Belfast, Northern Ireland, she spent years working as an investigative reporter across the region after first becoming interested in the profession as a teenager at the encouragement of an English teacher.

“My experience has always been that other people raise the bar for you,” McKee said in an interview with *Successful Belfast*. “But the script is written for working class kids, and they don’t realize that they can rewrite the script even without people encouraging them.”

As an adult, she studied at Birmingham City University, creating a public platform for herself with her own news blog *The Muckraker*. Throughout her career, she produced work focused on issues that often went overlooked, including the fallout of the Troubles - a period of terrible conflict concerning Northern Ireland’s status within the United Kingdom. The Troubles began in the 1960s and are largely understood to have ended in 1998, although sporadic violence in the region continues to this day.

McKee wrote on a freelance basis for BuzzFeed News, *The Belfast Telegraph* and several others. She also worked remotely as an editor for a USA-based website called *Mediagazer*. One of her most impactful stories - “Suicide Among the Ceasefire Babies” - ran in *The Atlantic*, speaking to the after-effects of the Troubles on those too young to remember them.

Her first book, *Angels with Blue Faces*, recounts the Troubles-era cold case murder of MP Reverend Robert Bradford. A second book, *The Lost Boys*, tells of several unsolved cases of young boys who went missing during the same period. It was set to publish next year, but she never got the chance to finish it.

Along with her journalistic work, McKee was a proud gay woman and a fierce advocate for LGBTQ rights. She lived in Derry with her partner, Sara Canning, and is said to have doted on her 11-year-old pet cat. In 2014, she published a “letter to her 14-year-old self,” which went viral and was later turned into a short film. In her 2017 TED Talk, she broached the subject of religion and its impact on LGBTQ people, particularly younger generations. “We need to have conversations,” she noted, “difficult conversations, and fight for the hearts and minds of people who oppose us.”

McKee was killed tragically on the job this past spring when she was caught in the crossfire during a riot in Derry. Reportedly, Molotov cocktails sailed through the air, setting several vehicles aflame. Members of the New IRA (a dissident Republican group) fired shots at the police, but it was McKee who was fatally wounded. Her death is being treated as a terrorist incident.

McKee’s family issued a statement following her death.

“To know that our wee Lyra was so well-loved across the globe and by people of all walks of life, is a true testament to her personal philosophy and her vision for the world.”

Her friend, Mike Harris, wrote an impassioned article for CNN. “Lyra was part of a generation of young Northern Irish people who wanted to put the country’s troubled past behind it, to forge their own post-sectarian identity. Lyra wasn’t to be defined by whether she was a Protestant or Catholic, she was fiercely proud to be from Northern Ireland but aware that things could be better.”

McKee has been memorialized through a Belfast mural, featuring the words, “It won’t always be like this. It’s going to get better.” It is a callback to her 2014 letter about growing up gay in Belfast but takes on another, second meaning now.

The day after McKee’s death, Ireland’s Taoiseach Leo Varadkar made a statement in front of Dublin’s Government Buildings. “She changed lives as she lived and will do so again in death.”

Thus far, Varadkar appears to be correct, as McKee’s legacy lives on; fellow journalists have held vigils around the world, and the hashtag #WeStandWithLyra has been making the rounds on social media. And, at the end of May, hundreds of her friends and admirers participated in a three-day “peace walk” from Belfast to Derry.



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