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INTERNATIONAL

The Changing Celtic Classroom

INSIDE!

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Fall Fashion, El Keegan, Puffin Stickworks*



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Fáilte!

The Ring

Recently, while reflecting on COVID-19 and its impact on education, I was reminded of an amazing experience of almost 50 years ago.

While winding my way through a hotel bar in Moscow following a Canadian victory in the 1972 WHL/Russia hockey series, I was pleasantly surprised to encounter the X-ring - one of the most recognizable educational insignias in the world - from St. Francis Xavier University (St. FX) in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

My good friend, Big Jim MacPherson - whom I had not seen in several years - had travelled to the USSR from British Columbia to support our Canadian athletes. I had done the same, arriving from Canada's east coast. Our chance encounter that day was a homecoming of sorts for both of us.

St. FX is a small-town university, renown for its focus on intellectual and spiritual development, global awareness, and social justice. There, students find a unique sphere of friends, and graduates wear their school rings with pride. Learners come from around the world to study in an academic environment where community involvement is both expected and encouraged. It is a special camaraderie - one that makes education and college life more meaningful.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about exceptional changes to the very fabric of our society, and the world of academia is no exception. However, though fraught with uncertainty, the recent downtime offers us the opportunity to implement new ideas and initiatives into the education sector.

As Coronavirus isn't expected to disappear anytime soon, schools - already struggling with rising expenses and financial viability - are looking for new ways and means of staying afloat. Some are even floating the idea of merging or even closing permanently.

Going forward, educational institutions will need to be creative in both the classroom and in developing financial sustainability. As many universities have untapped expertise in their teaching staff, government funding of research through those facilities could be a source of much needed revenue.

Delivering course material through digital platforms may not be the ideal way to teach, but it will suffice in the interim. For students, though, the educational experience will be radically different. William Lamb, a senior lecturer of Celtic and Scottish studies at the University of Edinburgh notes that we need to rethink how we deliver and access learning outcomes to create something better for the long-term.

Every university is unique, with great memories for its graduates. St. FX is no different and holds a special place in my life; myself, my wife Cabrini and our four children - Hector, Alison, Meaghan and Sheena - are all graduates, and we wear our X-rings with pride.

My most sincere wish - despite the dire state of current affairs - is to see the spirit of St. FX and all learning institutions, remain alive and well. Regardless of whatever changes may come, students need to continue to reap the rewards of education; knowledge, friendships, community, good memories, and the pride that comes with wearing a school ring.

Enjoy and may God bless!
Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher

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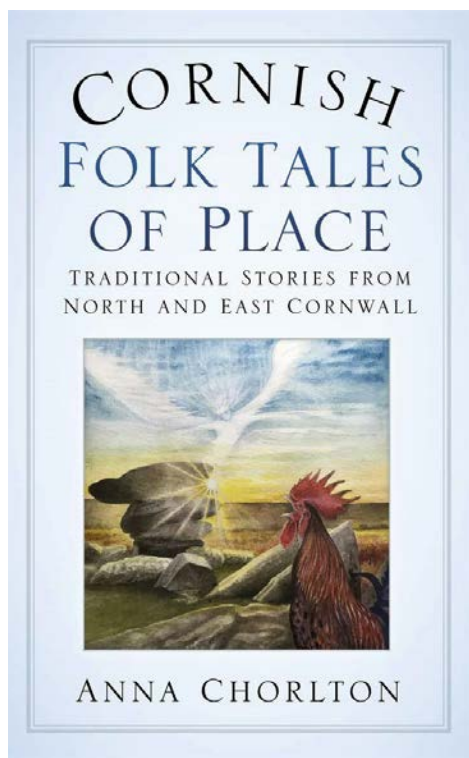
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Cornish author and storyteller Anna Chorlton took to literature when she was in grade school, later attending an evening class on writing, which inspired her to put pen to paper daily.

“I found it therapeutic,” she shares via email. “Writing is a wonderful outlet for emotion.”

Although her first inkling was to be a poet, Chorlton also explored different genres of prose, including short stories and even a “magic realist memoir.” Today, she considers herself a “place writer,” and that she is at her compositional best when she is “out in the wild.”

“I write to share with readers the joy of Cornwall and to give our folktales a wider reach. When I began writing, I imagined fame and fortune. However, the reason I write today is to push myself to be the best writer I can be - to make stories happen and to be read.”

Chorlton’s latest effort is *Cornish Folk Tales of Place*. She was approached by History Press about the project while promoting *Mazed Tales* (a website and collection of traditional stories from East Cornwall) at the Society for Storytelling’s gathering in Plymouth.

As she explains, Cornish folklore was originally passed down through oral tradition by wandering “droll tellers.” Fortunately, a number of folklorists put the tales to ink and paper. The author referenced about 30 books for *Cornish Folk Tales of Place*, including the work of 19th Century folklore collectors Robert Hunt, William Bottrell and Enys Tregarthen. A few of the tales in Chorlton’s book, such as “The Ghostly Feast at Bethany” were collected straight from local elders.

“I went to all the places in which the folk tales are set and spent some time getting a feel for the place and writing in the wild.”

“It was an enjoyable part of the research - discovering new places. My favourite place found in South East Cornwall is St. Nona’s Well: a magical well tucked away in a field above the West Looe River. In North Cornwall, I loved walking across the moors at Rough Tor.”

Interestingly, though many collections of the tales of West Cornwall have been published, stories from South East and North Cornwall had largely been forgotten.

“I had to forage deep into the old volumes, often finding only a fragment of a tale to unearth the folk tales of East Cornwall and bring them together. *Cornish Folk Tales of Place* explores Cornwall, giving a real sense of location. Tales of wild giants and mischievous piskeys (Cornish fairy folk) up on the moors. Tales of mermaids, smugglers and ghosts along the coast. The book can be used as a travel guide to readers visiting Cornwall to follow the trail of the folk tales.

“*Cornish Folk Tales of Place* puts East Cornwall on the map for readers and visitors discovering the folklore and place alike.”

For Chorlton, “change” is a crucial piece in any story, whether it be “a change of heart or a change in nature.” Often, she explains, Cornish tales are centred around morals.

“Witch Patten Peg learns the hard way how to be kind to her neighbours. Sarah in ‘The White Hare of Looe’ learns to forgive. Smuggler Finnygook is punished for betraying his friends.”

In other stories, it is the physical landscape that changes. “The Legend of the Cheesewring” tells the tale of the forming of an Ancient granite cairn on Bodmin Moor, and in ‘Seaton Mermaid’ the landscape is changed irrevocably at the hand of a vengeful mermaid.”

Chorlton says that she will continue to work with folklore and Cornish folk tales in her writing. Recently, though she has found herself going back to her first love: poetry. “I am writing poetry set within the Cornish landscape. During the lockdown I wrote a poem a day based on my response to the situation and the nature enjoyed during my daily walk.” In addition, she is working on telling a family story through creative nonfiction.

As for the future of folklore preservation, she is hoping for a contemporary droll-telling revival. “*Mazed Tales* brought Cornish storytelling back onto the streets, firesides, cycle trails, hotels and cafes of East Cornwall. I would like to see this continued, and spread back down west, with folklore re-embedded into the community narrative through the whole of Cornwall - my next book and project, perhaps.”

www.annachorlton.com

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one

Cornish Vodka

A Cornish potato vodka recently received the highest award from the San Francisco World Spirits Competition. Aval Dor vodka, made from family farm-grown potatoes and distilled at Colwith Farm Distillery, made its debut on the market just six years ago. Aval Dor landed the Double Gold designation in San Francisco, which means it received a "gold medal" rating by every judge on the panel. According to CornwallLive, less than one percent of distilleries have received such an honour, making Aval Dor one of the best spirits worldwide.

two

Welsh Language Preservation

A petition to stop Welsh place names from being changed to English has received more than 5,000 signatures, meaning the Senedd Cymru (Welsh Parliament) Petitions Committee must consider the issue for debate. As of June 29, the petition had 15,680 signatures. "Little by little, the country is losing its heritage," reads the petition webpage. "This must be stopped for the sake of future generations, whatever their language." The petition proposes that parliament legislate against people changing their Welsh house names, because "there is a pattern throughout Wales where new owners are changing their house names into English."

three

Scottish 007

Sam Heughan of Outlander fame has been advocating for a Scottish James Bond since last year - and he is open about the fact that he's gunning for the role himself. Daniel Craig will be done playing Bond after No Time to Die (the release of which has been pushed to November), which means it will soon be time for someone else to take up the mantle. Bond hasn't been played by a Scot since Sean Connery, who originated the film role in Dr. No. Heughan suggests it's time for Bond to go back to his roots.

four

Galician Statue

A centuries-old statue of the Virgin Mary was recently pulled from a river in Galicia. A fisherman was looking for trout in the Sar River when he came upon the damaged statue, which was later examined at Santiago de Compostela's Pilgrimage Museum. Researchers determined that the statue, which depicts Mary with baby Jesus in her arms, dates back about 700 years. The statue is made of granite, weighs 330 pounds and was created in the Galician Gothic style. Further research may determine exactly where it came from and how it ended up in the river.

five

Manx Art

In June, a Polish artist finished revamping the Port St Mary Town Hall on the Isle of Mann. Karolina Pawlowska - who has lived on the Isle since 2014 - started painting the Town Hall mural last year. The sea-themed images are a tribute to the fishing village. "The middle wall was the hardest to paint as it was almost completely hidden underneath the scaffolding and I couldn't see a thing! I had to use my intuition," Pawlowska wrote in a recent Facebook post. "But when I saw it unveiled - I couldn't believe that I actually made those lines exactly as I wanted."

six

Springhill Tartan

A new tartan honours the mining history of a Nova Scotian town. Recently, Springhill resident Roberta Bell was inspired by a dream to create the tartan to commemorate the local miners. Large scale coal mining hasn't taken place in Springhill for 60 years, but it remains a key part of the area's history. Bell's tartan design, which she called Blood on the Coal, was woven by a woman in Cape Breton and later recognized by the Scottish Registrar of Tartans in Edinburgh.

Have an interesting tidbit to share with our Celtic community? Drop us a line anytime at info@celticlife.com



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People of Colour Isle of Man

People of Colour Isle of Man (POC IOM) - an online platform and collaborative group - launched this past June. The group, which is primarily based on Twitter, prioritizes issues concerning Black and other racialized Manx residents. Recently, POC IOM launched its first campaign: Educating Mann. "We wanted to start a campaign that would encourage a shake-up of education of races in schools," POC IOM member Dominique Moran told Manx Radio. "There was a lot of people questioning how (the Black Lives Matter movement) was relevant to the Isle of Man. And, from that, there was an outpour of people within the community writing articles and Facebook posts, sharing their experiences of racism on their doorstep." The lack of education around racism on the Isle was apparent. Moran acknowledged that, even when people wanted to help, "they didn't necessarily have the tools to have these conversations." As a result, Educating Mann was born, inspired in part by the National Health Service's popular "Couch to 5K" exercise campaign. The crux of the campaign? "Read 1, Sign 2, Nominate 3." First off, the group is asking Isle residents to read one of the books on their suggested list: *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Natives* by Akala or *Brit(ish)* by Afua Hirsch. Next, the group suggests signing two petitions related to the Black Lives Matter movement. Lastly, nominate three friends or family members to do the same.



Amanda Harris

In 2014, a cycling accident left 41-year-old Amanda Harris with life-altering injuries. The Welsh woman was in the midst of preparing to participate in a charity ride when she lost control of her bicycle on Caerphilly Mountain and flew over her handlebars. Paralyzed from the chest down, Harris spent several months at Welsh Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Centre at Rookwood Hospital. Physiotherapy, occupational therapy and hydrotherapy eventually allowed her to walk again, with the aid of crutches. This year, Harris decided to give back to the rehabilitation centre that helped her in her time of need. In 2021, the Welsh Spinal Injuries Centre will be moving to Llandough Hospital, so Harris pledged to ride 150 miles on a static bike to raise money for a Horatio's Garden: a charity that will help build a garden at the new centre. "The moment that really helped during my six months in hospital was being wheeled in my hospital bed to the open door of the ward and feeling the sunshine on my face, watching the bumblebees and seeing flowers and hedgerows blossoming in the summer sun," Harris recently told the BBC. In order for garden construction to commence at the end of the year, there is a need for £275,000 in funding. Despite frequent breaks due to spasms and fatigue, Harris had already completed 150 miles by the end of June and had well exceeded her personal goal of raising £1,000.



Forth Valley Welcome

Formerly known as the Stirling Citizens for Sanctuary, Forth Valley Welcome has worked to support Syrian and other refugees who have re-settled in the Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire counties of Scotland since its inception in 2015. The group started off by petitioning Stirling Council to sign up to the United Kingdom government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme. The charity changed its name in 2018 and, as of 2019, it supports more than 140 refugees from Syria and Sudan. Among other things, Forth Valley Welcome helps newcomers learn English and supplies them with material needs like furniture, clothes and kitchen equipment. Recently, Forth Valley Welcome was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (also known as The Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service) - the highest award a volunteer group can receive in the U.K. A total of 230 organizations have been honoured with the award this year. "We were very surprised and absolutely delighted to receive this prestigious award. Our organization started because of a small group of volunteers who were passionate about supporting and welcoming refugees into our area," Forth Valley Welcome Chair Save Maharaj told Third Force News at the time. "We currently have around 75 volunteers and it's really hard to put into words the incredible contribution they make to the organization and their commitment to the families we support. We literally could not do it without them and it's great to see them recognized in this way."

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Celtic Colours International Festival At Home

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Faced with the uncertainty of travel and restrictions on large gatherings continuing into the fall - and in consultation with public officials - Celtic Colours International Festival will be doing things differently this year. With the safety of audiences, artists, volunteers, and staff in mind, the Festival will not be presenting a series of concerts around Cape Breton Island this October. Instead, organizers are excited to bring the spirit of the gathering online. From October 9 to 17, Celtic Colours International Festival At Home will celebrate the Island's music and culture with a series of nightly performances and stories from Cape Breton. "It will be a different kind of experience than we are used to," says Mike MacSween, Executive Director of Celtic Colours, "but we know how important music and the arts are to people, especially in difficult times. And as a festival built on culture and tradition, we feel it is important to maintain that connection. We will certainly miss hosting guests and artists from around the world and sharing our hospitality, scenery, and culture as we have done for the past 23 years. But with the expertise of our team in delivering a world-class event and high-quality livestream content, I am confident that we will deliver a great experience to our many fans at home, no matter where home is."



ReJigged Festival

October 23-25, 2020

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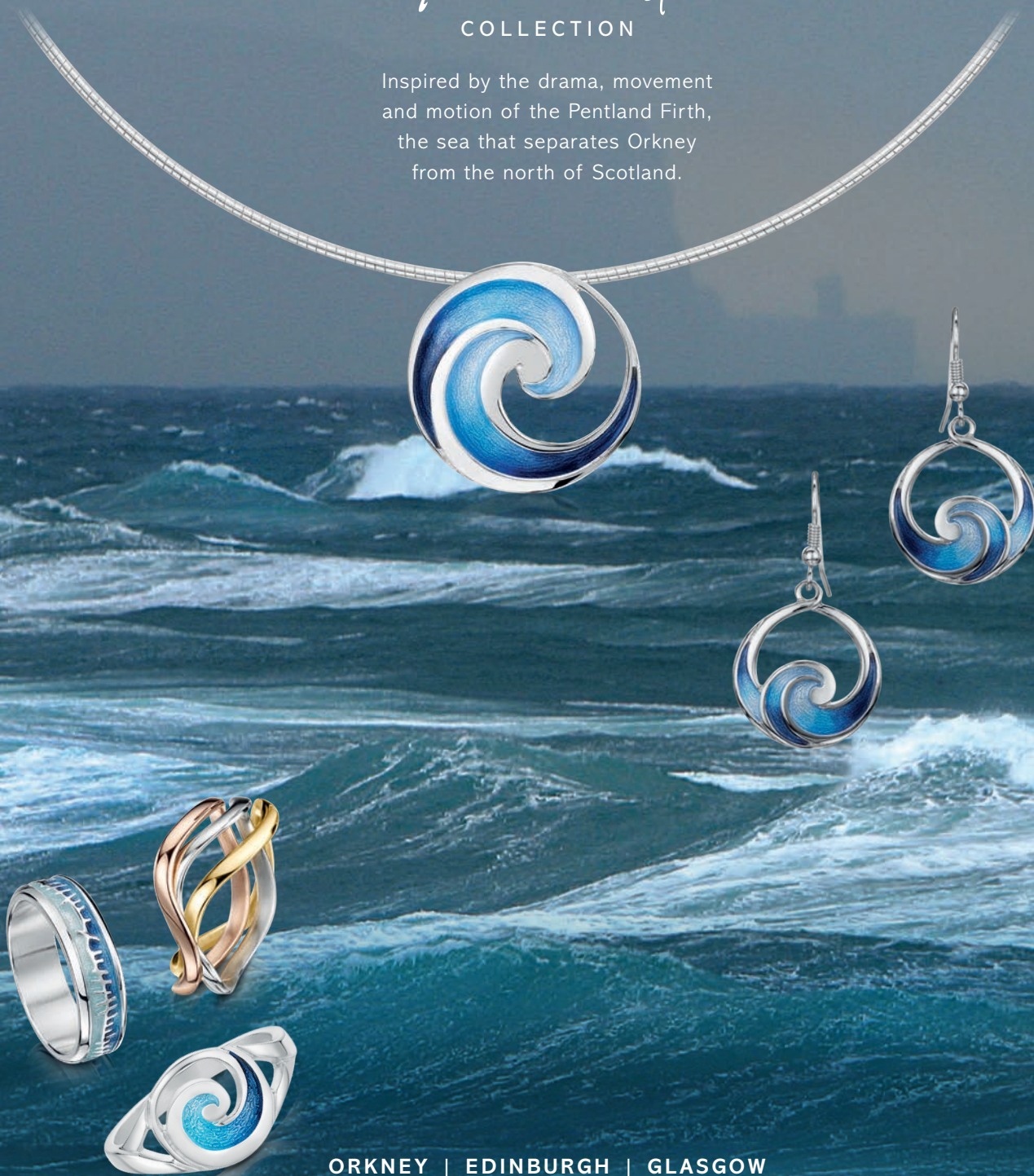
Moving along with the changing tides, ReJigged Festival 2020 will look and feel a little different this year. And while audiences and performers alike will miss the cozy halls and tree-lined streets of downtown Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, ReJigged is going online, bringing top new trad Celtic talent from around the world directly to fans everywhere. From October 23 - 25, audiences will enjoy ReJigged's signature programming from the comfort of their homes, including workshops in music, dance and song, delivered via both pre-recorded video and real-time Zoom sessions. Free live-streamed "mainstage" concerts on both Friday and Saturday evenings will seamlessly blend performances from leading regional, national and international artists into online, worldwide showcases of new trad music and dance. The festival schedule, list of artists and workshop registration information is available on the ReJigged website.

Sheila Fleet.

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Sheila Fleet

Like her jewellery, Sheila Fleet's roots on Scotland's Orkney Island go back generations

"I was born in the Orkney Islands on a small farm in October of 1945," shares Sheila Fleet via email. "My heritage as an Orcadian goes back many generations, and the islands themselves have a very rich heritage going back to Stone Age times. Through the course of history, people have left their unique marks on the landscape - specifically the Picts, the Celts, and the Vikings."

Many of those ancient cultures, and the marks they left behind, have inspired her jewellery.

"The Orkney Islands have been described as being like an open-air museum. It has been an amazing and inspirational place for me growing up on a farm, with all of that great history and stunning nature around me. This, I feel, has framed me as a creative person, and gave me a great foundation to build a future in design and crafts."

Fleet began her career as a self-made entrepreneurial jeweller back in 1993, after studying jewellery design at the Edinburgh College of Art and starting a family with her husband Rick.

"I felt that the time was right, having 26 years of experience behind me in the jewellery industry. Starting my own business gave me the freedom to do things my own way, producing works that reflected my Nordic, Celtic, and Pictish roots."

Her first design drew inspiration from a Pictish disc found on the tidal island, The Brough of Birsay, and it is still a hot-ticket item today. That piece has since been augmented by several other designs - most inspired by the island's distinctive beauty.



"I find I still use nature's wonderful colours, with vibrant, hand-enamelled sea blues for one of my most popular wave designs, called Pentland, and bright green hues for the wild grasses collection. A more recent collection - Seasons - shows spring, summer, autumn, and winter enamel colours that are mixed with 9ct yellow, white, and rose gold leaves."

Tourism is a large part of the region's economy, and over the years, Fleet has adapted her business to provide a special treat to those who travel to collect her wares. Today, folks can tour her workshop, where she employs local silversmiths, to better understand and appreciate where their prized pieces come from.

"Our customers around the world have been amazing, continuing to support us with online orders. Living on a small island off the north of Scotland, and being able to reach out to the world via our website and social media channels to market my jewellery collections, is simply amazing."

"It is wonderful to be part of people's special moments and help to make them happen."

Like most small-business owners-operators, Fleet has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; plans to open a new storefront in St. Andrews have been pushed back to Christmas of 2020. Despite the delay, she has been blessed with the help of her son, Martin, and his wife Mairi, to keep the business running as smoothly as possible.

She is eager to see the beaming faces of visitors again, especially as she feels that tourists help Orkney Island to remember its own history as they leave their own mark behind.

"Visitors to the Orkney Islands help support conservation and archaeology, which in turn helps us preserve our local culture for the next generation. Funding for research in modern technology like wind and wave power now sits alongside fishing, farming, and the arts and crafts. Local fiddle music and folklore is also very much alive, with many festivals throughout the year. It is vital that we have the support of tourists, who leave a valuable footprint."

Fleet adds that the rising popularity of discovering one's genealogy could also be a great way to get people interested in exploring Orkney, and all of Scotland.

"I find genealogy fascinating, as it gives you a sense of where you come from. People need to feel like they belong, so researching their ancestors could be a great way to understand their history. We welcome people to come and get a glimpse of island life in 2020, where they can eat local food and join in with local activities. I would like to welcome visitors back to Scotland and visit us in Orkney, or at one of our shops on mainland Scotland, in Prince's Square in Glasgow, in Stockbridge, Edinburgh, or St. Andrews."

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Broiled Langoustine with Fennel, Pea and Herb Salad and Aioli

Closely related to the lobster, langoustine is also known as scampi, Dublin Bay prawn and, sometimes, Norway lobster. Its white flesh is succulent and delicious, and it is a favourite in Europe. Scottish langoustines thrive in the cold seas and lochs off the shores of Scotland,

and they are shipped both live and frozen to North America, Europe and Asia. They can be found in food halls and markets throughout North America, and they are also readily available online and can be delivered direct to your door.

Langoustine Ingredients

20 large Langoustines
3 ½ oz /100g butter (unsalted)
2 cloves garlic
1 lemon
1 small bunch chives

Instructions – Blanch and refresh the langoustine by bringing a large pan of water to boil and adding a generous amount of salt. Plunge the langoustines into the boiling water for 40 seconds, then remove and refresh in ice-cold water. Once blanched, carefully cut each langoustine in half lengthways. To do this you will see a little cross on the top of the langoustine - place the point of the knife into the centre of the cross and push down cutting through the body and the tail and then cut through the head. Once halved, you will notice a brown sack at the head of the langoustine - carefully remove, and then remove the waste track running through the tail also. Repeat with all the langoustines. Preheat the grill to medium-high, and lay the langoustines cut-side-up on a large roasting tray, loosening them within their shells, and spooning over the lemon garlic butter. Place under the grill for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the butter is bubbling and the langoustines are golden in colour. Be careful not to overcook.

Fennel Salad Ingredients

fennel
3 ½ oz /100g peas
1 small bunch dill
1 lemon
3 ½ fl oz/100ml oil
Salt and pepper

Instructions – Using a sharp knife, shave thin slices from the bulb of fennel. Using a peeler, peel slices from the skin of the lemon, remove any white pith and cut into thin strips. Make a simple dressing using the juice from the lemon, oil and chopped dill. Mix the salad cress with the fennel, peas and the lemon zest, dress lightly with your lemon dressing.

Aioli Ingredients

3 egg yolks
4 cloves garlic
½ lemon, juice
150ml oil
Salt and ground black pepper

Instructions – Place the garlic, lemon juice, and egg yolks into a blender. Gradually pour the oil into the blender in a steady slow stream, until it forms a thick sauce. The mixture, once blended, should be a thick yellow sauce, if it becomes too thick you can add a little water to thin it down.

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Recently, while returning home to Dublin from the West of Ireland, my family and I stopped for a picnic lunch in West Meath at an abandoned farmhouse in a very rural setting. My brother Peter had been here before and suggested it as a quiet and peaceful place to stop. From a narrow country road, we turned in and parked in a clearing between the house and some old sheds, one of which was open revealed a portion of an early families farming history. A wooden spiked tooth harrow is set on top of an old horse drawn plow. The cone from an old gramophone, along with an old bicycle, accompanies the layers of history hidden here, and for now exposed to the destruction by time and the elements.

Exploring the grounds, we came across a Hawthorn tree in a field close to the house. The Hawthorn and the Blackthorn play an important role in Celtic Mythology. It was always believed that the lone hawthorn standing in the middle of a field was treated with much respect and some suspicion by farming communities. Whilst it was thought to be auspicious, bringing good fortune and prosperity to the landowner, it was also thought to belong to the magical folk of the Otherworld, the Sidhe. As such, it was never to be cut or harmed for fear of bringing their wrath upon the perpetrator. This particular tree had a massive rock set up against its trunk apparently to protect the tree when the field was being plowed and, in turn, spare the home-owner and his family any mischief or grief from the fairies.

With the place all abandoned and neglected for what appeared to be for a considerable time it aroused my curiosity as to what ever happened to its occupants and why so much was left behind.

Ireland is filled with its lonely places and forgotten or lost small family histories.

The Hawthorn is regarded as a very sacred tree to the fairies and is considered to have the most sinister reputation in Celtic tree lore. Because these trees flower in the spring, they were associated with the festival of Bealtaine, a sacred time in Irish mythology. The beginning of the summer season started with the Fire Festival at Beltane. Great bonfires would mark a time of purification and transition, heralding in the season in the hope of a good harvest later in the year, and were accompanied with rituals to protect people from any harm by otherworldly spirits. Serious ramifications were known to occur when one of these trees are cut down to clear the land. Farmers who have caused such destruction could suffer great misfortune for the rest of their days.

Those that heeded the fairy warnings would protect their tree by placing rocks and boulders around its base to protect the trunk from damage when the farmer plowed his land. This belief was taken so seriously that, in 1999, the upgrading of the National route from Limerick to Galway was delayed, rerouted, and eventually opened nearly 10 years after it was supposed to have started. The Clare County Council as part of their Contract had to protect the fairy tree 'access', which is not permitted within a minimum of a 15 feet radius, and a protective fence has been erected around it.

The Hawthorn was often seen as a gateway into the fairy realms.

Thomas the Rhymer, a Scottish poet in the 13th Century, claimed to have met the Fairy Queen by a Hawthorn bush from which

a cuckoo was calling. She led him into the Otherworld for a short visit, but when he emerged, he found that seven years had passed.

On a darker note, the 5th century St Augustine of Hippo decreed that un-baptized babies could not be buried in church graveyards. It was believed that instead they would go to Limbo and be lost forever. The Limbo of the Infants was a realm of the afterlife, exclusively for the souls of un-baptized babies. These souls were believed to be in a blissful state, but they stopped just short of the full bliss of heaven. This was cold comfort for many bereaved parents. Limbo was taught up until the 1990s, and I remember the scary tales told by the Nuns - who, at that time, were considered the brides of Christ - rather chilling stories of the souls of the un-baptized destined to carry a candle for eternity, looking for the mercy of God. What good God would be capable of such cruel mercy on an innocent child?

Babies who died before baptism would be brought in secret - away at night from the public for a private burial, carried out only by the father and male relatives. Women had no role to play and mothers were not present. The deceased would be brought to the ruins of an old church, whether it was Catholic or Protestant. Both were considered consecrated grounds that would allow the mother and family some peace of mind. A folk belief was that if the mother brought the child herself it would increase the chances of her bringing another in the future.

When all else failed in locating a burial placement according to location, the deceased would be buried beneath a Hawthorn tree with the belief that the fairies would care for these souls as their own.

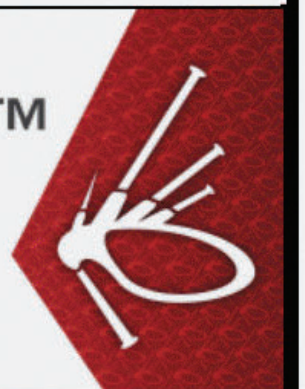
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Lorcan Mitchell

Lorcan Mitchell marches to the beat of his own drummer

In one sense, it might be hard to argue that carpenter and musician Lorcan Mitchell doesn't think outside of the box. But then again, his musical invention is pretty much exactly that - a box.

Of course, calling the Mitchell Drum just "a box" does a disservice to the simple ingenuity of its design. It is a portable snare drum worn on a strap across the waist, so it can be played sitting down or standing up, and it makes different sounds based on where the user hits it.

"It is perfect for all lovers of music who want to play and have fun," shares Mitchell via email. "Whether you are playing at home practicing your own beats, jamming with friends, warming up backstage before a gig, or busking on a busy street entertaining locals and tourists, the instrument is there with you."

Hailing from the western coast of Ireland - a small village called Aughrim, near Ballinasloe, Co. Galway - Mitchell was exposed to music at an early age.

"My parents were not musical, but they encouraged and supported my brother, three sisters, and I in playing music. I started with the tin whistle as a child, progressed to the button accordion, then took up the guitar when I was 13."

His first inkling to make a sonic contraption of his own came at the age of 17.

"In Ireland, before we go to college, we complete exams called the Leaving Certificate. I was doing woodwork as a subject, but I didn't want to make a table or cabinet. I asked my teacher about whether it would be possible to build a guitar. I loved every minute of making that guitar. From researching



the type I wanted to build, to learning what material I needed, to collecting all of the separate parts that go into making an electric guitar. It was fascinating to me. This wasn't school - something about it felt real."

After graduating, Mitchell travelled the world for a spell, before settling into work as a carpenter. It wasn't long before he began applying his skill set more steadily to the world of musical instruments.

"In February of 2016 I made my first drum. It happened. It worked. The feeling of relief and joy was unbelievable."

Since then, he has created a whole range of different models, including both acoustic and electric portable percussive dance floors.

And while he admits to having had some difficulty getting drum stores to carry his unconventional pieces - and with his plans to travel to North America to sell the product recently thwarted due to COVID-19 - he has adapted accordingly.

"It forced me to build my website and online profile to connect with people directly. It was slower and more difficult this way, but it has helped me build closer relation-

ships with customers, learn what they really need, and how to serve them better."

It has also allowed him to focus on growing his market share at home in Ireland.

"The nature of Irish culture is that we make everything with our hands in a spirit of love. We are connected directly to nature and our craft."

"That spirit dropped off during the boom (Celtic Tiger) years when, even though people had money, they did not appreciate or support creative endeavours - especially those that are produced locally.

"Buying a local, handmade product is not only the best thing you can do to support your local producer, but also for your family, community and future generations. Money spent locally stays locally, and jobs created locally stay locally. This ripple effect can have exponentially beneficial contributions to your area. Success breeds success. When others see a person succeeding in their craft and passion, they will want to invest in themselves and do the same.

"I am an eternal optimist and believe the world is turning toward a future where a person is rewarded for their passion, dedication, persistence and - in most cases - their sacrifice in perfecting their craft and finding their purpose, while helping to improve the local community. Maybe I am dreaming, but that is part of my purpose and passion; to encourage others to do the same."

www.mitchellmusic.ie

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Puffin Stickworks

One man is styling sticks for the soul

As a youngster, Roger Goeddey brought a different kind of weapon to friendly, neighbourhood playfights.

"I have been a big fan of sticks since I was a kid," he explains via email. "When everyone else was pretending to sword fight, I was using both ends; it just felt more natural."

Over time, Goeddey - now 50 and living in central Illinois - took that interest to new levels.

"One day I was searching the Internet, looking up Irish martial arts, and came upon the name Glen Doyle. There was an article about his family's Irish stick fighting style. Now, I already knew how to bash a man in the head, but I did not know there was a fighting art around what most people saw as a mere walking stick. I contacted Glen and he accepted me into his style. He was very informative and put up with my many questions."

Goeddey has both Scottish and Irish ancestry on his mother's side, and a little more Irish on his dad's. In addition, he recently learned that his great grandfather was a cane-and-stick man as well. Thus, his interest in stick fighting both fulfilled a desire to study a martial art and reconnected him with his roots.

"I have always believed that if you don't know where you came from, you don't know where you're going."

"These days, far too many people don't have a clue about their own family history, what their ancestors accomplished, or how their past struggles might help to overcome problems that you may be facing in the present."

"I can trace some of my family back to the 1600s in Ireland and Scotland. When we came to the States, we fought in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and every single conflict since then. I learned from my grandfather, and from our family history, that hard work pays off, to stand up for what is right, to be generally kind, to help those you can, and when an obstruction gets in in your way, no matter what it is, knock it down."



Most recently, Goeddey's interest in the shillelagh has evolved to the point where he is not just practicing with them, but he is constructing them as well.

"I stumbled into this by complete accident. I was helping my stepbrother clean up a tree that had fallen, and this branch just kind of cried out to me. My friend Alex had always wanted a shillelagh-type cane, so I figured - what the heck - I'll give it a go."

A few pictures on Facebook and some rave reviews later, he had more requests for commissions than he could shake a stick at; so, Puffin Stickworks, his Facebook-based shillelagh shop, was up and running.

"I have helped some people reconnect with their heritage with my sticks and I have helped others with their mobility. The very

fact that people want something I make, and then brag about it to others, is, of course, an ego boost. Never did I think that making one stick would ever blossom into this. Bringing a smile to their faces is a big reason why I do what I do."

In fact, demand is so high that Goeddey is looking into acquiring shop space and procuring more tools in order to fulfil the many orders; he notes that, at his current capacity, it will take awhile to meet all of the demands.

"I am currently about three to five months out, depending on what someone might want for canes, trainers, or cudgels, and basic walking sticks. I have a hard time saying no, and not for the money, but the enjoyment of the demand itself."

He hopes that by crafting shillelaghs he is keeping an ancient custom alive.

"In days of old, fighting sticks were given as a rite of passage to young men; to me, fighting sticks are an essential part of preserving and promoting tradition - as vital as Gaelge itself. Using sticks to beat each other is not solely an Irish thing, of course - many cultures employ variations on stick fighting - however, this singular style helps to make up the Irish soul."

www.facebook.com/Puffinstickworks



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The Celtic Arts Center has long been a fixture in California, despite decades of difficulties finding a fixed address to call home.

Celtic Life International recently spoke with Larry Malley, treasurer and chairperson for An Claidheamh Soluis, aka the Celtic Arts Center, about its storied and far-reaching past.

"The history of the Celtic Arts Center can be said to begin with the Easter Rising of 1916," he explains via email. "The doomed rebellion in Dublin was crushed in a week but touched off an independence movement that ultimately resulted in the autonomous Republic of Ireland."

According to Malley, one of the leaders of the Rising, James Connolly, was executed by firing squad for his role in the rebellion, but his grandson Brian Heron - surely inspired by his grandfather - would go on to contribute to Gaelic culture.

"After founding the Irish Arts Center in Manhattan in 1972, Heron's life of phenomenal activism led him here to the west coast where, along with marching with Cesar Chavez, he pursued his passion for theatre, forming a nucleus of dedicated theatrical talent which was to become An Claidheamh Soluis. In the spirit of the Gaelic revival, Heron created a multi-disciplinary effort encompassing education in the language, music, dance, and theatre of the traditional Celtic peoples."

The facility has had to pull up stakes and relocate several times since then, later op-

erating from the San Pedro area - adjacent to the port of Los Angeles - the Angels Gate amphitheatre at the Fort MacArthur army base, and Hollywood Blvd. A fire in the early 1990s even forced the company to operate out of a Columbian monastery for a time.

It may sound nomadic for a theatre company, but those who believed in its mission of promoting Celtic culture through the arts were dedicated to keeping the doors open, wherever they happened to be.

"Around the year 2000, the Center built another theatre space in a storefront, and resumed a successful theatre program to renewed critical acclaim," says Malley, noting that he became involved with the group around that time. "I decided to learn the Irish language, and an Irish-American colleague from work told me about Brian Heron's Celtic Arts Center in North Hollywood, which was just starting classes. Classes were moved to the theatre later on."

"It was a great place where you could dance, drink, learn, and see plays. We are still doing three of those."

Today, the Center operates mainly out of the Mayflower Club in North Hollywood.

"Our activities have shrunk since the moves, but we have tried to keep our seasonal talent shows and language classes going, as well as holiday celebrations and a few tentative steps to bringing back theatre. We

have had art galleries and folklore classes as well. Our music session is on hiatus (due to COVID-19), but there are sessions, including 'Slow (teaching) Sessions' going on all over the region. Our excellent language teacher, Michael Chitjian, has been giving Zoom classes every week. I don't know how people are continuing with Céilí dancing, unless it is with friends and family. That would be the hardest thing to continue."

Malley explains that the company is trying to sort out the logistics of doing future events remotely, like the annual election and membership meeting, and the upcoming Samhain holiday. They are even looking at the possibility of selling products online.

He is confident, however, that - like previous challenges - the organization will survive, as its core mission - preserving and promoting Celtic culture - won't likely be going out of style anytime soon.

"I am optimistic, especially about the state of the Irish language. For the past 20 years at least, people have come from all over the world to learn Irish in Ireland and in other places, and there are more speakers than probably ever. Learning Irish in the 21st century is almost like learning Celtic music in the 1960s, and that has maintained its popularity ever since."

"We welcome absolutely everybody who wants to learn about Celtic culture," adds Malley. "It's about what is in your heart, not your blood."

www.celticartscenter.com





CHROMA

Welsh rockers get out of the garage

The image of the teenage garage band, trying to find their own unique voice in a vast musical landscape, was once something of an American stereotype. From the Beach Boys to Black Flag to The Black Keys, young men and women pounded on drums, strapped on second-hand guitars, turned their amps up to 11, and kept the neighbours awake well past their bedtimes.

Garage bands are now a global phenomenon, including in Wales, where three-piece rockers CHROMA are making musical waves.

"We all reside in South Wales," shares the band's drummer, Zac Mather, via email. "Katie (Hall, vocals) lives in Cardiff, myself in Pontypridd, and Liam (Bevan, guitar) lives in Abercynon. We are all Welsh speakers, and we also write music in Welsh, with some English songs too."

As youngsters, each was inspired by the likes of Nirvana, Biffy Clyro, Blink 182, and Rage Against the Machine, along with an array of music teachers.

"Both Bev and I played in many local bands together while in our teens, when Katie eventually reached out to Bev during her time at Cardiff University to start a musical project," Mather explains. "Since teaming up, we have been using our music as an outlet for us to creatively express our feelings through our songs, as we grow in this ever-changing world. Without this outlet we would probably end up screaming internally for eternity."

Back then, the band was content to scream into the void. However, over time and with more concerts under their collective belt, the trio developed confidence

in their sound, knowing that someone out there wanted to listen to what they were putting out.

"Our sound has really evolved in the past five years, as we have all grown up together," continues Mather. "We are all in our early 20s now; when we started CHROMA, we were all in our late teens, and we didn't know if we were any good or not, or if anyone would even want to listen to us."

"Thinking of ourselves as artists has played a huge role in the way we make our music today."

Mather admits that being in the music industry has its fair share of challenges - especially as the internet offers so much sonic competition.

"The main issue we face these days is getting heard. There are plenty of amazing artists popping up everywhere right now. Getting a slot on a huge show, or managing to get some good press, can be tricky when everyone is getting bombarded with new music all of the time."

Regardless, what draws the group out again and again is the sheer thrill of live performances.

"The feeling we get when we are on stage - whether it is in front of a 100 people or a 1000 - doesn't change much. It is so rewarding to get up there, leave all of our real-life problems behind, and just smash out some heavy, loud, rock music to people who are also into it."

Since officially forming in 2015, CHROMA has enjoyed a number of major career highlights, including performing at the renowned Reading and Leeds festivals, appearing on BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend, recording tracks at Maida Vale Studios in London, and travelling throughout Europe.

Their most recent project is the release of their new single, *Mind in Transit*, which highlights Hall's soaring vocals - something, says Mather, that has shaped and defined their sound. The song was meant to be the centerpiece of their first full-length album.

"We were due to record it in April of 2020 but had to postpone until further notice due to the rapid spread of the coronavirus," explains Mather, adding that everyone's health and safety is top priority. "As soon as things have cooled down a little, we will be recording the album, and then looking to string together a U.K. tour to promote the release."

Mather would like to see more Welsh representation in popular culture, but also believes some serious strides are being made in that direction.

"You have promoters like Clwb Ifor Bach and Tafwyl that are doing great work in bringing in people from outside of Wales and getting them involved in our culture in a real-world setting. And there are plenty more people in Wales working relentlessly to fight back against the oppression we have faced for hundreds of years and, in typical Welsh spirit, nobody is slowing down anytime soon."

www.chroma.band

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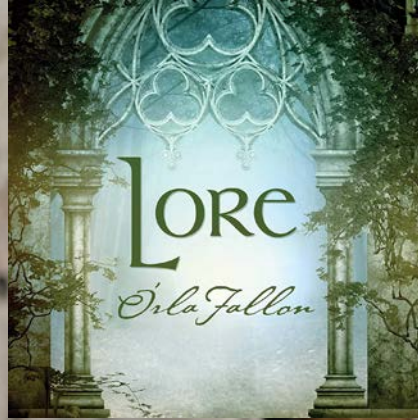
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Orla Fallon

Orla Fallon returns to her roots



After a brief foray into the world of country music, Irish harpist and singer Orla Fallon returns to her roots with her latest album *Lore*.

"I had been doing a lot of gigs and had been singing a lot of the old traditional songs that I grew up with as a child," she tells Celtic Life International via email. "The songs always got such an incredible reaction and I really felt exhilarated as an artist when I sang them. I felt the time was right to do some new recordings of old favorites."

The former Celtic Woman member worked alongside Irish producer Dan Shea to create the 12-track recording, which covers traditional Celtic songs, including *Siúil A Rún* and *The Parting Glass*.

"I wanted to record at least 50 songs. Dan and I spoke at length with our great friend and mentor Greg Howard at the record label and between us we narrowed the list down to 12 pieces. I love our recording of *Wild Mountain Thyme* as I feel it is so hopeful for brighter days ahead. I also love our version of *Roseville Fair* and could sing it all day. *Galway Bay* is very special too - it was my Dad's favorite song."

Apart from the usual time constraints, Fallon says that the project came together quite smoothly.

"Dan and I know each other so well. We are working together for over 12 years now and, although he is based in California and I am here in Ireland, we FaceTimed a lot to

work out the logistics of keys and tempos. He worked his magic at home and sent me roughs of the tracks; I went into the studio and put down my harp first and then did the vocals. I work in a lovely little studio in Dublin and the engineer Dave McCune always gets a lovely sound on both the harp and the vocals. I know I am in safe hands and that both guys will do a super job."

The album's production began in February of this year, only weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We never dreamed of the situation that was facing us with COVID-19. We had recorded all the tracks over a few days and intended doing one more day in March to do harmonies, but the country was locked down starting March 13, so we didn't get to do our last session."

"Still, I have to say that I felt very blessed during the lockdown. We have a lovely garden at home, and my son, my Mum and I worked in it every day. My husband had to go to work every day. We were in our own little bubble at home."

Even with the day-to-day uncertainties surrounding the creation of *Lore*, Fallon believes it was all worth it.

"When I finally listened to the tracks it felt like I was putting on a cozy, old sweater."

"It really felt like the songs were so appropriate for the times - they felt comforting and reassuring."

Like many in the music scene, she is concerned about the long and short-term effects COVID-19 will have on those in the industry.

"All of the work - the gigs, all the months of planning - were just pulled overnight. It is not just the artists themselves who are suffering, but all the stage crews, the theatre workers, the sound guys...the list goes on. It has been a very difficult time for the music industry in general. That said, I think there will be a great hunger for live performances once we come through this, and I, for one, can't wait to hear the roar of the crowd again."

Fallon plans to spend the next several months promoting *Lore* in any way possible. While much remains unclear, she keeps her head held high.

"You can't pursue a career in music unless you have a great drive to succeed, to work hard, and are prepared for hard times. The personal rewards and the pure joy of doing what you love, though, far outweighs any of that. Every time I record, I learn and grow, not only as an artist, but also as a person. I really wear my heart on my sleeve when I sing, and I think my confidence and self-belief have grown with every new piece of work."

www.orlafallon.com



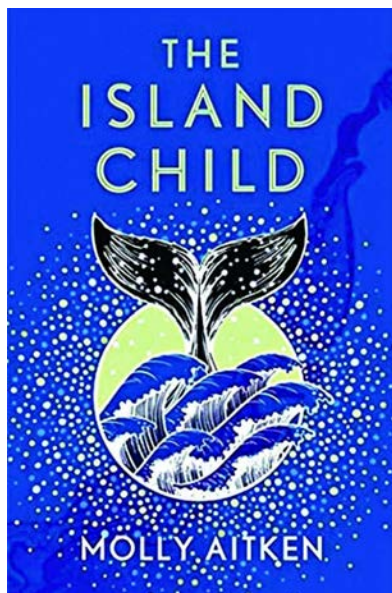
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Molly Aitken *Author Molly Aitken brings new life to old stories of Irish folklore*

Born in Perth, Scotland and reared in a small seaside village in West Cork, debut author Molly Aitken grew up listening to harrowing tales of Celtic folklore and myth.

"My mother told me the stories, and I believed they were all true," she tells Celtic Life International from her home in Sheffield, U.K. "As soon as I realized that there was someone who wrote down the stories that I read, I knew it was the job for me. Even now writing still feels like play to me so it hasn't changed all that much. But, I suppose, now it's play that pays the bills."

Although the 28-year-old says her career in writing has been filled with many highlights – most notably, meeting her intelligent and thoughtful readers – she admits that the solitary lifestyle of a writer can be challenging.

"I really loved touring bookshops and meeting readers, but at the end of the day to get a story down on the page you have to spend a lot of time alone, or rather only with the characters in your head. It can be quite lonely at times."

Earlier this year, Aitken released her debut novel *The Island Child* (Cannongate Books), a magical work of historical fiction that explores themes of identity, freedom and motherhood.

"I came up with the idea while I was living in Galway," she recalls. "I had an idea of a man washing up on the beach of a tiny island and changing the community there. I soon realized that the story was not about him, but about the girl that found him. She began telling me her story."

The 320-page narrative follows a young woman named Oona who flees her home on the Isle of Inis in search of a new life. Alternating between storylines of Oona's past and present, the novel is described as both haunting and rich, and brings to life old stories of Irish folklore.

"I actually never set out to write about Irish folklore, but so many folktales are still relevant today – that is why we keep telling them."

"Look at the selkie; she gives up a free and joyful part of herself to become a wife and mother when she leaves the sea, but she still longs to return. Countless women today can relate to this."

While the book is purely fiction, Aitken says she did significant research on the Aran Islands.

"I based my fictional island, Inis, on some of the islands around Ireland. The islands – particularly the Aran Islands and Blasket – became famous in Ireland in the early 1900s and many islanders wisely decided to make a bit of money by writing down or dictating their lives and stories. There is a wealth of literature, diaries and accounts of islanders, so I spent a lot of time poring over those. Over the years of writing I also visited Inis Oirr, the smallest of the Aran Islands to feel the wind and rain on my face and hear the birds and clack of stones under my feet.

I wanted to really feel the place in my bones.

"One of the joys of creating a fictional place is not only that it can have a timeless, mythic quality, but also that it can be shaped to suit whatever story you are telling."

The Island Child has generated great buzz in the few months since hitting shelves, with *The Telegraph* calling it "exquisite" – and labelling Aitken as an exciting new voice in Irish fiction.

"It was a story I had been living with for several years and I was so relieved to have finished it, and to have written a story that I was, and am, incredibly proud of."

Aitken notes that her novel fits into a much larger trend of contemporary authors reworking old tales of folklore, fairy tale, and myth.

"Folklore is not only a strong part of our heritage, but also an important part of our present. I always find it sad if myths and stories are lost, which is why reinterpretation is so important. That could be through film, art, fiction – really, anything. It can make stories that we think of as irrelevant re-energized for a new audience."

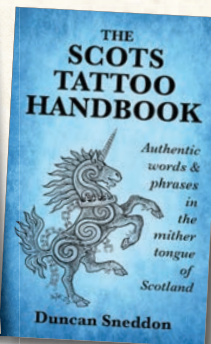
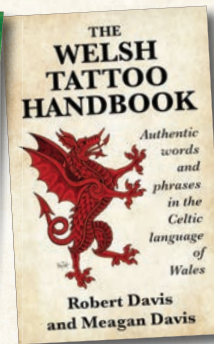
With her debut novel freshly behind her, the young scribe is already working on her next project.

"It's about a messy family and begins in a small village in West Cork and journeys out to Scotland and Italy that, like *The Island Child*, draws on folktales and myth."

@molly.aitken

Celtic books from Nova Scotia

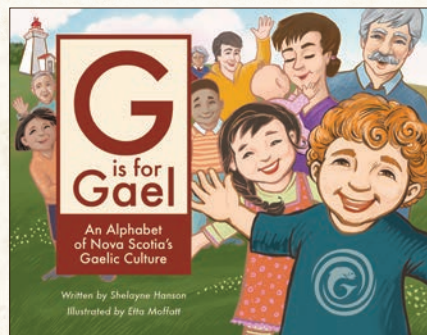
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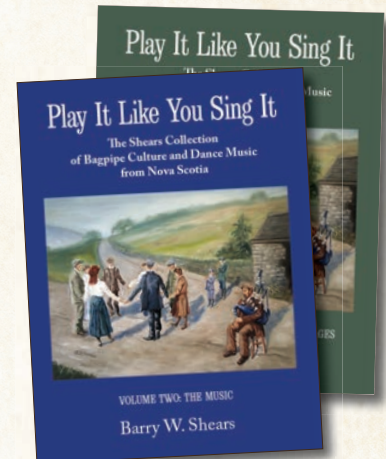
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Anna Ruadh

Gaelic language publisher Bradan Press translates a Canadian classic



It has been just over a year since Celtic Life International last spoke with Emily McEwan-Fujita, the passionate president of Nova Scotia's Gaelic language publication Bradan Press. In that time, she and her team have worked on a myriad of projects, from poetry collections to music books, all with the mission of connecting "readers worldwide with Gaelic language and culture."

One such project - a Gaelic translation of the Canadian classic *Anne of Green Gables* - has been in the works for over three years.

"At the time, I was invited to dinner with Diana Gabaldon, the author of the *Outlander* series," McEwan-Fujita shares via email. "She was visiting Nova Scotia to do some research for her next book. Among the local authors and booksellers at the dinner was Lisa Doucet, a manager at a children's bookstore in Halifax. Lisa also happens to be a serious collector of *Anne of Green Gables* and other books by L.M. Montgomery. She asked me if there was a Scottish Gaelic translation of *Anne*. I said there wasn't, so she suggested that I do one! That idea really appealed to me on multiple levels, so as a publisher I immediately started to think about how such a thing could be accomplished."

It was through her preliminary research that McEwan-Fujita met with Dr. Kate Scarth, the director of the L.M. Montgomery Institute at the University of Prince Edward Island.

"She urged me to attend the LMMI's biennial conference in June of 2018 - and it was a fantastic experience! I had the privilege of meeting some distinguished Montgomery scholars, and hearing the latest academic research on the worldwide significance of Montgomery's work and foreign language translations of *Anne*. That convinced me

that there would indeed be a wider interest in a Gaelic translation of *Anne*."

Translating the book, which eventually earned the title *Anna Ruadh*, was not without its challenges.

"Funding was by far the greatest challenge. People doing the work needed to be paid fairly. Initially, about two years ago, we applied for a Gaelic Books Council grant in Scotland. They have been extremely supportive of our other Gaelic publishing projects, and this time they very reasonably asked us to show support from our own province first. So, we had to wait several months and apply for a grant here in Nova Scotia. We applied and carefully explained in the application that we would get some matching funding from Scotland contingent on getting the provincial grant. And they turned us down anyway! That was a blow."

In June of 2019, McEwan-Fujita turned to an online crowdfunding platform to support production costs.

"It is risky, with no guarantee of success. I ran a 30-day Kickstarter campaign to raise \$15,000. It was almost constant promotion work for 30 straight days - I didn't have any days off that month. We were very fortunate to receive support from people in about 10 different countries, everyone from native Gaelic speakers and scholars, to professional book editors and librarians, and *Anne* fans and collectors. In the end we raised just over \$17,000 in total."

Although that sounds like a lot of money to publish a book, it's not - especially once you factor in Kickstarter's usage fees, Canadian sales tax, shipping costs, and more. Even still, McEwan-Fujita says that working alongside Gaelic translator Mòrag Anna Nic-Neill and illustrator Etta Moffatt made it all worthwhile.

"We are so pleased with how the book turned out.

Not only is it beautiful to look at, but it gives us an enduring, endearing new image of one of our favourite characters."

"I loved seeing Etta Moffatt bring *Anne* to life visually with her incredible cover illustration. And Mòrag Anna's translation also conveyed all the humour and the sadness in the story so well that you would think Montgomery had originally written it in Gaelic! It really is fun and rewarding to read."

Anna Ruadh is currently available for order on the Bradan Press website.

McEwan-Fujita says Bradan Press will be busy in the coming months, working on several upcoming releases and adjusting to the world's new normal. The company has no plans of slowing down, she explains, noting that the Gaelic language has a very important place in Canada.

"Even Montgomery herself had Gaelic roots, as did her beloved Prince Edward Island. Translating this book felt like a homecoming, in a way.

"Bradan Press is, and will continue, to try and help people reconnect with their Gaelic roots, which have been erased in the history books and often even in family memory. We will try to help everyone connect with whatever they love about the language and culture."

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El Keegan

Irish photographer

El Keegan details the immigrant experience with her latest project

Dublin-born photographer El Keegan has enjoyed both commercial and artistic success in her field, photographing the likes of Barack and Michelle Obama, and more. Recently we spoke with Keegan about her passion for her profession, and her latest project, Abhaile, which documents the Irish immigrant experience.



What are your own roots?

I was born and raised in Dublin, but I have lived in Toronto for the last five years.

When and why did you first become interested in photography?

I loved photography from a very young age. I did a degree in Communications and specialized in photography, but it was not until I was scouted by the Irish Independent for my work on the college paper that I really believed it was a possibility for me.

Are they the same reasons that you continue to be involved today?

To me, there is an excitement in capturing a fleeting moment. That stolen glance, the warmth in someone's eyes when they look at a loved one. Photography has always been rewarding because of the connections it brings and the ability to get to capture the emotion of a moment, whether that is in portraiture or even a food and beverage

shot. It is always about creating something authentic and emotional, and it has been that way since the start.

How has your work evolved over the years?

I began my career as a photojournalist and it was a baptism by fire. I would only get a phone number as my assignment and I would have to connect with the person, the event, the feeling of a story almost instantly, and the subjects varied across all walks of life. I gradually moved from news to features, capturing magazine covers of famous athletes and doing lifestyle spreads for publications across Ireland and internationally as well. When I moved to Toronto, I delved into commercial photography in a huge way focusing on food and beverage photography for big brands. I love to build an image from scratch; developing a fourth of July picnic, a barbeque with friends, a schoolyard, a lavish Christmas get-together, all from a small studio is such a thrill. I loved the technical challenges it brought, and the potential to convey emotion in static products. Now I love to cover everything. I do large-scale commercial shoots for brands like Tim Hor-

tons, Pepsi, KitchenAid, and Lindt, but I also have a passion for dog photography, capturing portraits and doing Photoshop-based artwork.

What are the challenges of the vocation?

In order to succeed in this industry, you have to work relentlessly. There are thousands out there who want to do what you are doing, to work with your clients, and to fill your seat. You need to constantly prove yourself in everything you do. It is so important to be adaptable, to have strong communication skills, to have a deep passion for photography, to push yourself to learn in order to keep excelling.

What are the rewards?

That feeling of creating something that resonates with people. To stop people in their tracks and let the images sink in. To connect with people and clients from all walks of life. To see your work across the world. To know that after all these years, you're still hungry for it.



What have been some career highlights to date?

I got to be one of only two photographers in Ireland granted access to capture a private event with Barack and Michelle Obama. I got my images published on over 80 magazine covers. I have had a subway poster campaign across every station in Toronto for two years straight. In all of this, the enthusiasm people have shown for Abhaile has been so rewarding. It is the first time that I have completed a personal project outside of my commissions. It is a true expression of my experience living away from home, away from my family and from everything I have ever known. To have something so deeply personal so well received has been the greatest honor.

Is your creative process more 'inspirational' or 'perspirational'?

Perspirational. For every image you see, years have gone into making it just so. Every shoot, every concept has a learning curve, be it in preparation or execution, nothing I do is simply achieved. It is carried out with determination and hard work. At this point in my career I could carry out so many shoots with my eyes closed - metaphorically speaking, of course - but it is so important to me that every shoot is treated as a brand new experience, with potential for even greater success than the last.

What makes your work unique?

I bring an emotional quality to all of my work. From portraits to products, I create an atmosphere, something tangible far beyond a two-dimensional image. I never look at a shot and think, light from the left, I think,



this beautiful spread would be enjoyed about 8:30 am, with family, bleary-eyed, pre-coffee, in the winter months. I communicate that with lighting and composition. I want people to see themselves in my work no matter the subject.

What makes a good photo?

I think that is so subjective. To me, though, emotion is king. So much imagery online these days is just carbon copies and fake smiles. When someone can allow themselves to let go, to laugh until they cry, to allow themselves to be vulnerable, I think that makes an incredible image.

What inspired Abhaile?

I am the youngest of four siblings, and I was the last to emigrate. Since I was 15, it seems like we were always driving to Dublin airport to see another family member off. Our relationships were entirely online, with 12-to 14-hour time differences. Emigration has made up the fabric of our family for so long that when I moved to Toronto five years ago it made me look at my new world in a completely different light. I saw everything that was new, but I felt everyone I had left behind. Every bar, café, friend, and family member. This city is my home now but for so long I have felt like I don't fully belong. Toronto is a multicultural hub. It is common to identify with a culture outside of North America but I was holding on so tight to my memories of home that I felt like I was living in limbo. I tried to identify what my evolved sense of home was, by bringing these very personal icons of home to my current surroundings I was allowing myself space to feel at home in a new unexplored territory. To finally belong to this hybrid.

What has the response been like so far?

It has been so wonderful. I worked for months to create something I resonated so deeply with, to hear how many others see themselves in what I've created is so reward-



ing. So many people have taken the time out of their day to communicate what each image means to them. That they finally find a home in my work too.

How will you follow it up?

In an ideal world, COVID-19 will pass and as such, I will be allowed to travel. I would love to add more cities to this project. The Irish diaspora is a thing of great power and reach. I would love to share this piece of home with a much greater audience.

What are your thoughts on the current state of the visual arts in Ireland?

I think there is great creativity and talent in Ireland, especially in the visual arts. I do feel from my own personal experience there is a ceiling though and a limit in the prospects available. There are incredible photographers and artists at home killing it, but I felt limited in the amount and scale of opportunities.

How can it be improved?

Honouring and investing in the wealth of talent at home is a great start. There are countless photographers and artists working day and night for their big break. I would love to think they wouldn't need to emigrate to reach their potential.

What is on your creative agenda for the remainder of 2020 and going into 2021?

I hope to encourage people to buy my prints and to take a piece of their city home. With COVID-19 there is an element of uncertainty, but I hope to see myself back on set in the coming weeks adapting to the new normal. I have another project up my sleeve as well that I look forward to investing more time in over the next year.

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OUT OF SYNC

ance all the different processes which are carried out by the three of us; designing the clothes, to pattern work, sizing, fabric choices, construction, processing orders, the management of the website and media feed, bookkeeping, and making copious cups of tea.

“The three of us collaborate with our diverse range of individual ideas to produce unexpected and unconventional designs. A core part of our design process is the play on the words ‘Out of Sync’ - by combining different fabric tones, manipulating texture or altering proportions, our aim is to create subtle contrasts which are the basis of our distinctive designs. It is then down to us to turn these ideas into reality as everything is made by us in our studio in Cardiff.

“Our clothes are modern day essentials, versatile transitional pieces that are visually interesting and which create maximum impact effortlessly for women who want to reflect their individuality through distinctive design and who are not afraid to be ‘Out of Sync’ in a crowd. Our clients make considered choices, who love and value the clothes that they wear for a more sustainable and ethical wardrobe and who believe in community spirit. We believe good pieces of clothing should go beyond a single season, made with care, quality being at the forefront. Customer focused, designed with real people in

Out of Sync is a Welsh fashion brand based in a studio in Cardiff, founded by Jackie Lewis and her two daughters Kate and Meg.

“As a family it has been a natural process. We have each experienced enjoyment in the practical side of creativity, from designing home furnishings to making or adapting our own clothes. We have taken inspiration from travelling and have been influenced by cultural experiences from street art to fashion and art exhibitions – all great ways to spend time as a family together.

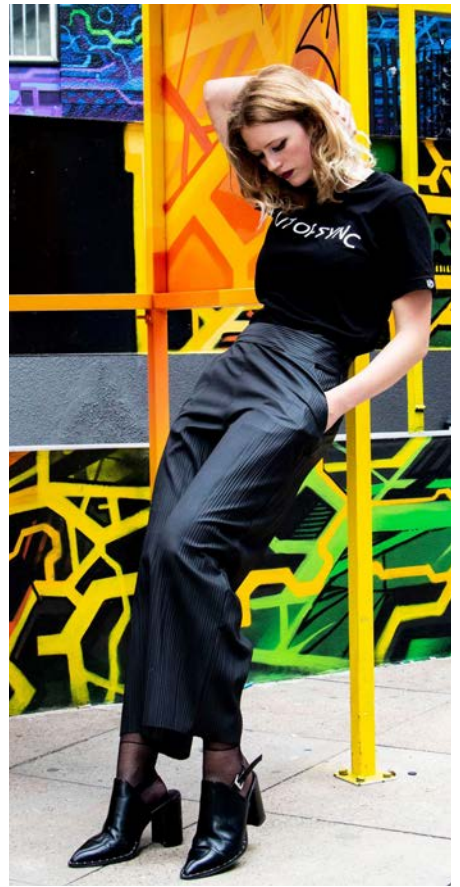
“Since we launched Out of Sync in 2019, we feel that our creativity and ideas have flourished. Our designs, website and media-feed reflect our inspirations and experiences - which we want to share with our community - and having a strong family network motivates us to continue.

“Starting a new business comes with many challenges; we have to bal-

mind. A partnership formed between the consumer and a team behind the scenes. Most importantly an item of clothing should have the power to make the wearer feel confident and beautiful by putting a smile on their face.

“Celebrating independent Welsh fashion and creating a niche shopping experience would promote Wales and boost tourism to the area. Here in Wales it would be fantastic to give opportunities and support to small businesses by offering the use of empty shop units for short periods of time, at a reasonable cost, giving new small businesses local exposure and the opportunity to experience all aspects of running a store. Encouraging community spirit by hosting sponsored events which showcase and celebrate our many talented Welsh creators and designers out there is also vital.”

www.outofsyncwales.co.uk





SCOTTISH LANDS

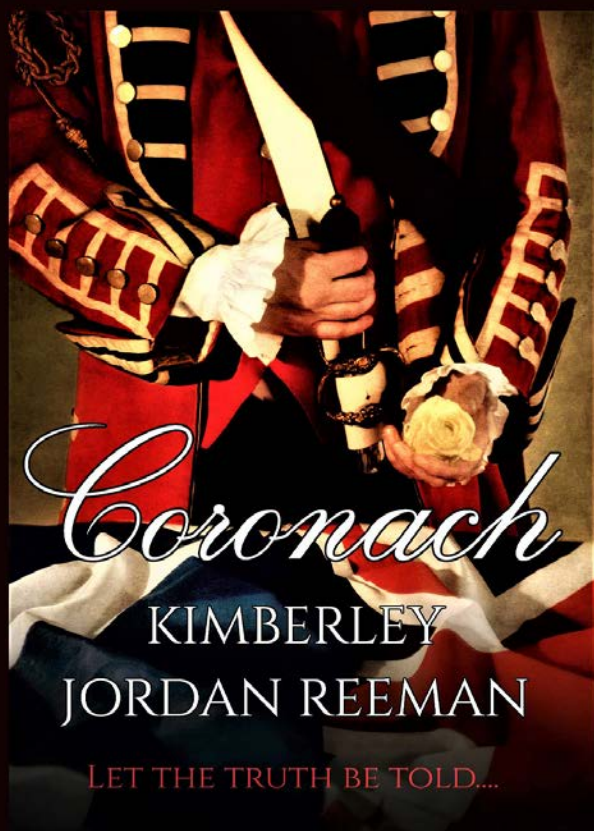
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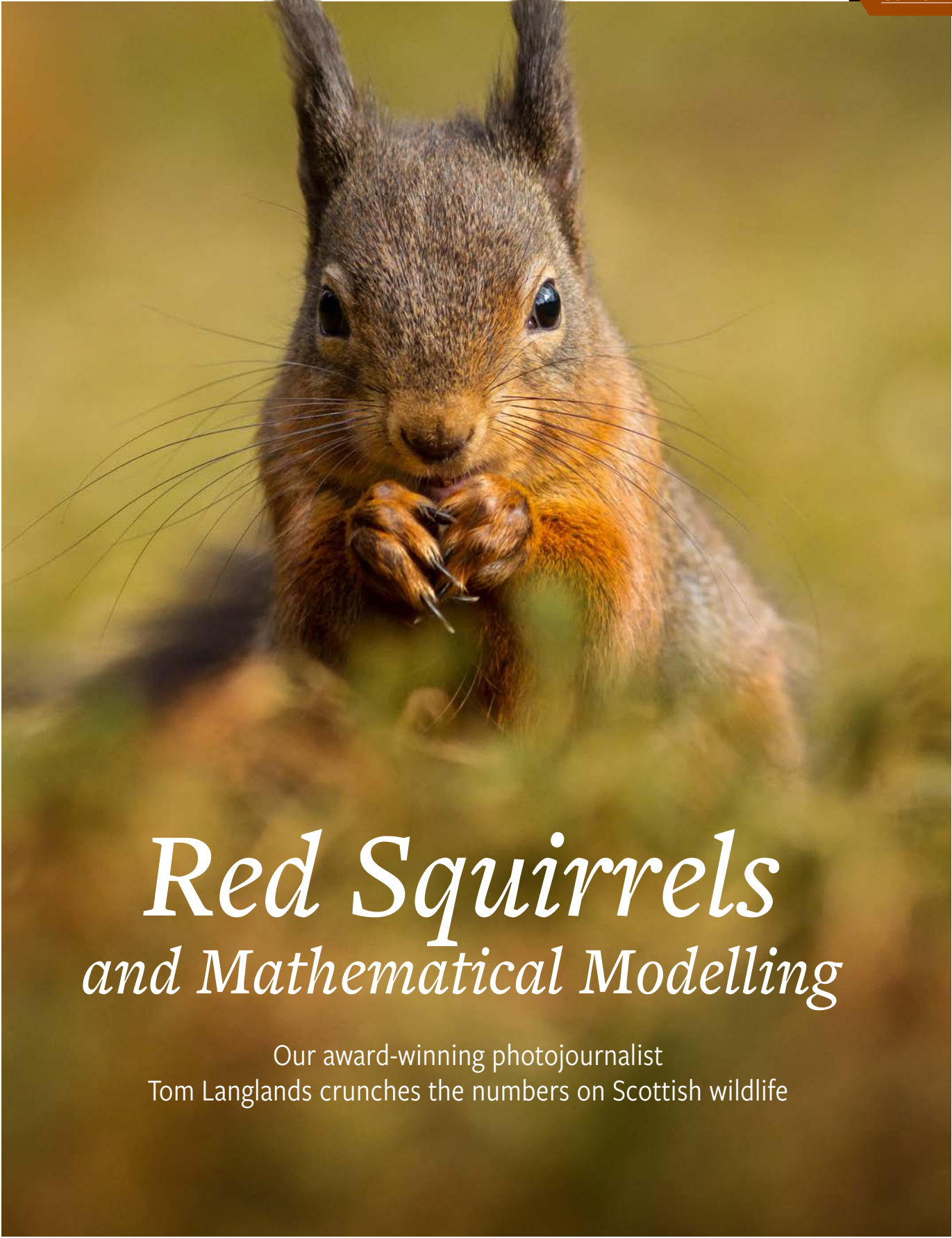


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Red Squirrels and Mathematical Modelling

Our award-winning photojournalist
Tom Langlands crunches the numbers on Scottish wildlife



As the new coronavirus sweeps across the world, we are reminded once again of the frailty of human existence. Throughout the course of history, mankind has found itself in similar situations before and no doubt will encounter them again in the future. We should, however, take some solace in the knowledge that with more tools at our disposal to understand and fight the virus we are better prepared than ever before.

In all of the news reports and government briefings there is talk of infection curves, infection peaks, Ro numbers - the ability of a virus to reproduce and infect others, secondary spikes, predicted death rates and when it is anticipated that lockdowns can be lifted. These are all the results of mathematical modelling - an important tool in shaping strategies for dealing with such things as vaccination programs and the spread of diseases. Mathematical modelling of diseases can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries but came to the fore in the early 20th century when it began to be used to explain the behavior of epidemics. The advent of modern computers has enabled mathematical modelling to become ever more flexible, accurate and faster in its ability to predict disease behavior and provide a greater understanding of how a species will respond to different pressures and threats to its survival.

Their survival is also threatened by the impact of habitat destruction by man. Mathematical modelling is now being used to inform those responsible for the conservation of this protected species and enable strategies to be developed to ensure its survival. At the forefront of the field is Professor Andy White, Head of Mathematics at Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh. White undertook his doctoral thesis in the 1990s using mathematics to explore theoretical



Like humankind, many of Scotland's red squirrels are being infected by a deadly disease brought from distant shores - in this instance through the introduction of a non-indigenous competitor.



ecology and infectious disease biology. This led him to explore mathematical modelling focused on the U.K.'s squirrel populations, and since 2013 he has been working with some of the country's most important ecology agencies.

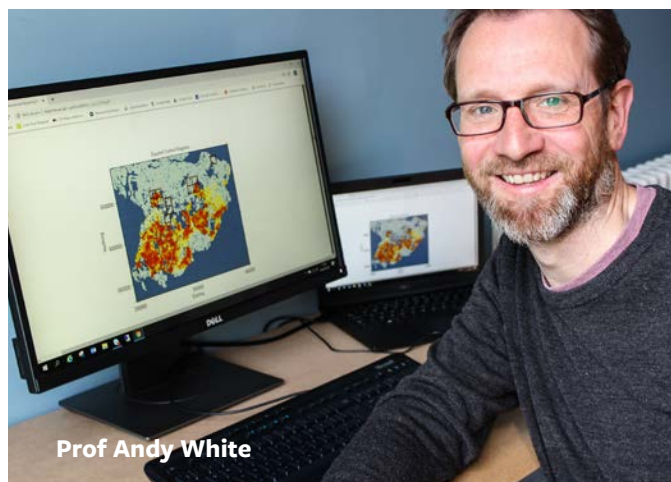
The Eurasian red squirrel - *Sciurus vulgaris* - is rather aptly named with *Sciurus* derived from the Greek *skiá* meaning shadow and *ourá* meaning tail - literally, the one that sits in the shadow of its tail. The red squirrel is recognized as one of the great icons of Scottish wildlife, and its presence is an important part of the tourism market. Once widespread across the British Isles, deforestation in earlier centuries adversely affected the species' numbers. With the planting of extensive woodlands in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it recovered to the extent of being considered a pest. It was, however, a short-lived recovery as the loss of woodland during the WWI war effort once again had a devastating effect upon numbers. When the war was over it would seem reasonable to assume that, as new forests were planted, numbers would again increase. That might have been the case had it not been for the introduction of the North American grey squirrel - *Sciurus carolinensis*. Brought to the U.K. mainly by wealthy Victorian landowners in the 19th century, some of the grey squirrels inevitably escaped or were released at different locations around the country. The consequences of this were not understood at the time.

Their numbers expanded rapidly and, with an aptitude for stripping the bark from trees, by the 1930s grey squirrels were regarded as a pest. That led to the legalized killing of greys and, in 1953, the introduction of a bounty hunting scheme. Perhaps surprisingly, efforts to control the greys in this way had little impact and they continued to expand their distribution, range and numbers. Today they have colonized most of England and Wales, with only localized areas of exception.

Reds have become confined predominantly to the Highlands of Scotland, parts of southwest Scotland and the west coast of Ireland.

For Professor White, it was important to understand why this was happening. Using data from a 1983 field study in Norfolk, it became apparent that wherever greys spread in numbers reds disappear. Available information suggested that there was no aggressive behavior between the species and that they often fed amicably in the same habitat. What was observed is that greys will steal the food of red squirrels and, where greys were located, female red squirrels displayed lower body mass and produced fewer young - often only one litter per year instead of two. White fed this information into his mathematical model noting, "Models can be used to extrapolate local findings into general findings and explain the big picture." The model predicted that, without any other influences, greys would supplant reds in a given area within 18 years. However, reds were disappearing in some areas faster than the model predicted and it became apparent that something else was affecting the populations.

Unknown at the time, some of the greys that were introduced into the U.K. carried a deadly disease - the squirrelpox virus. Although greys carry and transmit the virus, they have a resistance to it and remain unaffected by it. For reds, the virus is a killer; they have no resistance and, once infected, the squirrel will break out in painful lesions and die an unpleasant death within two weeks. The first reported case of squirrelpox in the U.K. was in 1973, but by 1996 it was clear that it was spreading across the country with the expansion of the grey's range. By 2002, the effect upon the red squirrels was clear. The spread of squirrelpox was then factored into the mathematical model and it confirmed that in areas where infected greys overlapped



with reds, the reds would be replaced within six years - significantly less time than the previously-predicted 18 years. Further field studies in 2006 confirmed this to be the case.

White's model demonstrated that indiscriminately culling grey squirrels would have limited impact on the loss of reds. Instead, by gathering local field data in different parts of the country and feeding it into the model, it showed where red strongholds existed and where they needed to be protected - rather like a lockdown procedure. This, in turn, would demonstrate that the most effective places for controlling greys were on the boundaries of such habitats allowing the conservation bodies, assisted by local environmental groups, to concentrate their efforts where they would be most effective. His work was also used to influence Forestry Commission proposals for felling areas of woodland at Kielder Forest in the northwest of England. By adopting a phased strategy and creating a woodland corridor between proposed felling areas it was possible to limit the impact of forestry operations on red squirrel populations. His modelling has also been used in southwest Scotland to demonstrate how woodland links can provide connections for greys to spread squirrelpox into the central belt of Scotland. Sadly, squirrelpox had already spread northwards by the time the conservation bodies were able to consider closing off the links. Perhaps most importantly, White's modelling has demonstrated that by working alongside key conservation bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Wildlife Trust it is possible to predict the likely spread of greys within given time frames and the likely effect upon native red populations. With the Scottish Highlands being home to 80 percent of the U.K.'s red squirrel population it is good news that, to date, modelling has indicated greys are unlikely to advance into the Scottish Highlands owing to inadequate and unsuitable woodland connections with the central areas of the country.

On the back of his mathematical modelling work on the U.K.'s squirrels, White is involved in projects to investigate how pine marten predation on grey squirrels may act to protect red squirrel populations and how to minimize the incidence of bovine tuberculosis and African swine fever in wild boar populations in Spain.

The next time you switch on the news or read the papers and see references to coronavirus statistics, forecasts, curves, plateaus and the impact on health services, bear in mind that this kind of mathematical modelling is already being used by a Scottish professor to protect Scotland's iconic and beloved red squirrel.

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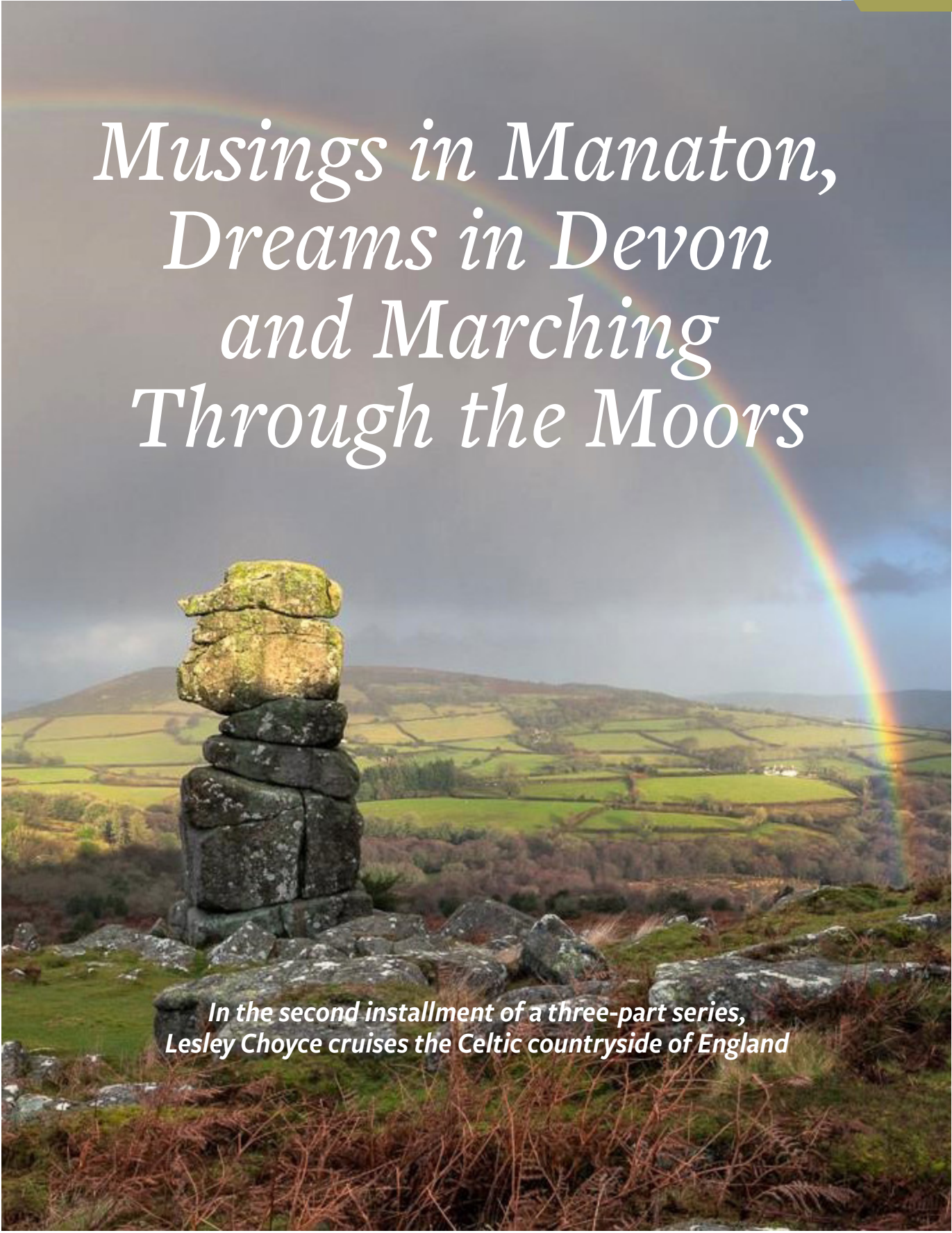
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Musings in Manaton, Dreams in Devon and Marching Through the Moors

*In the second installment of a three-part series,
Lesley Choyce cruises the Celtic countryside of England*



Dartmoor National Park

One of the reasons we were in Devon was so that I could interview British author Tony Hawks – no, not the skateboard champion (Tony Hawk) – but the man who penned Round Ireland With a Fridge. Alas, it turned out the cheerful busy man was in London for work. I looked over my emails and discovered that he had nonetheless been kind enough to provide answers to some of my questions in writing. Here would be good advice, I hoped, to put us in the proper mindset for exploring his neck of the woods.

Remember, here was an author whose spirit of adventure and witty wisdom had inspired me to write in the tradition of Around Somewhere with a Something. Asked what a typical day for Devon is for him, he replied, “Woken by four-year old-boy. Struggle with demands of four-year-old boy. Drop him to school. Write and work on

projects if raining - putter in the garden if a beautiful day and feel guilty. But not guilty enough to go inside and work. Long country walk. More childcare. Go to bed way earlier than I ever have before!”

His response made me think yet again about being a grandparent of the twins born prematurely to my daughter, Pamela, back in Canada. We would have to get to know these little ones, take them overnight to give the parents a break and care for them, maybe even be there for them at daybreak for the first bottle of the day. And then, watch them grow, Genevieve and Scarlett, and be there to be part of their important lives. These were powerful things to ponder here in a little cottage outside Manaton.

Tony added that he had undertaken other quests involving tennis and miniature pigs, “To demonstrate to people that ‘play’ is as necessary for adults as it is for kids.” Indeed. A worthy message. He noted he had a dog as well as a child. The dog’s name was Coco, a smallish mutt that he sometimes carried in a front-side pack much like a parent kangaroo to National Book Awards and such.

He reminded me that driving these “labyrinthine” roads of Devon could be frustrating and challenging, but I had already discovered that. Best and worst things about life near the moors: “Best - the views and the air. The worst - the pro-Brexit fervour.” Another good reminder of a subject to avoid at the local pubs in Lustleigh or elsewhere.

He ended his email with some fatherly advice to a fellow earth-traveller/writer:

“Be kind, patient and find a way to serve others.” Jesus couldn’t have said it much better.

I woke up in the middle of the night with the memory of yesterday’s event where an ambulance was bearing down on us on a steep narrow road where we were lost. The scene quickly shifted to driving on a paved road somewhere back in Leicestershire and me hitting those bumpy reflective knobs in the middle of the road while Linda’s words echoed from the windshield: “Stop hitting the cat’s eyes.” That’s what they were called – cat’s eyes. One of my favourite U.K. roadside signs I had observed back around Alconbury was “Cat’s Eyes Removed.” Cat’s eyes are also known as “road studs” and English drivers apparently get upset if the eye - the reflective part - is broken and not working. But why they are removed in some areas is unclear. Maybe it’s just for road work, or maybe some of us found them too annoying to keep bumping into even if our vehicle was wandering onto the wrong side of the road.



Lesley and Kelty



John Galsworthy

Linda headed off from Little Hazelcott for a run at 6 a.m. again and, over toast and dark roast coffee, I scanned the Internet for more information about yesterday's tragedy. I found nothing but was quickly diverted by an item that caught my eye. According to The Telegraph, "Cat's eyes were invented by Percy Shaw in 1934 and in 2006 were voted one of Britain's top 10 designs alongside the Concorde, the Mini and the World Wide Web." Most impressive indeed. And I didn't know that the web was a British invention, did you? Later that summer, I found myself missing England so I logged back on to The Telegraph to see what the British were currently riled about (they are almost always riled about something interesting) and that is when I discovered that down in Sussex, an American tourist or two were shocked by the "Cat's Eyes Removed" signs and so local councillors changed "cat's eyes" to "road studs" on the signage. That would probably suggest to unknowledgeable travellers that the local council had cleaned up a problem with male highway hookers, so I reckon, eventually linguists would need to be hired to come up with something new.

Apparently, it was a national, not a local, issue because The Telegraph also reported that "Rebecca Brewer, a mother from Ipswich, said that her daughter thought people were mutilating felines. 'I have a five-year-old daughter who was very upset the first time she saw the sign - she really thought that cruel people were torturing cats...I had

to explain to her what it meant - and that our pet cat was quite safe."

But enough of that. While Linda was improving her cardiovascular system, I did receive an email from Nova Scotia saying that all was well with Pamela and the babies - at least as well as they could be. Pamela was recovering from the Caesarean and the early twins were in incubators receiving round-the-clock care. I silently thanked the angels and the Canadian health care system that was not only providing excellent care to my granddaughters, but doing so free of charge.

When Linda returned from her run, she reported that she had found the actual village of Manaton and that it was quite lovely. There was a main road going through it and we had, most likely, found our way to Little Hazelcott by "the back way." Lucky us. Single lane. Not a cat's eye within miles and a grim tragedy in a green gully. Time to put that behind us and see what the countryside had to offer.

We drove into Manaton, parked by the church with its leafy cemetery and found the trail leading to Bowerman's Nose. Legend has it that a hunter named Bowerman liked to lead his dogs into the moors to hunt rabbits. He unwisely claimed he was not at all afraid of the witches that seemed to be as thick as thieves in this part of England. This annoyed the hell out of the witches who plotted to trap Bowerman and turn him into a large rock.





Once locals discovered what had happened, they too were angry and drove all the witches out of Devon (or so the story goes) and sent them to Wales, although I myself had not encountered a single witch during our stay there.

Such were the stories abounding in Dartmoor, a place of curious-looking hills, vast expanses of a kind of “desert,” (as some describe the moors), and mysteries that span the many centuries since humans immigrated here to find some rural peace and quiet.

Only the very top part of the hike to the Nose required me to lift our dog Kelty up the natural stone staircase. It was like some version of a childhood fantasy at the top with rocky outcroppings making a kind of fort from which to look out over the miles of moor with patches of dark and light orchestrated by sun and clouds.

I can confirm that there were no witches left here but an odd-looking owl flew over us low enough to make a haunting whooshing sound with his wings that I can still hear if I close my eyes and drift back to Manaton.

There were more hills to be climbed, of course, and we made a quick retreat to the carpark and made a brief tour of downtown Manaton. The town is proud of the fact that the novelist John Galsworthy (1867-1933) lived here for a stint and may have written a novel or two, or at least had the inspiration for them, while in

Manaton. Galsworthy would have been quite famous in his day for *The Forsyte Saga* and other works but, like so many authors, many of his bestsellers are probably gathering dust on the library shelves.

We were crossing paths, this dead author and I, so I felt a certain kinship, too well aware that my own books would soon be gathering dust if they weren't already and that I would eventually be joining Galsworthy in the great crowded literary dumpster of history. But, yes, for one shining moment in June, he and I were united as Manatonians.

And before the readers of the world feel a big yawn coming on, I will remind you that Mr. G. was a vocal advocate for women's rights and kindness to animals, not to mention prison reform. He spoke out against censorship as all good writers should and turned down knighthood, stating that writing well was its own reward. While living in Manaton, he wrote a fictional story based on a girl named Kitty Jay who had hanged herself. We should forgive him for having an affair there with his cousin's wife and then using her as a character in a novel. And we should applaud him for adding a poem about a dog to the great canon of canine literature, a poem which ends with the lines:

*Then through the ages we'll retrieve
Each other's scent and company;
And longing shall not pull my heart —
As now you pull my sleeve!*



And if you are not allergic to dust, do take a trip to the public library and check out a lonesome copy of *A Man of Property* and let me know what you think.

We walked down yet another narrow road leading out of town where it ended and gave way to a small stony hiking trail that took us up to Manaton Rocks, the second most notable hiking destination here. It took us across a cow pasture with a kissing gate and we kept Keltly well leashed and the cows at a distance. Linda saw a bull she didn't trust not far off and the three of us did a lively bucolic dance as we hurried on, darting this way and that around big thistle cones and sidestepping cow pies. Such exercises like this I was certain formed the basis for many a traditional English country dance. All that was missing was music.



Looking south from the top of Manaton Rocks revealed how truly remarkable the moors were. Here were wide-open spaces, hilltops and valleys with most towns tucked so far down in the lower regions that they appeared not to exist. It was one of those dreamlike visions you find in rural England where you realize you are looking at a landscape that, from this vantage point at least, has not changed in hundreds if not thousands of years. We scrambled around the funny shaped boulders until the sun was high in the sky and it was time to grudgingly return to the twenty-first century and lunch.

I had eyed a town named Lustleigh not far off, so we drove there and tucked into an outdoor table at the Cleave Public House, a thatched roof enterprise surrounded by gargantuan chestnut trees if I have my tree knowledge intact. I daresay it felt old and authentic but doubt that it dated back to 899 when Alfred the Great gave what is now Lustleigh to his son as a gift.

When I made my dutiful pilgrimage to the indoor loo, I peeked in the kitchen to see a cluster of young white-hatted kitchen staff watching the chef crush and sprinkle spices on a piece of roast chicken. The group was so solemn, it almost appeared as if it were a religious ceremony, but I am sure it was meant to be a culinary educational moment.

Although fish and chips still ruled the English diet, I detected that things were changing with a younger generation who were either modern day gourmet witches and warlocks or simply contemporary champions of parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.

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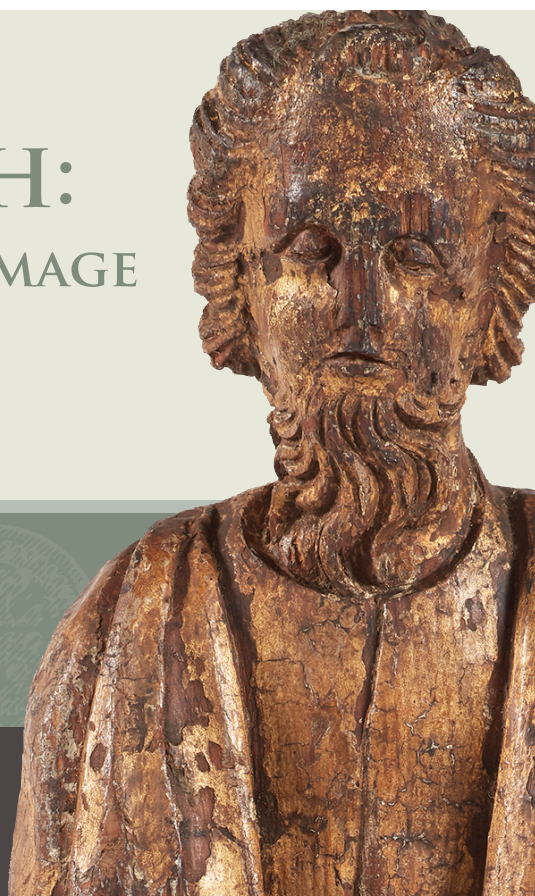
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The Changing Celtic Classroom

As Celtic Life International Associate Editor Rebecca Dingwell explains, Celtic classrooms are going to look a little different this fall...



The discipline of Celtic Studies is as varied as definitions of the word “Celtic” itself. Those who enroll in Celtic Studies courses or programs may be interested in topics such as literature, mythology, language, music or all of the above. But as the 2020 fall semester begins, most students and teachers are steering clear of lecture halls, relying on remote learning instead.

Rosemary O’Flaherty, who teaches at the University of Ottawa, only had a couple of days to pivot her courses to online when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada. She received an email about the change on Sunday, March 15, and had to quickly prepare her Wednesday class: Arthur of the Celts. “It was a bit of a scramble,” she says. “The students were really good about it and really patient, because I’d never taught online before and they’d never learned online before.” With only three weeks left in the term, the course finished successfully.

The University of Ottawa offers a minor in Celtic Studies as part of its Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Soon, students will also have the option to take a Bachelor of Arts major in Word Cultures and Languages with a concentration in Celtic.

Many of O’Flaherty’s pupils took her course as an elective out of personal interest, but she says there is a “small, core group” of folks who opt for the minor. Additionally, there’s a uOttawa Celtic Club that organizes events and get-togethers.

O’Flaherty has spent much of her summer setting things up to teach online for the coming school year. She is preparing two courses, both of which take place in 80-minute classes twice a week. To prevent students from staring at a screen too long, she plans on splitting up her lecture time with activities and class discussion. She admits that, with 50-70 students in a class, online class discussion will be difficult. “But I think the important thing to do is to give them activities,” she explains.

“As a teacher, when you are in the classroom, you can transmit your enthusiasm for the subject to the students. When they are staring at me online, that is much harder to do.”

As such, she is trying to come up with fresh and creative ways to engage those students.

O’Flaherty also suspects language learning will present a specific set of difficulties, especially for first-year students who aren’t familiar with pronunciations. “One of the most important things in language is practice - getting the students to practice. So, our two Irish instructors who are teaching this fall - that is going to be very challenging for them.”

Language Immersion

While some students get their Celtic education in the academic world, others aren’t necessarily going for a certificate or degree, opting to learn out of interest for the culture and self-improvement. Such is the case for people who study at Oideas Gael, which offers Irish language and cultural courses for adults. It usually welcomes people to learn in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking region) of Gleann Cholm Cille or Gleann Fhinne in northwest Ireland.



“The key bits are that they are holidays and they are for adults,” says Rónán Ó Dochartaigh, who typically works on the marketing side of Oideas Gael but wears other hats for the centre as well. “It is very different from the formal education system and that was sort of the idea when it started.”

With Oideas Gael, people can learn about Irish language, tapestry weaving,



music and more in a laid-back environment that seems more like a vacation than a class. Ó Dochartaigh estimates that, on average, about 60 percent of the facility's students come from within Ireland, while the other 40 percent travel from abroad. Many of those students come from other parts of the United Kingdom or North America, but people have even travelled from as far away as Japan.

The landscape and the history of the Gaeltachtaí have been as big of a draw as the courses themselves.

During the pandemic, however, fewer folks will get to see that lush landscape. Oideas Gael had to cancel its St. Patrick's Day course and pivot its Easter course online on short notice. That Easter course served as a "pilot project" of sorts for the school to establish how distance teaching would work. At the time of interview, they had plans to run a total of 12 weeks of online language courses over the summer. There are four levels, beginner to advanced, and

each course includes an hour-long lesson every day for five days.

"It guarantees you have that hour of speaking Irish every day of the week," explains Ó Dochartaigh. Those classes focus on conversation - something students can't get from books or apps - more than the technical aspects of the language. There are also extra events during the week that take place through Zoom. "The interest has been huge." In fact, demand for online courses became so big that there is now a waiting list. "We could have shut up shop for the summer, potentially, and come back next year, but we didn't want to lose that contact with people."



Kenneth MacKenzie

The Gaelic College in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia is in a similar situation when it comes to trading its immersive, in-person courses for an online model. In 2018, the facility acquired the Atlantic Gaelic Academy - which teaches Gaelic language classes over the internet - so it is not a completely new concept for the school. However, Director Kenneth MacKenzie notes that "COVID pushed us to develop in that area further. We should have been doing online anyway, as it is a great opportunity for an institution like ours."

Due to the pandemic, the Gaelic College had to cut its first March Break program short before cancelling the second session. It was also forced to withdraw its usual onsite summer programming - the school's major draw. Luckily, the resulting online programs have proved to be popular. Those courses include topics such as conversational Gaelic, creative writing in Gaelic and a transcription course based on archival material. According to MacKenzie, the transcription course is especially helpful for advanced learners who feel that they have hit a plateau in their language acquisition.

Music and Dance

In addition to language learning, the Gaelic College also delves into the arts, with courses on offer for fiddle, pipes, dance and weaving.

“One of the big challenges is that you can’t play together with both of you hearing it,” MacKenzie says of online music classes. “You can work around it, however, and we have gotten very used to it.” Dance classes have been going very well, he adds, as many of the college’s dance instructors are used to distance teaching via Skype anyway.



The same goes for Celtic dance instructors elsewhere. Sabra MacGillivray is no stranger to online teaching: she released her first online step dancing video series last year. She also teaches in-person Highland dance classes (which she is currently doing via Zoom) and teaches dance for St. Francis Xavier University’s Human Kinetics program in Nova Scotia.

For her pre-recorded classes, MacGillivray says there is a lot of set-up involved in terms of video, audio and editing. The live classes require less prep work.

“Face-to-face is better, but thankfully we have the online option, as we are able to keep teaching, see the students and finish off our sessions.”

MacGillivray has just finished helping out with a week-long summer camp put on

by the Saskatchewan Pipe Band Association. The annual camp is typically done in-person, but of course, this year’s sessions had to be online. Instructors from all over the country taught students music and dance from their respective homes.

Accessibility

Despite its drawbacks, the overall shift to online has led to an increase in accessibility.

“It kind of opens up the world a bit,” shares MacGillivray, noting that there has been an increased interest in her dance classes amongst all ages. “It was interesting to see the people that were getting in touch with me.” Going forward, MacGillivray hopes to continue building on her video series. “There is an opportunity to have a library of different courses on there.”

Oideas Gael has also been able to accommodate a wider range of students. Rónán Ó Dochartaigh says the centre has two main goals: to make language and cultural courses accessible to adults, and to encourage people to visit and support the economy of the Gaeltacht. While the latter isn’t so simple at the moment, Oideas Gael’s courses are more accessible than ever. “It has been brilliant to meet all these new people,” says Ó Dochartaigh, noting that not everyone has the time or money to take advantage of the in-person classes. “There have been some real positives to come out of it.”

While the Gaeltacht experience will always be an important part of Oideas Gael, Ó Dochartaigh expects the online offerings will also be available for the foreseeable future.

As for the Gaelic College, online classes can’t completely replicate the immersive learning for which it is known. However, “there are workarounds,” says MacKenzie. “There are actually some real benefits to online learning. A big benefit is that it is really easy to record the session, for one thing. Even if the students are busy, they can turn on Zoom, record the session and then go back.”

Rosemary O’Flaherty of uOttawa echoes the sentiment: she is recording her lectures and posting them on Brightspace (the school’s learning management system). This means students may listen, or re-listen, on their own time. “If they miss something I say, or if they have to miss a class for some reason they can at least go back and listen to the full lecture again.” Access to recorded lectures will be especially helpful for international students who can’t physically

return to the country come September. “Last year, I had a student from India and two from France,” she explains. Students who can’t “attend” classes in real-time due to time zone differences will still be able to take the courses.

Student Perspective

One of O’Flaherty’s students, Isaac Toth, also sees some upsides to remote learning. Conflicting classes and commuting from building to building, for instance, are no longer a problem. Toth is on his way to completing a degree in Linguistics with a minor in Celtic Studies.

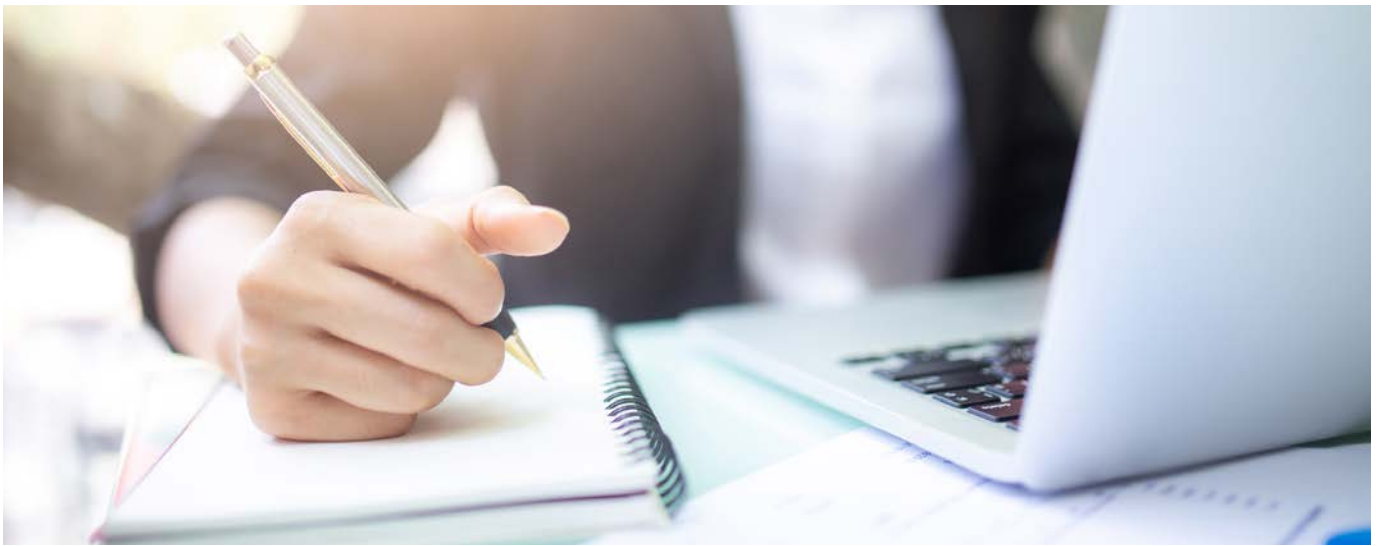


“I am very happy I came to Ottawa,” he says, speaking to Celtic Life from his home in Buffalo. “The university is very well-integrated into the city.”

“I don’t feel like I am just a student - I feel like I am an adult who happens to take classes.”

Toth also appreciates how “all the professors and all the students all have a different reason” for being interested in Celtic Studies. Some have familial or ancestral ties, while others are fascinated by folklore. For Toth’s part, he was initially a History major at a college in upstate New York, but he became interested in Celtic culture after studying abroad in Cardiff, Wales. His first connection to Wales, however, came from the Duolingo language app, where he developed a fascination with the “melodic” nature of the Welsh language.

“I think that is the thing that I have been committed to longest in my life,” Toth says. “I have about a 1,000-day streak on Duolingo. It started with me being interested in the language, but I probably would not have been able to tell you what ‘Celtic’ even meant or that it was part of a larger cultural



group or linguistic group.”

While studying in Cardiff, he was endeared by how friendly the Welsh people were. He also began listening to the “Myths and Legends” podcast, which often delved into Celtic mythology. At school, he took a Celtic literature class, which introduced him to Celtic Studies as a broader subsection of education outside of Welsh language and culture. As a result, instead of going back to his home state to continue his post-secondary education in New York, he searched for somewhere in North America to pursue Celtic Studies. He stumbled upon uOttawa and it was a good fit.

When classes at uOttawa came to a halt due to the pandemic, Toth’s priority (like that of other international students) was to get home. He returned to the United States as soon as he could. These days, learning from home can be a challenge - he always preferred to study at the library, he shares - but it is doable.

“We did make it work. Would I say that it is the same experience? Definitely not.”

The Future of Education

Although many universities have already announced plans to stay exclusively online for the fall semester, others are offering a mixed bag. The Gaelic College, for example, has been trying simultaneous onsite and online workshops. The in-person portion of the workshop has limited capacity and implements social distancing rules, while other students watch a stream of the class through Zoom. Likewise, Oideas Gael planned for in-person classes (for students coming from within Ireland) over the last few weeks of August.



William Lamb

At the University of Edinburgh, William Lamb - a senior lecturer of Celtic and Scottish Studies - has been instrumental in his school’s strategy for the coming year. For the university’s School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (LCC), the plan involves a hybrid of online and on-campus teaching. Lamb worked with a committee before piecing together a lengthy document to help guide instructors during this unprecedented time.

“We were surprised by the influence that document had,” says Lamb, adding that other faculties used it as a roadmap to create strategies that would work for them.

Back in March, the initial pivot to online was more of an “emergency response,” as Lamb puts it. “It was heavily time-pressured.” PowerPoint presentations were uploaded with lecture voiceovers, and assessments were cancelled or modified to take-home essays, for example.

That initial response was quite different from what the school has planned for this year.

The idea is to focus on “active learning” as much as possible. “It is kind of a sea change for the University of Edinburgh and for a lot of other places,” explains Lamb. “We are doing some video content, but it is meant to be very short.” The guidelines recommend videos stay between seven and 10 minutes long, and that they are immediately followed by an active learning exercise. That could involve anything from a multiple-choice quiz to a journal entry.

“This is going to be a massive amount of effort from everybody. So, let’s do something that’s got some longevity.

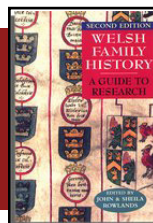
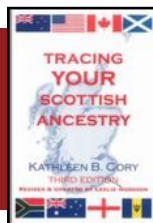
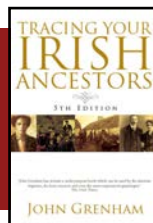
“We need to really rethink how we deliver learning outcomes, how we assess learning outcomes and create something better for the long-term.”

Even if universities go back to conventional teaching methods, Lamb believes there will be more of an emphasis on interactive classrooms: “Having students viewing material or doing some reading before they come to a lecture, and then doing things in small groups or perhaps online activities en masse.”

As for Celtic Studies specifically, Lamb isn’t worried about its lasting power. “I have a lot of confidence that Celtic and Scottish studies will be even more effective” in the future, he says. “It is a department that is tied into a lot of different ways of teaching people.

“I believe that the innovation we are going to see in the next year, and going forward, will be surprising and impressive when we look back on it.”

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Galician Fish Stew

While there has been some debate in recent years as to Galicia's status as a Celtic nation, there is no denying the impact of Celtic tribal life upon the beautiful northwest corner of Spain. Even today, the region's music, dance, visual arts, architecture and more all show evidence of that 2500-year-old influence. Cui-

sine has been a large part of that cultural equation also. As the Hibernian Celts were fishermen - both by nature and geographic necessity - their culinary creativity reflects their dependency upon, and love for, the sea. Often, their fish stew was seasoned with Ajada, a spicy Galician sauce made from olive oil, garlic and paprika.

Ingredients

4 6-oz filets of halibut, skinned
1 tbsp. salt
2 lbs. potatoes, peeled and sliced $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick
1 cup fish stock or clam broth
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine
2 bay leaves
1 medium onion, chunked
3 cups coarsely chopped Swiss chard leaves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 tbsp sweet paprika
Crushed red pepper

Instructions

Season the halibut with salt and refrigerate for 30 minutes in a large saucepan. Combine the potatoes, stock, wine, bay leaves and Swiss chard. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes. In a small saucepan, heat the oil. Add the garlic and cook over low heat until golden, approximately four minutes. Stir in the paprika and crushed red peppers. Remove from heat. Lay the halibut on top of the potatoes that are just covered in water and simmer, turning once, until the fish is cooked through, about eight minutes. Transfer the halibut and potato stew to shallow bowls. Ladle a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of broth into the garlic oil and bring to a boil. Stir well, pour over the fish, and serve. Serves four.

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Savouring Shelter Point

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Shelter Point Distillery is located near the Shamlet of Oyster River, about 20km north of the towns of Comox and Courtenay on the east coast of Vancouver Island. The region has one of the mildest climates in Canada, making it a popular year-round destination for those from colder climes. The distillery was built in 2011 by Patrick Evans, a third-generation dairy farmer, on a 380-acre farm. With stunning views across the Salish Sea, Shelter Point is one of the last seaside farms on Vancouver Island.

I last visited Shelter Point in October of 2018 with a couple of employees from my whisky team, with an eye towards purchasing an exclusive cask for the store. In the end, we purchased two. Upon arrival, we were met by Jacob Wiebe, Patrick's son-in-law and distillery manager, and Leon Webb, the head distiller. The dynamic duo - who could easily be confused for a comedy act - showed us around the distillery, the visitor center and the maturation warehouse. Shelter Point's casks mature in part of a converted dairy barn, the rest of which is used as a grain store.

It was slightly overcast, with a faint drizzle, but otherwise warm for autumn. We were told the plan was to have lunch on the beach, and they kept hinting that I might want a jacket. I am rather warm-blooded, and assured them that I would be fine, but in retrospect I should have taken the hint. Unbeknownst to ourselves, the plan was not to have lunch on

the beach, but rather atop a mountain. While sitting around a beachside fire pit we were surprised by the arrival of a helicopter. We were even more stunned when we learned that it was picking us up!

What followed was one of the most memorable whisky experiences that I have ever had.

Patrick Evans had arranged to helicopter us high up into the Vancouver Island Mountains, where we would have lunch and a very special tasting on the shoulder of a mountain. I had been to the distillery previously, but it was here, amongst the clouds, that I met Patrick for the first time. We sampled a range of whiskies while snacking on cheese and smoked/candied salmon, just steps from the sheer drop-off of a cliff face. While not unbearably cold, I could have done with a light jacket. Nevertheless, the whisky and adrenaline kept me warm.

Shelter Point predominantly makes single malt whisky in the Scottish style, but also produces vodka, gin and rye whisky.

One of the most interesting releases to come from the distillery is their "Montfort Series" - made from estate-grown barley. Lacking the facilities to malt their own barley, the Montfort releases are made from a mash

of un-malted barley, in the style of single pot still Irish whiskey (think Redbreast) - a nod to Patrick's Irish heritage.

My favourite recent release from Shelter Point is the "Smoke Point" - a second batch of which is due this fall. The whisky used to create Smoke Point begins its life in ex-bourbon barrels before finishing in quarter-casks from Laphroaig. The whisky is kissed by smoke, salt and mildly medicinal tones, while retaining the fruity DNA of Shelter Point's spirit.

Another interesting recent release from the facility is "The Forbidden" - with a lovely round, oily and fruity profile, and a crisp minerality - a touch of terroir, if you will. Produced from a mash of 100 percent malted wheat, The Forbidden is yet another Canadian first. Shelter Point has racked up more than a few of those in recent years and is without question one of the leaders in the Canadian craft whisky industry.

Shelter Point whisky and gin can be found all over Western Canada, though the limited releases are often harder to come by. The distillery is open to the public seven days a week and offers both tours and tastings. Don't expect them to fly you up on to a mountain for a tasting, but if they suggest you bring a jacket you might want to take the hint!

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'A blizzard of wit and wisecracks'
The Times

marian keyes *Grown Ups*



Grown Ups

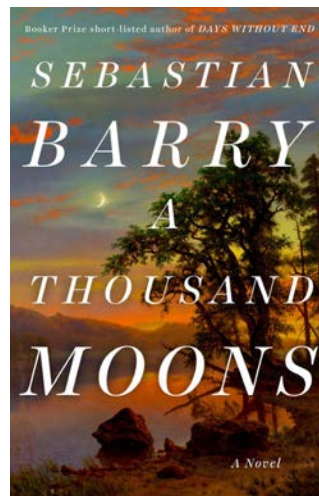
By Marian Keyes
Michael Joseph Books
656 pp / \$31.95

There has been so much popular and critical acclaim about Marian Keyes' latest effort, *Grown Ups*, that there has been the very real threat that the publicity will outperform the plot. Thankfully, that hasn't been the case, as the Irish author has pieced together a novel of epic proportion. At 656 pages, the work isn't so much a singular storyline as a complete immersion into the lives of the Casey family. By turns tender and touching, the massive narrative will have readers in stitches on one page and in tears on the next. Charming, irresistible, poignant and profound, it is - without doubt - a leading candidate for a number of literary awards and, more importantly, a worthwhile investment of the audience's time and attention. ~ SPC

Love

By Roddy Doyle
Viking Press
336 pp / \$27

After the overwhelming success of his debut novel *The Commitments* (1987), it would have been all-too easy for Roddy Doyle to call in the rest of his career. Instead of sitting on his literary laurels, however, the Dublin-based scribe took his writing to new and amazing places over the course of more than three decades and a dozen works of different genres. His latest effort, *Love*, tells the tale of two old friends who reconnect in a pub after years of not seeing one another. Over a few pints, each opens up to the other, sharing the triumphs and trials of their lives. Hilarious and heartfelt, the work is an insightful and inspiring look at the many perks and perils of men amidst mid-life crisis. ~ SPC



A Thousand Moons

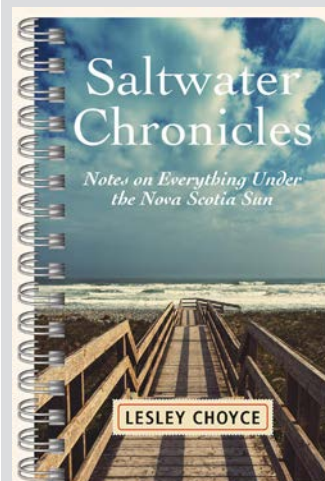
By Sebastian Barry
Penguin Books
256 pp / \$27

There must be something special in the waters of the Irish sea that brings out the gift of gab in the country's authors. And while Eire has long been a hotbed of storytelling and song, the sheer volume of verbiage that has emanated from the Emerald Isle in recent years is staggering. However, as evidenced with Dublin author and playwright Sebastian Barry's latest narrative *A Thousand Moons*, it is not a case of quantity over quality. The story of one woman's fierce determination to build a life for herself in the aftermath of the U.S. Civil War, the new work weaves and winds its way through the American south, touching on themes of love and redemption - two matters that the Irish are well-versed in. ~ SPC

Saltwater Chronicles

By Lesley Choyce
Nimbus Publishing
173 pp / \$18.95

Author, poet, publisher, professor, performer, hard-core surfer and Celtic Life International contributor, Lesley Choyce recently published his 100th book (!), *Saltwater Chronicles*. More a myriad of mid-life musings than a memoir, the soft-cover selection of stories is filled with the warmth, wit and wisdom that readers across the globe have come to know and love. The Earth has become smaller for the scribe in recent years, having traded in his telescope for a microscope, finding truth, meaning and beauty in the tiny details of everyday life. The result is a collage of vibrant and vital vignettes that paint a portrait of a man at peace with himself and with the world. Kudos to Choyce for retaining his youthful ideals and for sharing them with us. ~ SPC





Biffy Clyro

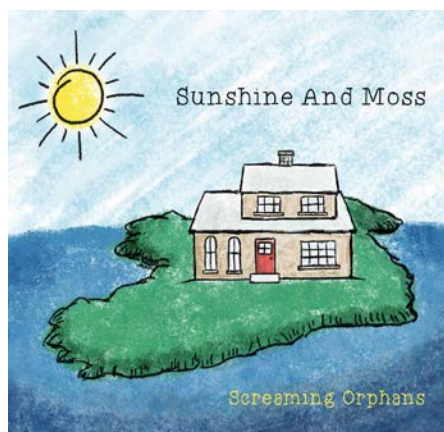
A Celebration of Endings

Scotland has produced its fair share of great rock 'n' roll bands over the years - Nazareth, Teenage Fanclub, Primal Scream and The Jesus and Mary Chain to name just a few. However, none achieved the mass popular and critical acclaim enjoyed by alt-rockers Biffy Clyro. The Kilmarnock-based trio has quietly gone about their business for the past 25 years, releasing 8 studio albums and performing to millions of fans around the world. As evidenced on their latest recording, *A Celebration of Endings*, the band has taken their hard-rockin' style and sound - seasoned with smart-pop hooks and clever lyrics - to new levels of sonic swagger with 11 terrific tracks of guitar-grinding, drum-driven melodies. A kick-ass effort that is best enjoyed at top volume. ~ SPC

Fontaines D.C.

A Hero's Death

Fans of Joy Division, The Cure, Nick Cave, Sonic Youth and Snow Patrol will surely savour *A Hero's Death*, the sophomore release from Fontaines D.C. Since forming in 2017, the Dublin-based quintet has established itself with their mix of moody and melancholic melodies, striking a chord with Millennials and critics alike. The appeal is understandable, and the 11 songs on the new recording sound like soulful stirrings of teen angst in a back alley on a rainy day in Dublin. Highlights include *I Don't Belong*, *A Lucid Dream*, *Sunny*, and the title track, which makes a compelling case that despair sounds best with an Irish accent. While likely not everyone's cup of tea, the band has found a home in a generation of dark hearts. ~ SPC



Screaming Orphans

Sunshine and Moss

At the other end of the musical spectrum, though no less poignant or powerful, the four Diver sisters of the Emerald Isle - Angela, Joan, Marie Thérèse and Gráinne - continue to dig deep into their Donegal roots with *Sunshine and Moss*, their 15th full-length studio recording. Soft and stirring vocals hover like gentle mist over a sonic landscape of guitars, fiddles, accordions, and keyboards. The 11 songs call to mind the rich melodic traditions of the region's first musical family, the Brennans of Clannad and Enya fame. As such, and like those artists, Screaming Orphans sound as if they have shot right up from the soil, sprouting flowers, and spreading even more colour and light to an already-robust musical garden. Haunting, moving and beautiful. ~ SPC

Hauler

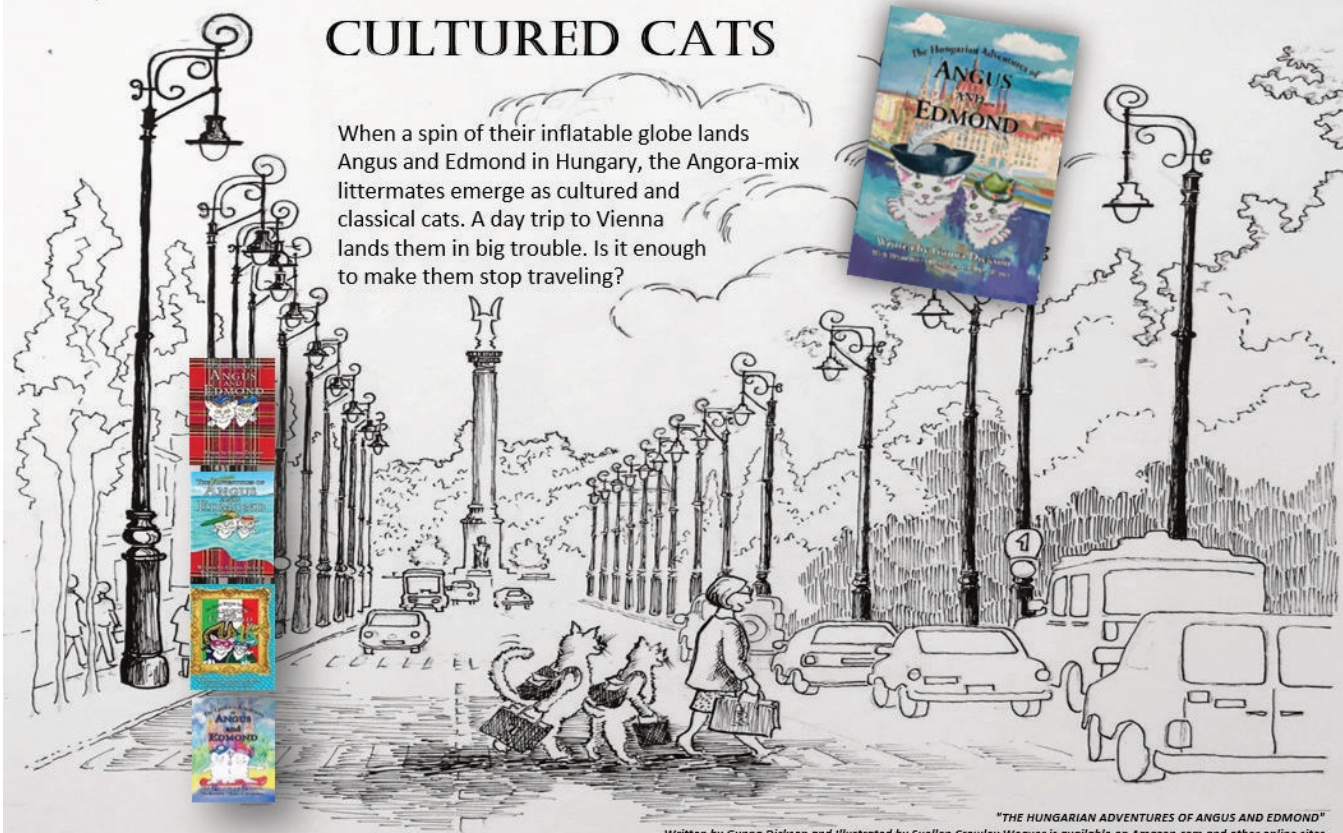
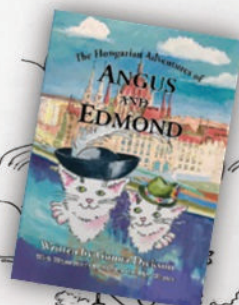
Hauler

One of the world's great musical hot-spots, Cape Breton has produced some of the finest Celtic artists in recent memory, including the likes of Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, Rita MacNeil, the Rankins and many more. Featuring members of regional rockers Slowcoaster and Coig, the terrific new trio Hauler fans the flames of tradition with their first, self-titled, full-length release. As the band's website aptly states, "Seamlessly blending and bending roots, rock, and traditional Cape Breton Celtic music together into a hearty homemade soup that can dynamically have you hanging off every lyric - or knock you flat on your arse - Hauler, has been simmering on the stove and are now ready to serve themselves up with the release of their debut album." 'Nuff said. ~ SPC



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Chris Gray

Even with extra time on his hands, Chris Gray has his hands full

Slotting a profile on the Glasgow-based musician Chris Gray under our “Piper” banner is almost a disservice to the young artist, as he is adept at a number of instruments.

“I spent six years studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, for both a Bachelor and Master’s degree in Traditional Music where pipes, piano, and whistles were my instruments of focus,” he shares via email.

Originally from southwest Scotland - specifically Lockerbie in Dumfries and Galloway, where his family has lived for generations - Gray discovered the ancient melodies of Celtic music as a child.

“Piping was around me from a very young age,” explains Gray, who has been piping for 17 years, starting at the tender age of seven. “Around six months before I started, my older brother Steven was learning, and my dad also played. I am fascinated and fulfilled by playing music, and it has grown to become a central part of my life. I still enjoy it today as much as I did when I started, and it is the key reason why I continue to play.”

His tenure on pipes, keys, and whistles has given him many wonderful memories over the years; he has travelled abroad to Sydney, Australia to teach pipes, performed at internationally renowned Celtic music festivals like the Ortigueira Festival in Spain and the Lorient Festival in France, and has even shared the stage with the Red Hot Chilli Pipers at the Basel International Tattoo in Switzerland.

His most recent achievement is the release of his debut, self-titled album.

“One of the biggest highlights to date was the live launch of my album at the Celtic Connections Festival earlier this year - it was really special to be on stage with such a great team of musicians playing an entire show of my own original material. My style and sound is undoubtedly influenced by my playing of piano and whistles, and exposure to lots of other kinds of music including jazz, pop, and classical.

“The music on my debut album leans more towards the contemporary style of piping, but with strong elements of the traditional style that I was first introduced to.”

While eponymous, the album is by no means a solo act; many gifted players loaned their talents to the tracks.

“It is a collection of all-original tunes, featuring Highland pipes, whistles, and piano, which I have arranged for a multi-instrumental ensemble. A fantastic team of musicians was involved in the project, including Graham Mackenzie (fiddle), Innes White (guitar), James Lindsay (bass), Mark Scobbie (drums), Alice Allen (cello), Laura-Beth Salter (mandolin) and Mohsen Amini (concertina).

“It was really special to work with them, and their energy and talents shine throughout the record.”

A behind-the-scenes, making-of documentary about the album was also produced and can be viewed on Gray’s website. He is certainly eager to share all his efforts with those excited to listen.

“So far, the response has been fantastic, and the recording has received really positive reviews. It is a really great feeling to share all of this music that has been living with me for quite a while and knowing that people are enjoying and connecting with it means everything.”

Gray holds no fears for the future of piping - he sees many young artists taking interest, in both traditional and contemporary styles. But he does believe it is an art that can be further invested in.

“In Scotland, many schools offer piping tuition. It would be fantastic to see the number of schools offering piping tuition continue to rise, and tuition be made accessible to all. Internationally, the more events and workshops getting young people involved, the better - I think there is certainly scope for this to grow.”

Despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Gray refuses to rest on his laurels.

“When it is possible, I look forward to returning to performing and bringing my music to new places and audiences. I teach piping, as well as piano and whistle, and will continue to pursue this throughout the year, in addition to composing and arranging new music.”

www.chrisgraymusic.com



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Seán Heely

Even amidst a global pandemic, Seán Heely is staying busy

When Washington, D.C.-based fiddler Seán Heely needed a name for his instrument, he went with an unmistakably mighty moniker.

“She is a powerhouse fiddle, but also has just the most spectacular range of dynamics; her name is Freya, after the powerful Viking goddess,” explains Heely via email. “She was made in 1912 Germany at the Schirmer workshop by an Italian master luthier from Cremona who was working there at the time. That is why it is such a beautiful and fine example of a copy of Guarneri del Gesù.”

Heely hails from a family of folk musicians who inspired him to take up an instrument himself.

“I began studying classical violin at age 10. I have fond memories of my Australian grandmother - who was a concert pianist in her day - gathering the whole family around the grand piano and leading us all in folk songs with three and four-part harmonies.”

While folk music had always been part of his family DNA, Heely began studying music formally in the ninth grade, starting with the violin, under the tutelage of Irish fiddler Carol Downing of Portsmouth, VA.

“My older sister Karen had a violin growing up, and I aspired to be like her in all ways. I didn’t know I was going to love it so much.”

Heely would go on to study music in college before picking up a degree in Music Performance from the University of South Carolina.

“During my years there, I played in a Bluegrass band called The Blue Iguanas and a jazz manouche band called Flat Out Strangers. I would credit that time as cutting my teeth in the world of musical improvisation.”

He also studied at music summer camps, including the Acadia Traditional School of Music and Arts in Bar Harbor, Maine, before transitioning from student to staff in short order. Today, not only is he adept in the Irish style of the fiddle, but he also sings both Scots Gaelic and Irish traditional ballads.

“I would say that I live in the traditional sound world, but that my sound is shaped by the influence of classical, jazz manouche, and improvisatory ideas. I do, however strive to make my Irish fiddling sound different than my Scottish style.”

“Authenticity, in terms of sound, means a lot to me. It is fiddling with the right accent.”

Heely has also enjoyed an eventful career over the years; he became the U.S. National Scottish Fiddle Champion in 2016, formed The Seán Heely Celtic Trio, and released his first album in 2018, which was followed by a year of touring.

Like the rest of us, Heely has been somewhat waylaid by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he has been using this free time to work on new music.

“There will be certainly enough material for another album or two as soon as it is possible to get into the studio. Most of the time my creative process is inspirational. Knowing that, I have to strive to put myself into situations and places from where I can draw inspiration. Nature speaks to me a great deal, as do travels to breathtaking places, and even just appreciating what is beautiful about every day. From the calm, sunny days, to the windy torrents and bleak skies. There is music for all of it.”

What he is more concerned about in the wake of COVID-19 is the loss of those summer camps he learned and taught at; he believes that education about what “Celtic” really is - and that it means more than just being Irish and Scottish - is the best way to preserve cultural traditions for the next generation.

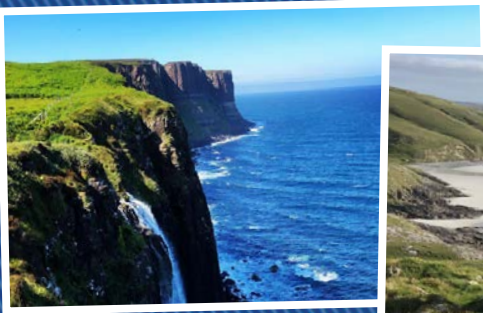
“There are lots of other Celtic nations with amazing performers making names for themselves all over the world. I call myself a Celtic fiddler only because I don’t limit myself to the study and performance of Irish or Scottish. Those are my two main focuses, but I would like to be open to more styles in the future.”

“The more people see the strong community that fiddling and traditional music builds, the more people will realize its necessity.”

www.seanheely.com



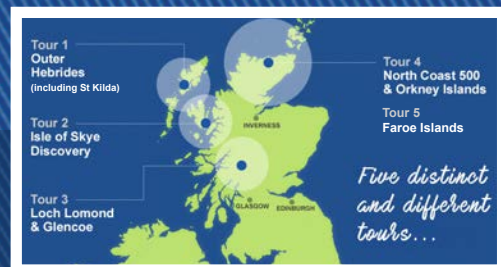
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David Geaney

Irish dancer David Geaney performs for the sheer love of it

It has been just over 20 years since David Geaney first took an interest in Irish dance. Then only five years old, he became enamoured with the ancient art after watching his sister in an award-winning performance at a local community feis.

"After that, all I wanted was a medal," recalls Geaney via email. "I didn't care what I had to do to get it, I just wanted my own medal. I took a couple of Irish dancing classes and I am still here today."

Geaney - now a resident of Dingle, Co. Kerry - later won championships across Europe, including both the 2011 TG4's An Jig Gig and the 2012 Kerry's Got Talent competitions.

In 2018, the 25-year-old dancer took his career to new heights, performing his own show - Velocity - on Broadway.

"Ever since I was a youngster, I have dreamed of seeing my name in lights in Times Square - and that dream came true; we performed a three-week run in The New Victory Theater. Coming out of the stage door seeing my name next to the likes of Harry Potter, Aladdin, The Lion King, and so on was just incredible...I don't think it will ever be topped."

While the accolades and awards have been more than rewarding, Geaney says that he continues to perform for the sheer "love of it."

"There isn't a moment that goes by that I don't think about dancing - I can't stand still...I'm always tapping my feet or my hands making different rhythms."

Inspired by the likes of Fred Astaire, The Nicholas Brothers and Gene Kelly, he describes his personal style today as a mix of all the things he loves.

"While I am a trained Irish dancer, some of my biggest inspirations are tap dancers.



I would like to think I have quite a natural, traditional vibe to my style. That said, I do incorporate modern tricks from other genres every now and again, and I wear modified shoes with metal taps and aluminum heels. Most within the circle would describe my style as traditional, but outsiders might liken it to sean-nos - meaning old style or tap."

Today, Geaney splits his time between international tours and performing at his family's renowned restaurant, The Dingle Pub.

Overall, he feels confident about the future of Irish culture and dance.

"It only continues to grow in popularity. With the influence and impact of social media these days, and the reach that certain Irish dancers have, it is helping to encourage more young people to get involved in the hopes that they might one day reach higher standards. And, given the increased demand for Irish music around the world - and the amazing touring artists who promote it - the interest in dance has risen as well.

"As with everything, though, you can always do more. I do think that the artists in all walks of Irish and Celtic culture do an amazing job to preserve and promote our unique heritage. Perhaps in tough times like this,

however, more could be done to help struggling artists around the world who depend on the arts for their income."

He notes that one way to increase job security is for the government to implement a wage subsidy scheme between pubs and their long-serving musicians.

"Running at 30 per cent capacity and having live music doesn't make financial sense for musicians at the moment. With the government's help it would be great to see Irish culture thriving again, with a greater number of people employed."

Like many of his colleagues, Geaney anticipates a difficult end to 2020, with even more uncertainty around the forthcoming new year.

"It has been difficult to adapt. You have to try to come up with different ways of staying in touch with the audience so you can stay relevant. Thankfully, I have a great social media following, which I have focused on growing. When we do get back out on stage again, I hope to be performing to them in a live setting and not virtually. To that end, I am currently preparing for my first full U.S. tour of Velocity in 2021."

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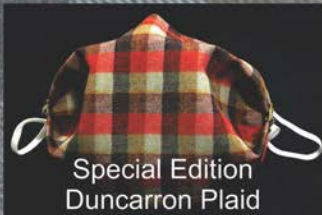
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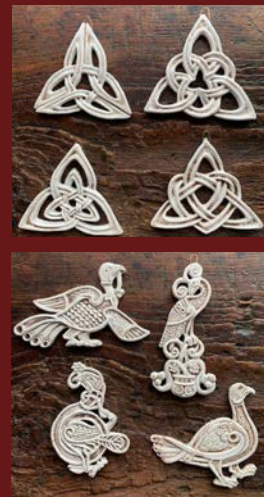
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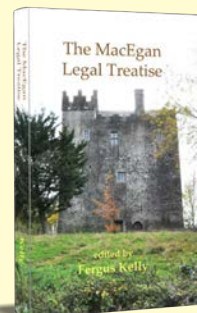
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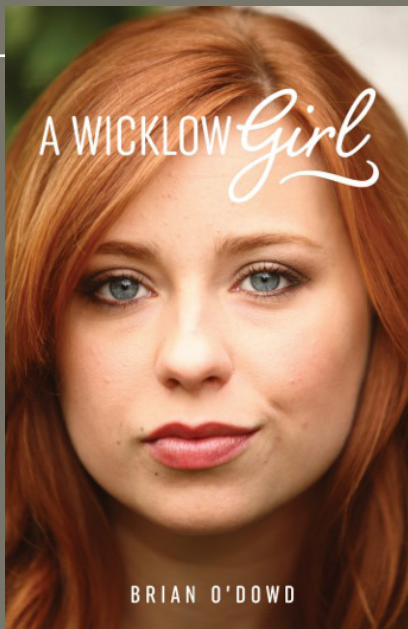
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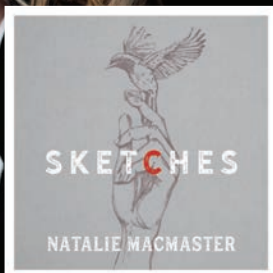
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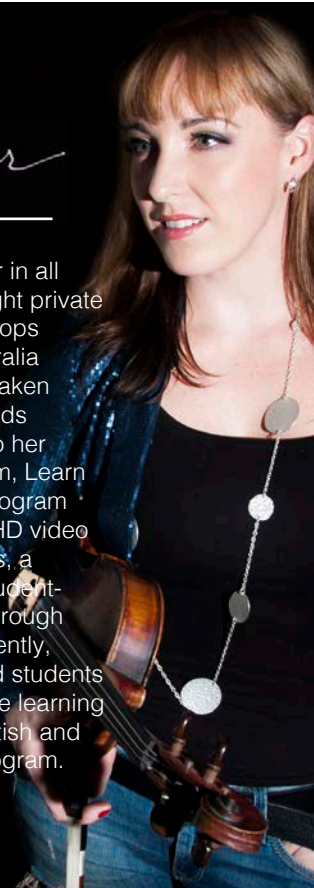
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Jack Charlton; 1935-2020

Although Jack Charlton was English by birth, he will be remembered as a legend in the Irish sporting world. In fact, his obituary in the Irish Times referred to him as “one of Ireland’s greatest adopted sons.” Charlton died in his Northumberland home in July, having lived with dementia in recent years and a diagnosis of lymphoma since last year. He was 85 years old.

A statement from Leeds United Football Club read: “He will remain in football folklore forever and his records at Leeds United are unlikely ever to be surpassed.”

Charlton was born to a family of footballers, including his brother Bobby, several uncles and his second cousin, Jackie Wilson. He joined Leeds United as a ground staff member when he was just 15, then played for the Leeds United youth team and later, the Yorkshire league. He stayed with Leeds United for his entire career as a player, which spanned 23 years and 773 appearances for the club. He was also part of the England team that won the 1966 World Cup. A year later, Charlton was named the Football Writers’ Association Footballer of the Year.

*He retired from playing in 1973,
but was far from finished with the
“The Beautiful Game.”*

He soon launched a career in team coaching and management, starting with Middlesbrough, Sheffield Wednesday and Newcastle. He was appointed an OBE (Order of the British Empire) in 1974. When Charlton applied to manage England’s team in 1977, he got snubbed - not even receiving a reply. At the end of 1985, though, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) approached Charlton to manage the Republic of Ireland national football team.

At the time, the team was in debt and generally failing to fill stadium seats. No one could have predicted the Republic would eventually sit among the top eight teams in the world. Charlton’s approach to the game was pragmatic and straightforward. As midfielder Pat Byrne told the Irish Times, “He made it very clear that first time on the training ground that ‘we are not going to have any

nice stuff here.’ It is going to be very straight; we are going to play it this way: we are going to get the ball, we are going to put it over the full-back’s head and we are going to have runners in behind. We are going to close everything up and we are going to turn the whole backline; as soon as they are turned, we are on our way.”

There were conflicting opinions about Charlton’s demeanor and style of gameplay, but he also brought success to the Irish team during his decade at the helm. The 1988 UEFA European Football Championship, for instance, was Ireland’s first appearance in a major tournament. The team triumphed against England, though they were defeated by the Netherlands: the team which went on to win the cup that year. Under Charlton’s direction, Ireland also qualified for the World Cup in 1990 as well as 1994. Some outlets say he retired from the role in 1995, while others say the FAI sacked him. However he went out, his impact on the game has been a lasting one. The following year, he was awarded honorary Irish citizenship - the highest honour given by the Irish state. He received the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008.

“He changed everything about Irish football,” former player Ray Houghton told the New York Times. “His legacy is absolutely huge.”

In his 2003 autobiography, Niall John Quinn (another former player) wrote, “Under Jack we were mostly ramshackle and part of what made us tick was the disorganization and the joy we got from pretending to the world that we were not to be taken seriously.”

Charlton is survived by his wife, Pat - the couple married in 1958 - and their three children, John, Deborah and Peter.

“As well as a friend to many, he was a much-adored husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather,” read a statement from his family. “We cannot express how proud we are of the extraordinary life he led and the pleasure he brought to so many people in different countries and from all walks of life. He was a thoroughly honest, kind, funny and genuine man who always had time for people. His loss will leave a huge hole in all our lives, but we are thankful for a lifetime of happy memories.”

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