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# CelticLife

— I N T E R — O N A L —

## *the Celtic Catalogue*

*Inside*

Exclusive interviews with Celtpreneurs  
Celtic Travel, Style, Culture & more!

Saoghal Ceilteach Iris chinnidheach  
air fhoillseachadh sia uairean 's a bhliadhna le

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# Dacey's Cornish Tours



**T**he Celtic nation of Cornwall offers visitors both stunning scenery and an abundance of culture. Recently we spoke with David Warner, founder of Dacey's Cornish Tours, about what guests can expect to experience.

## **What is your own ethnicity/heritage?**

I was born and raised in England. I moved to Cornwall in my early 20s and fell in love with the area. Being there stirs something in the soul. I eventually moved to the USA in the early 2000s.

## **What is the company's history and mandate?**

We specialize in bespoke, unique tours of Cornwall. Our first tour was in 2013. Our mandate is to continue to introduce the beauty and magic of Cornwall to as many people as possible. We continue to celebrate Cornwall one tour at a time.

## **How has it grown over time?**

We are now a recognized operator specializing in Cornwall. We have built relationships not only with our many guests, but also with the many companies that we work with - both in Cornwall and all over the globe - to make the tour what it is today.

## **What are your roles and responsibilities there?**

I am a one-man small business, so my responsibilities as owner cover every aspect

of the business - from marketing to booking to being the tour director of all tours.

## **What are the challenges of the job?**

I absolutely love the job. The uncertainty of the last two years was not only tough for me but for so many. To be honest after the last two years anything that challenges me seems a breeze to deal with.

## **What are the rewards?**

I love getting feedback from so many guests that have finally had the opportunity to see the place that they have dreamed of for years - especially seeing their joy when we first arrive. It can sometimes be very emotional knowing that so many visitors have entrusted my company to show them the delights of Cornwall. Also, I get to be there hosting the tour - what more could anyone want?

## **How do you differ from the competition?**

We are definitely more personable and hands-on - clients book their tour directly with me. Perhaps we have spoken over the phone, and I have answered a few questions before booking. We are then in touch via email and, 6 months later, I meet them in London and prepare them for Cornwall. Not many companies offer that kind of personal journey.

## **How do you reach your potential clients?**

Word of mouth is playing a major part now we are established. We also continue to look for advertising opportunities within our budget that will help show our tour to the people we feel might have an interest in seeing this beautiful part of the world.

## **What are your thoughts on the current state of the Celtic marketplace?**

The whole world seems to have been tipped off its axis with the pandemic. For most, it is consolidating and then reviewing as we continue to celebrate Celtic history in all its forms.

## **What are your future plans for the business?**

The plan is to keep doing what we are doing, while always looking at ways to improve the experience. As things start to return to normalcy, I am exploring ideas about giving something back to Cornwall - perhaps some sort of scholarship for tourism. We will also continue to celebrate Cornwall one tour at a time!

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Celtic STYLE



# Celtic Knot Works



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**F**or Bob Heiney, the ancient art of crafting Celtic jewelry is a labour of love.

#### **What is your own background?**

I am a geek, a gamer, a maker, an artist, and a proud owner of multiple lasers. My mom is a pioneer in the inspiring and visionary jewelry industry, and the time came when I wanted to create items that I wanted to wear myself. Celtic Knot Works began with our line of pendants featuring Celtic animals and traditional symbols. Today, we have grown to offer Viking rune sets, pocket dice sets for gamers, and other cool stuff for the well-dressed adventurer.

#### **What is the company's history and mandate?**

One thing that has become clear to me in our eighth year is how important it is to have fun. There is plenty of hardship in the world, no doubt, but we can't be resilient without joy. Part of our expansion – we have added a dice and gaming shop to the site to bring some Celtic flair to the world of tabletop gaming – is because we want to be part of our customers' lives when they are having fun. Some of our new designs – including the three Gemstone Dragon pendants and the Celtic Spirals Cat pendant – came about because I was having fun. There is something to be said for bringing some happiness into the world.

#### **How has the business evolved over time?**

Celtic Knot Works' growth has followed my own interests and enthusiasms. As an artist, I think you can only be creative when you are authentically excited about what you are doing. If it's not fun to create, it's not

going to be fun to wear. It is happiness that gets us through the hard times. We focus on creating little pieces of beauty that provoke smiles. It is a good place to be and, I think, a deeply necessary one.

#### **What are your roles and responsibilities there?**

We are a small family business. That means I do a lot – from creating designs, overseeing the hand-casting – which is done here in the United States to ensure high quality – packing and shipping orders, keeping the website up to date, and social media. I also have a great partner – my wife Suzie – who is a talented designer and entrepreneur, the support of my mom Micki, and our cat Raven who keeps us motivated by requiring incredible amounts of snacks at all times.

#### **What are your core products?**

We are known for our pendants – all hand-cast in fine American pewter, which means the quality stays very high – featuring Celtic Animals, traditional Celtic and mystical symbols, and the occasional dragon. New this year is the Dice and Gaming shop, which includes very cool stainless steel Pocket RPG Dice sets and other neat accessories. Viking Rune Sets & Gemstone pendulums are a big hit with those who would like a hint of what tomorrow holds.

#### **What are the challenges of the vocation?**

This year, the biggest challenge has been containing my excitement about some new pendants we are debuting for the holiday season. Some of my looks come to life very, very quickly – the Celtic Spirals Bear, for example, demanded to make the leap from

concept to creation on a very abbreviated timeline – while others take time to perfect. When a project has been years in the making, it is hard not to spill the beans. It will be on the website soon – I promise!

#### **What are the rewards?**

It is important that Celtic history isn't lost entirely to myth and memory. By putting a modern twist on ancient symbols – and introducing them to a generation of people who can incorporate the strength and wisdom of the Celts into their lives – I feel like I have done something important. The best part is when people take the time to give me feedback. There has been a phenomenal response and I love it when someone sends me an email letting me know how my work impacted them.

#### **How do you reach your potential clients?**

We are primarily online, connecting with our customers via our website, Facebook, and Instagram. We also do some email marketing. We are gradually easing back into doing some shows and events.

#### **What are your thoughts on the current state of the Celtic marketplace?**

We are strong and smiling – but would you expect anything less? The return of travel is good news for everyone who's wanted to make the journey home to Ireland. The support of small local businesses is much appreciated. And the creativity and enthusiasm among the maker community is great to see. The work that is being done right now is amazing.

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A stack of three antique books is shown. The top book is open, with its pages fanned out in a semi-circle, revealing the aged, yellowish paper. The book's binding is worn, with some of the leather or cloth cover missing at the spine. The two books below it are closed. The middle book has a dark brown cover with gold-tooled decorative patterns, including a central diamond shape. The bottom book has a similar dark brown cover with gold-tooled horizontal bands. The books are resting on a wooden surface, and the background is a blurred bookshelf.

# Celtic CULTURE



# Intrigue, Murder, Conspiracy *and* Embedded Enemy Spies

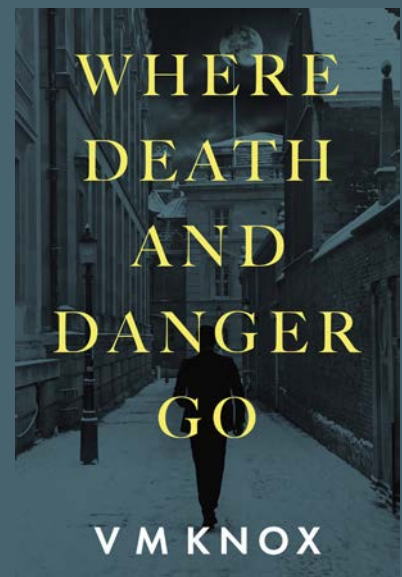
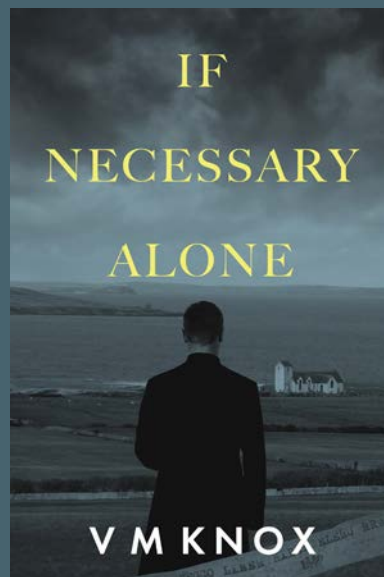
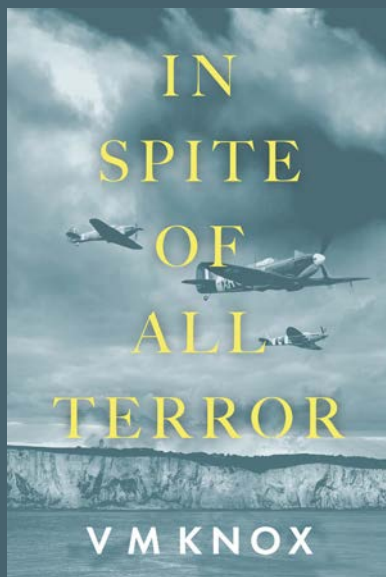
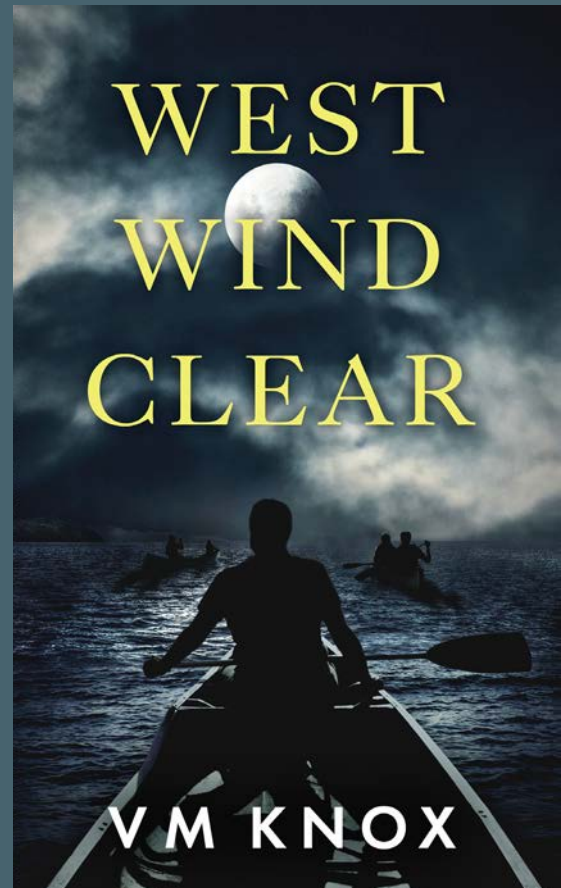
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*In late 1941, the Pacific is a very different place from only one year earlier. Japan threatens and vast numbers of Imperial Army spies have infiltrated throughout the Pacific Islands in readiness for conflict.*

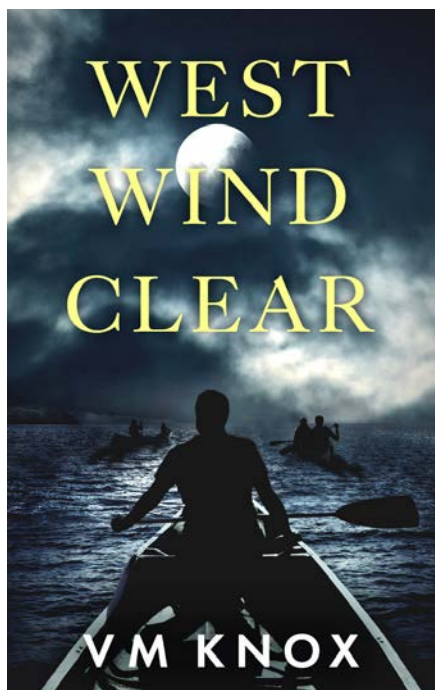
*Just as he is preparing to leave Australia and return to Britain, Major Clement Wisdom is seconded to lead a small guerrilla force. Their mission: to rescue Captain John Winthorpe from Singapore and take him, and a vital secret he carries, back to Australia.*

*While enroute to the island bastion of the British Far East Fleet, Clement learns that Malaya, Singapore, and Pearl Harbour have all been bombed and war with Japan is declared.*

*With no up-to-date intelligence on the volatile region, and leading a group of men he barely knows, much less trusts, Clement's orders leave him with no option but to proceed. His fears are compounded when one of his men dies in an apparent suicide and it seems likely that there is an enemy spy on board; one who will manipulate and kill to evade discovery.*







Australian author Victoria Knox found her voice later in life.

#### **What is your own background?**

My heritage is thoroughly British coming from Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales so I can claim to be descended from Celtic stock. The women especially were amazing people, hardworking, resilient, formidable who suffered hardship and isolation for a better future for themselves and their many children.

#### **Why and when did you begin writing?**

I began writing late in life. In my younger adult years, I sang in a semi-professional capacity as an opera singer and alternated that with nursing. The memories I have from those nursing years have given me a firsthand knowledge of trauma which has been particularly useful to me as my chosen genre is crime / espionage, particularly WW2 intelligence warfare.

#### **Are they the same reasons that you continue to write today?**

I began writing around 2012 with a story that has never been published. It was my nursery school, and I learned my craft working on this manuscript before turning my attention to a completely different story. Inspired by a question on the television program, "QI" I wrote the first book in the Clement Wisdom Series, "In Spite of All Terror". From this came a second, "If Nec-

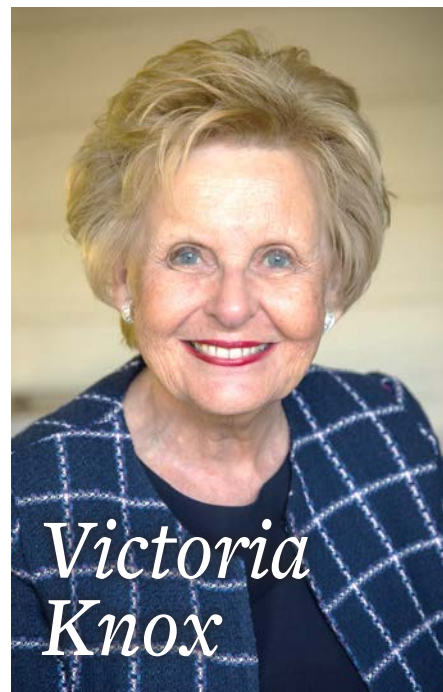
essary, Alone", then a third, "Where Death and Danger Go" and now a fourth, "West Wind Clear", and I think it likely there will be a few more to come before the world and I are finished with Clement. Clement is a lovely character; driven by a sense of duty, he is a true hero-type; brave, dependable, and honest. I believe I have a responsibility to portray the places and characters in this series of books authentically particularly as some of the characters were real people. However, I do write fiction; fiction heavily based in fact, but it is fiction and some of the things I do to my characters, real or imagined, may go beyond nonfiction, or may occur at different times or in different locations than was actually correct.

#### **What are the challenges of the vocation?**

Accurate research is vital. And this can take days even months. But I don't consider it a burden, nor do I ask others to do it for me. I love history and enjoy finding remote, even banal minor events around which I can weave a story. It is from these small, seemingly insignificant events that I find my characters. Then the challenge is to weave it in such a way as to make a story my readers will enjoy.

#### **What are the rewards?**

Just knowing that people I don't know are spending their hard-earned money on a book I wrote is a real thrill. Then a good or very good review cements that thrill. Royalty cheques don't hurt but the excitement comes from the readers' reactions. All my books involved murder. That is my genre. However, the first book, "In Spite of All Terror" is, I would say, more of a murder mystery with a touch of espionage and where we first meet Clement. The second, "If Necessary, Alone", is more a thriller with a sprinkling of espionage where Clement is removed from his village and the people he knows there, the third, "Where Death and Danger Go" is intrigue, more espionage and the enemy within along with some of the characters from the first two books but the fourth, "West Wind Clear" is set in the Pacific War, around Australia, Timor, Singapore and Indonesia and is mainly espionage with a touch of murder. And I love it! I love the action and excitement that comes from embedded spies, betrayal, revenge, and action. I feel I have written a satisfying story if the reader is surprised by the identity of the culprit. I mix historical facts with fiction and weave a story. As long as my readers are happy, as they seem to be, I'm happy.



#### **Who are your readers, and how do you reach them?**

My readership seems to be broadening. Initially I believed my target audience would be the over 55's and most likely male. But this isn't so anymore. I seem to have a balance between male and female readers, older and younger but not young adult. I advertise in Celtic Life International and other magazines specific for the target market and digitally for the younger reader on social websites.

#### **What's the Celtic community like in your part of the world?**

There is a large (for Australia - we have a population of approximately 25 million) group of people of Irish / Scottish heritage in Australia. In my own community there is an annual Highland gathering with pipe bands, Highland sporting events as well as an artistic community making Celtic crafts.

#### **What's next on your creative agenda?**

I have embarked on another book away from Clement and have about three other plots in mind for standalone books, so I never run out of ideas for stories. Then, of course, there will be Clement five, six and possibly seven! Who knows!

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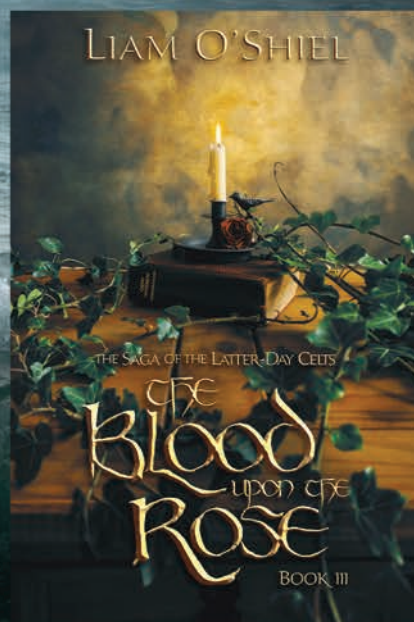
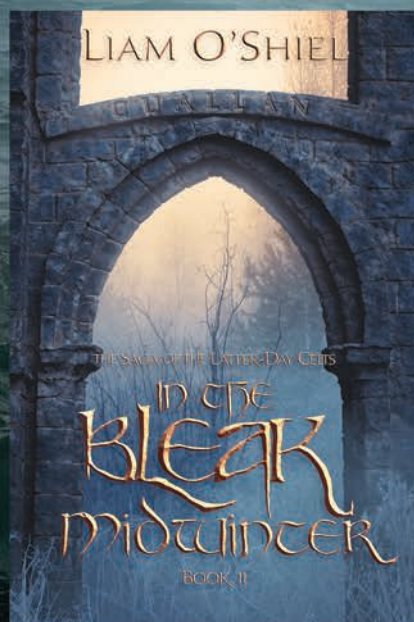
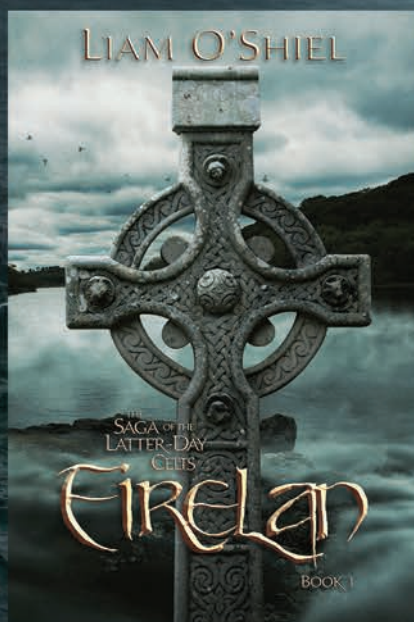


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**L**ocated in the heart of the Canadian Prairies, Reelpipes.com has been serving the Celtic community for almost two decades. Recently we spoke with the company's founder Iain MacDonald.

#### **What is your own ethnicity/heritage?**

As far as I know, our family is mostly Scots-Irish, although we know of one Mi'kmaq forebearer in the Maritimes who was identified from a 19th-century census. All four of my grandparents moved west from Prince Edward Island in the early 1900s, establishing themselves on Treaty 6 and 4 territories in Saskatoon and Regina. The original immigrant Scots settled in PEI in 1772, landing from the brig "Alexander" having left the west coast of Scotland. The Irish side of the family came at various times in the 1800s, likely driven by economic circumstances, and they met up with the Scots at social occasions on the island.

#### **What is the company's history and mandate?**

The company started in 2005, although my involvement in selling bagpipes and supplies goes back to the 1980s when I lived in Vancouver and worked at Tartantown one of the great Scottish suppliers in the world. Later, I was a distributor for Tartantown in the prairie region. My involvement in teaching and running pipe bands has always kept me close to what's happening in the business. As a company, our goal is to provide customers with the best products possible, and an exceptional customer service experience. In selecting products to supply and represent, we work with companies who share that desire to provide a high level of customer satisfaction.

#### **How has it grown over time?**

Reelpipes.com started in 2005 when famous Scottish piper Fred Morrison launched his first set of pipes. I had known Fred for years and he asked if I would help market his pipes in North America, and so that was how it started. Next came smallpipes, and eventually we just added more products as the demand grew. In the time we've been going, we've delivered Fred Morrison reelpipes, smallpipes and uilleann pipes to customers across North America, Europe and in fact as far away as Australia and New

Zealand. We now supply instruments, reeds, accessories and even Highland dress from some of the top manufacturers, and we always have exceptional bagpipes in stock and ready for set-up and delivery. We have loyal customers all over North America, and we continue to work hard to make their experience a good one.

#### **What are your roles and responsibilities there?**

I do everything! Sometimes that seems like a bad thing, but it also helps me control costs and bend with the wind, which was required over the last two years. I do all the ordering, testing, supply, setup, customer and supplier relations, right down to selecting customer reeds and helping them sort issues with their instruments or playing. I have worked in communications for many years, and as a result I am able to do most of the web design and updates, and I have also designed all the print, web, and social media ads.

#### **What are the challenges of the job?**

The challenge is just keeping up, and staying on top of inventory, cash flow, customer orders and inquiries. It's sometimes hard to launch new things, or try new marketing ideas, because just keeping up with inquiries and orders is a job on its own. There are always little changes and adaptations to products and staying current with each supplier and their product line is part of the requirement for providing the best service and information possible to customers. "What reeds go in that chanter?" "How is Bagpipe X different than Bagpipe Y?" "Can I get that shoe with extra width?"

#### **What are the rewards?**

It's rewarding to have people feel happy and grateful for the service and products they've received. I've also been passionate about bagpipes my entire life, so getting to spend so much time with pipers and piping is a gift. I've met a lot of fantastic people through the business, on both the supply and customer sides, and it's always great to connect with them. It's also great to have a chance to try new products, and it's especially exciting when friends have a great product that you can promote. This was the case with Fred Morrison, and my friend

and band mate from Babcock-Renfrew Pipe Band - James Begg - has been making excellent pipe bags for 40 years, and a few years ago he and I put our heads together to design a bag specifically suited to bellows pipes. More recently, we've started carrying bags and bagpipes from Lee & Sons Bagpipes, and it's exciting for me because I've been friends with Jack Lee since the 1970s and to be selling his and his sons' products is just really satisfying.

#### **What are your core products & services?**

Our core products are the Fred Morrison series of reelpipes, smallpipes and uilleann bagpipes, plus Highland pipes from Duncan MacRae, McCallum, Lee & Sons, R.G. Hardie, Peter Henderson and Dunbar. We sell all the accessories and products for pipers and pipe bands, too.

#### **How do you differ from the competition?**

We are smaller, with a more personal, customer-satisfaction approach. My extensive experience in Highland pipes, pipe bands, and bellows piping is unique in many ways. My resume includes Grade 1 pipe bands going back to the 1970s: Babcock-Renfrew Pipe Band, The SFU Pipe Band, ScottishPower and 78th Highlanders (Halifax Citadel) and I was pipe-major of the Grade 2 City of Regina Pipe Band for 30 years and ran a youth pipe band for over 20 years. I started uilleann piping in the 1980s and played and recorded with a folk band for a number of years, and I've since played both smallpipes and border pipes in performance situations, so I have experience and perspective that is useful to customers at all levels of their piping journey.

#### **What are your future plans for the business?**

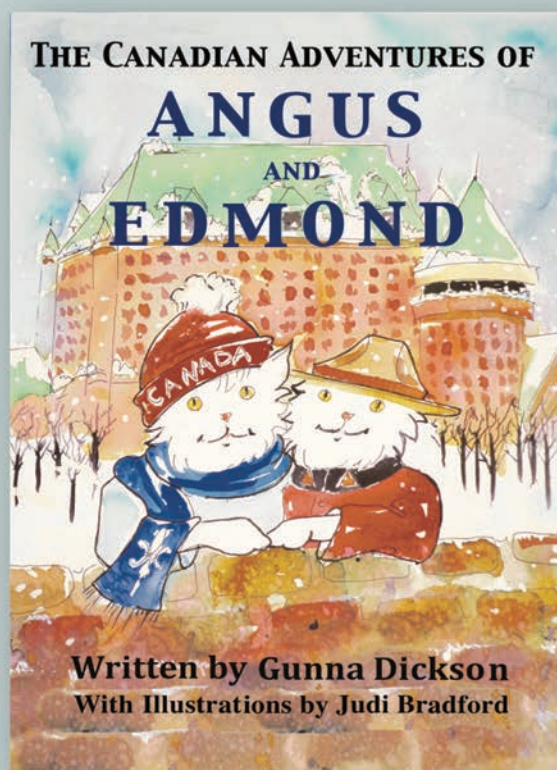
I see the company carrying on serving the needs of pipers and pipe bands, and one of the ways we'll do that is to continue developing partnerships and products with like-minded people and businesses striving to make piping of all kinds a little easier, a little more mainstream, and a little more fun. After all, if it's not fun, what is the point?

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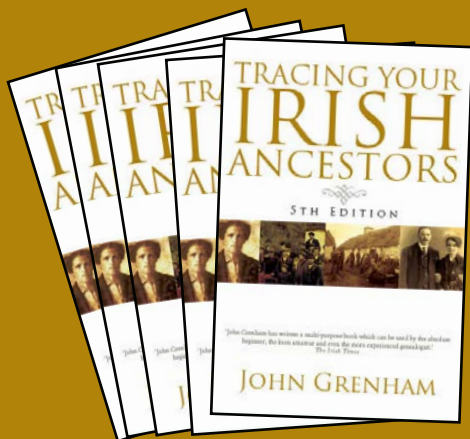
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Heavenly Spirits is a leading US importer of artisanal French Spirits, including: Armagnac, Calvados, Cognac, Single Malt Whisky, Gin, Pastis, Absinthe, Aperitifs, Vermouth, Vodka, and Specialty Spirits.







**D**aniel and Christine Cooney have been promoting quality French Spirits for over twenty years. Recently we spoke with Daniel about his company's Celtic connections.

#### **What is your own ethnicity/heritage?**

I trace all my roots to Ireland, with a wee bit of Scotland thrown in. I have dual citizenship now - American and Irish. My wife and business partner, Christine, was born in France. We met in Iceland, on the way to my first visit to Ireland.

#### **What is the company's history and mandate?**

Heavenly Spirits was founded in 2008. We import and distribute a wide range of spirits to the United States, produced mostly in France, including Brittany, which is our company's Celtic connection.

#### **How has it grown over time?**

Since its founding in 2008, Heavenly Spirits has grown a minimum of 15 per cent every year. From a small husband-and-wife start-up working out of our back room, we have grown into one of the leading importers of French spirits in the United States. We now distribute in 41 states and employ a dozen people.

#### **What are your roles and responsibilities there?**

As co-owner, I maintain a general overview of all aspects of our business. As Director of Communications and Marketing, I pay special attention to brand building for each of the twenty-plus spirit producers we represent, as well as our own brand, Heavenly Spirits.

#### **What are the challenges of the job?**

As an importer that specializes in offering exceptional spirits, the challenge is to maintain our high standards while continuing to build our portfolio. Another challenge is maintaining a balance of both time and resources that we invest in each product and line.

#### **What are the rewards?**

I truly love my job, including the people, the products, and the industry as a whole. I love that Christine and I get to work together, representing mostly small to medium-sized, multigenerational, family-owned distilleries who we consider to be true artisans of the industry.

#### **What are your core products & services?**

We import and represent some of the finest spirits available from Western Europe, including Whisky, Armagnac, Calvados, Cognac, Gin, Rhum Agricole, Vodka, cider, and various liqueurs and aperitifs. 40 per cent of all Armagnac imported to the USA comes through us. We are also the leading importer of Celtic French whisky, and organic Cognac.

#### **How do you differ from the competition?**

We are extremely selective in who we represent as we consider most of our suppliers to be good friends and/or like family. We do not represent what are often referred to as the "industrial brands," or the giant Goliaths of the spirits world. We also consider ourselves to be educators and ambassadors, representing the history, culture, and unique traditions of French spirits.

#### **How do you reach your potential clients?**

Many of the distributors in the USA who we currently work with originally reached out to Heavenly Spirits after reading about one of the many awards our products have earned. When they find our web page and see the amazing line of products we represent, (featured in our interactive, on-line catalog) they often ask if they can represent us in their state. We also participate in various trade shows throughout the year, and often have our products featured in editorials of certain industry or cultural publications.

#### **What are your thoughts on the current state of the Celtic marketplace?**

From my perspective, Celtic Life International Magazine seems to be one of the best ways to connect with the American-based Celtic community, which is only one part of our target demographic.

#### **What are your future plans for the business?**

Heavenly Spirits plans to continue bringing award-winning craft spirits to the North American marketplace, including all the best from Brittany's Celtic enclaves. As French-made whisky like Armoric Single Malt continues to develop and grow, we plan to offer many new expressions to our Celtic cousins.

[www.heavenlyspirits.com](http://www.heavenlyspirits.com)



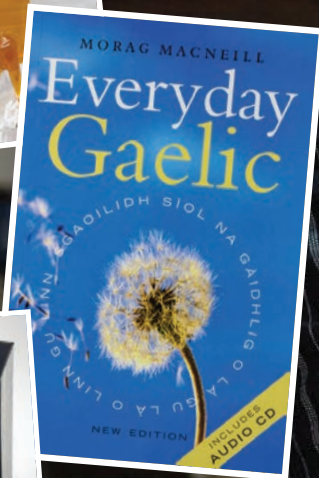
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Canadian-born of Czech parents, raised in both Europe and Canada, and fluent in five languages with a Ph.D. from Stanford University, Dr. Barbara Paldus considers herself a global citizen.

#### **What are your own roots?**

I am of Czech-Austrian heritage on one side and Czech-Lithuanian heritage on the other side. So, definitely East European.

#### **What is the company's history and mandate?**

Codex Beauty Labs was originally founded to create a series of collections from around the world to solve specific skin conditions; dry, itchy sensitive skin, or red, inflamed skin, or oily, acne-prone skin. We initially developed a patented for a novel, biotech fermentation-based preservative system and then applied it to our first collection, Bia, from Ireland. I acquired a small Irish company that had a heritage in local Irish herbalism. Today, our mandate has expanded to offer microbiome-supporting skin solutions that are vegan and cruelty-free to various skin conditions such as acne, eczema, psoriasis, rosacea, and more. We also aim to drive sustainability and preserve indigenous knowledge and planetary biodiversity. We are mindful about carbon footprint and ocean plastic as well.

#### **What are your core products & services?**

We provide skincare solutions for different skin solutions. Check out the Bia, Antu and Shaant collection, as well as our soaps and soaks!

#### **How has it grown over time?**

We started with one collection and 5 products - the Bia Irish collection in 2019. We then added the Antu collection of 6 products in 2021 - these are based on an adaptogenic antioxidant system from Patagonia, which is based on tribal medicine of the Mapuche. This collection helps restore

and support the skin barrier and reduce oxidative stress in skin while protecting from urban pollution and UV exposure. We also developed the world's first microbiome-supporting soaps (four, 2021) and bath soaks (three, 2022) in Ireland that were also driven by a desire to have waterless, zero waste body products. We just launched four out of seven products of the Shaant collection for oily, acne-prone skin. This collection is based on traditional Ayurvedic plant medicine. Today, we sell in over 20 countries.

#### **What are your roles and responsibilities there?**

I am the founder and CEO, so I make sure - like a good den mother - that everything is running as smoothly and according to plan as possible.

#### **What are the challenges of the job?**

The diversity of work can sometimes be difficult, especially if a lot of things go wrong at the same time. During COVID-19, for example, supply chain, logistics, and supporting employee health were major issues. Keeping the innovation at a fast pace while being thorough in our testing everything is also challenging. And - now that we are travelling again - criss-crossing the world is definitely challenging!

#### **What are the rewards?**

I love helping people, so seeing people with skin problems heal - and having them write to us about the improvement in the quality of their life - is the best part of my job. Also, innovating and seeing amazing clinical results, or being awarded a new patent is also incredibly rewarding.

#### **How do you differ from the competition?**

We run gene expression testing on all our novel plant ingredients and innovate synergistic plant complexes in our formulations that solve specific skin problems. We then

test all products for performance with a third-party lab that quantitatively measures the results with dermatology analysis instruments. We report these results on our cartons in an efficacy panel. No one else in the industry does this yet. We want to know what our products do!

#### **How do you reach your potential clients?**

We have a variety of channels including social media, speaking events, and print. We also work with the National Eczema Association and the National Psoriasis Foundation as well as dermatology groups. We try to diversify as much as we can.

#### **What are your thoughts on the current state of the Celtic marketplace?**

What we have seen is a demand for cost-effective products. With the current inflation, customers are often waiting for sales.

#### **What can be done to improve that?**

This has driven us to continue to strive to increase our manufacturing efficiency so that we can pass these savings to the customer. Even during this year of inflation, we will be keeping prices flat, or even reducing by 10%. We do this because we believe that all people with skin conditions deserve solutions so they can have a healthy, normal life.

#### **What are your future plans for the business?**

Our next step will be to provide supplements for some of these skin conditions that we are developing with our dermatologist - an inside-outside approach to skin problems. And then we want to bring more diagnostics to the customer at-home so that they can know exactly what skin health challenges they face and how to best overcome them.

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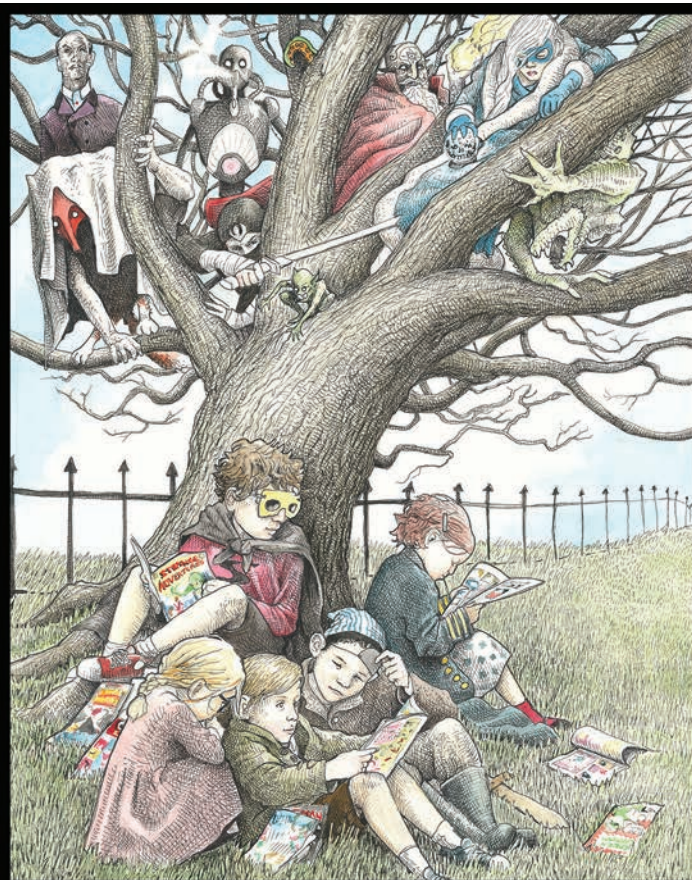
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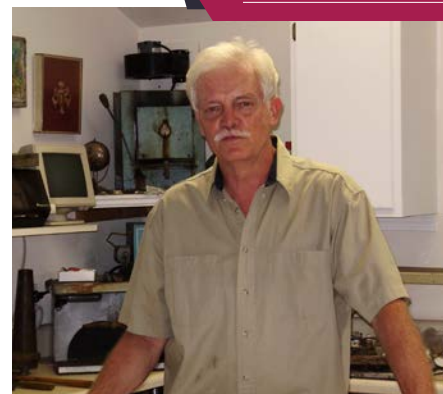
**Display Case with Clan Name**

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# Crest Badges



**D**on Kimble had been designing and making custom jewelry for over ten years. Recently we spoke with him about his passion for his profession.

## **What is your own heritage?**

Although my ancestors came to America from England, they must have carried some Scottish genes with them for me to feel such a kindred spirit with my Scottish customers. It would be a stretch to think the name Kimble morphed from the Scottish Campbell at Ellis Island but who knows.

## **What is the company's history and mandate?**

In 1980 I owned and a small jewelry shop, The Company Jewelers, located in Little 5 Points near downtown Atlanta. One day George Carr walked into my shop dressed to the nines in traditional Scottish attire and commissioned me to make for him what he called "a proper" crest badge of solid sterling silver. "I'd like it to shine, laddy!" he said, "I want it to be a quality piece that will sparkle brightly atop my balmoral for all to see! Unlike these here made of plated pot metal and dull silver castings." Little did I know at the time that that commission would lead me down a path that I am still traveling over 40 years later, for no sooner had I completed the original commission for George's Clan Carr crest badge than he was back with commissions from fellow Scotts Ferguson, Douglas, and more.

## **How do you differ from the competition?**

It became apparent right away that the standard methods we used to reproduce the work on any scale of production numbers was just too labor intensive to achieve the high polished finish we wanted. Lost-wax casting required much grinding, sanding, and polishing and even the best of castings sometimes had some porosity that no amount of sanding and polishing could overcome. So, we started over, replacing the one-step casting approach with a multi-step

process that combined silversmithing, casting, hand engraving and assembly work. The strap and buckle or outer "donut" which was common to all clans would be struck from solid sterling sheet using special dies cut for the purpose. This pristine surface could be polished to a mirror finish! The center crests, unique to each clan, would be cast and soldered in place. The clan mottos would then be engraved into the surface of each badge upon completion of assembly. Years later, when it became available, we switched to Argentium sterling - the newest innovation in sterling silver alloy. This new sterling contained more germanium making it much more tarnish resistant than traditional sterling and further distancing us from our competition.

## **What were the challenges involved?**

Once we had achieved the quality we wanted, we expanded the line to include the larger clans, and then hit the road to promote our badges at Scottish games around the Southeast. I recall the results of those early sales efforts at the games as being underwhelming and we retreated to explore a new venue, the internet. We created a website, in those very early days of the internet, and together with our ads in Scottish magazines and word of mouth saw sales gaining momentum. We were expanding the line with every request for a new clan. It seemed we were on our way. Then sadly George, the soul and inspiration of Kimble & Carr, Ltd., our joint venture, passed away.

## **How has the company evolved over time?**

With George's passing the whole enterprise came to a grinding halt. It had been a back burner business for me but without George it was no longer even on the stove as I had diversified away from full time jewelry making. My wife and I operated a retail window covering business and later sold real estate. The Company Jewelers had shrunk to a studio in my home, and I was producing only a handful of badges each month. However,

with the crash of the real estate market in 2008 I suddenly had extra time on my hands and crestbadges.com was awoken! I dusted off my jewelers' tools, invested in a computerized engraving machine, and went back to work doing what I loved.

## **What are your core products and services today?**

The Clansman badge as a pin, pendant, or bolo in solid sterling or 14K yellow gold (solid or plated) has always been my core product and I presently offer them for around two hundred clans. Clan badge options include a display box that lets you display your badge when you are not wearing it, clan badge buckles, clan badge plaid brooches, and more. In addition, I make badges for Armigers, Chiefs and Chieftains, as well as custom orders for personal crests.

## **What are your future plans for the business?**

In retirement now my sole productive activity is my clan crest badge business, hence completing the circle of my life's work - my first and last love; making beautiful pieces from precious metals for appreciative customers. Mass production was never my thing and it is why I never hired any help, preferring to be a one-man shop while creating heirloom quality badges, one badge at a time, one customer at a time. The variations and customizations that I offer for two hundred clans is so numerous that I no longer even try to keep completed badges in stock opting instead to stock all the necessary components for assembly on demand, a process that normally takes one to two weeks. I am now in my early seventies and, God willing, I will continue making badges in my home studio in St Marys, Georgia, for years to come but just in case you best not wait too long to place an order for your own "proper" clan crest badge.

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