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# CelticLife

INTERNATIONAL

## *The Grand Old Game*

**INSIDE!**

***Celtic Folklore, Ewan Currie, Wales  
Derry Jazz Fest, Devil's Porridge Museum  
Celtic Caribbean, Patrick Redden Keefe***



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# Fáilte!

Mabou is a quaint, picturesque village on the northern coast of Nova Scotia. Snuggled into the foothills of the Cape Breton Highlands, the area has deep-seated roots in the West Highlands of Scotland. Residents there, and in the surrounding communities, take great pride in their heritage and are dedicated to preserving and promoting the noble traditions of their Gaelic-speaking ancestors.

Mabou has been a pillar of Highland culture - language, music, song and dance - for generations. It hasn't always been smooth sailing, however; there were rough seas in the 1960s and 1970s when Cape Breton fiddling was on the wane as young people opted for the sounds of Elvis, Roy Orbison and Wilf Carter.

The region was not alone in its concern for diminishing Celtic customs; across the pond, Scotland experienced serious cultural decline until the inauguration of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 - the first in almost 300 years. Ireland, Wales and Bretagne also went through an identity crisis of sorts, until recent revivals saved the ancient traditions from extinction.

Thankfully, efforts like Ron MacInnis' 1972 film "The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler" helped to reignite the flames of fiddling culture in and around Mabou, and today the region is one of the most prolific producers of young musicians anywhere in the world.

Around the same time, Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Allan J. MacEachern, an Inverness Gaelic speaker from Nova Scotia, encouraged (and provided funding for) Gaelic to be taught in the local school system.

Support for the Gaelic language came from many corners, including a long list of renowned Celtic artists from Mabou; fiddler Donald Angus Beaton, prolific composer and fiddler Dan R. MacDonald, John Allan Cameron - the "Godfather" of Celtic music - and, of course, the world-renowned Rankin family.

It is no accident that Colaisde na Gàidhlig/The Gaelic College in St. Ann's, Cape Breton, is developing a satellite location in Mabou. In partnership with Cape Breton University, the new site will primarily offer post-secondary courses in Gaelic music and culture, as well as music classes for children, Gaelic for youth and adults, and early-years' programming.

There are many others - parents, teachers, educators - who have gone the extra mile to ensure the Gaelic language remains a language of everyday use in the area. By way of example, Kenneth and Jenny MacKenzie - residents of Mabou, and parents of 2-year-old twins Duncan and Iris - are doing their part; even at such a young age, their children are well on their way to becoming fluent in the Gaelic.

May is Gaelic Awareness month in Nova Scotia and celebrates the ancient language and culture through an array of activities across the Province, including Gaelic classes, fiddling sessions, step-dancing, story-telling and more.

May also signals a return to warmer weather here in Nova Scotia, and thus a return to our beautiful fairways and greens. Cape Breton has some of the best golf courses in the world and - after a round or two of the "Grand Old Game" - be sure to drop by The Red Shoe in Mabou for a round of another sort, where you are sure to fall in love with the language, music, dance and other cultural traditions of the Gaels.

*Enjoy and may God Bless!*

**Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher**



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# Mary Lou McDonald

*In the third instalment in a six-part series on prominent women in the Celtic community we speak with Mary Lou McDonald, Leader of Sinn Féin.*



Despite the pressures of her profession, and the political and social uncertainty surrounding Brexit, Mary Lou McDonald knows her priorities.

"I am passionate about my activism," says the Leader of Sinn Féin. "The hours are long, but the work is important, and I love what I do."

After serving as Deputy Leader for a decade, McDonald assumed the helm of Ireland's oldest political party last year. It was, she notes, the culmination of years of engagement.

"The hunger strikes of 1981 - during which ten men died - was the first time I really understood the injustice of the British colonial presence in Ireland. It was this tragic and pivotal time in our history that awakened my politics and activism. I joined Sinn Féin in 1998, just after the Good Friday Agreement was signed, and have been active ever since. I am currently elected as a TD for the Dublin Central constituency and previously served as an MEP in the European Parliament."

Her purpose for staying politically active has not changed over the years.

"Irish unity - and a new, agreed Ireland - remains my goal. It is achievable, and I believe that it is closer now than it ever has been in our history."

She notes, however, that there is more to her story.

"We must end partition and unite our country and people. We must also ensure that a new Ireland is one that has at its foundation equality and social justice. Decades of conservative governments in the South have presided over a society of haves and have-nots. We currently have a housing crisis in the South - where over 10,000 families are homeless - and a two-tier health service that sees scores of ordinary people locked out. That, to me, is not good enough and shows the need for strong left-wing political parties like my own."

Her vocation is not without its challenges.

"Well this isn't just a job. I am an activist, meaning that my work is very full-on and doesn't recognize normal office hours! Sinn Féin is an all-Ireland party which means there will be weeks where I might be in Derry on a Monday and in Cork on a Tuesday. This can be tough because, aside from politics, I am also a mammy with two children."

The rewards of doing what she does, she explains, are plentiful.

"It is a privilege leading Ireland's oldest political party - I work with an incredible team of people, representing the four corners of Ireland, who have the same goals and objectives. We are pursuing policies that work, we are delivering in our respective elected institutions and representing people to the very best of our abilities."

*"The biggest reward is knowing that we are making a difference..."*

McDonald is equally passionate about her home country.

"Of course, there are the big attractions - the Walled City of Derry, the GPO in Dublin, the Cliffs of Moher. I also love Sligo - Lissadell House, the childhood home of the Rebel Countess Markievicz is well worth a visit. But for me the most beautiful place in Ireland is the Glen of Aherlow in Co Tipperary. That is where my mother is from originally, and I spent my childhood running around the hills there. It is wild and stunningly beautiful and well worth making the trip to Tipp to see it."

Along with its astounding landscape - something she admits to taking for granted - McDonald believes that Ireland's greatest strength lies in its people.

"We have come through a lot of hardship down through our history. We had occupation and war, we had famine and emigration. We also

had decades of austerity governments in the South which really impacted on communities and which we are still dealing with. We are known for our resilience and for our sense of community and friendship. We also have a proud heritage and culture which is evident in our national games and our unique language."

The Irish people have experienced great change since she first joined Sinn Féin over two decades ago.

"We have come through a period of quite intense and positive change; the conversation on the reunification of the country is well underway. Young people in the North are demanding their rights which have been denied for generations. In the South we have seen constitutional change in the area of marriage equality and access to safe abortion services - two significant and positive changes for the better, recognizing our diverse and compassionate people."

The coming months will see no shortage of opportunities for more growth.

"Brexit is a big challenge for Ireland, and the need for our agreements, our economy and our rights to be protected in the prospect of a no-deal Brexit remains paramount for us."

As if that wasn't enough, she and her political peers are preparing for elections.

"We hope to return and build in order to continue delivering for communities and in Europe. There needs to be a recognition that, while there has been economic recovery in the South, a large number of people have felt no benefit to this. We must bring about a recovery where no one is left behind, and I think a plan around dealing with the high cost of living here is essential."

"There is also a need for the Irish Government to convene a forum that will plan for Irish unity. I intend to pursue that as a priority."

[www.sinnfein.ie](http://www.sinnfein.ie)



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## one

### Surprise Birth

Last summer, a woman gave birth while in a helicopter 426 metres above the Cornish coast. Alicia MacDonald was to conduct a friend's wedding on the Isles of Scilly when she went into labour earlier than expected. As there was no midwife on the islands, the coast guard was sent to fly MacDonald and her husband back to the mainland. The baby, however, had other plans - and MacDonald ended up safely giving birth on the helicopter with the help of the crew and a midwife onboard.

## two

### Wandering Peacocks

Many places have issues with an overpopulation of stray cats or rodents, but the Isle of Man is facing a problem of a much different - and more colourful - sort. According to the Manx SPCA, the organization has been getting dozens of calls from folks complaining about wandering peacocks. For example, peacocks have been spotted in supermarket parking lots and the Douglas town centre. The birds are not native to the Isle of Man, so SPCA staff suspect the stray peafowl are abandoned pets. The organization has urged owners not to breed more birds than they want to keep.

## three

### Scottish Stone Circle

An "ancient Scottish stone circle" is not-so-ancient after all. The site in Aberdeenshire was being studied by Historic Environment Scotland and Aberdeenshire council's archaeology service when the former owner of the property came forward to say he had built the stone circle himself in the 1990s. The recumbent stone circle was intended as a replica of similar monuments in the area. This kind of structure is unique to the north-east region of Scotland and tends to date back 3,500-4,500 years. Although disappointed, researchers commended the crafter on his skills.

## four

### Cornish Fishermen

The story of a group of Cornish fishermen-turned-singers is slated to hit the big screen. The seven fishermen and builders landed a record deal after a radio presenter happened to hear one of their self-recorded tracks while vacationing in the region. The group, which hails from Port Isaac, is aptly named Fishermen's Friends - and they specialize in the sea shanty genre. After signing a £1 million record deal with Universal Music, they toured the United Kingdom. The U.S. tour was cancelled due to a personal tragedy, but they took to the stage again a year later at the Royal Albert Hall.

## five

### Growing Brittany

Late last fall, one third of voters in the Loire-Atlantique department (an area on the Atlantic coast of western France) signed a petition asking to become part of Brittany. Due to the scope of the demand, local authorities must look into it by law. However, experts are skeptical that anything will actually change, as a referendum would have to be approved by multiple government administrations. Loire-Atlantique was previously part of Brittany up until World War II, when it became part of a neighbouring region which eventually became known as Pays de la Loire.

## six

### Welsh Bluestones

Eight years into their investigation, scientists have confirmed the bluestone pillars that make up Stonehenge are originally from Wales. New evidence suggests the stones came from two outcrops in the Presili hills and were transported to Salisbury more than 5,000 years ago. At least five of the bluestones are said to have come from Carn Goedog. Why exactly the stones came from so far away and how they were transported remains a mystery, but the recent discoveries mean researchers are getting closer.

Have an interesting tidbit to share with our Celtic community? Drop us a line anytime at [info@celticlife.com](mailto:info@celticlife.com)



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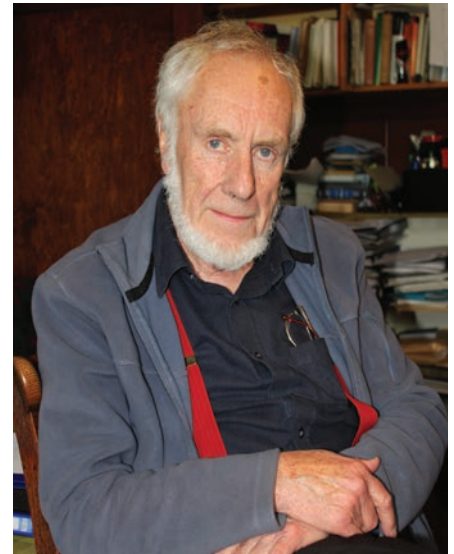
**Mercy Ngulube**

**M**ercy Ngulube has been HIV-positive since she was born. Growing up in Wales, she was hesitant to talk about it, as there were only about 20 people in the country who were in the same boat. In her teen years, however, she shared her story with some close friends and later began speaking more openly. A former chair of the Children's HIV Association Youth Committee, Ngulube is now a co-chair of Sophia Forum: an organization which advocates for women living with HIV. In May 2017, she received a Diana's Legacy award, after which people started reaching out to her. "It was really nice for me to feel like people were able to come to me about things that might not even be related to HIV and saying 'we can talk about the things in society that are taboo and we don't have to sit in silence about them anymore,'" she wrote for BBC. Ngulube was one of 25 people shortlisted for a St. David Award from the Welsh Government in 2018 and she continues to work tirelessly as an activist, speaking at TEDx Talks and participating in panels at multiple events.



**Disabled Women Ireland**

**D**uring conversations about the referendum for the 8th Amendment, Maria Ní Fhlartharta saw a gap in Irish feminist discourse: it tended to exclude women with disabilities. So, she decided to do something about it. Along with a crew of like-minded individuals, she officially formed Disabled Women Ireland (DWI) in May 2018. "We need to become a powerful voice for equality in Ireland. We experience disability-based oppression and gender-based oppression. These intersect and magnify one another," Ní Fhlartharta said in a press release at the time. "The rate of poverty and sexual violence experienced by disabled women is case in point." Disabled Women Ireland is the first organization in Ireland made by disabled women, for disabled women. Its mission? Equality: "Equality for women, and equality for disabled people must work hand in hand for either to be successful," reads the website. The group works to grow a network of disabled women and advocate on issues of concern to women with disabilities in Ireland. According to DWI, there are 300,000 women in the country living with disabilities, and that number is growing. One in four of Irish women 70 or older identify as having a disability.



**Brian Stowell**

**A** strong advocate for the Manx Gaelic language died in January, but his legacy lives on. Dr. Brian Stowell dedicated 30 years of his life to teaching Manx Gaelic and was involved in a multitude of endeavors, including the Manx Language Society, the Manx branch of the Celtic Congress and the Isle's Gaelic Broadcasting Committee. He was also a musician and vocalist, as well as a long-term adjudicator for the Manx Music Festival. Stowell was born and raised in Douglas, learning the Manx language as a teen. He left for England to study physics at Liverpool University and continued to work in the country as a physicist, eventually gaining a doctorate in applied physics. He returned to the Isle of Man in 1991 to fill the role of Manx Language Officer in the Department of Education. "Stowell is considered a father figure in the maintenance of Celtic languages, both on the Island and further afield," his obituary reads. In 2008, Stowell was awarded the Manx Heritage Foundation's Reih Bleeaney Vanannan (Manannan's Choice of the Year). In 2010, he received the Tynwald Honour: the highest accolade one can receive on the Isle of Man.





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Regina, SK  
[www.saskhighland.ca](http://www.saskhighland.ca)

Each long weekend in May, thousands of guests gather in Regina for the Saskatchewan Highland Gathering and Celtic Festival. Held in beautiful Victoria Park, the two-day celebration pays homage to the region's - and the country's - rich and robust Celtic ties, with activities ranging from heavy athletics to traditional music and dance. It all begins with the annual Prairie Piping Invitational, an evening competition showcasing some of the most skilled pipers in Canada. The Queen City Highland Dance competition kicks off Saturday morning, with champion dancers from across Canada competing for prizes. After that, attendees are welcome to enjoy from a variety of other competitive activities, including solo piping and drumming, and the Scottish Athletic Championships, where contestants try their hand at the Stone Put, Weight for Distance (both light and heavy), the Caber Toss, and more. As always, the popular "War in the West" event - a strongman and strong woman competition - will be held each day in the afternoon. Things round out in the evenings with impromptu musical performances and sessions at locations around Regina.



### Northern Nevada Celtic Celebration

May 18, 2019  
Reno, NV  
[www.renoceltic.org](http://www.renoceltic.org)

The Northern Nevada Celtic Celebration goes back 28 years when the former Fitzgerald Casino and Hotel planned a private, annual Celtic New Year celebration. The event evolved over time, eventually becoming a public, family-friendly affair. This year, the day-long gathering includes headline performances by Celtic Rock band Tempest. Both the City of Sacramento Pipe Band and the Sierra Highlanders Pipe Band will also perform. Across the festival grounds, competitors will partake in heavy athletic events, including Stone Put, Weight for Distance, Weight Over Bar, Scottish Hammer, and the always-popular Caber Toss. Cultural exhibits and demonstrations will be set up around the venue, including a British automobile show, Scottish Highland and Irish dancers, living history re-enactments and multiple vendors. As always, the Northern Nevada Celtic Celebration will host an annual Clan Gathering, where several established clans and cultural organizations will share history and heritage. At day's end, the main stage will showcase a closing ceremony featuring a Massed Pipe Band.



### Smoky Mountain Highland Games

May 18-19, 2019  
Maryville, TN  
[www.smokymountaingames.org](http://www.smokymountaingames.org)

Originally called the Gatlinburg Scottish Games and Festival, the Smoky Mountain Highland Games is now one of the oldest and most recognized Celtic festivals in North America. Each year, thousands of visitors meet in Maryville to honour the area's rich Scottish heritage through music, dance and celebration. The gathering returns to the region again this May, with participants from all over the world competing in Saturday's heavy athletics, including the Caber Toss, the Stone Put, the Scottish Hammer Throw, and more. Piping, drumming and highland dance are also on the agenda. On Sunday, attendees can tighten up their laces for the annual 5k or half-marathon runs, or take a stroll through the festival's diverse vendor area. Music is always a large part of the annual event, and this year features mainstage performances by Albannach, Black Market Haggis, and The Celtic Martins among others. The weekend's itinerary also includes Scotch tastings, sheep dog demonstrations, and the annual Clan Gathering, where Clan Stewart will be honored. As always, children will enjoy the Wee Ones area, where they are welcome to partake in miniature athletics, crafts and free face painting.





### Carassauga Ireland Pavilion

May 24-26, 2019  
Mississauga, ON  
[www.carassauga.com](http://www.carassauga.com)

**T**he Carassauga Festival of Cultures - a three-day festival set in the spring of each year - is one of Canada's largest multicultural celebrations. Since its inception in 1986, the gathering has showcased the country's fine mosaic of cultures, with presentations, musical entertainment, and cultural pavilions - each a mainstay of the weekend's festivities. This year, the event will host over 25 cultural pavilions - ranging from Africa to Vietnam - and will highlight the very popular Irish Pavilion. Conveniently held at the Paramount Fine Foods Centre, the Irish Pavilion invites visitors to enjoy a full-range of classic and contemporary Irish activities, including dance, food, music, and more. This year, things 'kick-off' with a robust display of Irish dancing featuring the Graham School of Irish Dance - an accomplished all-age academy from Milton, Ontario. The performances will include a variety of styles, from the traditional to the modern, and will take inspiration from both the Irish landscape and from the ancient Irish art of storytelling. Visitors are also encouraged to stroll through the venue at their leisure and enjoy stirring Celtic melodies and authentic cuisine from the Emerald Isle.



### Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games

June 8-9, 2019  
Blairsville, GA  
[www.blairvillescottishfestival.com](http://www.blairvillescottishfestival.com)

**N**ow in its 16th year, the Blairsville Scottish Festival and Highland Games takes place in lovely Meets Park. The annual two-day festival hosts a number of popular Celtic activities, including live musical concerts and heavy athletic competitions. Things get competitive early on Saturday morning with the Open Stone, the Caber Toss, the Sheaf Toss, and more. Guests are then invited to take in one of the many cultural attractions, including Highland dancers, genealogy tents, and the celebrated Clan Gathering, where the Clan MacGregor will be honored this year. The weekend will also feature many festival favorites, including live demonstrations, falconry and dog shows, pipe bands, workshops, and the very popular Gaelic Gallop, where participants can undertake a 5k or one-mile run. The wee ones will enjoy the children's area, home to miniature games, face painting and a passport to the Clans. Performances from EJ Jones and the Jones Pipe Band, The Blarney Girls, Colin Grant, Bob Valentine, and the Kitchen Racket will provide a super soundtrack for the festivities.



### Taste of Scotland Festival

June 13-16, 2019  
Franklin, NC  
[www.tasteofscotlandfestival.org](http://www.tasteofscotlandfestival.org)

**N**ow in its 22nd year, the Taste of Scotland Festival aims to promote and preserve Celtic culture in and around the Franklin area. This year, the annual event's mainstay exhibit - the Scottish Tartans Museum - has added a second floor, offering more insight into the region's rich Scottish heritage. Weekend activities begin on Friday night with a traditional Scottish dinner at Tartan Hall, featuring Celtic band The Jacobites by Name, followed by the popular Ceilidh, showcasing the sounds of the Blarney Girls. On Saturday, the entire community will enjoy a unique street fair featuring Scottish food, Highland games, a Scottish-cows exhibit and sheep herding. The morning Clan Parade - led by an Honoured Clan - will feature this year's "Little Miss Tartan" - Kendyl Reece Holland - as well as pipe bands, the 71st Highland Regiment (firing their black-powder muskets!), and wee Scottish Dogs. Cherokees in full regalia, seminars about Scottish history and Scots-Irish Immigration, and - of course - lots of great Scottish music - will keep visitors engaged and entertained. The gathering wraps up in style on Sunday morning with the customary Kirkin' of the Tartan ceremony, to be held at the Franklin's First Presbyterian Church.



## Almonte Celtfest

July 5-7, 2019  
Almonte, ON

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

Each year, Ontario's Almonte Celtfest attracts thousands of visitors to the Ottawa Valley for three days of Celtic music, dance and history. The celebration was created in 1997 by three young men - Brian O'Connell, Dan O'Connell and Terry Currie - who shared a deep appreciation of their Celtic heritage. Today, more than two decades later, the gathering is one of the best reputed Celtic festivals in North America. This year, things get off to a rollicking start on Friday night with both Celt-rockers The Mudmen and French-Canadian trio Les Rats d'Swompe. The music continues all weekend, as over a dozen seasoned performers take the mainstage from noon until dusk on both Saturday and Sunday, including Twin Flames, Anna Ludlow, and world-renowned fiddler Ashley MacIsaac. In addition, the Almonte Celtfest hosts musical workshops, step dancing performances, children's activities, award ceremonies, and much more. Hungry patrons can sample from the many on-site food trucks, and those with a thirst will enjoy the two craft breweries on tap at the bar. A seniors' tent is also available for accessibility, and be sure to watch for the weekend's most mischievous mascot, Liam the Leprechaun.



## Portland Highland Games

July 19-20, 2019

Gresham, OR  
[www.phga.org](http://www.phga.org)

The Portland Highland Games return to the beautiful fields of Mt. Hood Community College this July for its annual celebration. For over six decades, the renowned festival has brought thousands of visitors together to celebrate their Scottish roots through music, dance and culture. This year, things kick-off on Friday with amateur athletics, food and music. The weekend's main events take place Saturday, starting in the morning with the Highland Games, which run all day with traditional competitions including Highland Dance and heavy athletics: the Caber Toss, the Stone Put, the Sheaf Toss, as well as Portland's very popular regional game, the Portland Stone. The festival will also include whisky tastings and musical competitions in fiddling, drumming and piping. There is also the Kilted Mile Run, and the Youth Fun Run, a small race designed for children 13 years of age or younger. There will be Scottish food, beer and vendors. Those interested in learning more about their Scottish history and heritage should be sure to check out one of the many Clan and genealogy tents.



## Glengarry Highland Games

August 2-3, 2019

Maxville, ON  
[www.glengarryhighlandgames.com](http://www.glengarryhighlandgames.com)

Since its inception in 1948, the Glengarry Highland Games has maintained its mission to celebrate and preserve Scottish traditions and culture for each new generation. From humble beginnings, the event is now recognized as one of the largest Celtic events worldwide, with well over 20,000 visitors each year. Today, the annual gathering is renowned for its North American Pipe Band Championship, where more than 50 massed pipe bands and over 200 dancers and athletes gather to compete. This year, the weekend kicks-off with the always-popular Tartan Ball, where guests are welcome to enjoy a hearty three-course meal, traditional Scottish music, and socializing. Of course, competition is at the core of the festivities, with men and women of all ages and skill levels competing in Highland dance, solo piping and drumming (Grades 1-5), and heavy athletics. The event will also host fiddle workshops, the Highland Regiment Tug of War, the Kilt Run, children's events, clan gatherings, and toe-tapping live shows. This year, attendees are in for a very special treat as the energetic and multi-talented young performers of The Next Generation Leahy will take the main stage.





## Chicago Scottish Festival & Highland Games

June 14-15, 2019

Hamilton Lakes, "Aye-Tasca", IL  
[www.chicagoscots.org](http://www.chicagoscots.org)

The Chicago Scottish Festival and Highland Games – founded and organized by the Chicago Scots, Illinois' first not-for-profit and one of the largest Scottish cultural organizations in the world – returns this summer for its 33rd annual gathering. The festival originally convened in 1986 and has since grown to include numerous activities such as the Signature Shortbread Contest, the popular Heather Queen contest, and the weekend's bread-and-butter attractions – the heavy athletics and musical competitions. Each year, thousands of talented contestants gather to compete in drumming, Highland dancing, and piping in the largest pipe band competition in the United States. The Games also include a series of thrilling athletic feats, including the Caber Toss and the Hammer Throw. The competitive fun doesn't stop there, however, as the event also hosts two distinctly Scottish events – the Haggis Hurling and Haggis Eating competitions. A small children's area will be replete with crafts, games and miniature athletics. For visitors interested in Scotland's history and culture, educational tents will be set up throughout the venue with Clan information, genealogy, and vendor booths. This year, the celebration hosts live musical performances from Cleghorn, The Rouges, The Bandicoots and Crazy Heart. Proceeds from the Festival benefit Chicago Scots' principal charity, Caledonia Senior Living & Memory Care.



## Greater Moncton Highland Games

June 15, 2019

Moncton, NB  
[www.monctonhighlandgames.com](http://www.monctonhighlandgames.com)

Atlantic Canada's Highland Games season kicks off in early June with the 13th annual Greater Moncton Highland Games and Scottish Festival. From the kirk-in' of the tartan on Sunday to the closing ceillidh on Saturday, there is lots of fun for everyone to enjoy! The Games are honoured to host the inaugural Canadian Scottish Athletic Federation's Lightweight Championships this year, and look forward to welcoming competitors in 2021 for the Scottish Masters Athletics Heavy Events World Championships. The Greater Moncton Highland Games features Highland dance, pipe, drum, and pipe band competitions as well as dozens of workshops and demonstrations covering everything from Gaelic language and song to falconry and sheep dog herding to historical reenactors. And don't forget the petting zoo, wagon rides, and bouncy castles for the kids, and the beer tent with the best in entertainment from New Brunswick, Cape Breton, and Scotland! The Greater Moncton Highland Games and Scottish Festival takes place along the waterfront in downtown Moncton, the perfect hub from which to enjoy an East Coast cultural adventure!



## Embro Highland Games

July 1, 2019

Embro, ON  
[www.embrohighlandgames.ca](http://www.embrohighlandgames.ca)

Ontario's Embro Highland Games has been preserving and promoting ancient Caledonian culture through music, athletics and education for more than 80 years. Today, the annual gathering is considered one of the oldest and most celebrated Celtic festivals in Canada. This year, the day-long event will stay true to form by showcasing a swath of Celtic competitions in Highland dance, piping, drumming, and heavy athletics, where invited contestants will gather to compete in the Stone Put, the Weight for Distance, the Hammer Throw, and more. The celebration will again be hosting the popular 2km, 5km, and 10km Road Race events, as well as the always-entertaining Tug-of-War competition. The festival will be bringing back other fan favorites also, including the sheep dog demonstrations, Scottish Dogs on Parade, a Rugby Sevens Tournament, Highland cattle & horses, kilted yoga, and a refreshment garden where attendees will enjoy a selection of local craft beers and spirits. New for 2019 learn to Scottish country dance in the air-conditioned hall.

# 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!”

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

[www.fireandrain.scot](http://www.fireandrain.scot)



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## *The Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo's new managing director is in it for the long haul*

**T**he Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo celebrates its 40th anniversary this summer with a week's worth of new and traditional festivities in and around the provincial capital of Halifax.

The world-renowned event recently named a new managing director. And, given his history with both the bagpipes and big productions, the fan-favourite Atlantic Canadian institution is in very good hands.

"I have been involved in music my whole life," says Scott Long over the phone from his home in Halifax. "I started as a bagpipe player, playing in various pipe bands and went on to play folk music with the likes of (fiddler) Ashley MacIsaac for several years."

Long's past experiences both on and off the stage eventually led him to a full-time position as the executive director of Music Nova Scotia, a spot he held for a full decade.

"A big part of my job over the last 10 years, and continuing on now with my new position, is the administration of non-profit organizations in the cultural sector. With that gig comes a lot of event planning and marketing. To be honest, I wasn't actively out there searching for new employment, but when I saw that the Tattoo was looking for someone, I thought that it would be a great fit for me, given my background."

Long is beyond thrilled to be involved with the time-honoured Tattoo. The things he holds closest to his heart - traditional folk music native to this region and putting on big spectacles honouring the genre - is ingrained into the DNA of the event. He hopes to bring some fresh ideas to the yearly spectacle.

"It is going to be a healthy balance of respecting and presenting the tradition of the show, with a mix of new, exciting entertainment that is geared towards families. We want to make sure that we are getting that message out there - that this is a show for the whole family."

To that end, messaging is a big focus of his new position. The Tattoo has garnered a loyal following over the years, but like any cultural organization, it cannot afford to rest on its laurels. As such,

Long's top priority is to grow the event's visibility both within and outside of the immediate community.

"My goals are to help with the marketing side of things, find new audiences, expand our audience demographic, and sell a whole bunch of tickets to the show. We have a great brand and an excellent image that is respected far and wide, but there is always opportunity for new growth."

In terms of programming for his first year in the managing director's chair - as well as executive producer of the show - Long says that full performance details will be released shortly.

*"A big part of show business and entertainment is the element of surprise. Audiences can expect the traditional aspects that have always been a part of the show, but they will also enjoy some new, exciting family entertainment that will keep them on the edge of their seat."*

This year's theme, he explains, is "the power of peace."

"We will be celebrating the role that the Canadian Armed Forces - and other first responders like the RCMP - have played throughout the history of Canada; promoting peace in all its forms. It is a timely message these days, given how divisive the world can be."

Long has already hit the ground running in his first season at the helm, though he knows it will take time for him to make a lasting impact on the overall shape of the Tattoo. However, he expects to be around long enough to make those changes.

"I am not going anywhere - I just got here," he laughs. "I hope to be here for as long as possible. In the years to come, I want to have some meaningful input into the creative process of the show."

[www.nstatattoo.ca](http://www.nstatattoo.ca)





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# James Mullinger

*James Mullinger finds paradise on Canada's East Coast*

Award-winning comedian, editor and speaker James Mullinger first turned to stand-up comedy as a way to cope with childhood bullying.

"I was a shy kid growing up in England and listened to stand-up comedy as a way to cheer me up," remembers the 41-year-old. "I watched Frank Skinner, Alan Davies and Eddie Izzard videos over and over. I laughed like a drain and wondered how these people could amble on stage, act so natural and be skilled at making two thousand people laugh, when I was too shy to talk to another kid in my class. Comedy saved my life, but I never thought I could do it."

These fears and insecurities continued into his twenties. However, in 2004 - while on holiday in Saint John, New Brunswick - Mullinger was inspired to take the plunge.

"I was watching a dinner theatre production with my wife and her family. The performers had us all laughing and dancing and singing. I was very entertained, but completely overcome with profound jealousy. These performers were living out their dreams. No matter what they did during the day, or what their home lives were like, at night they were stars.

"I became angry with myself for not even trying," he continues. "I made a pact that 2005 would be the year I tried stand up comedy. It still took me five months but, in May that year, I found the confidence to do it."

Initially, he worked London's local open-mic circuit, performing every night for five years.



PHOTO CREDIT: TYLER WARREN ELLIS

"I did it while doing a fairly high stress and pressured day job for GQ magazine. That is what my screenplay *The Comedian's Guide to Survival* is about - those years when you have a day job but you are performing on stage each night. It is a brutal grind but gradually you get better at it. It was around 2010 that I started to get decent gigs, and I began touring solo a couple of years later."

In 2014, Mullinger - a name of Irish origin - moved from London to Rothesay, a small community in southern New Brunswick.

"I am still a stand-up comedian, but I am now also the editor of *The Maritime Edit* magazine, an international print publication devoted to celebrating the joys of living in, working in and visiting Atlantic Canada.

"I just didn't like living in London anymore. I didn't want to commute in to the city every day. My wife is from the East Coast of Canada.

*"It is the most beautiful, most friendly place in the world. I like to call what we have here 'discreet luxury.'"*

"We have time and space and beauty. It is a different world here in the Maritimes. Canada is the best place to live in the world."

Although the move was a welcome change, he notes that his comedic career required some minor adjustments.

"The comedy scenes are very different. There isn't a star system here, which is both a good and a bad thing. The good news is that the biggest and best comedy festivals in the world are here. The largest comedy club chain is here, and stand-up has been a regular fixture on primetime TV for much longer than it has been in England. Another upside is that no-one gets in to comedy for the money or for the fame. There is a real passion in the circuit here. The only people doing comedy in Canada are the people that truly love comedy. We love what we do, we work hard, and we have made a career out of it."

Mullinger is currently preparing another cross-Canada tour, including stops in cities from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

"I am a great believer that anything is possible anywhere. You don't need to be in a big city to do great things creatively. You just have to do things differently and find your own path. I am so much happier here. It is paradise in the Maritimes, and I am getting a lot more done."

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

PHOTO CREDIT: JOSEPH COMEAU







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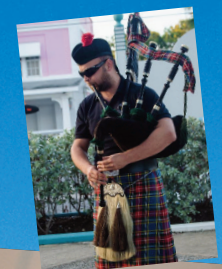
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## *Barbados is the perfect place to get Celtic in the Caribbean*

Since taking on the role of Festival Director of the Barbados Celtic Festival in 2011, Carol Anderson has aimed to reconnect Bajans with their Celtic roots.

"The celebration actually began in the early 1990s," shares Anderson from her office in Scotland. "At that time, a Welsh woman brought her father's Welsh choir into the island for a concert.

"We have taken that original idea - the fusion of two distinct cultures - to new levels since then. Along with bringing in Celtic musicians from Scotland, Ireland and other parts of the world, including Canada and the United States, we are now working much more closely with the island's musicians."

Like many parts of the globe, Barbados has its fair share of Celts; in the 18th century, after being purged from Scotland by Oliver Cromwell, a large number of Scots found themselves living on the island as indentured servants. In addition, during the heyday of the Royal Navy, many sailors with Celtic backgrounds settled there of their own accord, likely for the better weather.

As such, Barbadian culture has all sorts of hints pointing to its Celtic heritage, with traditional symbols everywhere.

The Cross of St. Andrew - Scotland's patron saint - appears on the emblem of Barbados, including on their dollar coin. Reggae drum beats, it was discovered, originated from Scottish military drums, and not African drums as had long been believed.

"There are still descendants of those Scots living in Barbados," says Anderson. "It has this unique link to Scotland and Ireland, which is in the blood of many people on the island today. They tell me that maybe their granddaddy or their great granddaddy was a Scot."



*And yet, Celtic culture in Barbados is still something of a hidden gem among Bajans, many of whom have little familiarity with their Celtic roots.*

"People here asked me what it means to be Celtic," notes Anderson. "They didn't understand the word until we brought in our musicians and artists. The festival is one way to really strengthen those links to the past."

Past performers include Hamish Stuart and his band, saxophonist Molly Duncan, Eddi Reader, the Peatbog Faeries, John McCusker, Heidi Talbot, Fara, Sandra Macbeth, Riddell Fiddles, Duncan MacKinnon, Jock the Box, the Mackenzie Brothers, the Alan Kelly Gang, Siobhan Miller, Tom Oakes, and the Ross Couper Irish dancers from Riverdance.

Along with musicians, the festival has

featured street performers, artisans, and even a visit from a famous Edinburgh chef, who created Caribbean Haggis from local ingredients. In addition, as part of the gathering's core mandate, Celtic dancers and fiddlers provide complimentary lessons to local and area residents.

This year's festival - which runs from May 21 to 26 - features solo pipers, mini bands and full pipe bands, all of which are welcome to play alongside musicians from the Barbados Defence Force and the Army Cadets during the annual Street Parade.

In addition, there will be outdoor concerts, spontaneous pop-up events in local rum shops, school performances, Highland Games, and several foodie happenings featuring Celtic fare fused with cuisine from the West Indies.

2019's core attraction is the world-renowned Gwalia Singers, an all-male choir from Swansea, Wales, under the musical direction of Nick Rodgers from Pembroke.

Despite the connection to Celtic heritage, and Anderson's efforts to reignite the embers of that heritage on the island, one Celtic tradition that is still scarce in Barbados is piping.

"There are no pipers in Barbados, bizarrely. You would expect that there might be, but I know they are not on the island, because we have hunted and hunted. We are actually talking about teaching some of these Barbadians to play the pipes, which has never been done before. I am very excited about that.

"What I want to see as my legacy is a fusion of the cultures - particularly the music. I want to preserve the links that we have together, and the history that we share."

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



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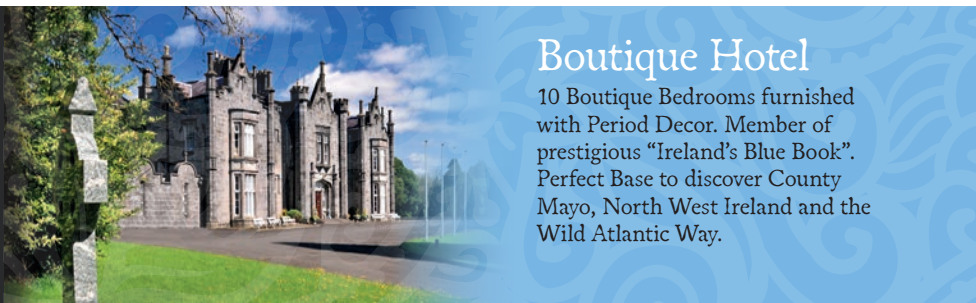
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# Derry Jazz & Big Band Festival

*Northern Ireland's foremost jazz festival showcases big talent and epic master classes*

The City of Derry Jazz & Big Band Festival began with the goal of bringing visitors to the northwest to grow the area economy. Gerry McColgan was the brains behind the idea: working with the Derry City Council at the time, he saw an opportunity for a music festival to fit within the Council's existing events calendar. In 2001, he travelled to the Cork Jazz Festival with Johnny Murray, manager of Derry's Rialto Theatre, to see if there was potential for something in their own city. Soon after, McColgan and Murray began planning Derry's first jazz program with the help of Cork Jazz Festival director Jack McGouran. That first event attracted 6,000 music-lovers.

"The Jazz Festival has grown and developed so much over the past two decades," shares current festival coordinator Andrea Campbell. "Over time, the event has very much evolved into a community-oriented gathering; local bars and businesses have stepped up and taken ownership and it has moved from being a civic-led happening to one that the local business community has invested in and supported. While Council is there in terms of facilitating and leading on the logistics, this is very much a joined-up partnership event."

These days, the Derry Jazz Festival draws a crowd of 60,000 people over five days of programming.

"We have a core audience of local music fans who turn out year after year," says Campbell. "They know lots of the bands and they come to see their favourites every year. But we also have many international visitors who travel from England, the U.S, the Netherlands - everywhere, really - who have heard about the festival and want to be a part of it. We find that lots of younger people come out just to enjoy the atmosphere. They may never have listened to jazz before but love the thrill of a live band and the fact that every venue in the city has something different to offer each night."

On top of organizing the programming, planning and strategy for the festival (including the headline act), Campbell is the self-proclaimed "mum" for the artists involved. She makes sure everyone arrives on time with equipment intact and ready to go, and she manages plenty of non-music related tasks as well.

*"I'm the person who gets the phone call if someone's lost, has blown an amp or can't find a vegan restaurant."*

"I have developed a risk strategy which I amend for each festival, which ensures I can almost pre-empt situations before they happen, making life a lot less stressful!"

For Campbell, the main challenge is keeping the event fresh year after year. It's no small feat - and there isn't much time for a breather between festivals. "Festival planning kicks into operation once we get the last band member on a plane home - we just start the process all over again."



Much needs to be organized; flights, accommodation and transport for musicians, to name just a few tasks.

"It has to be run like a military operation. In the last few months leading up to the festival there is a lot of pressure and the rewards can seem very distant on the horizon. But every year, without fail, once the musicians begin to arrive in the city, everything changes. Despite the long hours and the inevitable last-minute hiccups, the festival atmosphere just takes over."

The 2019 festival runs from May 2 - 6 and will host more than 300 performances in 50 different venues.

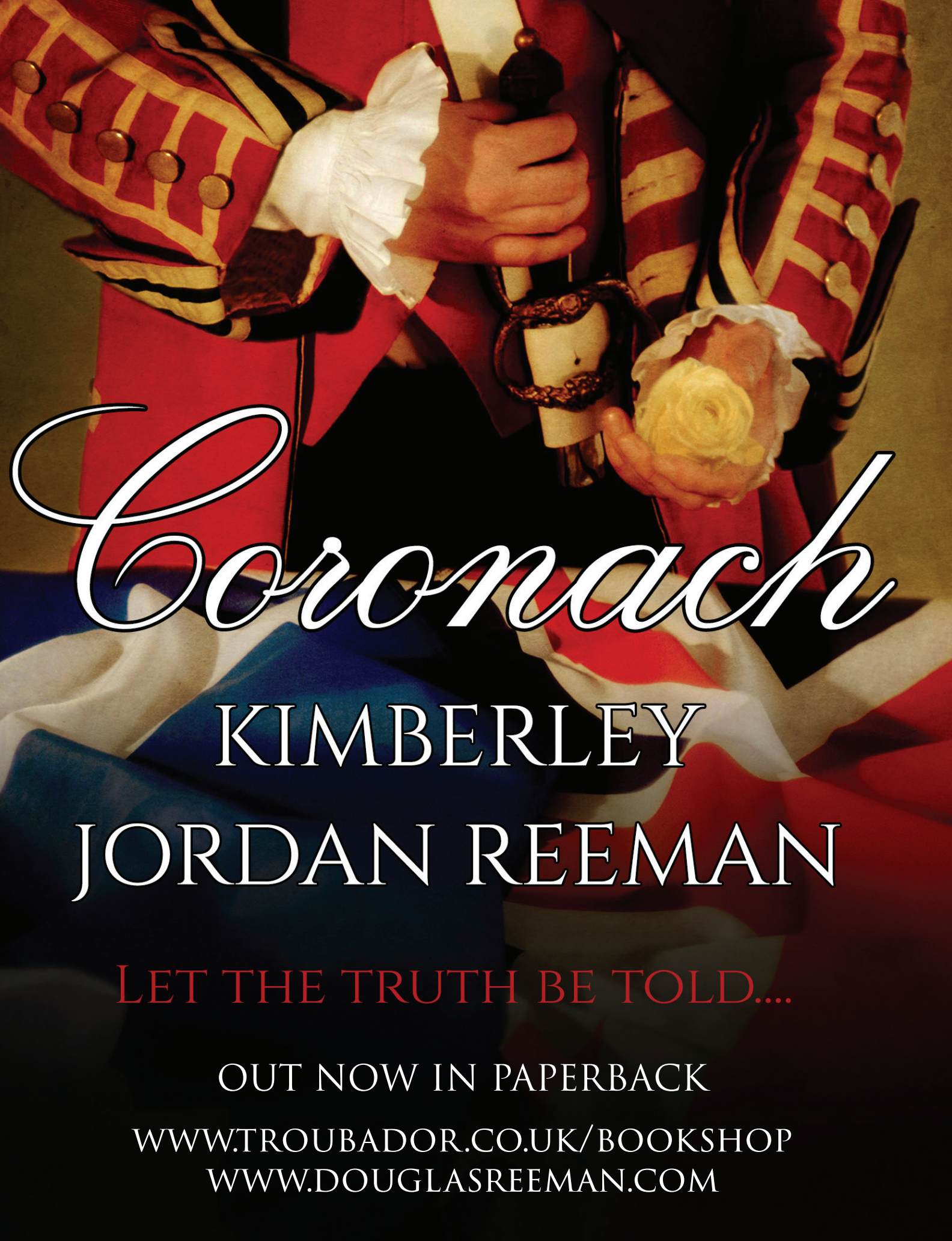
Returning favourites include The Heavy Beat Brass Band, Jumping Up, The Red Stripe Band, The Ska Beats and Paddy Sherlock. As for new faces, Sid Peacock and the Surge Orchestra, and Mr. Wilson's Second Liners will also be taking the stage. English singer-songwriter Marc Almond is this year's headliner.

"We aim to attract the biggest names we can in the industry, but we also hope to build on that wider appeal of the festival that draws the younger audiences and offers a platform for new and up and coming talent to shine.

"I do take a great personal pride in it, and I hope to see it running for another 18 years - it is a part of Derry now and I just can't imagine a May Bank Holiday where the streets aren't ringing to the sound of Jazz."

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





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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.

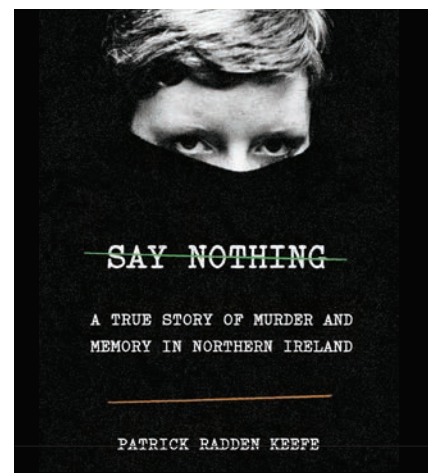
"I interviewed over one hundred people. And there is a significant revelation at the end of the book about the 1972 murder at the heart of the story, which was enormously cathartic."

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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## *Cynthia Neale finds love and satisfaction in her latest narrative*

**B**y the age of 11, Irish-American author Cynthia Neale was already fascinated with her future as a writer.

"I would knock on my neighbors' doors and ask if I could recite my poetry to them," she tells Celtic Life International via email. "At the time, I identified with Jo in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and declared to my family I was going to be a writer. I read voraciously and carried around a notebook to write my stories in."

In time, the young scribe traded in her door-to-door technique for something a touch more traditional.

"As I got older, I sought to sell short stories and essays. I would freeze after the first line or first paragraph. I had to get that first line and paragraph perfect to be able to go on. Now I just let it rip, knowing there will be much editing and revising. It is important to let inspiration and ideas flow and then later, 'grow them up,' so to speak."

Neale already has a number of novels to her name, including *The Irish Dresser* (2003), *Hope in New York City* (2008) and, more recently, *Norah* (2011). She has also published a cookbook titled *Pavlova in a Hat Box: Sweet Memories and Desserts*.

Her career, she shares, has had many notable highlights.

"I have been lucky enough to attend a redhead conference in Ireland to speak about my work. I stood in a stone mansion that belonged to a British landlord during the Famine and was used as a soup kitchen. I felt the shivering presence of my ancestors.

"I also sat on a panel for IBAM (Irish Books, Arts, and Music) in Chicago with a few esteemed writers and speakers. They were all male and all were from Ireland. I was the only woman, and I was not born in Ireland."

More recently, Neale released her fourth book, *The Irish Milliner*. The narrative is

set in New York City during the civil war and tells the tale of a young woman named Norah McCabe.

"I wrote this novel - and my three previous novels - about my protagonist, Norah. Norah and her stories sought me; I did not seek them. After the first two novels were published, I learned there had been a real Norah McCabe who came from Ireland to New York City in 1847. I thought I had finished telling her story after each one, but there was always more. After finishing the third novel, *Norah*, I was ready to work on another novel, one that I had been researching and writing for years. But through a dream, I saw Norah parading about in these fantastical, Victorian hats and knew there was another story in her.

"Watching Norah lead me through her escapades, trials and romances, and then seeing her woven into an Irish-American woman without compromise has been deeply rewarding."

Still, she admits that piecing together *The Irish Milliner* - which was roughly five years in the making - was not without its challenges.

*"I loved digging through history...but deciphering the historical details to support the story wasn't easy."*

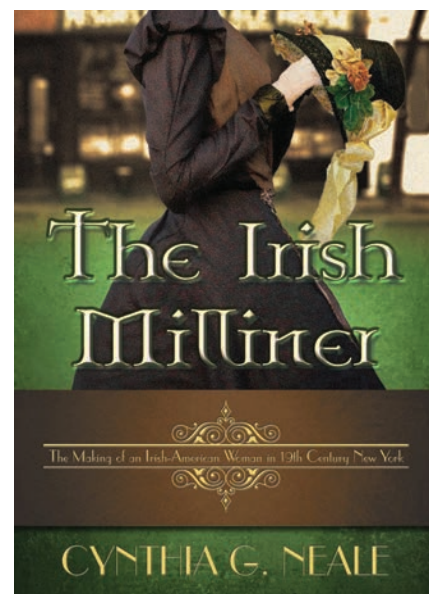
"There is so much that is fascinating but could have been extraneous and gotten in the way of the story. It is difficult; some say that I used too much historical detail, and others tell me they learned so much from my books, while also being entertained."

Since its debut, the novel has received great popular and critical acclaim.

"I hear from many readers; they loved

learning about the Draft Riots, the rich history of New York - especially the twists and turns of history - and enjoyed being back in Norah's life. I am always thrilled when readers take the time to write a review on Amazon or Goodreads."

Neale is currently working to adapt her first three novels into a series for television, called "*The Irish Dresser*." She is also fleshing out her next story, *Catharine, Queen of the Tumbling Waters*, which follows a Native-American woman with French blood who lives in New York State during the American Revolution.



"As an author, I will always see flaws in my writing. I am still growing, but now I have a sense of my own style that evolved slowly. If the story ends with love and sense of satisfaction, I will consider myself rewarded."

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



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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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# *Ewan Currie is out of his mind*



**B**orn in Australia, Ewan Currie moved to Saskatoon in the Canadian Prairies at the age of 11. He co-founded alt-country rockers The Sheepdogs in 2006. The band has since released numerous studio recordings, toured constantly, appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone Magazine*, and won an array of music industry awards. Recently we spoke with Currie about his roots, rock 'n' roll, and his latest solo effort *Out of My Mind*.





### **With a name like Currie, you likely have some Celtic heritage.**

Yes, I have a good helping of both Scottish and Irish history on both of my parent's sides of the family. Ewan, of course, is a proper Scottish name, and my brother's name is Shamus. Those are kind of the give-aways. It's funny; people in both Australia and Canada have always had a bit of a hard time pronouncing my name. However, I remember the first time we played Glasgow someone came up to me on the street and asked me "Excuse me, are you Ewaaan Currrie?" in that rich Scottish brogue, and he made it sound so beautiful and melodic.

### **Were you in touch with the heritage growing up?**

To be honest, not really. We were never really all "rah-rah" on that kind of stuff as a family. It wasn't until The Sheepdogs toured over there - I remember seeing the long, low, ancient stone walls on the drive to Glasgow - that I felt connected. Interestingly, I also felt that tug on the heartstrings while hearing the bagpipes at my neighbour's funeral, a proud Scotsman.



### **Have those melodies woven their way into your work?**

I don't think that I have ever sat down with the guitar and consciously tried to incorporate Scottish or Irish melodies into our songs. That said, I am almost certain that those influences are there. To some degree, it is unavoidable, given my own family's history - I mean, who knows? Maybe these are things are unconsciously passed down through our DNA. And, really, the history of music in North America has been undoubtedly influenced by Scottish and Irish emigration. As folks from those countries crossed the water into Canada and the U.S. over the years, they brought their instruments and those sounds with them. Newfoundland and Nova Scotia are perfect examples of that, as are the southeastern states in the U.S. As a musical artist, as well as being a huge music fan, these are the kinds of things that fascinate me.

### **Was being a music fan the reason you became a musician?**

Oh, absolutely. From a very young age, music moved me in a way that other things just couldn't. I wasn't into sports, and school was never really a big deal. I would come home from classes and just bury myself in recordings. I would listen to anything. Some of it didn't do anything for me, but enough of it did.

### **Were there other reasons?**

Yes, I liked being good at something and getting some recognition from my friends and family. And there were other motivations that perhaps I didn't really understand until later on down the road - things like self-expression, and the freedom from self that I get from losing myself in the music. There was, and still is, simply no feeling quite like it in the world.

### **What happens when you sit down with the guitar?**

Anything can happen. Haha. That is both the proverbial blessing and the curse, right? Some days I just feel like kicking back and strumming



out some tunes for the sheer joy of playing. It is relaxing and therapeutic. Some days nothing happens. And then there are other days when inspiration strikes and there is a mad dash to get it down before it disappears. Those times are magical, when I feel gripped by the music - it could be something as simple as a single riff, or a melody, or one line of a lyric, or it could be an entire song. Often, it begins with that, and after there is the discipline of working it out and making something cohesive out of it. Of course, not everything is a million-dollar idea; I have probably thrown out far more stuff than I have kept over the years. But, every once-in-a-while there is a real gem - a tune that ends up working really well either in the studio or in concert, or both. Sometimes this process can take months, or even years before coming to full fruition. The art of it is making it all seem effortless, which it is not.

### **Was that the process that went into your new solo recording?**

To some degree, for sure, though *Out of My Mind* seemed to flow pretty smoothly from start to finish. It was a very laid-back vibe all the way through, and I believe you can hear that in the songs. That is what happens when you surround yourself with good people in the studio though - musicians, engineers and producers who understand that a big part of the creative process is about getting out of the way and allowing the song to develop naturally and organically. It is actually quite cool to see a song write itself!

### **That is a big buzzword in music these days - organic.**

I suppose it is. It is kind of ironic, though, isn't it...given the incredible technology we have available at our fingertips today? The upside is that more people are making more music than ever before, which is beautiful. The downside is that the amount of crap music out there has skyrocketed.

### **Flea (bassist, Red Hot Chili Peppers) once said that there were only two types of music; music with soul and music with no soul.**

Perfect. For me, it has always come down to this; a good song can stand on its own on a single instrument, whether that is a guitar, a piano, or whatever. If the basic structure of the piece is sound, then it will endure. If it has a solid melody, one that moves the listener and takes them somewhere, then it will endure. Most importantly, if it comes from an honest and heartfelt place, then it will endure. Look at The Beatles or The Stones; there is a reason why we still listen to their music to this day. I'd like to think that the songs on *Out of My Mind* incorporate all those elements, even to a small degree.

### **How have you evolved as a songwriter over time?**

A number of ways; I think that my work ethic has always been pretty good, but I am much more disciplined than I was when I was younger and, because of that, I get more done in less time. I have also learned that I don't have to hit people between the ears to reach them and that, in some regard, subtlety - whether musically or lyrically - affords



me the opportunity to say more with less. I know that is kind of vague, but I have read or heard other creative people, in all disciplines, call this artistic maturity. And listening back to *Out of My Mind* with fresh ears I can hear those same three or four chords that I first learned way back when, only now I know how to use them and where they go. All that said, I am grateful that I still have a long way to go as a both a player and as a musical artist. The day I stop growing is the day I put the guitar down.

### **You are a bit of a guitar hound.**

Ha. Yes, it is an expensive passion for sure. I couldn't begin to tell you how many guitars I have owned through the years; Strats, Teles, Firebirds...I love a good, heavy-set Les Paul though. You can't beat those for feel and tone. I have two that I play all the time, both 1973 models. And they look so cool!

### **Guitar porn is a thing.**

Absolutely! When I was a kid, I would just drool over guitar magazines, dreaming about owning vintage gear. I still do. Now, I see that same look on the faces of kids who come up to me after a show - they don't want to talk, or even get an autograph - they just want to check out my gear!

### **Well, at the end of the day, it is still rock 'n' roll after all.**

You know it brother! And if I have any kind of advice for younger people looking to get into music as a career, or even as a hobby, it would be to enjoy it and have fun with it. The music industry has changed a lot in recent years, and its tougher than ever to carve a good living out of it. So, if it isn't fun, then it isn't worth your time. And, if it isn't fun then it ain't rock 'n' roll.

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# Paul Loverling

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*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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# *The Devil's Porridge*

Our award-winning photojournalist  
Tom Langlands travels back in time...





In the township of Eastriggs in south-west Scotland there is a small purpose-built museum dedicated to one of the most amazing and secretive stories of WWI. It tells a tale of 10,000 navvies, the biggest explosives manufacturing site in the world, state controlled public houses, canary girls, women's rights and one of the greatest social experiments of its time. It is the story of... The Devil's Porridge.

In March of 1915, the British Army launched its first major, planned offensive of WWI against German lines at the village of Neuve Chapelle in the north of France. The attack commenced with the largest artillery bombardment in the British Army's history and, although the Germans were pushed out

of the village, the advance ground to a rapid halt. Casualty numbers on both sides were horrific. The failure to capitalize on the success of the battle was put down to mostly a lack of ammunition - the British Army had simply run out of shells.

Back in Blighty there was public outrage and the press rounded on the government. Future Prime Minister David Lloyd George was appointed Minister of Munitions and was tasked with finding a solution to the 'Shells Crisis'.

At the outset of war, munitions factories were dotted around the country. However, WWI proved to be a different type of war; this was industrialized warfare and it necessitated industrialized solutions. Lloyd

George set about finding a new site for the largest munitions factory of its time. The site needed to be away from population centres - beyond the range of enemy Zeppelin attacks - and have access to established rail links to enable the flow of goods to and from the factory. In May 1915 a site along the Scottish shoreline of the Solway Firth was chosen. It was nine miles (14.5 km) long by two miles (3.2 km) wide and stretched almost from Annan, Scotland in the west to Longtown, England in the east. The area was flat, rural, largely unused, could connect with existing rail routes and had access to large quantities of coal. Crossing the Solway Firth, an existing railway viaduct connecting Scotland and England facilitated the installation of anti-submarine nets across the estuary. Importantly, the site also ran alongside the River Esk - a source of essential water. It would become known as H.M. Factory Gretna.

Work started on site in November 1915 with the help of 10,000 - mostly Irish - navvies attracted by the good wages on offer. The project involved laying 130 miles of railway track, 30 miles of road, and 100 miles of water mains as well as a purpose-built power station, manufacturing units, warehousing, barrack style accommodation for the workers and the creation of two new townships at Eastriggs and Gretna. Acclaimed engineer, architect and town planner Raymond Unwin, a proponent of the Garden City Movement, master-planned the townships. The designs were a far cry from the industrial towns of previous generations and heralded a new approach where the welfare of workers was considered important. There were green spaces, cinemas, community halls, churches, central kitchens and a bakery.





The purpose of the factory was to produce cordite - a cord-like material that provided the explosive charge in everything from bullets to artillery shells. This required the mixing of acids, nitro-glycerine, and gun cotton to create cordite paste that could then be extruded into strands of varying lengths and thicknesses before being dried and packed. As the process was inherently dangerous, and the risk of accidents and death high, the site layout was designed on the dispersion principle - i.e. lots of individual buildings spread over a large area - thus restricting damage in the event of an explosion.

The construction phase brought unexpected challenges. Many of the 10,000 navvies lodged in Annan, Longtown and Carlisle.

*The labour was physically demanding, and it wasn't long before the hard work was accompanied by hard drinking.*

The government, keen to maintain civil liberties - while not endangering the war effort - took control of all the breweries and licensed premises in the Carlisle, Gretna and Annan areas. Under the State Management Scheme, public house managers were encouraged to make their premises more 'family friendly' and to sell food and provide other facilities such as bowling greens. Beer was supplied at reduced strength, buying chasers was prohibited, and patrons could only purchase alcohol for their own consumption as the buying of rounds of drinks was banned. Prices were controlled by the state, and advertising alcohol was banned. Known as the Carlisle Experiment - although it was started in Annan - the government only intended the scheme to extend 12 months beyond the end of the war. However, it lasted until 1973!

Despite the enormity of the construction phase, much of the work was completed by June 1916 when the first factory workers arrived. These were the working-class women who took up the gauntlet of 'doing their bit' for the war effort. Attracted by good wages, an opportunity to be independent, and in the knowledge that they were directly helping the men on the front line, they came from all over the country to work there. By August 1916 the first cordite was being produced, and by 1917 the factory was manufacturing 800 tons of it per week - more than all the other manufacturing sites in the U.K. combined. At its peak, the entire operation employed 30,000 people with 15,000 - mostly women - directly involved with the



manufacture of munitions. At first the female workforce was housed in simple wooden huts with basic facilities, but later architect-designed, brick-built houses and hostels to a high standard were provided in Gretna and Easttriggs. The work was difficult, hard and dangerous; fumes from the chemicals were a constant problem affecting the eyes, nose and lungs, often causing breathing difficulties. Sometimes women would appear intoxicated and had to be taken outdoors to recover. Chemical burns from splashes were not uncommon, and contact with acids and other chemicals could turn the skin yellow - earning some the nickname of 'canary girls.' Prolonged exposure to certain toxins caused gum disease and loss of teeth. Explosions were a constant hazard and the women were regularly searched and fined if caught with anything metallic on their persons that could cause a spark such as a hairgrip or button. It is known that there were at least seven recorded deaths from explosions on site and another thirteen directly attributable to factory work. It is unlikely the exact figures will ever be known.

*Nobody knows the long-term damage that was done to the health of workers operating in conditions that would be deemed unacceptable today.*

Arthur Conan Doyle - of Sherlock Holmes fame - visited the site and wrote an article about 'A Miracle Town' that was first published in The Times in November 1916. He referred to the cordite mix that the women stirred and kneaded in large pans as the 'Devil's Porridge' and, noting the dangers they faced commented, "...it is a narrow margin here between life and death." The size and commitment of the female workforce did much to improve the status of women in the early part of the twentieth century. Certainly, it reinforced Conan Doyle's opinion that women should be given the right to vote, "...for those who have helped to save the State should be allowed to guide it." Put simply, the war could not have been won without their efforts and it was a contributing factor to women being given the right to vote in 1918.

The factory ceased production in 1919 and today there is little that remains of one of the greatest factories on Earth. For Judith Hewitt, manager and curator of The Devil's Porridge Museum, the museum plays an important role locally and nationally, "It preserves the forgotten heritage of an area and explains the largely untold role of women on the domestic front. For it was here as much as anywhere that the war was won."

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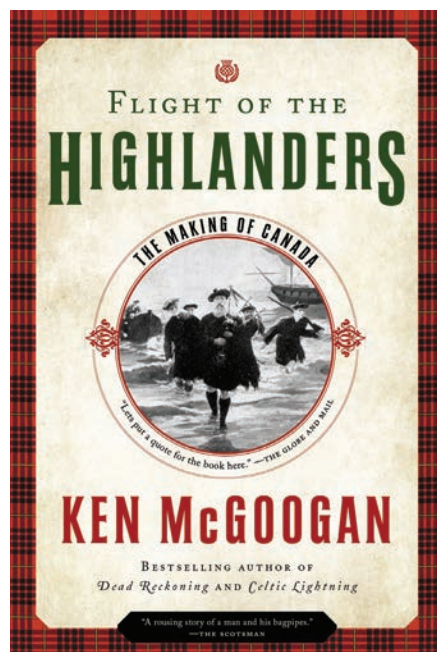
# *Flight of the Highlanders*

**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 tacksman 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 tacksman 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.*







The men build the houses and continually renew and repair thatched roofs. They also make and mend furniture and do any jobs that require heavy lifting, including digging the land and sowing the seed. The women handle the cows, make wicker baskets, and transport water and manure in buckets and baskets. They tend the corn and potatoes, and they also do the cooking. Generally, breakfast, lunch and supper vary the same elements: porridge, bread, milk, po-

tatoes, sometimes eggs, and possibly fish. Bread would be bannocks of oat or barley meal. In some areas, the grain is exhausted by the end of spring and people live on milk and fish until the potatoes are ready.

As April ends, the township turns to cutting and drying the peats needed to burn through the year for cooking and heating. An average family burns 15,000 peats per year. Several families usually combine their efforts as cutting peats requires two men, one to cut the rectangular cubes out of the ground and the other to lift them onto the bank. This tough, heavy work demands that the two change places frequently. A good team can cut 1,000 peats a day.

The women spread and stack the peats to dry, often with the help of older children. If the weather cooperates, the peats dry in two weeks. People carry them home in special wooden wheelbarrows called "peat barrows" and pile them near their homes. If they are lucky, they might be able to saddle up a "pack pony" to help with the carrying. This peat cutting takes place during the dry season, when men will also be working the ground and planting turnips.

The men make wooden pack saddles and collars for horses, ponies and oxen, and primitive sleds on which to drag large stones from the fields. They use fires to crack the largest stones, or else bore holes and fill them with wet wedges that crack the stone as they dry and expand. They make wooden gates to confine cattle and various kinds of rope using rushes, heather, and even horsehair. For this task, they create rope-twisting devices.

In ancient times, Highlanders went barefoot. But then they took to cutting undressed hide to fit their feet, punching holes around the edges and tying what was effectively a moccasin around their ankles. By the 18th century people are tanning leather to make their shoes.





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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# Celtic Folklore

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





**W**e 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.

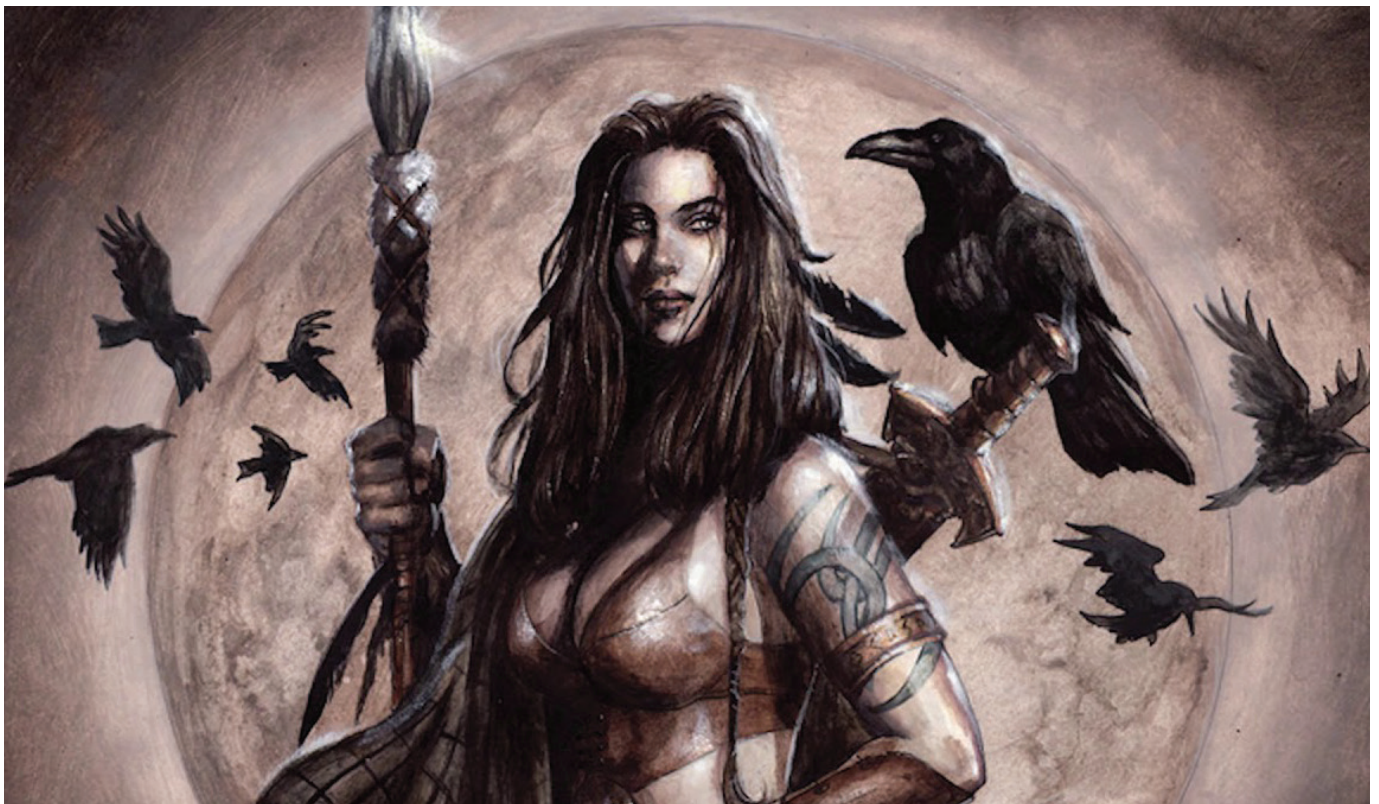
"Not at all, ye just sit tight there." Oonagh set about making two large cakes on the griddle. When they were cooked, she placed the metal griddle between the two cakes and handed it to the Red Man.

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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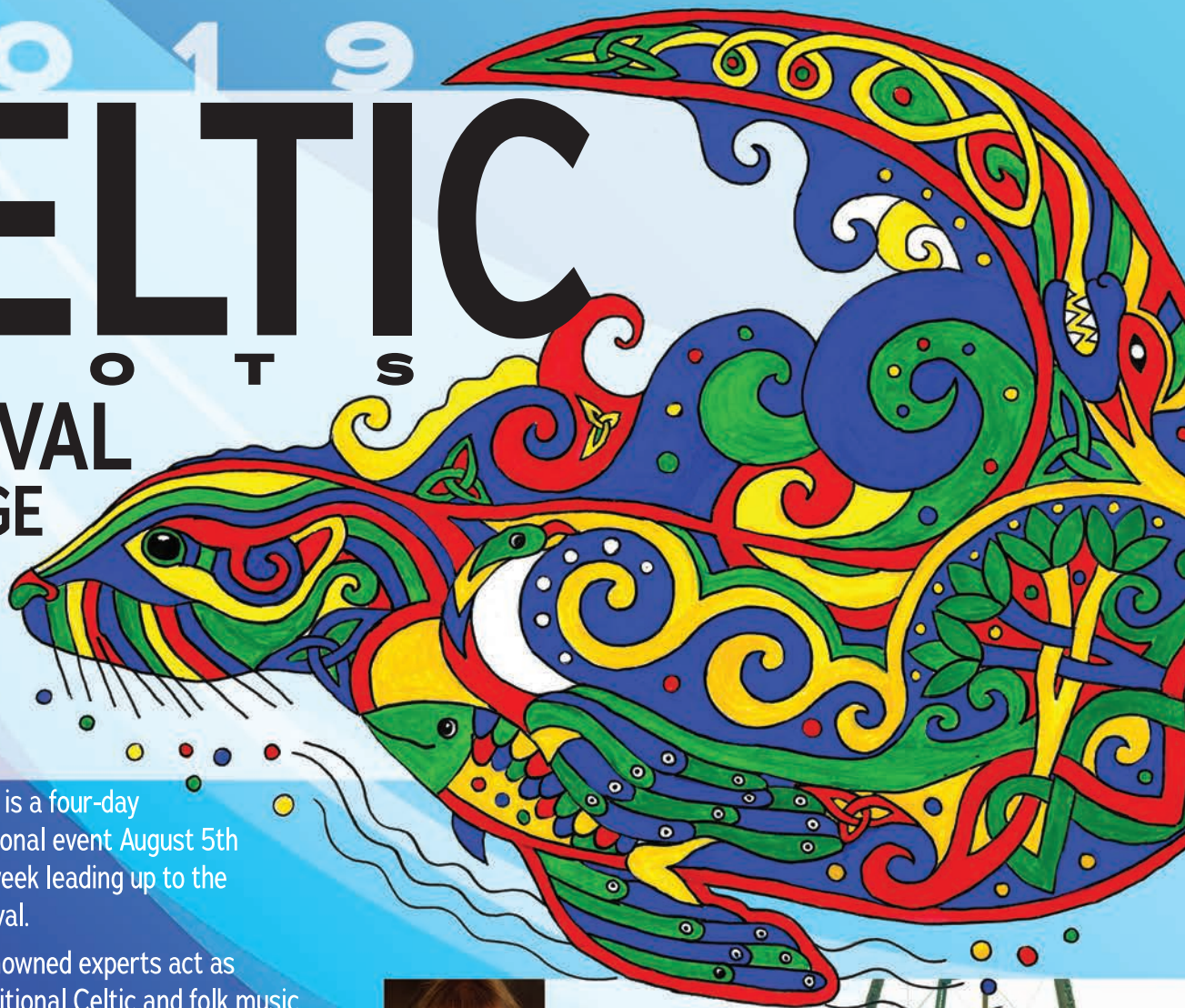
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# *Learning to Love Wales*

In the first instalment of a four-part series, Lesley Choyce wanders through the wonder of Wales...







One of the reasons I thought that my wife Linda and I, along with our trusty Westie Keltie, should travel to Wales was for me to overcome a deep-seated grudge, an outright prejudice some might say, that I had against the Welsh.

However, before you judge me harshly, let me explain a few more details; as a young man (well, as someone in their late thirties) I was travelling about Wales, somewhere near Merthyr Tydfil or Pontypridd, when I stopped in one late afternoon for a pint of bitter at a pub in a small town. I was alone and looking every bit the outsider. I received dark looks from working men who had obviously just finished an honest day's manual labour, I would guess, and in walks this foreigner (me) without a care in the world.

I sat at the bar and absorbed the scowls of working men with a certain amount of grace I believe and ordered my pint. I handed the barkeep a twenty pounder and he promptly handed back several of those weighty little pound coins. The price of a beverage to me that day seemed a bit steep here in whatever the town was. So, I reminded the man behind the bar that I had handed him a twenty, not a fiver or a ten. He grunted and I think so did a few of the other regulars not trying to mind their own business that afternoon. The man grudgingly opened the till again and slapped some appropriate bills with those funny pictures of the queen before me.

As I drank my bitter, feeling a bit bitter myself, I decided then and there that here was possibly the most unfriendly pub I had ever had the displeasure to drink in. Perhaps it was the most unfriendly pub in all the U.K., perhaps the Western World.

After that, even though I knew Wales to have some exquisite surfing beaches, dramatic mountains and lively culture, I couldn't shake the feeling that I had received that unwelcoming day.

*But now, as a man in his sixties, it was time to bury the hatchet and forget about old grudges.*

Fittingly, perhaps, the skies were clear, and it was a fine day as we drove on to Llangollen through a green valley that was untarnished by slate or coal strip mining as far as the eye could see.

Between Llangollen and Glyndyfrdwy, however, not far from Horseshoe Falls, we hit more traffic on the highway. In fact, we came to a complete halt. After a twenty-minute wait, we were allowed to move forward and discovered that in the opposing lane of traffic was a monstrous size truck towing a mammoth blade of a wind generator that was at least four car lengths long. The truck was dead stopped. We'd seen wind generators generously distributed throughout the



U.K. and, to me, they were always symbolic of how far this nation and much of Europe had come since the energy crises of the 1970s and 1980s. Such change, though, comes at a price...and today, I supposed those late for an appointment due to the construction of environmentally-friendly energy sources would be cursing those goody-two-shoe environmentalists who were mucking up Welsh traffic flow with their damn wind machine parts.

Soon, however, we were past the truck and on our way, but for those coming from the other direction, the drivers were stuck in a traffic snarl that was at least five miles long. Maybe it is one of those disreputable North American traits but passing those other poor sods who were going to be stuck for a really long time and not knowing even why they were stopped, I felt a small bubble of happiness burgeoning in me. I daresay I am not proud of the feeling, but part of my brain produced the simple adolescent equation: they were stuck in traffic and I was not. How lucky is that?

A quick glance at our map assured me that there was probably not another easy way through this valley and, besides, there was no place to turn around on the narrow road. Those Welsh drivers were good and screwed if they were hoping to get home on time for their Welsh rarebit lunch. This seemingly insignificant event strangely lifted my spirits enough so that I had stopped worrying about my daughter Pamela and the soon-to-be twins.

Along the way we passed a place called Ewe-phoria Agri-theatre and Sheep Dog Centre, although it didn't look to be open. According to Britevents, the place "details the life and work of the shepherd on a traditional Welsh farm. The Agri-Theatre has unusual living displays of sheep with accompanying lectures on their history and breed, while outside sheepdog handlers put their dogs through their paces." The BBC once declared Ewe-phoria one of the top U.K. Easter destinations, coming in at number thirty-eight just ahead of the Star Wars Museum.

I made a mental note to possibly stop there on our way back to England if we happened to be in the mood for unusual displays of sheep, but for now we kept going and, instead, stopped for a much needed break in Pentrefoelas. Dayoutwiththekids.co.uk claims there are 155 "things to do" with kids in this town but there isn't really. How-



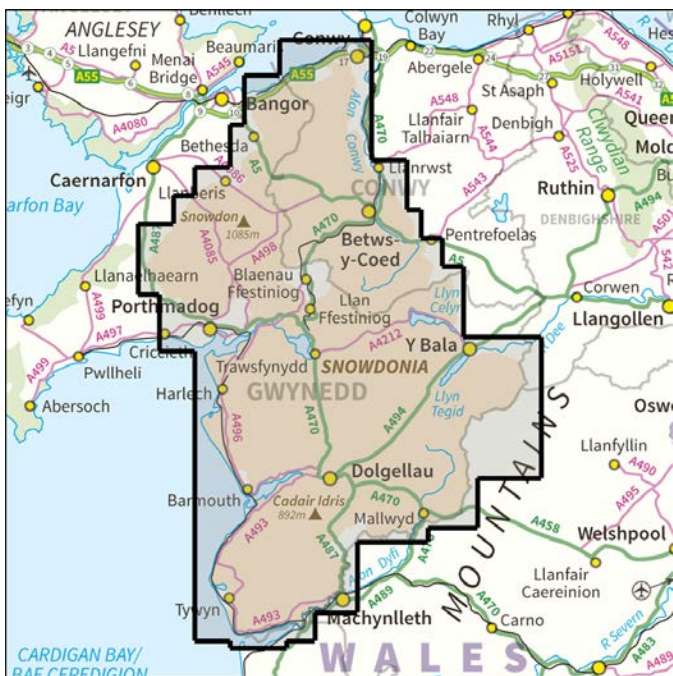
ever, there is a little grassy park by a chattering brook with a cool arched stone bridge. There are wood carvings here and plaques with stories about the "Fair Folk" of Welsh legend.

*Apparently, long ago, these mystical creatures appeared and disappeared on a regular basis and occasionally became intimately involved with the locals.*

One story, recounted by author zteve t evans (zteve must really hate capital letters), tells of a young shepherd from Pentrefoelas who was staring at a peat stack one misty morning only to discover a beautiful girl standing there. It looked like she needed help and he went to aid her, eventually falling in love with this lovely person from another dimension. According to zteve, "Although the girl was not from earth they married and had children and lived a happy life. Sadly, their happiness was shattered by a freak accident that broke a promise the shepherd had made to his wife's father. This meant she had to return to the Otherworld where she came from and they were parted forever."

Such a sad ending to an inter-dimensional love story. I suppose local parents tell the tale to their children as a kind of warning not to fall in love with someone from the Otherworld. I know I wouldn't want my kids to fall for someone like that and I guess you would have to say that becoming beguiled by one of the Fair Folk is not one of the 155 things to do in this neighbourhood.

Although we only stayed a short while in this small village, both Keltly and I felt the presence of something we could not quite name and left for the last leg of our journey refreshed and rejuvenated. I found myself thankful, as well, to all those who keep track of old legends like this, especially zteve t evans who has this to say about himself: "I have a deep affinity with the natural world, animals, plants, trees, birds, and all other of God's creatures and a healthy respect for spiders, scorpions, snakes and anything that stings, or bites." Clearly, he and I are kindred spirits.







Conwy Castle

We easily found our temporary home, Rock Cottage, close to the centre of Betws-y-Coed. It was right behind a discount outdoor sports outlet called The Cotswold Outdoor Rock Bottom Store. “Rock Bottom,” I assumed, referred to prices but to my eye, the running shoes, backpacks, BPA-free water bottles and hiking shorts all looked damned expensive. The town actually had several of these outdoor enthusiast franchises, leading me to realize that many travellers come to Betws-y-Coed to hike, climb mountains, run up and down the mountain trails and bike through the valleys, all with stylish and expensive gear. In fact, the town reminded me a lot of Grasmere back in the Lake District where such stores had been plentiful as well.

In principle, ever since I was a Boy Scout hiking through the wilds of the New Jersey Pines with my friends in the Flaming Arrow Patrol, I believed that the really good outdoorsy stuff need not be anything special. An old pair of shoes that you’d never wear to church, some old jeans that probably had rips and paint stains, a signature faded flannel shirt with button down pockets, an army surplus canteen with cold water, a used rucksack that had once belonged to a private in the military - and Bob’s Your Uncle, as we like to say in Canada. But I could see that the world of outdoor activity had been infiltrated by commercialism like everything else on the planet. Fellow hikers here in the heart of Snowdonia National Park probably judged you by the brand name showing on your sunglasses, your self-wicking t-shirt

or appropriately low-rider designer white socks. I remained confident, however, that the creatures of the wild you encountered in the Gwydyr Forest didn’t care a whisker about your clothes or gear so long as you left them in peace as you tromped through the valleys and along the streams.

But, by the way, did I also say that I liked Betws-y-Coed? Well, I did. The name means something like “prayer house in the woods,” and it has had its share of famous visitors over the years, including Percy Shelley, Mathew Arnold, Charles Darwin, Alexander Graham Bell and the Queen of Siam. Darwin, who was born in Shrewsbury, near the Welsh border, liked to hike through the hills near Betws to find fossils. Shelley was no doubt

trying to get away from the rat race of competing poets. I don’t know what drew Bell or the Queen of Siam, but the mountains of Snowdonia had a heyday of tourism that started in the eighteenth century and continues on to this day. The great news is that as soon as you walk two blocks southwest of all the hubbub of the expensive footwear stores and the organic pizza parlours you are in the woods that are still as pure and pristine as the days when Wordsworth came here to wear out the soles of his latest hiking boots and mutter his latest sonnet for sister Dorothy before it drifted off into the wispy clouds of the blue Snowdonia skies.

After we’d unloaded our car, Linda wanted to shop. So Kelty and I agreed she



Pont-y-Pair Bridge





Lesley Choyce



Linda & Kelty

in the 1500s and still seemed in good shape today as cars and ice-cream-licking tourists passed over its stone arches. It appears in a number of famous paintings, including one by Thomas Girton who captured it in watercolours back in 1798 well before the bed and breakfasts and the hiking supply shops took over the town.

We found a trail leading west along the river into a forest with a high canopy of deciduous trees and I slipped off my shoes to dangle my feet in the cold water as Kelty followed my lead and put paws to water. Back on the trail we ended up in a field of sheep that weren't the slightest bit shy around a small, yappy white dog. Kelty's tail stood straight up, as did his ears, as we danced around the minefield of blackish sheep dung. Soon it was time to catch up with Linda back in front of St. Mary's Church.

My initial survey of the town revealed it to be busy but friendly, quaint yet commercial, dog-friendly and human-friendly as well. And so, I was forced to re-evaluate the national character of the Welsh and admit that my encounter with the scoundrel barman might have been an anomaly. Clearly not all Welshmen were nasty cheats. Here was a village with water bowls for dogs, polite young smiling shopkeepers, pubs offering discounts on craft beer during mid-afternoon happy hours and balding men with serious sunburns sporting t-shirts with phrases like, "I'm a Railway Nut." I was beginning to like Wales very much.

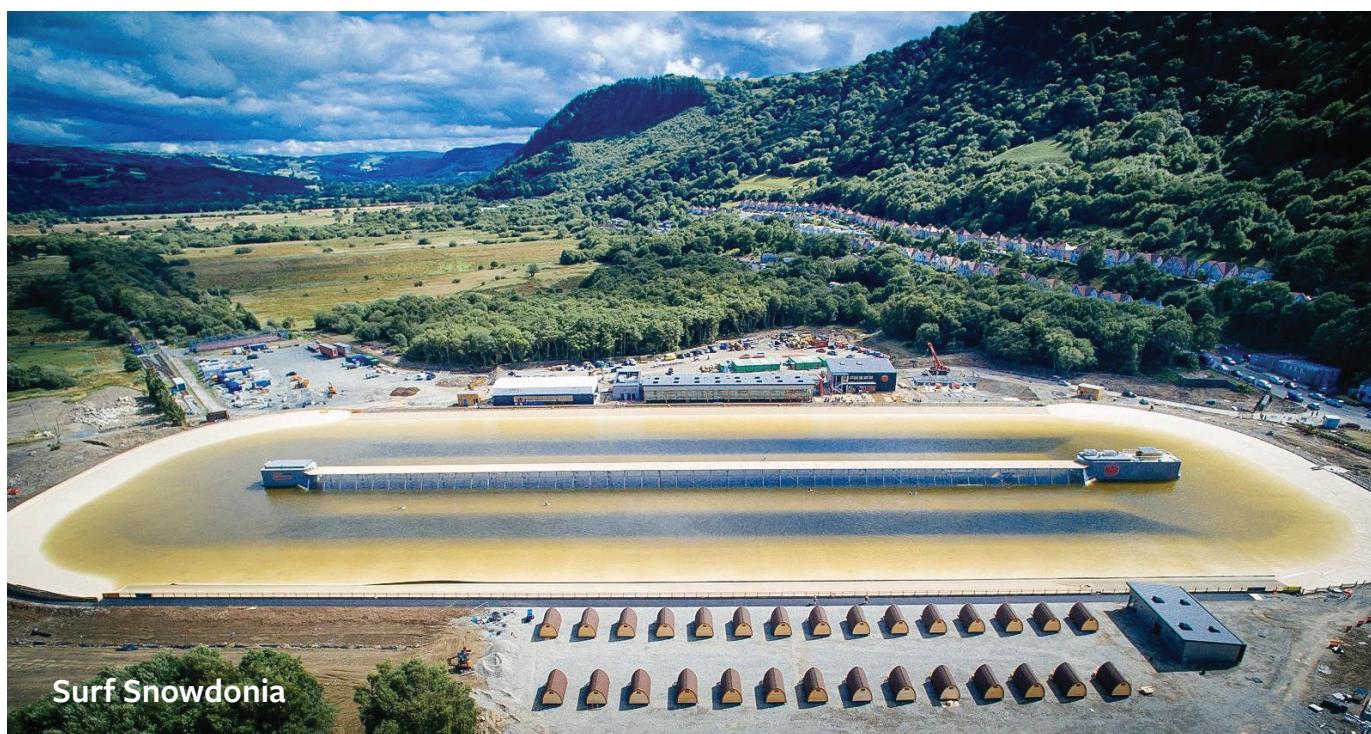
should go her own way and have fun while we hiked about town. It was a hot day by Canadian standards, so we headed for the Afon Lugwy River that runs through town to connect with the Conwy River. A quick stop at the tourist bureau allowed me to pick up some brochures of nearby places we would not be going to, including Zipworld, The Conwy Railroad Museum, Go Below Underground Adventures and the Betws-y-Coed Golf Club. However, they did have a large bowl of water on the floor for Kelty, as did many stores, restaurants and pubs in town. In my mind, such a preponderance of this symbolic gesture made Betws-y-Coed regis-

ter much higher on my travel regard than if it had twenty four-star Michelin restaurants.

I did pick up a brochure for one place already on my to-do list – Surf Snowdonia, one of the world's first inland surf parks. Tomorrow would be the day I surfed my first artificial inland wave and I was both excited and nervous at the prospect.

As Kelty slurped down half the contents of the water in the steel dish near my feet, I read an item on the wall that said: "Fun Fact: Betws-y-Coed is the most misspelled word in the U.K." Who would have guessed?

Kelty and I walked back and forth over the Pont-y-Pair Bridge, which was built back



Surf Snowdonia





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# *On the fore-front of Golf's Future*

*Celtic Life International Senior Writer Chris Muise explores  
the links to golf's past, present, and future...*





**O**f all the wonderful things the Scots have given the world over the centuries, the ancient sport of golf is likely among one of its finest gifts - save, perhaps, a nice snifter of whisky - but we can debate that in another issue. Golf is a sport loved among folks the world over, Celtic descent or no.

One of its many appeals, arguably, is the long sense of tradition that infuses the game. While its earliest origins are obscured by the fogs of time, recorded history of the game goes back nearly 700 years.

"The modern-day idea of golf from the 1400s does come from Scotland," says Dr. Beth Jewett, an adjunct faculty member and professor of Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. "But there is a lot of evidence to earlier ball-and-stick from across the European continent, a lot of relationship with earlier Dutch games. Like all other games or sports, the origins are somewhat lost in time."



Jewett teaches many aspects of Canadian history, but one of her favourite topics - the focus of her PhD project, in fact - is the history of golf course design between 1873 and 1945. She agrees that customs are part of the DNA of the game.

"The traditions remain," she says. "There are strong connections to the histories of individual clubs, and of club members. The golfers that come out of that club. There are even strong connections between certain golf courses and their designers."

The Old Course at St. Andrew's in Scotland is a prime example. Established in 1552, St. Andrew's is considered to be the oldest golf

course in the world. Golf's top players still tee off there today.

While St. Andrew's continues to flourish, other courses haven't been so lucky; Riddell's Bay Golf and Country Club of Warwick, Bermuda, Edinburgh's Carrick Knowe Golf Club, and the lush-but-exorbitant Wynn Golf Club in Las Vegas are just a handful of well-known and beloved golf courses that have, or soon will, shut their doors forever. Blame it on dwindling memberships, debts to creditors, and rising maintenance costs.

"Sadly, a few of my golf courses have been closed - one is now a rugby academy and the other a country park," says Jonathan Gaunt, a notable golf course architect from the U.K. since the late 1980s, who has designed 40 golf courses and helped remodel 250 more.

It is a grim trend, according to some golf industry spectators.

In 2017, Canada's The National Post published a piece titled, "As courses close and millennials turn their backs, golf reckons with uncertain future," speculating on the future of golf, a sport still reeling from the 2008 housing crisis, and the inevitable loss of the baby boomer generation.

"The sport needs to become more attractive to younger players," continues Gaunt. "Teenagers through to retirement age, rather than just retirees. The average age of the golf club member in the U.K. is over 60 years old."

Shorter courses with fewer holes that take up less land is one possibility that Gaunt has explored. Golf legend Jack Nicklaus even suggests changes to the ball itself, suppressing the distance it can travel.

Ironic - considering that technology allowing golf balls to fly farther is one of the many factors that made the game what it is today.

Golf hasn't always appeared like this. Today's game is a product of post-war realities, according to Dr. Jewett; the sport looked a lot different prior to its emergence in North America in the latter half of the 19th century.

"You go from a very early type of course, where there were no designated different holes, tees, greens. You were on seaside links, rolling grasslands used as common land for different purposes. By the mid-1800s, you see a shift towards a development of what we would witness now; your standard nine-hole course, 18-hole course, where you have a differentiation made between your tee-off area, your fairway, your green. Before that, you would even have golfers playing back and forth on the same hole, so it was also about routing the course.

*"Those cultural changes, alongside changing technologies that allowed actual changes to the course, started to come together."*

Earth-moving technology meant a course could be designed to an architect's imagination, and not just limited to the topography of that land. That led to the creation of longer holes, and more varied hazards. The style of courses quickly evolved: the Penal style of the late 19th century, characterized by straightforward links with horizontal hazards, soon made way for the Strategic style of the early 20th century, which adds variety in terms of course playability and types of nature on display, all in favour of a gameplay style that added course navigation to the player's skill repertoire.

Then technology improved to the point that golf clubs and golf balls could be machined with precision, using materials carefully designed to improve accuracy and distance of shot. Gone were the days of the "Featherie" ball - made with leather-bound feather filling - to the "gutta-percha" ball, with a rubber core, and a machine-dimpled surface for maximum aerodynamics.

These changes brought about the golf course style most of us think of when we think of golf - the Heroic, characterized by dramatic





vistas, unbelievable natural splendour, and a mix of disparate styles of nature scarcely found together naturally, all in service of maximum topological challenge.

It is the Heroic course that many people saw major games played on for the first time, cementing the image of the “true” golf course in our culture for generations.

“I have talked to a few golf architects themselves, who speak to how television really altered people’s perceptions of golf,” notes Jewett. “Once people saw Augusta National on TV for the Masters in colour, zooming in on these blooming azaleas, everyone wanted an Augusta National. It became the difference between certain perceptions of golf and the reality of the day-to-day workings with the course, what would be possible and feasible.”

*“When you really get into the history, it has gone through several changes, and it has evolved with society.”*

The confluence of these factors that defined “golf” to the modern mind also helped to establish the perceived exclusivity of the sport, itself part of the overall sense of tradition that people associate with the game.

“It was, from the beginning, a game that was taken on by the social elite, by royalty or nobility,” explains Jewett. “It was also played by the everyday person. But quite quickly, the club system that emerged became a very exclusive part of golf.”

Early golf clubs didn’t necessarily have exclusive rights over a golf course - they shared public land with everyday people - but membership to these clubs was exclusive, and became a sign of class, status, and means.

When the sport emerged in North America, clubs then began buying up farmland, and turning it into golf courses the clubs owned, which they then had exclusive rights over. The prominence of these clubs and the social status membership carried helped cement the

idea that golf was a “classy” sport, for well-to-do, upper-society folks. And unfortunately - like much of the western world in the 1920s - for whites only.

And while the days of Jim Crow are seemingly long-gone, socio-economic factors and systemic racism have caused at least the perception of racial exclusion to linger for decades; a spectre of the past the golf industry has long fought against, and only relatively recently really started to exorcise.

“You do start to see a stratification in who is considered part of golf culture, and who is not,” notes Jewett. “We still hear about these cases, about these lingering rules within clubs. It depends on the club, but that is part of the history, for sure. As it was in many other sports. It has definitely been a lingering association. We have always had clubs that have bucked the trend.”

*“We are dealing with a structure of play, and of sport, where you did have those racial boundaries, and even gender boundaries, for a long time. That you still feel that they linger.”*







With that context in mind, maybe it is not such a surprise, then, that legacy clubs are struggling to entice new blood; that costly courses are closing; that people are talking about golf like it is an endangered species, and its most beloved and historical courses might soon become missing links.

But with that same context, it is clear that this version of golf is an evolution from an earlier iteration, a version that arose from the needs of society and the desires of the players. So, if golf could be saved by making radical changes...is that really so bad?

According to Dan Pino, director of communications at Golf Canada, the industry is not interested in resting on its laurels, hoping the "Grand Old Game" will stay relevant forever.

"There is not a reluctance or hesitancy to change or innovate; innovation is just part of the business," says Pino, "heritage, history, and tradition is not a bad thing to have in your space, but that doesn't mean that you are prohibited from innovating. They do not have to be exclusive."

Pino adds that golf is certainly not interested in wholesale shedding of centuries of customs; far from it. Those traditional elements, those values and codes of conduct, are still treasured by the industry. But there is also plenty of room to allow for new traditions to flourish.

Players, courses, and clubs alike have balked to some degree at the onset of digital options. Topgolf, virtual reality holes, and things of that nature can be seen by some purists as sacrilege, since it takes the player out of the natural milieu.

However, other types of digital technology are booming among golfers. Namely, data tracking technology. Your opponents in golf include other players, the course itself, and even you - the past you. Data tracking technology allows players to monitor their own improvements against all three.

"We love information about our own game," shares Pino, who says the industry is heading towards a global handicap tracking system by 2020 which will allow any two players on Earth to enjoy an equitable game together, regardless of personal skill. "For those that are tech savvy, there are things like GPS, score tracking, and so forth.

***"Technology has certainly made its way into the golf experience. And, for those that want it, you have it."***

As for those scary virtual-reality computer games, Pino says that there is room for them in the game as well. In fact, everything from driving ranges to Mario Golf is a net gain for the longevity of the sport.



"You could say, 'is that golf?' It may not be a traditional round of golf, but it is 100 per cent a golf experience. The green grass golf experience is part of the golf experience. The driving range experience. The Topgolf experience. The winter simulator - hit balls and play any golf course in the world - virtual experience. There are golf experiences that contribute to people's interest in consuming the game.

"If you buy a bucket of balls at a driving range, you are contributing to the economic impact of the game."

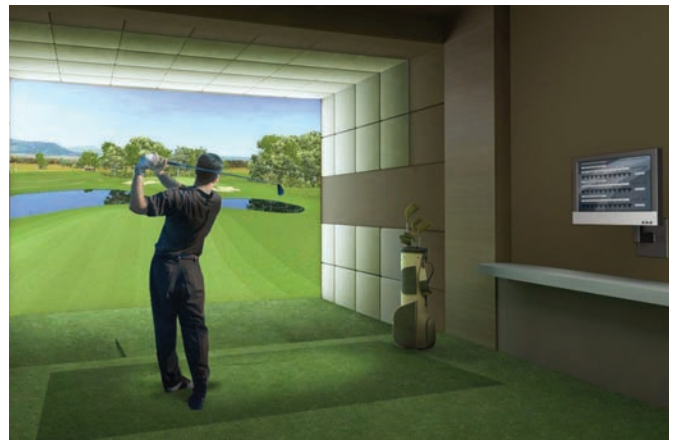
The survival of the game relies - and has always relied - on exposing a new generation to the sport. But one size does not fit all, so expecting one style of golf to be everyone's style is the death rattle of the game. That is why the golf industry is eager to court new golfers, however they like to play.

"If you are always going to rely on people getting older to play more golf, then you are going to have fewer golfers down the road," says Pino.

He adds that even golf course closures needn't be seen as dire portents of the end of golf. In times of big change, being efficient is a boon, not a bane.







"A course closure isn't necessarily a bad thing for the general health of the game, the way that people make it out to be. 'This course is closing; it must be that golf is dying.' That's like saying Target closed in Canada; it must mean that people don't like to shop. If a semi-private or private golf course closes for whatever reason, those are less impactful to the game than a municipal golf course, or a mom-and-pop, or a driving range. Those are the courses that feed entry-level participation."

The closure of the Wynn Golf Club in Vegas, for example, is a sign that the golf industry is examining eco-friendly course design, both in the ecological sense and the economic sense.

"The environmental impact side is huge, in terms of a need to shift what you use," says Jewett. "Do you use Astroturf? Do you just get rid of grass and go to artificial greens?"

The solution may not need be so drastic.

"A few years back, the US Open went to Pinehurst, and there were elements of the golf course redesign at Pinehurst that were specifically meant to send an education message that says 'brown is beautiful,'" says Pino, adding that Gil Hanse, the designer behind the golf courses used for the Rio Olympics, also wanted to send a global message about the value of non-green golf. "There's certain elements of the natural terrain that makes it a unique golf experience."

*One of the biggest changes that could be on the horizon for golf is a return to the basics.*

"What I would like to see is for it to return slightly more to its roots," says Jewett, who is a proponent of the multi-use, public golf courses. "Allow for courses that have dual functions, as conservation spaces, as sustainable ecological sites. As well as places that are inclusive of all people."

Funny enough, one of the leaders of that trend today? St. Andrews, the oldest course in the world.

"This revered, iconic course that hosts the Open championship; on Sundays it is a public park," says Pino, who also encourages the development of multi-use sporting land that includes golf. "You can walk your dog - they are out walking on the fairway. It is part of the community."

"I love that at St. Andrews, on given days, the public still has the right to roam across the course," adds Jewett. "Maybe that is something we can do here."

The landscape of golf might be changing. It won't all change at once, and ideally, there will just be more diversity of the game, including the classic 18-hole links. One thing is abundantly clear, though; the caretakers of the game are not going to allow golf to fade away if they can help it.

"As long as golf courses exist, I think golfers or prospective golfers will play them," says Gaunt. "The sport will not die as long as people continue to need to escape from their daily schedule."





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# Top Ten

## Celtic Golf Greats

*Throughout history, an abundance of legendary players have hailed from the Celtic world. Perseverance and passion hold true among our list of “then & now” greatest golfers. Here is a quick glimpse of a few of the greats, past and present.*



## **Rory McIlroy**

*County Down, Northern Ireland*

A sign of great things to come, when Rory McIlroy was just two years old, he hit a 40-yard drive. Since late 2009, he's placed among the top 10 of the Official World Golf Rankings. Several times he's held the No. 1 slot, including a 32-week stretch in 2012-2013. Career highlights include winning the 2011 U.S. Open (where he set a new low score record) and the 2012 PGA Championship.



## **Catriona Matthew**

*Edinburgh, Scotland*

Catriona Matthew started playing golf when she was five years old. She has ranked as high as 11th among the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings. Matthew qualified for the LPGA Tour on her first try and she also plays for the Ladies European Tour. She has represented Europe in the Solheim Cup numerous times and on six occasions her team won. She's also won four LPGA prizes, including the RICOH Women's British Open in 2009, making her the first Scottish golfer to ever win a women's major championship.



## **Darren Clarke**

*County Tyrone, Northern Ireland*

A Northern Irish fan favourite, Darren Clarke has been a European Tour player since 1991. He also previously played the PGA Tour. He's won 22 professional competitions worldwide, but a dream was realized when he won his first major championship at the 2011 Open after more than 50 attempts to do so. In 2012, the Queen inducted Clarke into the Order of the British Empire for his success during the previous year. The Darren Clarke Foundation provides golfing opportunities to Irish youth and raises awareness about breast cancer.



## **Jamie Donaldson**

*Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales*

Jamie Donaldson has been a pro golfer since 2000 and by 2002 he was playing on the European Tour. But due to a back injury, he lost his spot in 2004. This was not the end of Donaldson, however. By 2008, he was on the European Tour again.

Since then his official Golf World rankings have steadily increased, rising as high as #27 in the world. His upswing wins include the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship in 2013 and the Irish Open in 2012.



## **Padraig Harrington**

*Dublin, Republic of Ireland*

European and PGA Tour player Padraig Harrington brought pride to the Emerald Isle when he won The Open Championship in 2007 - the first Irishman to do so in 60 years. That same year he won the PGA Championship and in 2008 he won another Open. Harrington has collected numerous other European, Asian and PGA tour prizes since the late 90s. While his rankings have declined since 2009, Harrington has been determined to make a comeback.







## **Sandy Lyle**

***Shropshire, England***

Although born in England, Alexander Walter Barr Lyle has always played on behalf of Scotland and now calls Perthshire his home. The World Golf Hall of Famer was one of the “Big Five,” along with Seve Ballesteros (Spain), Nick Faldo (England), Bernhard Langer (Germany) and Ian Woosnam (Wales). The quintet has won 16 major titles between them and each were members of the famous 1985 European Ryder Cup team that claimed victory from the U.S., which had been previously undefeated for nearly three decades. Highlights of Lyle’s own career include winning The Open in 1985 and the Masters in 1988.



## **Samuel Henry “Errie” Ball**

***Gwynedd, Wales***

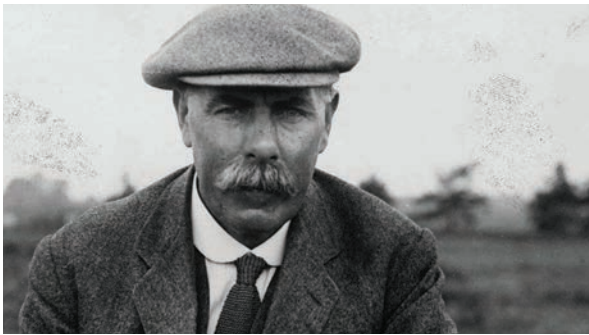
When Samuel Henry “Errie” Ball passed away in 2014 at the age of 103, he was the oldest surviving member of The PGA of America. He competed in the first Augusta National in 1934. In 1926, at age 15, Ball was the youngest player to have competed in the British Open. Bobby Jones, who won that championship, began mentoring Ball and convinced him to move to the U.S. An Illinois and PGA Golf Hall of Famer, Ball won several Illinois PGA Championships, among other tournaments. As of his last birthday, Ball was still teaching golf lessons.



## **Philomena Garvey**

***County Louth, Rep. of Ireland***

At the time of her death in 2009, The Ladies Golf Union described Philomena Garvey as “Ireland’s most successful female amateur golfer to date.” Her numerous achievements include 15-time Ladies Irish Close Champion; five-time finalist, including one win, at the Ladies British Amateur Open Championship; six wins with the GB&I Curtis Cup team; and 18-time Irish representative at the Home Internationals. In 1964, Harvey became the first female professional golfer in Ireland’s history, but she requested she be reinstated as an amateur in 1968. She retired from the game after winning the Ladies Irish Close Champion in 1970.



## **James Braid**

***Fife, Scotland***

James Braid was one of the “Great Triumvirate” players. He, Harry Vardon and John Henry Taylor were known as the three foremost golfers during their time and together won 16 of 21 Open Championships from 1894 to 1914. Braid himself captured five of these major titles. He also won the 1910 French Open and several British PGA Match Play Championships. Today, Braid might be better known for the over 300 golf courses he designed or restructured across Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales. “James Braid is considered one of the finest golf course designers of all time,” states VisitScotland.com, encouraging visitors to take the James Braid Golf Trail.



## **Dorothy Campbell**

***Edinburgh, Scotland***

In his book *From the Links: Golf’s Most Memorable Moments*, Joshua Shifrin describes Dorothy Campbell as “the first truly dominant female golfer of international notoriety.” Campbell, aka Dorothy Campbell Hurd Howe, started playing golf at 18 months. She won her first Scottish Ladies Championship in 1905. Throughout her career, she took 11 national amateur titles, and was the first female golfer to capture the U.S., British and Canadian Women’s Amateurs. Campbell was inducted into both the Canadian and World Golf Hall of Fame.





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# Top Ten

## *Celtic Golf Courses*

*Whether it's the challenging holes, the picturesque landscapes or the legendary moments that took place on their greens, world-class golf courses can be found around the world, from South Africa to Japan. Here, we highlight 10 of the best among the Celtic nations and Diasporas.*





## St. Andrews Links (Old Course)

### St. Andrews, Scotland

St. Andrews, the “Home of Golf,” dates back to the 1400s. Old Tom Morris, responsible for its existing double greens, served as custodian from 1865 to 1903. Course features include the “Hell” bunker and what former European Ryder Cup Captain Paul McGinley calls “the most famous first tee shot in golf.” The Old Course has hosted the British Open 28 times and co-hosts the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship annually. Numerous legends have played there, from Bobby Jones, who said it was the last course he wanted to play before he died, to Jack Nicklaus, who said goodbye to the sport at the St. Andrews 2005 Open. [www.standrews.org.uk](http://www.standrews.org.uk)



## The Royal County Down Golf Club

### Newcastle, Northern Ireland

Surrounded by the Mountains of Mourne and Dundrum Bay, Royal County Down offers an exceptionally gorgeous view from each hole. Charles Darwin’s grandson and World Golf Hall of Famer, Bernard Darwin, described the course as “big and glorious carries, nestling greens, entertainingly blind shots, local knowledge and beautiful turf - the kind of golf that people play in their most ecstatic dreams.” Founded in 1889, much of the design came from Old Tom Morris. The course has hosted many notable amateur tournaments and some professional, including Senior Open Championships with Arnold Palmer, Tom Watson, Jack Nicklaus and other greats participating. [www.royalcountydown.org](http://www.royalcountydown.org)



## Muirfield Gullane Scotland

The Scottish links course is the home of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, the world’s oldest continuous golf club. They originally were based in Leith and Musselburgh before establishing Muirfield in 1891. Since 1892, Muirfield has hosted 16 Open Championships, witnessing the wins of such stars as Harry Vardon, Walter Hagen, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, Nick Faldo, Ernie Els, and Phil Mickelson. Muirfield’s design is distinctive in that it consists of two nine-hole circuits, one clockwise and the other counter, so that golfers never have to face the same wind conditions consecutively. [www.muirfield.org.uk](http://www.muirfield.org.uk)



## Ballybunion Golf Club (Old Course)

### Ballybunion, Republic of Ireland

The Ballybunion Golf Club is home to two links courses, the Old and the Cashen. The Old Course, founded in 1893, has become a favourite of Tom Watson, American pro with eight major wins since his first visit in 1981. Watson even helped remodel the Ballybunion to its current state. Other notable events through its history include President Bill Clinton’s visit in 1998, the 2000 Murphy’s Irish Open and the 2004 Palmer Cup. Stunning terrain and scenery, with views of the Atlantic Ocean and a dune grassland, make Ballybunion a true gem. [www.ballybuniongolfclub.ie](http://www.ballybuniongolfclub.ie)



## Pine Valley Golf Club NJ, USA

GOLF Magazine has ranked Pine Valley the world’s top course every year since 1985. PGA of America President Ted Bishop recently described it as the “most difficult course in the world.” Despite Pine Valley’s reputation, it is shrouded in mystery. The public is only invited to the course during its annual Crump Cup. The tournament is named after Pine Valley’s original designer, who died before the course was completed. George Crump’s vision included golfers only being able to see the hole they were playing and a course that required every club in a golfer’s collection. Notable visitors have included President Eisenhower, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Bobby Jones. [www.pinevalleygolfcc.com](http://www.pinevalleygolfcc.com)





## Cypress Point Club

### Pebble Beach, CA, USA

Known as the “Sistine Chapel of Golf,” Cypress Point was designed by Alister Mackenzie. The course’s 16th is known as one of the world’s toughest holes as it involves a 231-yard tee shot. Cypress Point co-hosted the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am until 1991. It was dropped from the tour for not abiding by PGA requirements of adding an African American to its membership. In 2010, Sports Illustrated’s Alan Shipnuck reported that it was a case of not wanting to interfere with the course’s seven-year waitlist and that Cypress Point now had African and Asian-American, and a long history of female, members. [www.pebblebeach.com](http://www.pebblebeach.com)



## Royal Melbourne (West Course)

### Black Rock (Melbourne), Australia

Founded in 1891, Royal Melbourne is known as Australia’s oldest continuous golf club. Scot Alister Mackenzie designed the course, and the construction was supervised by club member and winner of the 1924 Australian Open, Alex Russell. Its West Course is consistently ranked number one in Australia, its East Course among the top 10. When Royal Melbourne hosted the Canada Cup in 1959, it combined 12 holes from the West with six from the East, which is now known as the Composite Course. It has been the site for many national and international tournaments including the first Presidents Cup held outside the U.S. [www.royalmelbourne.com.au](http://www.royalmelbourne.com.au)



## Royal Porthcawl Golf Club

### Porthcawl, Wales

Founded in 1891, today Royal Porthcawl boasts 10 authentic-style links holes, with the remainder still offering stunning views of the Bristol Channel. The Porthcawl, Wales course has hosted a plethora of championships, both amateur and professional, from the Welsh Golf Classic to the British Masters, as well as its fair share of historical golf moments. One such milestone is former Captain of the R&A, William Campbell playing the Amateur Championship there in both 1951 and 1988. [www.royalporthcawl.com](http://www.royalporthcawl.com)



## St. Enodoc Golf Club (Church Course)

### Rock, Cornwall, England

Golf can be enjoyed all year round at St. Enodoc’s Church and Hollywell Courses. Among its many world class awards, the most entertaining perhaps is being ranked Great Britain and Ireland’s fourth best course “to put a smile on your face” by Golf World. The Church links course, designed by James Braid, hosted the English County Finals in 2005 and showcased the 2014 English Women’s Amateur Championship. Highlights of Church include the 80-foot tall Himalayas Bunker and views of 11th century-old St. Enodoc Church, the burial place of poet laureate John Betjeman. [www.st-enodoc.co.uk](http://www.st-enodoc.co.uk)



## Cabot Links Inverness

### Cape Breton, Canada

Less than a decade since it officially opened, Cape Breton’s Cabot Links has already caught worldwide attention. Recently it was ranked 42nd best in the world by Golf Digest. Located on the former coal mining site of Inverness, it has been declared Canada’s only authentic links course, with every hole overlooking the ocean. Highlights include six holes along the beach, and the running approach shot and double greens associated with the 13th. SCOREGOLF columnist Bob Weeks described the course as “simply the best golf I have experienced.” [www.cabotlinks.com](http://www.cabotlinks.com)





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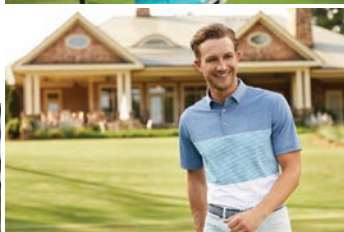


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## Chicken and Berry Salad



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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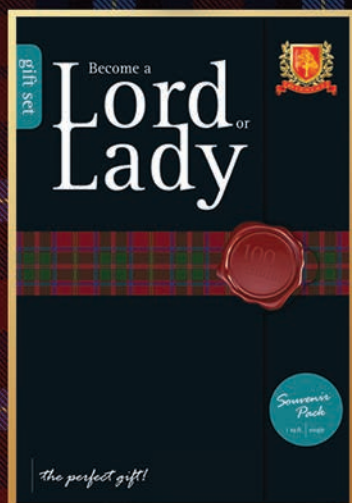


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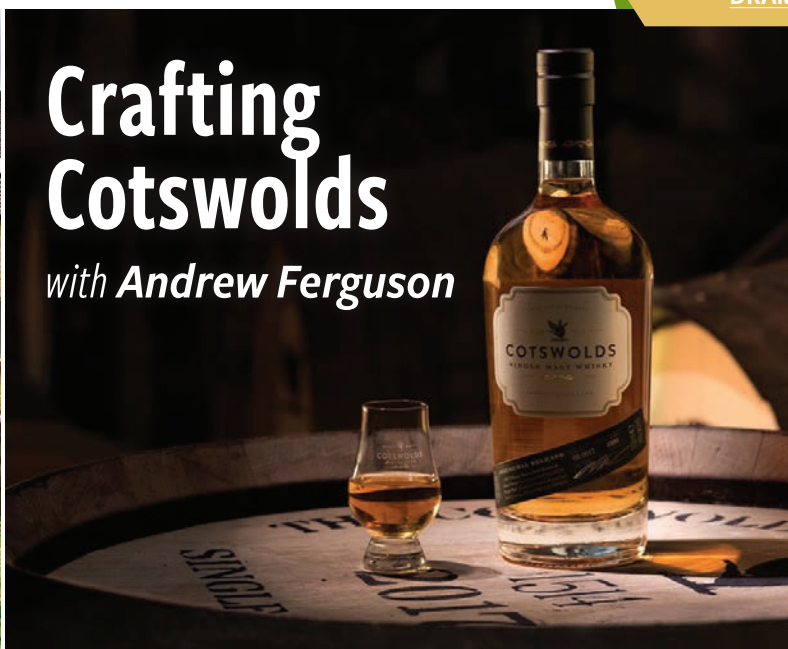
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# Crafting Cotswolds

with Andrew Ferguson

**T**he Cotswolds Distillery is the passion project of Dan Szor, a native of New York living in London, who forfeited a career in high finance to follow his dreams. During his time in London, Dan fell in love with both Scotch Whisky and the bucolic countryside of the Cotswolds, an idyllic rural region about two hours northwest of the English capital, where he kept a home.

Like many, Szor was enamoured by the story of Bruichladdich's revival in the 2000s. In that distillery's frontman, Jim McEwan, he found a kindred spirit. On several occasions, Szor mentioned to McEwan that he had a dream of opening a whisky distillery in the Cotswolds. During one of these meetings, McEwan simply asked his friend, "So, what's stopping you?"

Soon after, Szor acquired an estate with two derelict stone buildings in Shipston-on-Stour in the northwest of the Cotswolds. The buildings were little more than empty shells, and it took great effort to convert them into a functional distillery. Szor worked with the late, great distillery consultant Jim Swan on the project. Swan was a 40-year veteran of the Scotch Whisky industry, who had lent his name to a number of other notable upstart distilleries, including Kilchoman on Islay, Penderyn in Wales, Kavalan in Taiwan, Lindores Abbey, Milk & Honey in Israel, and Victoria Caledonian on Vancouver Island.

One of the biggest holdups for upstart distilleries is the sourcing of proper equipment, which can often take years. Luck was on Szor's side, however; a cancelled order at Forsyth's - a maker of copper pot stills in

Scotland - gave him an opportunity to quickly slide into the middle of the queue.

*Both the distillery, and its visitor center, were up and running in September of 2014 and have welcomed visitors each day since.*

Working with Dr. Swan, the facility fine-tuned its processes to create a soft, fruity spirit. Cotswolds employs a prolonged fermentation - at least 4 days - which is much longer than most distilleries. As Szor says, "the fruitiest esters come from rotting fruit" - think of an over-ripe banana.

Cotswolds makes its whisky gin from locally-sourced barley, traditionally floor-malted at Britain's oldest commercial maltsters, Warminster. The first limited whisky was released late in 2017, with a more widely distributed bottling released in 2018. Each item notes the farm that the barley was sourced from. The newly-made spirit is matured in a mix of ex-Bourbon, ex-Sherry and Jim Swan proprietary STR casks. The whiskies are bottled at 46 per cent, without colouring or chill-filtering.

Both the whisky and gin from Cotswolds Distillery have racked up their share of awards. The gin is made with 10x the botanical load of most gins, packing it with oils and flavour, and was ranked the World's Best London Dry Gin at the 2016 World Gin Awards. The Cotswolds Founder's Choice Whisky was

named the Best English Single Malt at the World Whiskies Awards 2019. The flagship Cotswolds Single Malt also showed well at the same ceremonies, earning a Gold Medal.

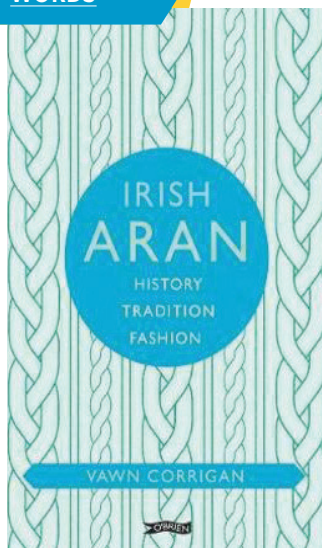
Recently, with operations having outgrown its facilities, the distillery opened a new visitor center, with an expanded shopping space and café for visitors, and dedicated spaces for tastings. After just four years in business, the site now receives over 150,000 visitors annually. Its product offerings have also grown to include a cream liqueur, absinthe, bitters, along with other spirits and liqueurs. The company also operates a small network of shops throughout the Cotswolds region.

Although Szor's passion project may still be a work in progress, its early successes are a testament to his work ethic, business acumen, and vision. Cotswolds is one in a new wave of English distilleries trying to make their name in the fiercely competitive world of spirits. And though it may not have been the first, Cotswolds is certainly leading the pack.

The distillery is close enough to London to make it a viable day trip. It is a bit of a trek from the nearest train station, so I recommend renting a car. Consumers in Alberta, British Columbia, and Chicago should be able to find Cotswolds' gin and whisky at area retailers. The cream liqueur is also available in Alberta. Wider North American distribution is expected in the years ahead.

[www.cotswoldsdistillery.com](http://www.cotswoldsdistillery.com)  
[www.kensingtonwinemarket.com](http://www.kensingtonwinemarket.com)



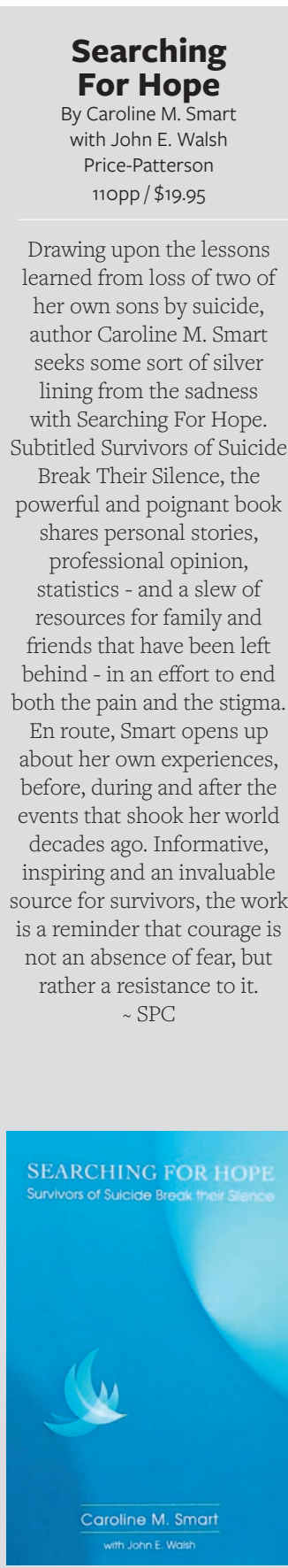


## Irish Aran

By Vawn Corrigan  
O'Brien Press  
168pp / €12.99

Subtitled History, Tradition, Fashion, Irish Aran is the first in a new series of pocketbooks published by O'Brien Press that celebrate the country's rich and robust heritage. Like the world-renowned sweater itself, the hardcover work is solid, steady, sturdy, and ready for everyday use. Woven with tidbits and trivia, dates and places, old and new photographs, and a sweeping overview of the tradition and cultural significance of the famed pullover, the narrative offers a fascinating insight into the history of both a people and a place. As such, and like the plush cluster of islands off Eire's western coastline, the book is timeless in its exploration of a customary craft. As is said in those parts, the Irish don't just write poetry, they knit it.

~ SPC



## Searching For Hope

By Caroline M. Smart  
with John E. Walsh  
Price-Patterson  
110pp / \$19.95

Drawing upon the lessons learned from loss of two of her own sons by suicide, author Caroline M. Smart seeks some sort of silver lining from the sadness with *Searching For Hope*. Subtitled *Survivors of Suicide Break Their Silence*, the powerful and poignant book shares personal stories, professional opinion, statistics - and a slew of resources for family and friends that have been left behind - in an effort to end both the pain and the stigma. En route, Smart opens up about her own experiences, before, during and after the events that shook her world decades ago. Informative, inspiring and an invaluable source for survivors, the work is a reminder that courage is not an absence of fear, but rather a resistance to it.

~ SPC

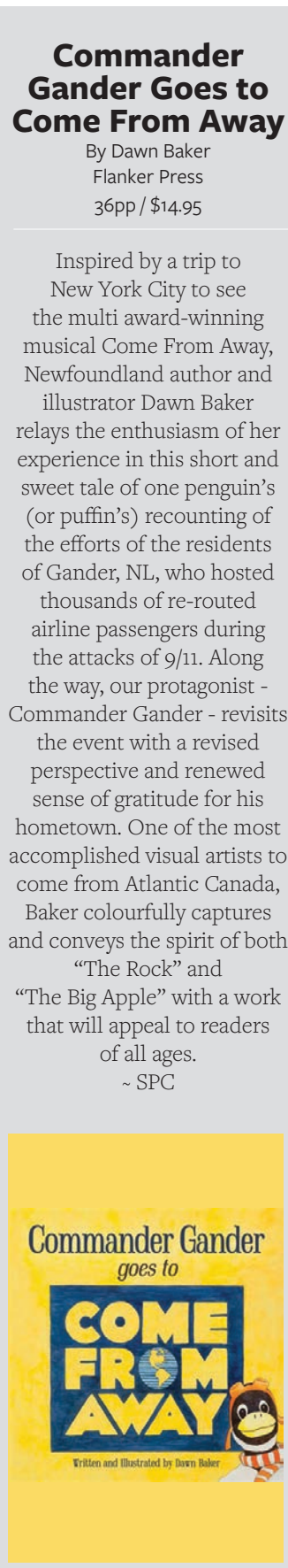


## Traditional Irish Cooking For Today

By Brian McDermott  
O'Brien Press  
80pp / €9.99

We have featured the food philosophy and recipes of Eire's Brian McDermott in our publication many times, and with good reason; no one sources and prepares fresh, local ingredients better than the Donegal chef extraordinaire. His latest collection, *Traditional Irish Cooking For Today*, brings old-school gastronomy to new places with fresh ideas for breakfast, brunch, breads, soups, salads, fish, meat, dairy and desserts. Combining classic and contemporary cuisine, McDermott not only pieces the plates together, but provides some historical context to each. The result is more than a cookbook; the work is a testament to the country's appetite for culture. And, if the mouth-watering recipes don't get you, the scrumptious colour photographs will surely whet your appetite. This is "food porn" at its very finest.

~ SPC



## Commander Gander Goes to Come From Away

By Dawn Baker  
Flanker Press  
36pp / \$14.95

Inspired by a trip to New York City to see the multi award-winning musical *Come From Away*, Newfoundland author and illustrator Dawn Baker relays the enthusiasm of her experience in this short and sweet tale of one penguin's (or puffin's) recounting of the efforts of the residents of Gander, NL, who hosted thousands of re-routed airline passengers during the attacks of 9/11. Along the way, our protagonist - Commander Gander - revisits the event with a revised perspective and renewed sense of gratitude for his hometown. One of the most accomplished visual artists to come from Atlantic Canada, Baker colourfully captures and conveys the spirit of both "The Rock" and "The Big Apple" with a work that will appeal to readers of all ages.

~ SPC





## Hozier

### *Wasteland, Baby!*

On Hozier's first studio recording since 2014's massively successful, self-titled debut album, the Dublin singer-songwriter hits the ground running with the soulful opening track *Nina Cried Power* (featuring the Queen of Gospel, Mavis Staples!) From there, wistful vocals, muted drum tracks, subtle melodies and sleight-of-hand guitar work pepper the sophomore effort with the grace of a sure and seasoned troubadour. As such, the ghost of fellow Irishman Van Morrison weaves and winds its way through each of the 14 clever compositions. Indie in spirit, the work is consistent, though not without its shortcomings; while the hipster vibe is cool, it does grow thin after repeated listens. Thus, though the songs are architecturally solid, they would benefit from a greater diversity of arrangement, production and instrumentation. ~ SPC

## RUNA

### *TEN: The Errant Night*

Featuring an impressive list of Grammy award-winning guest artists - including legendary Irish singer Moya Brennan, nine-time All-Ireland Irish Fiddle Champion, Eileen Ivers, Nashville session musician Jeff Taylor, Nashville singer-songwriter and harmonic layer Buddy Greene, and several others - multi-national Celtic supergroup RUNA celebrates its 10th anniversary with its sixth studio recording; a superb selection of 15 classic and contemporary songs that will get listener's toes-a-tappin' and tears-a-flowin'. *TEN: The Errant Night*, showcases the band's intense musicianship, its innovative arrangements and production, and its inspiring efforts to preserve and promote 'trad' tunes via an amazing array of sounds and styles. Highlights here include the dark John Riley, the gentle Green Fields, the swinging Firewood, the playful Buttermilk, and the lovely traditional lilt of *An Buachaillín*. ~ SPC



## Mike Vass

### *Save His Calm*

Those in the know have nothing but massive critical appreciation for Scottish singer-songwriter Mike Vass; his work has been covered by the likes of Brian Finnegan, Kan, Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas, Anna Massie and Mairead Green, and Irish/American band Comas, among others. Those who don't know his solo music should get acquainted; lush guitars and hushing vocals are just the start - the real treat on *Save His Calm*, his fifth full-length studio recording, is the structural arrangements of the songs themselves. Vass has mastered the art of subtlety - the effortless ability to say more with less, understanding that music exists in the spaces between the notes. As such, this short-but-sweet nine-song selection is a masterpiece. Now you are in the know. ~ 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. Okay, 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





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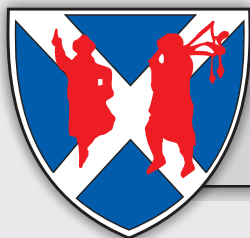
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# Olivier Craig- Dupont

*For piper  
Olivier Craig-Dupont,  
Irish music comes  
from the soul*



**I**t was a rainy afternoon in an old Irish pub when Montreal-native Olivier Craig-Dupont first heard the soulful sounds of Irish bagpipes.

"Strangely, they did not strike me back then," he admits. "It was when I started to learn Irish music on the whistle, and while listening to some of the old players, that the pipes revealed themselves to me. After listening to Seamus Ennis' 'An Leanbh Sidhe,' I said to myself 'I need to learn this!'"

The 41-year-old - who is of Irish descent on his mother's side - has been playing the pipes for just over six years now.

"Irish music has something very special about it," he continues. "It can be linked with the old harp, and the bardic tradition. It is music from nature. Maybe I am romanticizing it all, but I find that this music connects us with the deep roots of nature and some lost sense of enchantment."

Craig-Dupont currently plays a set of "D" pitch chanter pipes, handcrafted by New York pipe maker Tim Benson. He describes his personal style and sound as "lyrical."

"Fiachra O'Regan once told me the Sean-Nos tradition of his native Connemara highly influenced his piping, right up to his playing of dance tunes. That made me think a lot. I want to approach dance tunes with the same poetry we find in slow airs or sean-nos signing. I don't mean playing them as slow but playing them as if they were songs with the same depth."

*"Each song must tell a story,  
and each song will teach you  
how it wants to be played..."*

"In terms of phrasing, I try to be a disciple of Jimmy O'Brien Moran's. There ought to be a fierce approach regarding musical ornaments and accentuation. I think they must serve the phrasing, and it is a difficult thing to do. You have to sit and listen to what you are doing."

The biggest vocational challenge, he says, is keeping the music alive while living in Montreal.

"We live far from the old folks still playing the tradition. Tapes and cassettes help, but we need something more to keep the music alive. Playing alone and taking the music as a kind of meditation really helps. You must also get your hands dirty and work with natural materials such as cane, wood and leather to make the instrument sing. This special relation with the instrument moulds the music. It makes it raw and soulful almost by default."

In addition to playing the pipes, Craig-Dupont is skilled in the art of reed making. Earlier this year he was asked to instruct a reed-making workshop at the Chris Langan Festival in Toronto, which he lists as one of his career's biggest highlights.

"I got into the reed-making in order to help desperate beginners - like I once was - who are in search of a working reed."

"My best musical moments, however, are when I busk in the Montreal metro. Playing alone to whomever wants to listen kind of puts you in a right mood for this music. You practise your stuff at your pace; people like it or not; you don't know, and you don't care."

Although he does not believe focus should be placed on preserving and promoting one culture over another - referring to culture as a "moving thing" - Craig-Dupont does feel that more should be done at an educational level to maintain interest in the Irish pipes.

"We go to sessions now and all we see are iPads, Tunepal, and the like. This is killing the soul of music! No one plays the old tapes of Willie Clancy, Seamus Ennis and Tommy Reck anymore, but we should! Schools have a responsibility in passing on some historical knowledge about the music, and to rekindle a desire to dig deeper into its spirit."

Craig-Dupont is currently working with his friend and fellow musician, Patrick Ross, to master the musical styles of old Eire.

"Our goal is to be able to play with the same soul as the old folks. You really have to be in love with the music to play the pipes. It is easier, I suppose, when you are born in Ireland and your mom starts you off at the age of four. But if you fall in love with the instrument and are deeply attached to its music, there is hope, wherever you are."

[www.facebook.com/olivier.craigdupont](https://www.facebook.com/olivier.craigdupont)



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## *Fiddler Theresa Kavanaugh embraces both classic and contemporary Celtic culture*

**A**lthough the seeds of her passion for playing the fiddle were planted by her parents, Theresa Kavanaugh's reasons for sticking with the instrument have evolved beyond familial ties.

"My experience of both music and friendships in the Irish music world has been a factor in shaping who I am today," she tells Celtic Life International via email.

Though born and bred in Glasgow, Scotland, Kavanaugh's parents are from the Emerald Isle, and she was brought up in an Irish milieu.

"I am glad Mum and Dad never let go of our culture. As a family we were surrounded by Irish music, song and dance as my mother was an Irish dancing teacher. In fact, all of us took music and dance lessons."

When she was nine years old, the family moved home to Donegal, Ireland. There, she continued to take fiddle lessons. Over time, her enthusiasm for the instrument grew significantly.

"I knew I had a passion for music throughout my teens and decided to pursue it in university."

After studying for a Higher National Diploma in Professional Traditional Irish Music Performance at Ballyconnell House, Falcarragh, Kavanaugh later completed a Bachelor of Music at Ulster University, Magee.

"I was fortunate to have the opportunity to make my first album *The Seventh Veil* in 2006. Working with (Irish producer and musician) Manus Lunny on this project further enhanced my interest in composition."

Her latest work - *An Choill Uaigneach* (*The Lonesome Forest*) - was released in 2017.

"There are hints of jazz and lovely grooves on there that Manus created. Some of the other guest musicians really added to the vibe as well, including Fraser Fiefield on saxophone, Ewen Vernal on bass, and Donald Shaw on keyboard."

Lunny, she says, is a quiet genius and



# Theresa Kavanaugh

a loyal friend. "He really helped to shape the album with a contemporary sound. His amazing production and performance really complemented what I did."

Though contemporary in sound and scope, Kavanaugh generally considers herself a traditionalist in terms of style.

"Listening to a variety of genres over the years has, of course, had some influence, but my heart will always be in Irish traditional music."

*"Often I create from strong emotions in my life. Sometimes I just want to try a new trick and see what happens."*

Other career highlights have included composing music for the BBC's *Gleann Bheatha* - an Irish-language documentary about Glenveagh National Park - as well as playing alongside her musical heroes; Lunny, Michael McGoldrick, and Brid Harper.

"I have also enjoyed some wonderful experiences performing at major festivals such as *Celtic Connections* and *Festival Interceltique de Lorient*, as well as touring with *The Women of Ireland*. I am really looking forward to doing more touring in the future."

These days, she slides her bow across the strings of a fiddle from Scottish maker Douglas MacArthur. "I love the vibrancy in the instrument, the tonal quality, and evenness of tone across the strings. New instruments can be so responsive."

Kavanaugh says that she has no plans to put the instrument down anytime soon, even with her full-time day job as a teacher at Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair (Gweedore Community School), where she has worked since 2010. After an appearance at the Ardra Cup of Tae Festival in May, she is looking forward to the summer holidays when she can focus on her playing.

"We have so many wonderful opportunities to experience traditional music; festivals, radio and television programs, magazines and organizations who all contribute to the promotion and preservation of Irish culture."

She believes that young people are still interested in the fiddle. However, she suspects that they need greater opportunities to embrace the roots of Irish music in order to fully enjoy it.

"Irish music is primarily functional music for dancing, lamenting and celebrating. For many generations it was pop music to those people. House dances and céilidhs were their discos and clubs. It was how people courted, celebrated and grieved as communities. I think that bringing back both appreciation and céilidh dancing classes into primary schools will help fuel the fire of our culture."

"It is not enough for children to learn, though - they must have an opportunity to enjoy it as well."

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





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# Emerald Irish Dance

*Two women lead an Irish dance dream team in Michigan*

**B**oth Delia Phillips and Eileen Olech were introduced to Irish dance at a young age and now spend their time nurturing that same talent in others.

"When I was five years old, my parents enrolled me in Irish dance classes," says Phillips, who has Irish, German and Scottish roots. "I was already taking German dance lessons and my parents wanted me to learn the dance style for my Irish heritage too."

With encouragement from her mother and father, Phillips' love of dance grew. Now, she can't imagine life without it.

"I started dancing to learn about my heritage and where I came from, and it ended up teaching me about who I am. I love to dance, and to feel the music and let it flow through me - to let out how I am feeling and express myself fills me with so much joy."

*"I continue to dance today because I have to - it is a part of me."*

Phillips began teaching when she was still in high school at the request of several elementary students who were keen to learn a few Irish dance moves.

"I realized I loved teaching dance, not just dancing for myself. One of my own dance teachers found out I liked teaching and started training me to get my TCRG (Teagascóir Choimisiúin le Rinci Gaelacha) so I could become an official Irish dance teacher."

She started studying and tried her hand at teaching a few classes. Unfortunately, after a few years, the school where she was teaching closed its doors.

"I wanted to continue teaching, but I just didn't know where to go," she recalls. "I was still doing private lessons and coaching, and one day a student asked if their friends could join in. We ended up renting a church hall and I did a couple lessons for the friends. Then another friend joined the class, and then a couple more. Thus, Emerald Dance Academy was born."

The Emerald Dance Academy student body is made up of a small group of local girls, most of whom are homeschooled. As head instructor and owner, Phillips does everything from teaching dances and choreographing steps, to setting up shows and picking out costumes.

"Irish dance may be a small niche - and it is hard to get into unless you are really looking, since it is such a specific form of dance - but it is still going strong for the young people involved in it," shares Phillips. "Our students today are hungry to learn and do their best. The only issue that we see is the lack of awareness of this particular style of dance - for now, Irish dance is not as prominent as other styles."

Eileen Olech, who fell in love with Irish dance while watching a St. Patrick's Day performance as a child, reached out to Phillips for an opportunity to be involved.

"I had an itch to dance again and contacted Delia since I knew she still had a dance floor," she explains. "We got to talking, and she mentioned that she ran a dance class and I offered to help. I have been an assistant here for almost three years now."

In addition to their duties at Emerald Dance Academy, both Olech and Phillips ply their trade as school teachers by day.

"My career, consistently learning, and the other things that I participate in definitely need balancing," says Olech.

Phillips echoes the sentiment.

"Just balancing two jobs and life in general can be a challenge. While Irish dance continues to grow, there is still only a small group of teachers in the area to connect with. As many WIDA (World Irish Dance Association) events are outside of the U.S.A., it is often difficult to get our dancers to the bigger events and expose them to the culture as much as we would like."

There are, however, many great opportunities close to home.

"We are fortunate to participate in many Irish and Celtic festivals and events across Michigan throughout the year," notes Phillips.

"And we must continue to support our local dancers and teachers to preserve and promote the culture here; more often than not, and as it did with us, that begins at home."

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



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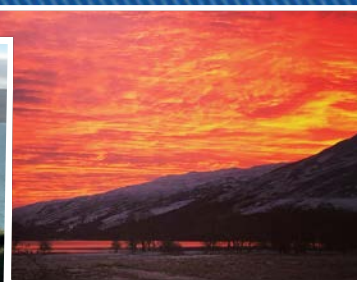
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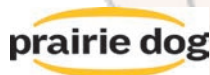
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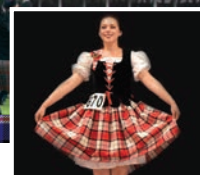
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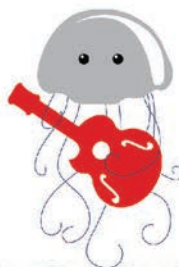
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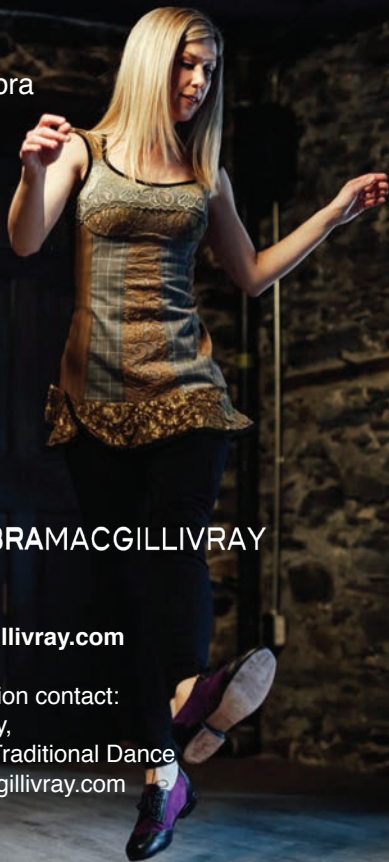
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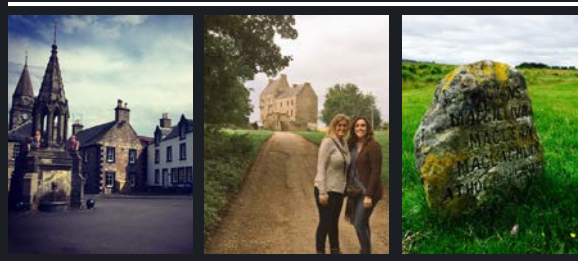


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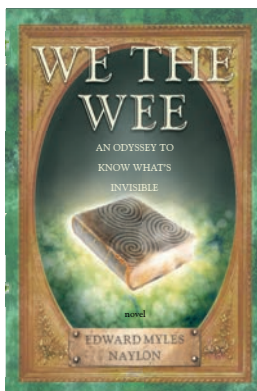
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# Donald Joseph MacDougall; 1935-2019

Born in Kirkland Lake, Ontario, in 1934, MacDougall was the son of native Cape Bretoners. His uncles had left their home in Judique, Cape Breton, to labour in the gold mines of Northern Ontario. His father followed them, as did so many others from the region.

MacDougall's sister, Anne St. Pierre, remembers a tight-knit Cape Breton community within Kirkland Lake during their early years.

"We would have get-togethers with a fiddler, Gaelic songs and square dancing in the kitchen and living room. The children would have to edge around the dancers to get in and out of the rooms. On other nights they shared ghost stories and tall tales from back home."

When a Cape Bretoner arrived in Kirkland Lake, he or she was often taken in by other Islanders until they could stand on their own two feet.

"Anyone new was the main source of news from Cape Breton," notes St. Pierre. "They were always made very welcome. Such things stay with you and shape you."

MacDougall's father followed work from Northern Ontario to Quebec and British Columbia. He yearned for his son to enjoy a different life, however.

"From the moment Don was born it was ordained that he would attend St. Francis Xavier University with its Scottish heritage," says St. Pierre.

Son Dave MacDougall believes the university years gave his father a closer proximity to his Cape Breton heritage.

"His family moved so much because of his own father's work that I think perhaps Cape Breton gave Dad a sense of stability and permanence, even before he met my mother."

Upon completion of his engineering studies, MacDougall obtained a master's degree in planning from the University of British Columbia. In his retirement, he spent a dozen years volunteering at Halifax's Pier 21 Museum of Immigration, where he encouraged visitors to pursue their own histories.

"He was a wonderful man who made many contributions to the museum and was an enormous help in delivering guided tours," remembers Kristine Kovacevic, manager of interpretation and visitor experience at Pier 21. "I am touched by how lucky we were to have him."

The MacDougalls' passion for all things Scottish was shared equally by their children.

"Mom and Dad loved going to the square dances in Mabou, and so did my sister Marcy and I," Seana reminisces. "It took a while for our brothers, Dave and Rob, to come around, but they did eventually."

In recent years, Dave - who now has a daughter in Highland dancing and a son taking fiddle lessons - regularly brought his father to Cape Breton ceilidhs.

MacDougall cherished his relationships with his children and grandchildren, often calling them "Macushla" - the Gaelic word for "darling."

One of Nova Scotia's finest and most active Celts recently passed away at the age of 84.

Donald Joseph MacDougall was a founding member of both the Halifax Highland Dancing Association and the Amethyst Scottish Dancers of Nova Scotia.

He and his wife of 53 years, Anita Rankin - whom he met at a dance in Cape Breton - each shared a passion for Scottish music and dance and worked tirelessly to promote both while raising a family in Halifax.

A professional engineer for many years, MacDougall plied his trade as a policy advisor for the Province's Department of Transportation prior to his retirement. Though busy serving his church for over three decades, as well as being heavily involved with his children's schools, he always made time for Celtic pursuits.

Daughter Seana was signed up for Highland dance lessons at the age of six and, by 1978, the family had a hand in developing a Highland dancers association in Halifax.

"I am sure that this was done because the first International Gathering of the Clans and Nova Scotia International Tattoo were going to be held in Nova Scotia in 1979," recalls Seana. "Dad wanted to establish a footing for the Highland dancers at these events."

While Anita organized countless fundraising concerts, her husband worked behind the scenes; creating logos, typing programs, and doing whatever else was needed to get the fledgling organization off the ground. The couple brought the same energy and dedication to founding the Amethyst Scottish Dancers of Nova Scotia in 1985.

"Mom organized the shows and emceed most of them, but Dad was the script editor," says Seana, "he added the historic details to Mom's voice."





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