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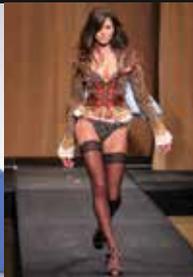
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Tartan Day, *April 6th*

Around the world, April 6 marks International Tartan Day. In New York City, citizens stage an entire Tartan Week – all in celebration of a garment that traces its existence as far back as 2000 BC.

Traditionally, the tartan has been associated with Scotland's ancient Clan system. Many historians have assumed that the plaid was invented by 17th century weavers, but archaeologists have a different story to tell. Excavations in Asia, Austria and Egypt have found evidence of plaid twill cloths going back 3,000 years. In 1,200 BC, tartan fabric was found on mummified bodies in Urumchi, China.

Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, who wrote works of history between 60 and 30 BC, referred to clothing worn by continental Celts as being dyed and embroidered in various colours with striped cloaks fastened by a brooch on the shoulder, heavy for winter wear and light in summer, all set in checks close together.

Today you will find tartans representing many countries. In Ireland, all of the counties have their own tartan, as do all Canadian provinces and American states.

In 2008, President George Bush signed a presidential proclamation making April 6 National Tartan Day. In Argentina, the Tartan Day parade was established in Buenos Aires on April 6, 2006.

So why is this ancient plaid experiencing such a renewal? Jean Watson from Nova Scotia is often called the "Mother of Tartan Day". In 1985, Jean was a member of the Federation of Scottish Clans in Nova Scotia. It concerned her that the youth appeared to have little interest in their Scottish roots. "They needed something to rally around" she proclaimed, and the tartan seemed to be the fit; a symbol to promote Scottish heritage by the most visible means, and a day to wear the tartan. April 6 was chosen because it is the date of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, which declared Scottish independence.

In 1986 the Province of Nova Scotia proclaimed April 6 Tartan Day, and on October 21, 2010 the Government of Canada officially recognized the milestone date.

Today the tartan is a driving economic force and its growth is unstoppable. In 2008 the Scottish Register of Tartans was established. In Scotland alone, the tartan supports 3,000 direct and 4,000 indirect jobs. Ronan MacGregor, Director of Operations at the Scottish Tartans Museum in Franklin, North Carolina, said North Americans are increasingly interested in their Celtic roots, resulting in more Celtic-themed stores and businesses. The high-profile New York fashion show, From Scotland with Love, is just one example.

The tartan has become an important thread in our universal cultural mosaic so on April 6, we encourage everyone to wear the tartan and follow Celtic Life International on Twitter, Facebook and our website as we celebrate Tartan Day.

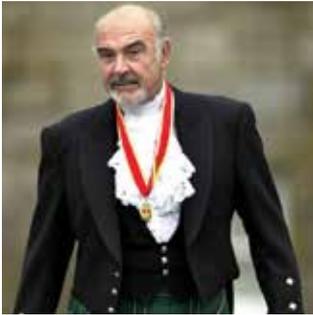
And to Jean Watson, Slainte - we raise our glasses in gratitude.

Enjoy Tartan Day and May God Bless!
Angus M. Macquarrie, Publisher



INSIDE

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Our Spring 2013 cover photo features Ewan McGregor





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CUBAN CONNECTIONS! *Maria Watson's companion piece to The Irish in Havana – the wonderfully detailed Irish Walking Tour Of Havana – is in the Cuba section on our website!*

Also in our Cuba section, check out our full interview with CeltFest Cuba co-founder Kilian Kennedy!



COVERAGE! *Be sure to follow our live online coverage of several events over the coming months, including From Scotland With Love and CeltFest Cuba in April, and the Celtic Festival Barbados in May!*



CLOSE UP! *Watch for in-depth, online interviews over the coming weeks with several of this issue's featured personalities, including comedian Tommy Tiernan, author Frank Macdonald, and musicians Chrissy Crowley and Wilber Calver!*

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DE THA DOL

Rabat Museum Morocco
photo taken by Dr Fraser Hunter



Fragment of ancient bronze tartan hints at a Scotsman's sad fate

A depiction of what could be the world's earliest tartan is on display in Morocco's Rabat Museum, but the fascinating exhibit tells a melancholy story. Discovered in the Roman city of Volubilis, in Morocco, the object, dated to around AD 217, is a fragment of Roman bronze drapery from a cloak that adorned a statue of the Roman emperor Caracalla who led military campaigns into third century Scotland. The statue was destroyed long ago. All that is left is the fragment of the emperor's cloak, which shows two captives – a Caledonian and a Parthian. Dr. Fraser Hunter of the National Museum of Scotland told Celtic Life that the tartan was carved into the bronze, and inlaid with bronze alloys and silver to give a clear impression of the textile. "The trews are relatively skin-tight and you can see the definition. The legs are two different patterns. This is the pre-history of tartan," he said. "You can see the Caledonian's bare chest, his head and cloak. His arms are bound. It's rare to see Caledonians in Roman art. Unfortunately, this Scot probably met a horrible end, possibly in an amphitheatre with wild animals."

Book of Deer available online

Scotland's tenth-century Book of Deer is among the rare documents now freely available online as part of the Cambridge University Digital Library, which preserves works of cultural importance to international traditions and communities. The Book of Deer is a pocket-sized gospel book, widely believed to be the oldest surviving Scottish manuscript, and containing the earliest known examples of written Scots Gaelic. "Because of their age and delicacy these manuscripts are seldom able to be viewed...Now...anyone with a connection to the Internet can select a work of interest, turn to any page of the manuscript, and explore it in extraordinary detail," librarian Anne Jarvis said in a statement. www.cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk.



Photo courtesy of
Cambridge University Library



Tripadvisor votes Welsh budget hotel No.1 in the world for service

The 11-bedroom Lauriston Court Hotel in Llandudno has won Tripadvisor's best service award following glowing reviews from travellers. The small hotel, which stands opposite the pier in the popular seaside town of Llandudno in North Wales, was also named one of the world's top ten bargain hotels. "We were shocked when Tripadvisor rang us – we initially thought someone was having a joke," shared Carol-lynn Robbins, who runs the hotel with her husband Ian. www.lauristoncourt.com

Jon Schueler Visual Arts Residency at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the National Centre for Gaelic Language, Culture and Arts on Skye, is inviting applications from international, Scottish and U.K. artists for a new visual arts residency. The John Schueler Scholarship is a partnership between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and New York's Jon Schueler Charitable Trust. It has been established to celebrate the life and work of Schueler, (1916-1992), an artist and abstract expressionist painter, and to recognize his special relationship with the landscape of the Sound of Sleat. www.smo.uhi.ac.uk



University of Glasgow Centre for Open Studies launches summer program

Running from June 24 until July 6 this year, students can study all aspects of Scottish history, culture and heritage at the University of Glasgow. The Centre for Open Studies program is available to everyone and participants can attend for one or two weeks. Modules include: The birth of Scotland and the treasures of Glasgow's museums; Natural Scotland; and The History of the Scots: Beyond our Borders – Scotland's influence across the world. The social programme will include ceilidhs and Taste of Scotland restaurant visits. www.gla.ac.uk/openstudiessummerprogramme2013.



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FIRST WORD

Professor, lecturer, author, engineer, chairman, board member, and Registrar and Deputy President of University College Dublin - John Kelly's long list of accomplishments is both impressive and inspiring.

Currently, Kelly is the Executive Director of the Ireland Canada University Foundation (ICUF), a not-for-profit organization established in 1993 for the purpose of encouraging and facilitating academic links between institutions and scholars in Ireland and Canada.



On his own heritage

I was born in 1935 and grew up in Newry, Co. Down in Northern Ireland. I was fourth in a family of seven – four boys and three girls. My father was a shopkeeper. Newry was a mixed Catholic-Protestant town, but there was no friction, quite the opposite. We had a holiday home in Killowen on the shores of Carlingford Lough where I became a useful swimmer and climber of the Mourne Mountains...I was quite fluent in the Irish language and was the under-10 hornpipe dancing champion of Ulster, Newcastle Feis Ceoil, 1945. It was a wonderful and happy childhood.

On the ICUF's mandate

The mission of the Foundation is to promote academic cooperation between Ireland and Canada by awarding short-term visiting scholarships to Canadian and Irish research scholars so that they can visit each other's countries and work on research projects of interest to both nations. A secondary mission is to assist in the development of both Irish language and culture in Canada.

On his responsibilities with the organization

As Executive Director, I am the Chief Executive Officer and, whilst in the early days I did most everything, I now concentrate on fund-raising from corporate and private sponsors as best I can, and from both Governments. This is increasingly difficult, with both the corporate and governmental worlds in poor financial shape.

On the rewards of his role

The rewards are in supporting the education and research output of the leading scholars in both countries on Irish-

Canadian research topics, and in seeing the developing academic cooperation between our two nations resulting from the scholarships. I also take pleasure in the execution of the Irish Government contract to develop the Irish language in Canadian universities. This program has been remarkably successful; thanks to the great dedication and enthusiasm of the Irish language teachers we have been sending to Canadian universities these past three years. There is great interest in Canada in the Irish language, seemingly more than in Ireland.

On the ICUF's future plans

It is our plan to continue with both the Dobbin and the Irish language scholarship programs, but we are totally dependent on getting sponsorships. The Dobbin Scholarships are named for our Canadian founder-benefactor, Craig Dobbin, who in 1993 donated £1 million to University College Dublin to fund a chair in Canadian Studies (I was then the university's Registrar/Deputy President.) It is the Foundation's intention, currently under way, to get both our Governments to agree a Memorandum of Understanding, an MOU, to fund the program of the Foundation for the exchange of scholars. We have great friends and supporters in Canada's Government, led by Minister for Finance Jim Flaherty, and the Speaker of the Senate, Senator Noel Kinsella, who is a graduate of University College Dublin, as well as Newfoundlander Loyola Hearn, Canada's Ambassador to Ireland, and many others, so we are hopeful that a core funding of the Foundation will be agreed by the two Governments so that we may continue with our exchange of scholars. In the past, we have had substantial corporate and private sponsorship support in both countries, but that is much harder to get and maintain in these difficult times and we must look to our Governments to keep the Foundation and its programs alive. We continue to have a full program of visiting Dobbin scholarships in both directions in this current year, as well as a continuation of the Irish language program which will have Irish language lecturers in eight Canadian universities, and funding for two students from each of those universities who will attend the month-long Irish language course in Connemara, Co. Galway in the coming summer.

www.icuf.ie





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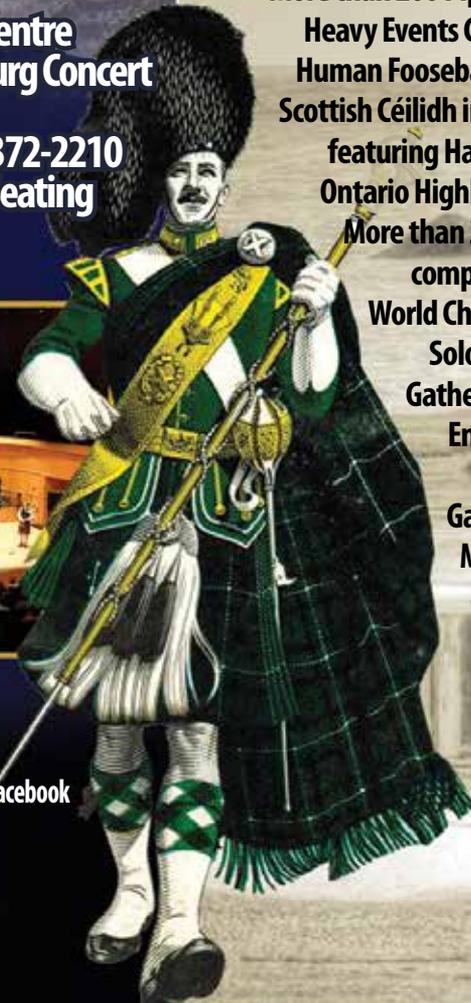
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UP FRONT



Kelly O'Connor

Since 1995, London's Irish Cultural Centre has been offering an adventurous program from its building on Black's Road in Hammersmith, central London. Now, change and opportunity abound as employees prepare to move into a new, purpose-built building that will better serve the needs of the city's expanding population of young Irish.

England's capital city has many Irish residents – the census of 2011 put the number at around 176,000, or 2.2 per cent of the total population. It's said that twenty-five per cent of all the children in London have an Irish grandparent. And now, the number of Irish residents is growing as Ireland's economic troubles force young Irish abroad.

"Last year, we had lots of young people peek around the door. We feel it's important to be a strong social and cultural beacon, especially for the new arrivals, although we welcome everyone," said the centre's assistant manager Kelly O'Connor.

"Everyone" includes many second and third generation Irish and those connected to Ireland through marriage as well as some who just wish to explore Irish culture.

The centre's eclectic program includes traditional music sessions with high-profile musicians, such as Dervish, Mary Coughlan, Danu, Wolfstones, Beoga and Niall Keegan.

There are also music and dance lessons, a film club, art exhibitions, reminiscence sessions, dances and theatre and literary events, such as the June Irish Writers' Festival. A popular debate series last year on the recession in Ireland was provocatively called: Why is No One in Jail?

The centre's free and subsidized services have always been offered from the aging building on Black's Road, but two years ago, change was forced when the cash-strapped local council decided to sell the building. Cultural centre employees were told that if they wanted to stay on, the price tag would be £3 million.

Negotiations brought the price down to £1.5 million and the centre's trio of staff, assisted by many volunteers, then went about the task of raising the money.

With the help of their many friends, they organized the world's first 10,000km session in September 2012. The musical sponsored walk left from the Black's Road base and threaded its way along the Thames.

"It was fantastic, a lovely turn-out and fabulous weather," said O'Connor, herself a Dubliner who has been in London about four years.

They held further fundraisers, and the Irish government provided a £500,000 grant. The rest of the money came from an advance payment from Shepherd's Bush Housing Association, which will share the new space with the centre.

"We panicked at first but once we realized we could secure our future we saw that it was a fantastic opportunity," O'Connor said of the move. "We can restructure to be more efficient and develop a building that better provides what's needed. We get to re-brand, and that's timely with a larger number of younger people signing up for events and coming to classes."

She said that the new hall, for instance, may be called The Junction – a name designed to appeal to the young, and which doesn't shout cultural institution.

The forced re-think has made staff realize they can work with other London venues that may offer more space, allowing bigger concerts or smaller acoustic sessions – they have already held a fundraiser with comic Dara O'Briain at the Palace Theatre on London's Shaftsbury Avenue.

"Many things that seemed out of reach, we can now think about, the opportunity's there, but we have to be realistic, we have to ensure we can deliver within our budgets," said O'Connor. "We want to become more commercially viable. The Irish government provides a grant for us every year and we want to prove to Irish tax payers that we're doing our very best to be as self-sufficient as possible."

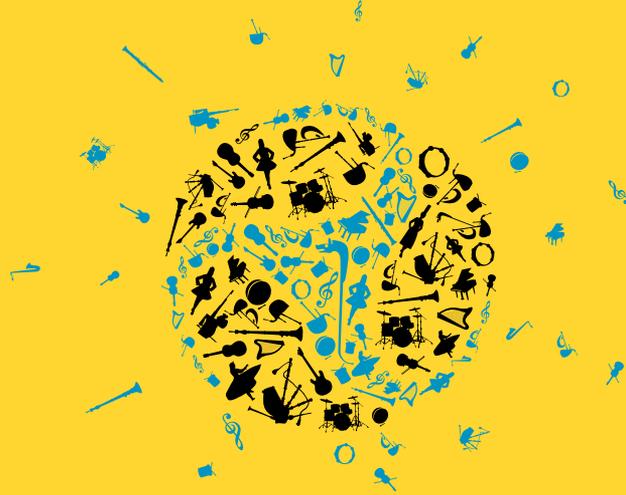
The centre has gravitas through its affiliations with Thames Valley University and London College of Music. It is the only centre in the U.K. to offer official examination grades in Irish Traditional Music. Ideas for generating more income and visibility include a café and shop, and more partnerships such as the one with London's annual Irish film festival.

The new purpose-built centre will open in the fall of 2014. The existing one will close this month (March 2013) and staff will move into temporary accommodation from where they'll continue to offer their services.

"At the start we were worried but now the future looks bright and it's incredibly exciting," said O'Connor with a grin.

www.irishculturalcentre.co.uk





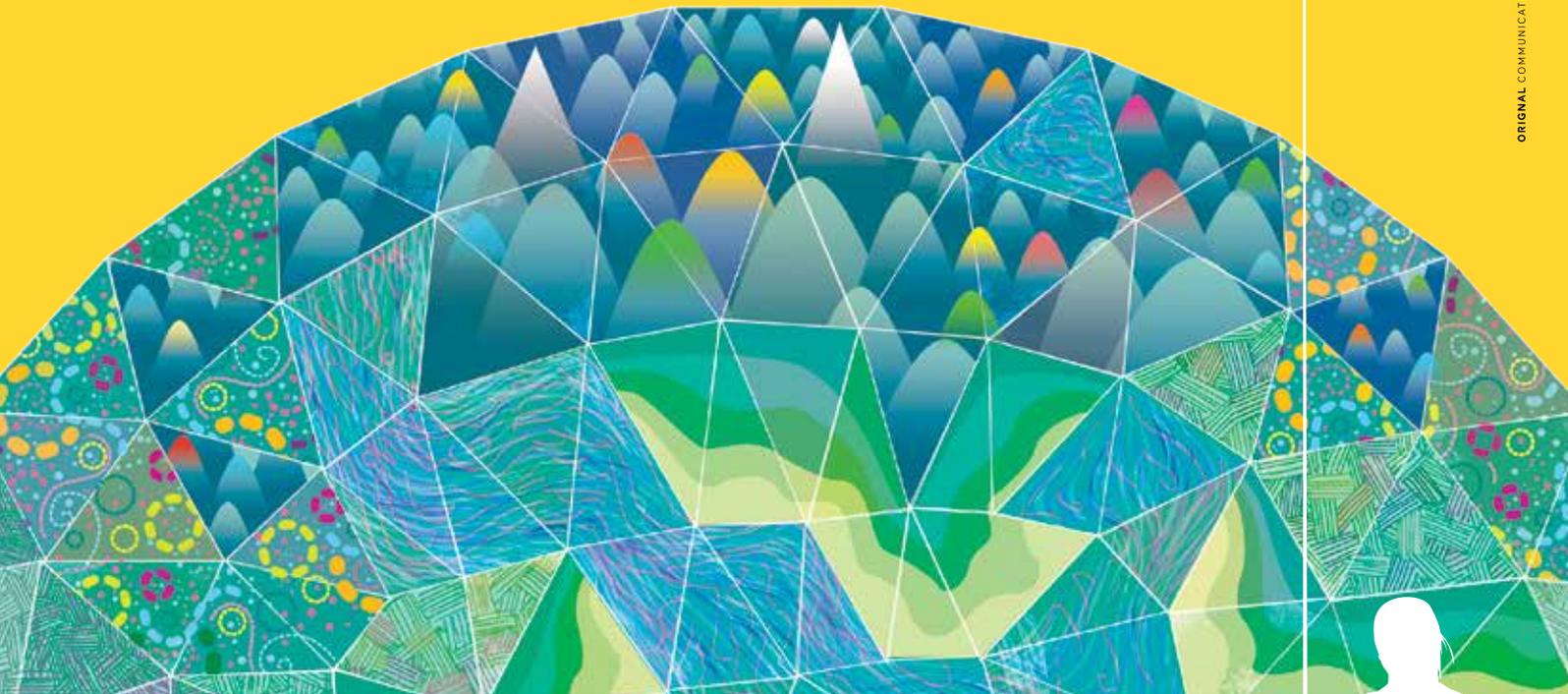
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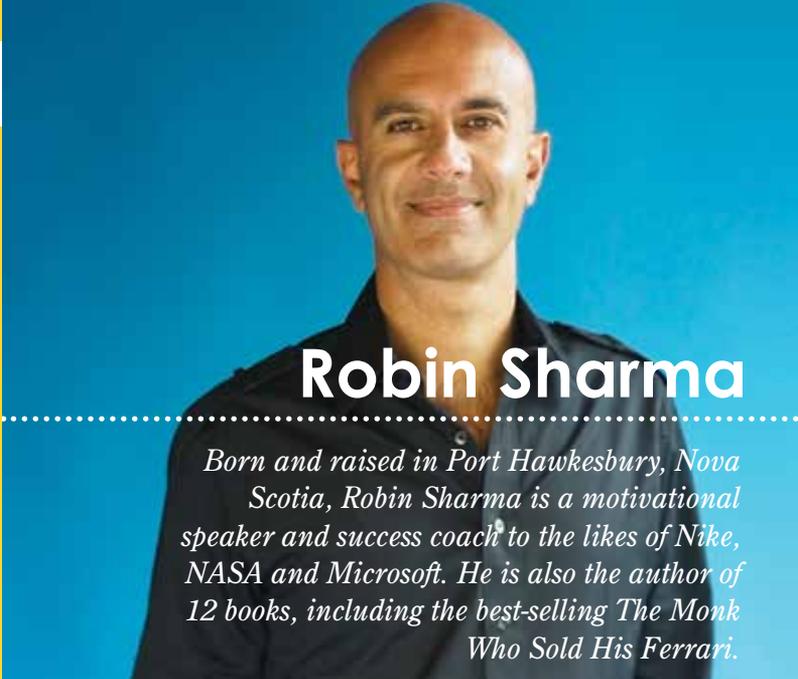


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Robin Sharma

*Born and raised in Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, Robin Sharma is a motivational speaker and success coach to the likes of Nike, NASA and Microsoft. He is also the author of 12 books, including the best-selling *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*.*



Barb Stegemann

*A native of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, inspirational author and social entrepreneur Barb Stegemann is the brain behind *The 7 Virtues Beauty*, a company that sources essential oils to support nations rebuilding from Haiti to Afghanistan and the Middle East.*

SEVEN CELTIC QUESTIONS

What is your own background? My father is from the North of India and my mother is from Kenya. I grew up in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. I treasure those roots. They shaped me enormously and influenced me deeply. I still miss the ocean and the people.

What was it like growing up amidst Celtic culture? Awesome - such a rich culture.

From your perspective, what were some of the key characteristics of that culture? A love of fun, human connections and the savoring life's simplest joys.

How have those roots influenced who you are today? Well they've influenced the way I see the world. Though I am now a global nomad in many ways, I still feel Cape Breton is my home. In terms of how the culture has influenced me, I'd say it's taught me that everyone we meet has a lesson to teach, a story to tell and a dream to do. We all—no matter what our station in life—have hopes and fears and ideals and insecurities. As we remember this, we can connect with others and encourage them. And even inspire them. The culture has also kept my feet on the ground. I still live a pretty simple life, in many ways. My best days are spent with family, and in nature, and around music.

Speaking of music, when and why did you become a U2 fan? I used to be in a rock band in university and we used to cover U2's early hits like New Year's Day. That's when I started to like them. I began to love them when they did songs like Pride (In the Name of Love) and Beautiful Day. U2—and their whole approach and philosophy—still speaks so deeply to me. I admire their devotion to mastery of their craft, their commitment to pushing the envelope, their desire to change the world. Bono is on my list of the Top Five People I'd Like to Have Dinner With (along with Nelson Mandela and designer Philippe Starck).

Again, from your perspective, and given your many travel experiences, is Celtic culture alive and well today? Most definitely.

How often do you get back to Nova Scotia? Once every year.

What are your own Celtic roots? Irish, my mother's maiden name is Gough.

Why are those roots important to you? I wish I knew more about our heritage. When you think of the courage of our great grandparents to come over to Canada with so little, sadly not much was documented. Perhaps this is a part of the longing to know more.

What does it mean to you to be of Celtic heritage? It means strength and courage. Our great grandparents had very little and yet, courageously, travelled across the ocean to provide a new life for us all.

How are you involved with the Canadian Celtic community? I return to my home community of Antigonish and give talks on my work. There is a strong Celtic community there. I return home to invest and share our story, but I could certainly be engaged more.

Why is it important to keep Celtic culture alive in Canada? My son read Irish poems to me for his International Baccalaureate exams in Grade 12. He was reading about bogs and moss and rural life. Then he looked at me and said, "In my urban experience, I am trying to connect to these rural experiences." My heart broke; for I know the smell of moss, the run through the wilderness with my Irish cousins in rural Nova Scotia. Our children are urban, they do not have a real connection to the life of our rural roots. However, by reading those Irish poems, my son's pride and wonder about our roots was just one way for us to get the conversation going as a family.

In your estimation, are Canadians doing enough to keep Celtic culture alive? No, we are not, and I am just as much to blame. I could do so much more. Life gets busy. But when my son read those Irish poems recently it made me realize we need to do more.

What could we be doing better? Exchanges and programs for our youth to connect with our roots would be a good start. My son will be taking a business course in the U.K. in London at Ashridge Business School this summer. I will see if we can take a trip to Ireland if there is time and learn a bit more about where we came from.



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Nova Scotia 60th

prepares to celebrate the Anniversary of its much-loved tartan

Picture shows Halifax Highland dancers, from left: Leigh Huxtable; Sara McKegney; Marla MacInnis and Elizabeth MacKay.

The vivid blue Nova Scotia provincial tartan can be seen almost anywhere these days: on kilt-wearing hockey fans or highland dancers; in television commercials, photography backdrops and more. It's become a pervasive reminder of the important contribution the Scots made to the founding of Nova Scotia, a province on Canada's east coast. And this year, it's having a party.

Nova Scotia's Tartan Day, April 6, will be marked with various events to honour the province's Scottish heritage. Notably, the Amethyst Scottish Dancers of Nova Scotia will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the tartan with two shows featuring Celtic music and highland dance choreography on April 7.

Amethyst's new artistic director, Marla MacInnis, said, "One great aspect of our Tartan Day show is that all the performers are young Nova Scotians who have a passion for their heritage. These people will someday be in the position to pass on traditions and teach the culture to future generations. If we're going to keep our culture alive, it's important to find opportunities to celebrate it. With each week that passes, my dancers get more and more excited for our Tartan Day celebration and I'm really proud to see them display such a strong dedication to preserving Nova Scotia's roots."

Jean Watson, a member of The Federation of Scottish Culture in Nova Scotia, is often referred to as the Mother of Tartan Day. Watson is responsible for creating Tartan Day, which became official in Nova Scotia, the first province in Canada to recognize it, in 1987. It has now been approved by every province in Canada as well as the federal government. The United States Senate recognized April 6 as Tartan Day in 1998.

Watson said, "By wearing the tartan, you honour the Scottish people. This year, I hope everybody wears a bit of tartan and puts on various Scottish events to honour their ancestors."

The Nova Scotia tartan was originally designed in 1953 for a historical display at an agricultural exhibition in Truro by Mrs. Bessie Murray. It became the official provincial tartan shortly after. The blue and white in the tartan stand for the sea, the greens represent the forests, red is for the royal lion on the Shield of Arms, and gold for the province's historic Royal Charter.

In the Scottish clan system, tartans represent family. Mac MacIsaac, of MacIsaac Kiltmakers, said, "In Ireland, another one of the Celtic nations, every county has its own tartan. They didn't have the same clan system as the Scots. But their tartans, and kilts, point back to their own home, family and heritage."

Nowadays, people from around the world are interested in designing their own tartans for various uses. "The Singh family in India designed, registered and had their own family tartan woven," said MacIsaac. "Now there are Norwegian and German tartans, football team tartans, and thousands of other tartans that have been registered, but will never be woven. Only about 500 tartans have been woven."

Online sites like the one at TheHouseofTartan.com make it easy for anyone to design their own custom tartans for free in just a few minutes.

If you want to register your new creation with the Scottish Registrar of Tartans, said MacIsaac, they'll ask you what the significance of the colours are in the registration process. "They encourage this kind of thinking so that people will make some sort of a connection with their designs."

2013 marks the third year since Canada officially recognized the Maple Leaf Tartan as a national symbol, although it has been an unofficial symbol since the 1960s. The Maple Leaf tartan incorporates the green of the leaves' summer foliage, the gold which appears in early autumn, the red which appears with the coming of the first frost, and the brown tones of the fallen leaves.

By Melanie Furlong



piseogs

Celtic culture has some odd traditions. Here, Lora O'Brien looks at piseogs, charms and superstitions.

A group of friends are sitting around a table when one of them scratches his nose.

"Ah, me nose is itchy," he says, scratching away. Then, he exchanges a few light punches with his friends and all is well again.

If you know much about Irish superstitions, you'll understand that traditionally an itchy nose signifies an impending fight, and that a mock fight should be carried out to ensure that the bad luck is done with. Superstitions like these are picked up by many of us in the school yard or around the family dinner table and carried on into adult life.

How many others can you remember, now you're thinking about it? Itchy palms - a sign of money to come. Itchy knuckles - another fight. Itching on the temples and you'll have cause to weep, while if your eyebrows need a scratch, you'll be drinking whiskey. Perhaps those last two are connected.

But it's not all about the itching. A gap between the front teeth is a sign of a beautiful singing voice. There's a vein that connects the third finger of the left hand directly to your heart, making it the best place to wear your wedding ring. What about "One for sorrow, two for joy...", and counting magpies to see what fates they foretell?

A black spot on the tongue is a sign of telling lies; many suspicious parents have told a child to "stick out your tongue 'til I see if you're lying". If your ears are 'burning', someone is talking about you. If it's the right ear that feels inexplicably warm, you are being praised, but if it's the left ear, the talk is bitter and full of malice.

In Ireland, the word for superstition is piseog, pishog or pisreog, depending on dialect and source, but the word implies much more than simple sayings and quaint beliefs. A charm, a spell, a superstitious practice - anything connected with magic - is deemed a piseog in the old stories.

Those who carried out the practices were known as piseogaí. These people could provide beneficial charms and cures and they could counter any malicious piseogs that were placed upon a family or an individual, or they could be the ones who placed the evil.

A classic piseog was connected to May Day morning, the turning of the year at Bealtaine from winter into summer; a time for changes. A malevolent person could go out on this particular morning and mix rotten produce into your farm to try and turn your luck. This could be rotten meat in the haystacks, or rotten eggs in through the soil... either way the imagery is clear, and unless the foulness was found your luck would turn. The sensible farmer would have already taken precautions against this type of shenanigans, and deployed one of the many available counter charms to turn aside ill intent.

May Day was also a time for beneficial changes - washing one's face in the sun-kissed dew on this morning would ensure fresh beauty throughout the year. Who needs expensive lotions when dew drops are free?

These folk beliefs, or superstitions, may seem silly to us now, thinking about them in the light of modern science and technological advancement, but they are reflective of our psychological needs, of how we as humans have thought, felt, and interacted with the world around us, and with each other.

Though we can glean the logic behind the origins of some piseogs, it is not rationality that has ensured their survival, it is repetition. When something is done again and again, down through the generations, it becomes not a superstition but a tradition, and these are held on to. They are links to the past, connection through the generations and common ground from which each new family builds their own rituals.

Maybe the old piseogs avert the bad luck, and bring about the good luck or maybe they don't. But before you decide either way, it might be wise to bear in mind the old Irish saying - *Ná dean nós agus ná bris nós* - Don't make a custom and don't break a custom.



CARRANTUOHILL

Lots of teens get together to form bands in high school. Not many are still playing together 25 years later. Polish-Celtic band Carrantuohill hit that milestone last year, and released their latest album - tidily named 25 - to celebrate.

“We are Polish, living in the south of the country where the Silesian folk culture is dominant, although we spend most of our time on our tour bus,” explained bass guitarist Adam DREWNIOK as the band took a break to chat to Celtic Life Intl. “As teenagers we got interested in different styles of music, continuously looking for something that would meet our taste. We all found it in Celtic music. One thing led to another and 25 years later we are among the top European Celtic music bands.”

“Somehow Celtic music represents everything we look for in music – our hopes, dreams and longings are mirrored in the Celtic spirit,” added violinist Maciej PASZEK.

What makes Carrantuohill’s longevity more surprising is that, of the six band members, only Paszek had formal music lessons.

Irish folk is a strong influence on their sound and the band has visited Ireland many times. “We’ve had the chance to acquire musical skills from the source,” said acoustic guitarist Bogdan WITA. “It was a priceless education that helped us get the original Celtic sound and character.”

“On our album 25, we included the studio versions of our newest numbers and a live recording of one of the anniversary concerts we played in Warsaw,” explained multi-instrumentalist DAREK SOJKA. “It was a special night for us as we played with the Irish singer-songwriter Eleanor McEvoy, who is a great star across the globe. It went so well that we have begun working together on a few projects.”

When the band first formed, they named themselves after the highest mountain peak in Ireland and copied Celtic music styles, but today they write their own numbers.

“When we started playing, it was more like a reproduction of the traditional Celtic and Irish songs but, after a while, when we got to know so much about Celtic music and how to play it, we realized that we were ready to start creating our own versions. And now, the majority of what we play are original numbers,” said drummer Marek SOCHACKI.

As well as performing all over Poland, the band is often seen at Europe’s big events, such as France’s Roches de Celtique Festival and Ireland’s Dancing with Lunasa.

“As well as the big festivals, we love to play the pub gigs; it’s so much more intimate, it’s the chance to show people what Irish music is all about,” said Wita. “There’s no boundary between the band and the audience.”

This March, the band members will also be hosting their fifth annual Green Island – Silesia, a two-week ecological event blending workshops, performances and a concert that they began in order to educate children and teenagers about ecology in an entertaining way. For the final concert this year, they’ll be joined by Polish stars such as accordionist Marcin WYROSTEK, singer Stanisław SOJKA, the Salake Irish dance group and event host movie star Olgierd ŁUKASZEWICZ.

Sojka is pleased that today it is so much easier to learn about Celtic culture. “We live in great times when it comes to satisfying your knowledge. Twenty-five years ago, it wasn’t easy to get any information, especially in Poland. Everything came through the grapevine – a friend of a friend went to Ireland and brought us a whatever... And now, there are entire associations that deal with Celts, web pages, blogs and Facebook sites. A lot is going on, as it is in plenty of other subjects, cultures and sub-cultures. It’s amazing, and so refreshing after the years of mainstream slavery.”



Not that anyone’s getting complacent; there will always be fresh ways in which to explore Celtic culture. “Carrantuohill is surrounded by young, creative minds – people who come up with amazing ideas all the time. It’s important to go forward and try new things,” added Sojka.

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Celtic Woman



Lisa Lambe is happy just to put her feet up.

"I've just made myself a cup of tea," said the newest member of Irish super-group Celtic Woman over the phone from the road. "We haven't stopped for what seems like forever, so I'm going to take advantage of our chat and breathe for a few minutes here."

The multi-talented singer-actress has earned the break.

"Actually," she laughed, "I haven't stopped since I was a young girl."

Indeed, Lambe's resume is a testament to her work ethic. She began her vocation at the age of three, and graduated with a Bachelor of Acting Studies from Trinity College in Dublin. She has since starred in numerous theatrical productions throughout Ireland, Europe and the UK, has been a featured soloist with Ireland's RTE Concert Orchestra, and was a soloist on Ireland's popular TV program, *The Late Late Show*. Her efforts have taken her from the stage to musical theater, film and television, and radio performances.

The accolades have followed, including a call-out from *The Irish Times*, which described her as "the finest singer and actress of her generation on whom a whole new foundation of theatre can be built."

"I've never paid much mind to that stuff," she said. "Once an artist starts believing the hype, it can impact what they do."

Since joining Celtic Woman in 2010, Lambe has been busier than ever.

"What haven't we done?" she asked rhetorically. "I don't even know where to start; recording, rehearsals, tours, appearances... it's been such a whirlwind of activity that I have hardly had a moment to myself."

Indeed, the acclaimed quartet have had an incredible twelve months; along with the current string of sold-out shows, their 2012 Christmas album achieved platinum status within weeks of its release, they performed before an estimated audience of 1 billion at a New Year's Eve concert in China, and *Billboard Magazine* named them World Music Artist of the Year – their seventh such citation from the prestigious publication.

Despite the flurry of activity, Lambe says that she is enjoying every moment of the experience.

"It has been everything I have hoped for, and more. The travelling has certainly been a thrill; getting to see so many different parts of the world and all the different cultures, trying new foods and seeing how people dress.

"For me, though, the most rewarding part has been meeting all of the amazing people everywhere we go, especially the folks who come out to the shows or an autograph session or appearance. I love hearing about their lives and knowing that their stories are really no different than mine."

Lambe admits that while life on the road isn't easy at times, she and her peers have a strong support system in place to take the edge off the long days.

"We are very much one big family on tour," she shared. "All of us – the performers, the management, the road team – we are all there for each other when needed. There isn't anyone involved with this show that I could not talk to about anything at any time. I am grateful to have made so many life-long friends."

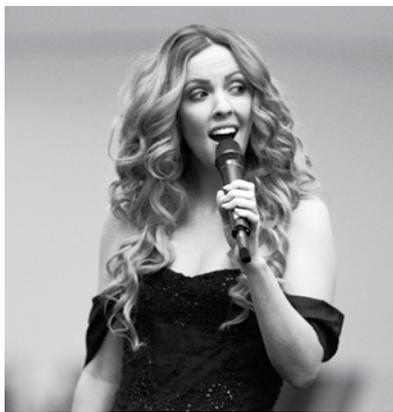
The cast and crew will likely get to know each other even better over the coming months, as the show works and winds its way across Canada and the United States. After a short summer break, they are back at it this fall across Europe.

"I get a little homesick sometimes," she confided, adding that it is difficult being away from her new husband, Irish vocalist Simon Morgan. "We manage to see each other whenever we can – he's very busy with his career also – but we make it a point to speak every day, either by phone or online."

Lambe stays closely connected to her family as well.

"They are my rock and my foundation," she shared. "They are quintessential Irish stock; salt of the earth people who keep my feet planted in the soil. They are quick to caution me, amidst all of it, of what is truly important in life; family, friends, health and hard work.

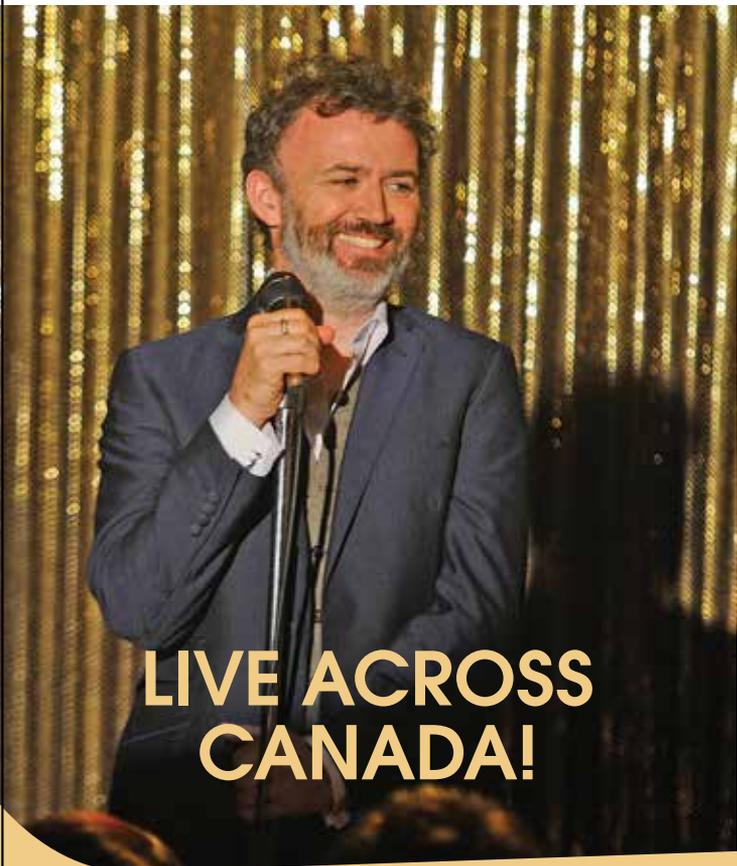
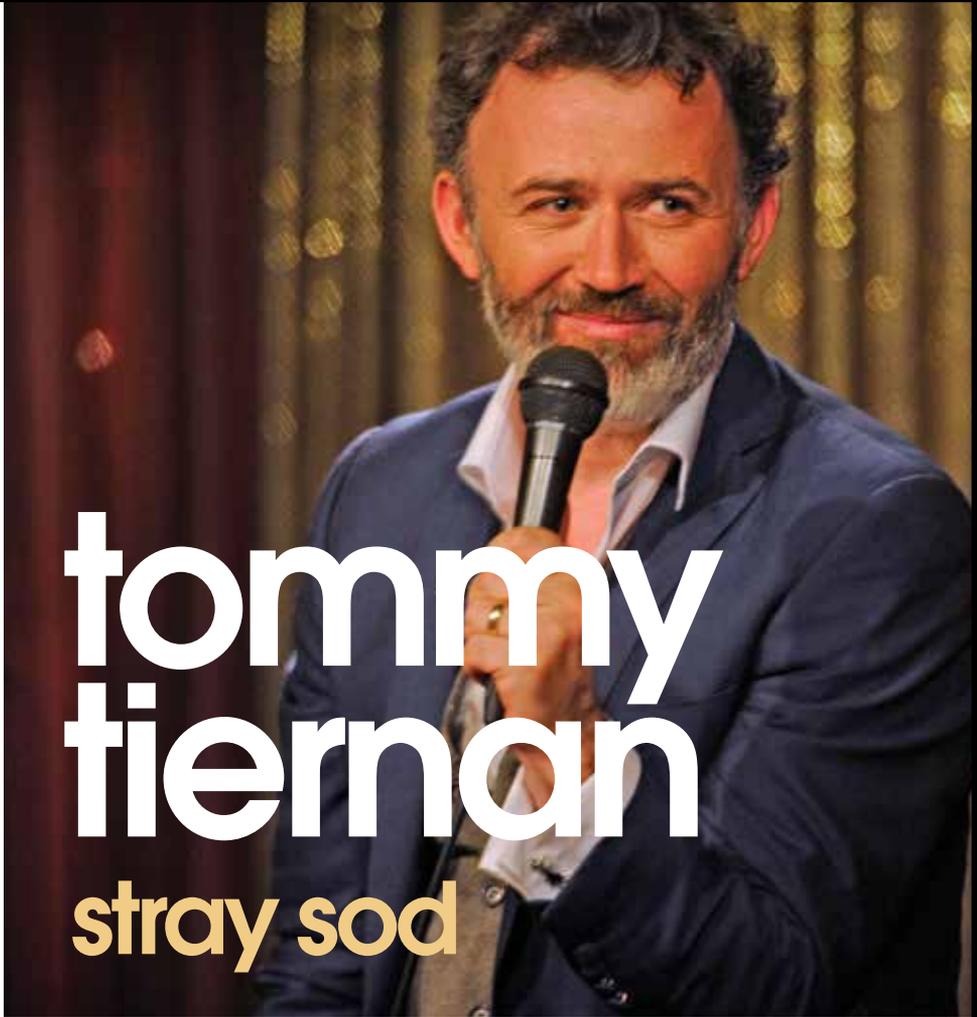
"And my mother never fails to remind me to take a few moments each day to make myself a cup of tea, put my feet up and just breathe..."



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is a stand-up guy

To hear Tommy Tiernan tell it, you'd think he was a wee bit daft.

"I really have no idea," the hyper-chatty Irish comedian said in his thick Donegal drawl when asked to explain his success. "But I must be doing something right, because the crowds keep coming back, or maybe it's because I keep doing something wrong and they are determined to see me do it right."

Speaking by phone from The Brooks Hotel in downtown Dublin, the forty-three-year-old humourist struggled to explain his immense popularity in both the Irish capital city where he just completed his 200th sold-out show at the 1,000-seat Vicar Street performing arts center, and elsewhere across the country.

"It's not very often that I'm speechless," he chuckled, adding, "I'm just happy that people seem to love what I do, and I'm extremely grateful to be making a living doing what I love."

Perhaps it is his sheer verbosity, or maybe it's his spastic delivery, or even his 'I-know-I'm-going-just-a-little-too-far-with-this-joke-but-I'm-going-to-do-it-anyway' cavalier attitude - whatever it is, Tiernan is tickling more funny bones than ever, both at home and abroad.

"Comedy has this great universal appeal," he mused. "I can tell the same joke, or do the same kind of routine, just about anywhere in the world and someone, somewhere, is going to relate to it."

All this means that Tiernan's show is inevitably influenced by his surroundings.

"If I'm on the road in Canada, then the show will take on a Canadian flavor over time, or if I'm in London then I might bring up stuff that is relevant to the U.K. The core of the joke is the same, however, and so is the response."

That response has sometimes been mixed over the years, and Tiernan has often been called-out for crossing the line into taboo territory. Still, his contentious wit keeps packing the rafters - especially with young people - and tickets to his upcoming tour-

dates in Canada are selling briskly.

"Just like here at home, the crowds in Canada and America don't come out to see me just because I'm Irish," he explained. "Sure, there will always be the nostalgia factor for North Americans - you know, the older ex-pats who will go to anything with the word Ireland stamped on it - but that's the exception rather than the rule for me and what I do."

He added that the only real difference between Irish and North American audiences is that "the Irish are shorter."

While his appeal is broader than his heritage, Tiernan acknowledges that the apple never falls too far from the tree.

"Look - I'm Irish, there is no way of escaping it, those are my roots and they are on display every time I take the stage. I don't shy away from the fact that I come from where I do, but at the same time I don't consider myself some sort of spokesperson or poster-child for my country. I am a stand-up comedian - I try to make people laugh. And it just so happens that the Irish are generally pretty good at that."

To that end, Irish comedy, he believes, is in a solid place these days.

"I like that we are a little different about things here. We are a bit quirky - almost like we are afraid of success. And because of that we have managed to maintain a sense of authenticity about it all; our comedy isn't this generic, made-for-TV schlock that you might get elsewhere. We are who we are and it is what it is and that's the way we like it and we make no excuses."

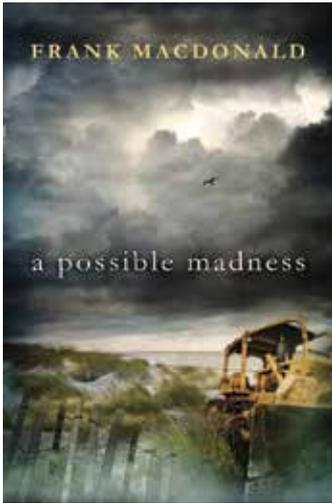
Tiernan's own creative-comedic process contrasts with the exuberance of his performance.

"I am not so sure I would call it a process; it's more of a perception which isn't always easy to call up. I tend to wait around for it like a lost poet waiting for the last bus. The ideas and words come to me when I am alone, usually when I am out walking on my own, in silence."

The silence, he acknowledges, brings some balance to his busy life.

"Yeah," he laughed, "it's not very often that I'm speechless."





Frank Macdonald

*Rural decline in Atlantic Canada doesn't sound like a subject with much international appeal, but rural decay lies at the heart of *A Possible Madness* by Canadian author Frank Macdonald, a book that's newly nominated for the prestigious IMPAC International Dublin Literary Award.*

In *A Possible Madness*, Macdonald explores the discord that erupts in the fictional east coast town of Shean when a multinational corporation devises a plan to exploit the last of the coal, at high cost to the community and ecology.

Shean's depressed condition is a sad but familiar reality in many rural Canadian communities and very common on Cape Breton Island, Macdonald's east coast home. Cape Breton is an area with a strong Celtic heritage, and it has bled people for generations as the young have traditionally left to seek work in Canada's booming western cities.

"During many years of reporting for a weekly newspaper, the *Inverness Oran*, one of the recurring themes was the loss of population, the closure of businesses and schools and the general decline of economic activities in rural areas," Macdonald told *Celtic Life Intl.*

"Many of these communities fought back against the decline by trying to find new economic solutions that would allow people to stay, or at least have a choice. It struck me that in pursuing investment it was conceivable, even probable, that the resources those communities had to offer, natural or cultural, could attract corporate interests that had little interest in those communities, but in the profits that could be made from exploiting them."

The book took a lot of research as the journalist in Macdonald wanted the engineering part of the story to be wholly believable. He also wanted the book to be a good read. "I aimed to tell a story that involved politics, journalism, corporate exploitation, and rural decline in a way that avoided early yawns. This I tried to accomplish by creating a rich cast of characters through whom most of the story could be told with humour and insights."

The strategy seems to have worked as official reviews have generally been positive, and the feedback from readers has been glowing. Macdonald was pleased when *A Possible Madness* was made mandatory reading in the Masters of Business Administration program at the Edmonton campus of the University of Alberta.

"The rationale, according to the professor who designed the course, was that while Shean is a fictional town, there are hundreds of rural towns and villages facing the same challenges. Each student in the program was expected to read the novel then write a sustainable economic development strategy for Shean. What I appreciated most

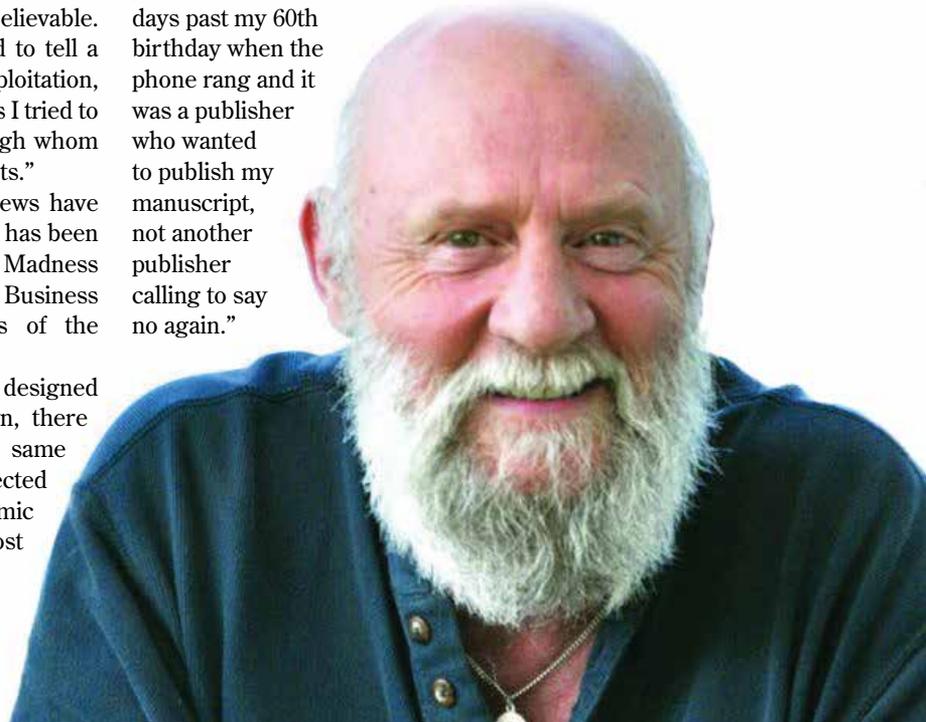
about this was that the professor had focused on the thesis of the story itself - that vulnerability of rural communities to corporate exploitation."

The IMPAC nomination puts Macdonald among 150 English-language books from around the world to have been nominated by designated libraries (the winner will be announced on June 6th.) It's actually his second IMPAC nomination in five years - his first novel, *A Forest for Calum*, was long-listed in 2007.

"It's great company I'm in," he said. "Writing a novel is a long, often frustrating process. I once heard Alistair MacLeod describe writing a novel as being like "walking to Vancouver". (MacLeod won the IMPAC for his 1999 novel *No Great Mischiefs* and, like Macdonald, spends a lot of time on Cape Breton Island, which is about 4,600km from Vancouver on Canada's west coast.)

In addition to his journalism, Macdonald is well-known as a writer of short stories, drama, poetry and songs, but he came to novel-writing relatively late. "I hope I am far from finished," he said.

When asked for advice, he tells aspiring writers to write and to read, "To devour the genre that you want to write in, but also sprawl across the spectrum. There are also some very good writers' workshops available. As long as the passion lives in you, pursue it. I was three days past my 60th birthday when the phone rang and it was a publisher who wanted to publish my manuscript, not another publisher calling to say no again."



Diana Gabaldon

After reading one of Diana Gabaldon's thrilling historical fiction novels, you may be surprised to learn that the author of the acclaimed Outlander series is American with Mexican and English roots, not Scottish.

Gabaldon's Outlander books are loved for the way she captures the history and culture of the Scottish Highlands with her exciting descriptions of action-packed battles and heady romance. The American also excels at recreating the region's language.

Gabaldon told Celtic Life International that she first worked on the Highland's dialect by listening to tapes and CDs by Scottish folk singers. "You can pick up quite a lot of the dialect from the song lyrics themselves, but even more from the live performances, where you hear the band members chatting with each other and with the audience in between numbers," she said from her home in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Gaelic proved more of a challenge. Gabaldon incorporated small amounts to represent the language spoken in the Highlands during the 18th century and, early on in the series, she was pleased to receive a letter from Iain Taylor, a native Gaelic speaker from the Isle of Harris.

Taylor said he could tell Gabaldon was relying solely on a dictionary for Gaelic terms and he offered to help her, to which Gabaldon replied, "That would be wonderful Mr. Taylor. Where have you been all my life?" Since then, Taylor along with Catherine MacGregor and Catherine-Ann MacPhee, have helped Gabaldon with Gaelic translations.

Gabaldon is now a New York Times bestselling author and her Outlander series and its offshoot, the Lord John Grey series, are published in 29 countries and 26 languages. It all began in the early 1990s with what Gabaldon calls her "practice novel" – a work she started after watching an episode of the BBC science fiction series Doctor Who, set during the year 1745, and which featured a "fetching" young Scotsman. Gabaldon immediately went to the library at Arizona State University, where she was a professor-researcher specializing in scientific computation and quantitative ecology, and typed the words, Scotland, Highlands, 18th century, into the card catalogue.

After intense research and self-discipline (she wrote while working full-time and raising three children under the age of six) she found the courage to share her practice novel with a CompuServe Literary Forum. Outlander, known as Cross Stitch in the UK, was released in 1991.

The book's success soon meant Gabaldon needed to write additional books, and she told her husband the time had come to visit Scotland.



"It was wonderful – it was actually exactly the way I'd been imagining it," she said, adding that visiting Scotland allowed her to absorb many realistic details. For instance, at Loch Ness, the writer was amazed to see white swans swimming around the headland. "I would have never imagined in a million years there were swans on Loch Ness," she said.

Gabaldon has returned to Scotland more than a dozen times since. Nowadays, a handful of Scottish companies run Outlander-themed tours, and Celtic fusion band Uncle Hamish and the Hooligans has composed a song based on the series.

Lovers of her work are currently anticipating an Outlander television series. The STARZ network has acquired the rights and has hired Ron Moore, author of Battlestar Galactica, to write the pilot.

"Ron came out with his assistant and they spent two days with me talking over the books and telling me their ideas on how they might do an adaptation, which I liked very much," said Gabaldon, adding that once the script is finished, STARZ will decide on how to proceed.

Currently, Gabaldon is working on Written in My Own Heart's Blood, the eighth book in the Outlander series, as well as the second volume of The Outlandish Companion.

She prizes the positive response she's received from Scottish readers, and is now an honorary member of Clans Fraser, MacKenzie and Anderson. She was thrilled when she visited an Edinburgh bookshop and saw her novels in the Scottish Fiction section.

"I found the manager and said, 'I'm really pleased that you put my books there.' And he said, 'Well we thought Gabaldon was such an odd name it might quite well be Scottish!'"

By Michelle Brunet



A man with a beard and styled hair, wearing a grey tweed jacket over a white shirt, looking over his shoulder. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

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I get to work with Wounded Warriors who inspire me each day. They may have been injured but have an indestructible will that allows them to find opportunity in the face of adversity and move on with their life. ~ Retired Army Captain Dawn Halfaker, President of the Board of Directors of The Wounded Warrior Project

The challenge is seeing families and warriors in the worst moments...the rewards are seeing them find their smiles again, and making the journey to their "new normal". ~ Retired Staff Sgt. Dan Nevins, Director of Warriors Speak

Wounded Warriors Project is a not-for-profit, Florida-based organization that raises funds and awareness for severely injured service men and women, and helps them to recover and readjust to post-combat life.
www.woundedwarriorsproject.org



Dr. Emily McEwan-Fujita



Dr. Emily McEwan-Fujita is a Gaelic speaker, linguistic anthropologist, and author specializing in the study of Gaelic revitalization in Scotland and Nova Scotia, Canada. Here, she takes a look at how Gaelic culture gets the “Disney treatment” in the popular movie Brave, which recently won the Oscar for Best Animated Film at the 2013 Academy Awards.

When Disney and Pixar launched the computer-animated film *Brave* in June 2012, the film was praised for its strong flame-haired heroine and its lush landscapes inspired by the Scottish Highlands. This also marked the first time the “Disney treatment” was given to Celtic culture.

The Scottish Gaelic language, a foundation of Scotland’s Celtic culture, appears here and there in the film. To help you make sense of it, I’ll review the use of Gaelic in *Brave* from my perspective as both a linguistic anthropologist and a Gaelic speaker.

The movie is set in ancient Celtic Scotland; we know this because there are bears, which became extinct in Scotland well over a thousand years ago. But *Brave*, like most Hollywood movies, lacks historical accuracy when it comes to language.

The characters in the film speak Scottish English and some Scots. Scots and English belong to the Germanic family of languages, not the Celtic family. The Scots language emerged in Scotland in the 1200s-1500s, and Scottish English in the 1600s, much later than the Celtic languages which have been spoken in Scotland and the rest of Britain since the Iron Age.

Despite this anachronism, the movie nods to the existence of Gaelic in Scotland, mainly through music. In one scene, Princess Merida reminisces about her childhood, and we hear a touching Gaelic lullaby sung by mother and daughter.

On the soundtrack, it is titled *Noble Maiden Fair* (A Mhaighdean Bhan Uasal). The lullaby is sung as a duet by Emma

Thompson, the well-known English actress who plays the voice of Merida’s mother Queen Elinor, and Peigi Barker, a Scottish girl from Inverness who plays the young Merida. Peigi, recruited by Pixar’s traditional music scout, had already received training in Gaelic singing at the local *fèis*, a popular activity for children with Gaelic roots.

The song itself was probably composed in English to match the movie’s plot, and then translated almost word-for-word into Gaelic, judging by its lack of Gaelic rhythm and its grammatical structures, which are technically correct for the most part, but are more similar to English.

Traditional Gaelic lullabies tended to be addressed to male heirs of noble families, but the story was developed as a mother-daughter conflict over self-determination, which reflects mainstream North American culture and values. This story combines many different mythological elements from England and continental Europe, but has no direct counterpart in Gaelic history, culture, or oral tradition.

We can see why if we read an interview with *Brave* director Mark Andrews in the online science fiction daily *io9.com*. Andrews was asked about the Celtic influences on the movie. He did not cite the quintessentially Gaelic mythology of Finn MacCumhail or the Ulster cycle, both accessible through Wikipedia. Instead, he referred to *Beowulf* – an Anglo-Saxon (Germanic) work which he mis-labelled as Celtic.

It’s a shame, for the Gaelic tales of Ireland, Scotland, the Isle

of Man and Nova Scotia are rich sources. Moreover, Gaelic manuscript evidence shows that some women in ancient Celtic cultures were interesting characters, with considerable power.

But Disney and Pixar can be praised for trying to create a bit of new Gaelic content for the film. This is an impressive cultural concession for Hollywood. The tune is beautiful, and Thompson is a talented actress with a lovely voice, although she mis-pronounces many of the song's words. Anyone who has ever taken a beginner Gaelic course could sympathize – Gaelic is a different language than English or Scots, with an entirely different sound system. It is not easy for native English-speaking adults to master the sounds.

The young singer Peigi pronounces the words much more accurately – no surprise since she had already studied Gaelic, and children can acquire native-like pronunciation of a language far more easily than adults.

The Brave soundtrack also features two songs by the

The use of Gaelic in Disney-Pixar's movie is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it is good to see mainstream cultural institutions taking notice of the language, because it may draw more people into learning Gaelic. On the other hand, its depiction of Scottish and Gaelic culture as consisting of kilts, drinking, and fighting is pure Disney – a mishmash of clichés and stereotypes.

In a linguistic study of 24 Disney films made from 1938–1994, Dr. Rosina Lippi-Green found that most Disney characters who speak with strong accents were

Images courtesy of Disney-Pixar



professional Gaelic singer Julie Fowlis – in English. They were composed by Pixar's Alex Mandel, and Disney handpicked Fowlis to record them after listening to her Gaelic albums.

Indeed, Disney induced Fowlis, who is from the island of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides, to sing professionally in English for the first time ever. In an interview with The Herald newspaper of Glasgow, Fowlis said that she barely knew what she sounded like in English. All of her musical output until that point, including four albums, had been in Gaelic.

The most Gaelic element of Brave, in fact, is a song that only appears in one of the trailers. After Disney's vice-president of music invited Fowlis to sing on the Brave soundtrack in English, she coincidentally received a separate invitation from a different Disney division to sing for a Brave trailer – they didn't know that she was already planning to record songs for the soundtrack!

The Gaelic song used in the trailer is *Tha Mo Ghaol air Aird a' Chuain* (My Love is on the High Seas), taken from Fowlis's 2005 album *Mar a Tha Mo Chridhe*. The song is unrelated to the plot of the film; it tells the story of a woman whose love is a sailor. For the trailer, Disney moved the song's verses around and eliminated several, so that the narrative of the song no longer makes sense. This is common in performances of Gaelic song dictated by the tastes and needs of English speakers.

either bad guys or buffoons. So it's actually a major step forward to find the hero – and a female one, at that – speaking with a strong Scottish accent in Brave.

But Gaelic as a spoken language is erased from the picture. And sadly, most people do not know enough about Gaelic to even miss it. Most of the time, Gaelic speakers do not get to set the terms of their own representation – the terms are set by the majority English-speaking culture.

Ultimately, however, if the Celtic fantasy of Brave leads more people to discover for themselves the marvellous reality of Gaelic language and culture in the 21st century, 'se rud math a th'ann – it's a good thing.

Tha Mo Ghaol air Aird a'

Kagyu Samye Ling:

*A Tibetan Buddhist Centre
in a Scottish Valley*

The colloquially named 'Muckle Toon', literally meaning 'big town', of Langholm is something of a misnomer. It is an attractive but small town, albeit with a big, friendly heart. The grey stone houses with their slate roofs owe more to its expansion during the heyday of the textile industry than the previous centuries of being a market town in a farming community.

Heading north from Langholm takes the traveller through the picturesque valley of the Border Esk. Flanked by undulating hills, this beautiful river meanders through the Scottish Lowlands. In the remote area of Eskdalemuir, the road takes a few gentle turns and in an instant you are transported to the other side of the world. Here, among the trees by the river, lies Kagyu Samye Ling, one of the largest Tibetan Buddhist Centres in the western world.

How it came to be here goes back to 1959 and the uprising in Tibet against Chinese domination. The Chinese crackdown was swift and ruthless. Two nineteen-year-old Buddhist lamas took responsibility for some three hundred refugees of all ages, and on foot, horseback and with pack mules the young spiritual leaders attempted to lead the refugees across the vast Tibetan landscape to safety. They were relentlessly pursued by the Chinese authorities. Forced towards India, it became a journey, in freezing winter conditions, through perilous Himalayan mountain passes strewn with raging rivers. They travelled by night, could not light fires for fear of being seen, and soon found themselves without food. Many died en route. At one stage they crossed the Brahmaputra River, which was guarded by troops, in makeshift boats. Although the lamas made it to the other side, the troops opened fire. Some of the refugees were killed and many captured.

Ten months after taking flight, the two lamas, Akong Rinpoche

and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, led an exhausted, emaciated group of fifteen survivors into India. It was a journey that had taken an enormous physical toll but one that was to provide enough spiritual strength to last a lifetime. Later, Akong Rinpoche reflected that some of them were still wearing valuable jewellery, but despite material wealth had expected to die. He considered it a lesson that taught him to help others suffering in distress.

The first refugee camp to which the lamas were taken was in Assam. It was run by Freda Bedi, an Englishwoman. She felt enormous compassion for them and kept in touch after they were moved to other camps. Months later, she invited the lamas to stay with her in Delhi, where she taught them English. She was aware of a blossoming Buddhist society in England and she arranged for them to travel there. They settled in Oxford where, with sponsorship, Trungpa Rinpoche studied English and Akong Rinpoche, who was a Doctor of Tibetan Medicine, trained with the Red Cross. Soon, they started looking for a place to establish a Tibetan Buddhist Centre and continue their important work as lamas.

I travelled to Samye Ling and met with Ani Lhamo, a Scottish woman brought up near Fort William. She first visited Samye Ling in the early eighties, became a Buddhist nun five years later, and spent a further four years in retreat. Now she is secretary

to Lama Yeshe, abbot of Samye Ling and brother of Akong Rinpoche, spiritual leader at Samye Ling. She explained why the lamas chose to establish their Buddhist centre in Eskdalemuir.

“Akong Rinpoche and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche came to Oxford in 1964 to study English. At that time there was a small Buddhist centre where Samye Ling is now. The people there invited the Tibetans to come during their holiday time and teach meditation. In 1967, the English course in Oxford ended and the people in the Buddhist centre moved to Canada. The lamas took over the centre and named it Kagyu Samye Ling.”

Many of the people who live in Eskdalemuir have connections with the Buddhist centre that stretch back to its beginnings. Nick Jennings was 18 years old when he first visited Samye Ling in the summer of 1969.

“I had been interested like many teenagers in the existential questions of meaning, purpose and identity and was very involved in our own local version of the counter culture,” he said. “I saw myself as part of a new fraternity of experimenters and explorers sometimes known as hippies.”

It was a time of change, of old established ways being challenged by new ideas. The dawning of the Age of Aquarius made some see the world through a kaleidoscope of art-related, drug-induced imagery. It also opened up different ways of thinking.

Jennings recalled, “I first heard about Samye Ling during a night-long discussion with the not-yet famous performer David Bowie and the radical underground journalist Mary Finnegan. I was sharing my youthful angst about what I saw as the pointlessness of all the conventional life pathways that seemed laid out ahead for me and my concerns about the lack of any authentic spiritual depth in any of the religions that I was exploring. David suggested that I took a trip to Samye Ling.”

Back then, it was no more than a two-storey sandstone house in a remote valley. Trungpa Rinpoche provided most of the teaching and was always in great demand at other centres in the U.K. and abroad. He visited the USA on several occasions and felt drawn to continue his work there. He left Samye Ling for the USA in 1971,

leaving Akong Rinpoche to decide if, and how, Buddhism was to develop in this remote corner of Scotland. If it was to develop, Akong Rinpoche’s teachings would need to inspire many hearts and motivate many hands. As it happens, that never proved to be a problem!

Work to construct a temple started in 1979 and Jennings became one of a group of resident volunteers that laboured on the building of the temple.

Since then, Samye Ling has expanded enormously and Ani Lhamo has witnessed most of these changes.

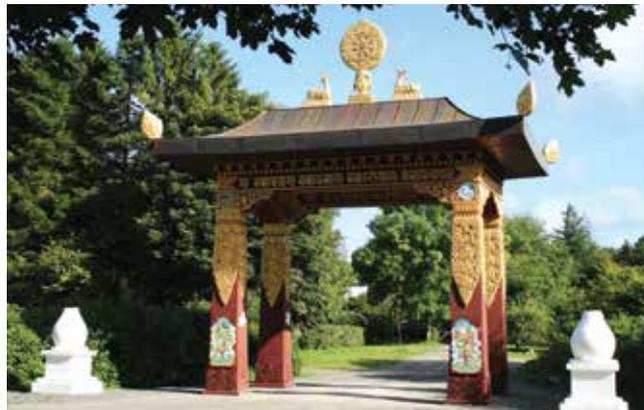
“Now there is a total resident population of around 60 monks, nuns and lay people at Samye Ling. Every year, around 30,000 people visit and 3,000-4,000 come to stay in guest accommodation and to attend courses or retreats.”

At first glance, the fluttering prayer flags and golden statues, the tall white stupa and the temple with its sweeping golden roof and brightly coloured walls, seem incongruous in this Scottish setting. Yet, it is wholly appropriate that the Buddhist teachings of kindness, compassion, wisdom and understanding should emanate from such a tranquil location, which apparently bears great similarity to the landscape of Tibet.

From this very special place, Akong Rinpoche reaches across the globe and continues to guide and teach. Lama Yeshe is responsible for the running of Samye Ling but also spends time on the Holy Isle, close to the Isle of Arran off the Scottish west coast. The island has a significant spiritual heritage associated with the spread of Christianity but is now under the ownership of Samye Ling. Part of the island

is used by the Buddhists for closed retreats but Lama Yeshe has established a Centre for World Peace and Health on the island where he runs projects irrespective of participants’ background or faith.

Words and Photos by Tom Langlands, recent winner of the Scottish Wildlife category of the Scottish Seabird Centre’s annual photography competition



Scotland End



Wilderness hiker, broadcaster and author Cameron McNeish recently hiked the length of his native Scotland along what he calls The Scottish National Trail. The experience led to a new book – Scotland End to End – and raised questions about the future of Scotland’s wild spaces.

The Border Hotel in Kirk Yetholm is well known to long distance walkers. It’s there many of them collapse into the bar after walking 354km from Edale in Derbyshire along the Pennine Way, the spine of England. But on a spring morning last year, I left the hotel and headed off in the opposite direction. My own walking odyssey was about to begin – 757km through the length of Scotland to Cape Wrath, the most north-western point on the Scottish mainland.

But why undertake a challenge like this – five weeks walking through all kinds of weather and landscapes? Well, in the course of a 757km walk through a country you get the opportunity to observe things at closer quarters than you would if you were to drive through it. Travelling by foot takes you into wild landscapes that most people are totally unfamiliar with. And I wanted to discover a little more about my own land, at a time when so many of us are questioning our national identity. My long route, created ostensibly for two BBC television programs that were broadcast last December, can be broken down into four sections: this southern section between Kirk Yetholm and Edinburgh; a route between Edinburgh and Milngavie following the Union and Forth and Clyde Canals; a central Highlands section between Milngavie and Kingussie; and the final haul between Badenoch and Cape Wrath. I decided to call it the Scottish National Trail. Kirk Yetholm is also on the route of the St. Cuthbert’s Way, a 100km route that follows in the footsteps of Cuthbert, a seventh century priest who became the Prior of the Celtic monastery at Melrose. The route runs from Melrose Abbey to Lindisfarne in

Northumberland and since I was heading for Melrose it seemed a little churlish not to follow in the footsteps of the saint.

The St. Cuthbert’s Way was the first of several established routes that I followed in the course of the Scottish National Trail. From Melrose, I would take the Southern Upland Way to Traquair and from there a series of Tweed Trails took me to Peebles and beyond, over the Meldon hills to West Linton where a series of Pentland Trails took me all the way to Balerno on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

A footpath alongside the surprisingly lovely Water of Leith took me into Edinburgh and the start of the Union Canal. I felt fairly strongly that you couldn’t call a route the Scottish National Trail and not visit our capital city!

The towpaths along the Union Canal and then the Forth and Clyde Canal were one of the surprises of the walk for me. Like a green artery running right through the Central Belt of Scotland these canals are well looked after by Scottish Canals and I shared the towpaths with walkers, cyclists, joggers and dog walkers.

Beyond Cadder, on the outskirts of Glasgow, I followed tracks and minor roads to Milngavie and the start of the popular West Highland Way. The route was busy and I was glad to leave it at Drymen to follow the much quieter Rob Roy Way to Aberfoyle then over the Mentieth Hills to Callander, in the very heart of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. I left the Rob Roy Way for a while and followed rights of way through Glen Artney and Glen Almond, which took me to Tayside and Aberfeldy where I met up with the Rob Roy Way again. I followed it to its

To End



finish in Pitlochry.

Shortly after that, came the remotest part of the walk so far – through the Cairngorms National Park by Glen Tilt, Glen Geldie, Glen Feshie to Kingussie, then by Laggan to the Corrieyarack Pass and over the Monadh Liath hills to Fort Augustus.

More canal towpaths, this time following the Caledonian Canal, led me to Glengarry where a day's forest walking took me to the start of the finest section of the whole route. Thus began a long, tough trek through some of the most majestic, remote and stunningly beautiful landscape you could dare imagine. There are no official long distance footpaths through these northern hills although a national Cape Wrath Trail, from Fort William to Cape Wrath, offers several alternative and unsigned routes. I had given myself several rough guidelines for this long section: the route should follow a south to north line as close as possible; it should allow passage through the most scenic areas; it should try and avoid tarmac and paved roads or paths but instead follow existing footpaths and stalkers' tracks as much as possible and it should avoid crossing mountain ranges and major rivers except where necessary. The resultant route is a stunner, without doubt the finest long distance walking route in the land. But it's not for the inexperienced. There are rivers to cross and passes to climb; there are sections where navigational skills could be crucial, particularly in bad weather, and accommodation is scarce. You couldn't find anything more different from the rolling hills of the Borders.

The route snakes through the North West Highlands and the kind of places that thrum the heartstrings of hillwalkers everywhere - Kintail, Torridon, An Teallach, Glen Oykel, Assynt and then, as a wonderful finale, along the wild coast from magical Sandwood Bay to Cape Wrath lighthouse, the end of the route and the end of Scotland. Beyond lie the glistening northern

..... seas... Next landfall is the Faroes.

Throughout the walk, I often sat beside some long ruined shieling (a house or hut) and thought of the people who once lived and worked in these glens, many of whom were later evicted. Large scale sheep farming replaced people after the Highland Clearances and today those sheep have largely gone. Victorian sporting estates dominate the Highlands and large areas of the Borders and one wonders how sustainable they are in these uncertain times. Very few of these estates are profitable and many landowners keep them on as hobbies, as playthings. While some land managers are working hard to regenerate native woodland and control deer numbers most estates are run on a monoculture basis, managing vast acres as a wet desert for a few grouse, or encouraging large numbers of red deer, which browse every bit of new vegetation that pokes its head out of the dirt. This is surely not the way ahead for Scotland? Land reform is one answer, where communities control the land on which they live and work, and there have been some success stories like in Knoydart, Assynt and the Isle of Eigg, but large-scale community buy-outs are still a long way off, particularly under the current economic climate.

So what's the next throw of the dice for Scotland's wild places? I wish I knew. My end-to-end walk threw up lots of questions, but few answers. Renewable energy appears to be the most obvious bet and that isn't a pleasant option for those of us who treasure the wild places, unless we can find a means of balancing our energy and climate change needs with landscape conservation.

I've probably enjoyed the best of Scotland's wild places in my lifetime, but I have grandchildren and I want the best for them too. I want them to enjoy Scotland's hills and glens as I have because I know the benefits of such a relationship. Those of us who love wild land have a duty to speak up for it, to fight for it. But first take the bus to Kirk Yetholm, tie up your boot laces, hoist your pack on your shoulder and gaze north. Lying before you is an adventure like no other. Step out and enjoy it before things change too much. A nation awaits you...

www.cameronmcneish.co.uk



Between the 11th and 14th centuries AD, the Kingdom of Man and the Isles dominated the Inner and Outer Hebrides, Skye, Argyll and the Irish Sea. The rulers of this territory were based on the Isle of Man, from where they controlled the vital sea route that allowed the trading of items such as rare, carved chess pieces, silver coins and symbols of religious power. Here, Celtic Life Intl. contributor Valerie Caine takes us inside a recent exhibition that returned some of the treasures of this largely forgotten era to the island's Manx Museum in Douglas.

One of the most important documents to be written on the Isle of Man, The Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles was composed in Medieval Latin, probably by monks at the island's most important medieval religious site, Rushen Abbey in the south of the island. Still in remarkably good condition, the document's closely knit but legible text sits upon pages darkened with age, allowing glimpses into the past, and bringing to life the battles, kings, revenge plots and political skulduggery and ecclesiastical concerns of Manx history.

Although recently part of the exhibition held at the Manx Museum, the document is usually housed in the British Library in London. How and why this manuscript came to be in the hands of people outside the Isle of Man is open to speculation. Campaigns to have the document returned to the island remain unsuccessful.

Speaking of the exhibition, Tony Pass, Chairman of Manx National Heritage, credited close collaboration between Manx National Heritage, the British Museum, the British Library and National Museums Scotland for securing loans of precious objects, some of which had not previously been seen on the Isle of Man.

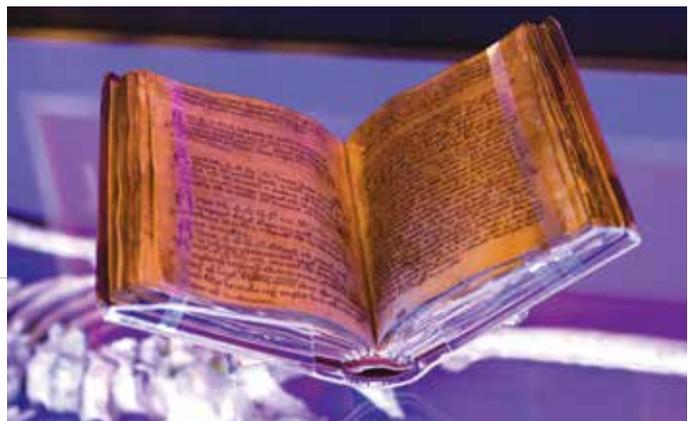
The Chairman said the exhibition shed light on a significant, but so far obscure period in the island's story. "It tells of a time



Ancient Treasures seen on Isle of Man'

when we were the capital of a maritime kingdom, extending from the Celtic Sea into the North Atlantic, when trade brought wealth, and wealth supported sophisticated art and skilled craftsmanship," he said.

Visitors to the exhibition were excited to find six pieces of the fabled Lewis Chessmen set on display. The Lewis Chessmen is a truly unique chess set; the intricately carved pieces are thought to have been made c.1200AD in the city of Trondheim in Norway. The 78 pieces were carved on expensive pieces of walrus ivory as well as the occasional tooth from a sperm whale. Some of the pieces were originally stained red, suggesting that the medieval game of chess adopted a different colour system from its modern counterpart.





from the areas of Block Eary, Druidale and Cronk ny Howe on the island. And despite the church frowning upon gambling, a number of dice were excavated at Rushen Abbey.

The church, which at this time was part of the archdiocese of Trondheim in Norway, held a powerful influence over people from all walks of life, including the Kings of Man and the Isles who wavered between ruthless behaviour and the need

Discovered by accident on the west coast of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, probably during the early nineteenth century, the visiting chessmen are normally housed in the British Museum.

Exhibition visitors enjoyed the pieces' remarkable individuality of expression, style and apparel. They saw a king who wears a serious, almost comical expression as he sits on his throne, while maintaining a tight grip on the hilt of his sword. His queen has long, braided hair covered with a veil underneath her crown. She looks discontented or contemplative as she holds a hand to her face. The knight is portrayed astride an exaggerated Scandinavian horse of the era and the warder carries all the hallmarks of the fierce, wild-eyed warrior known as the berserker, while the pawn sits eloquently in its simplicity.

Where the chess pieces were destined for when they were lost remains a mystery. As a hub of international trade, the Kingdom of Man and the Isles was home to many wealthy people, and the island of Lewis may not have been the final destination of the chessmen; they may have been on their way to the Isle of Man.

The exhibition also revealed details about archaeological discoveries which point to other games played socially during this period on the Isle of Man, with simple gaming boards recovered

for salvation.

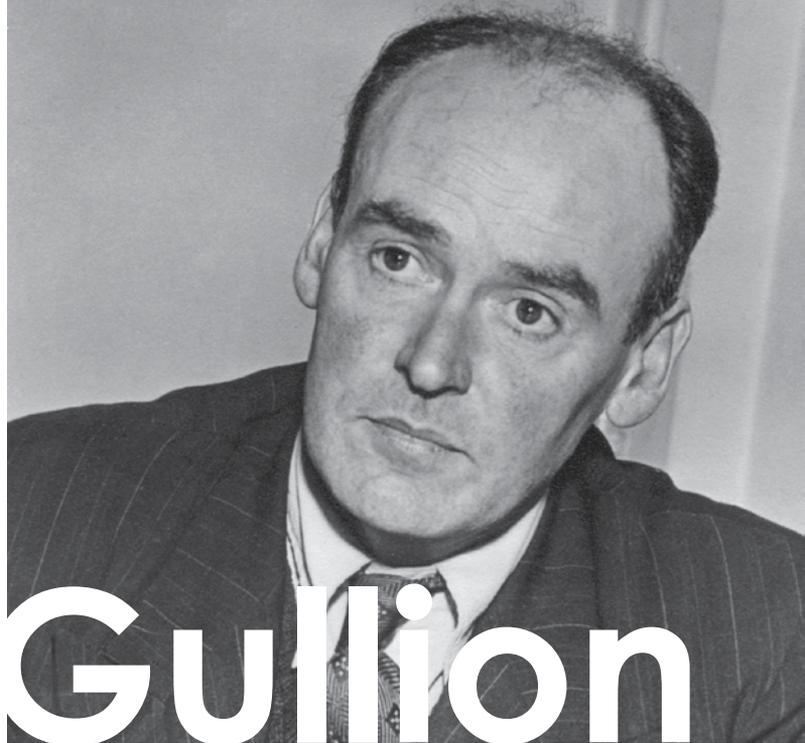
Although far from harmonious, the communities within the Kingdom of Man and the Isles inevitably blended a diverse range of cultures as people from both Gaelic and Norse traditions learned to live together, which is reflected in both family and place names. But, as this period of history drew to a close, one major difference did emerge as the Isle of Man favoured a Scandinavian parliamentary system as opposed to the Scottish Gaelic system which dominated within the other islands.

The Speaker of the House of Keys, Steve Rodan MHK, said that although the Kingdom of Man and the Isles may well have been forgotten over time, it is central to the island's modern identity.

"That we uniquely have our own legislature, Tynwald (parliament) and our own laws and government is thanks to that Viking legacy," he said. "The Kingdom deserves to be remembered, and Manx National Heritage has done an excellent job in reviving that ancient memory before the public...in putting together a superb exhibition which stands comparison for its content and quality of presentation with any museum display anywhere."

(With thanks to Allison Fox, Curator: Archaeology at Manx National Heritage.)

The Druid of Slieve Gullion



Donal O’Cathasaigh, a frequent contributor to Celtic Life International, was a friend of legendary Irish folklorist, writer and broadcaster Michael J. (M.J.) Murphy. The two sometimes sat beside Murphy’s fire and travelled the mountain roads of South Armagh in Northern Ireland as M.J. collected stories and rural traditions. Here, on the centenary of Murphy’s birth, O’Cathasaigh argues that it’s time to recognize this shy, humble man for his role in preserving and enriching Irish culture.

Ben Kiely, to my mind one of the best of our Irish writers, once called him “the Druid of Slieve Gullion,” and, it stuck. In fact, Michael J. Murphy wasn’t born on the mountain he loved, but he lived much of his life on its broad Dromintee side.

“That mysterious mountain,” he said, “gave inspiration and meaning to my writing and my life.”

Kiely, who first met M. J. as he collected old stories and songs in the wilds of Tyrone back in 1950, remembered him this way, “He was informative and most moving, and suddenly I thought this man here beside me is a druid, as much a part of this ancient land as the stone he sits on. He could have been here on this hillside under this oak before Patrick came.”

Others recognized the significance of M.J.’s home country. The scholar and revolutionary Eoin MacNeill once said that South Armagh was the most historic area in Ireland, and a well-known local scribe added, “Kick any stone and the history leaps out at you.”

The feminist and actress Maud Gonne McBride wrote to Michael, saying that Slieve Gullion sang to her and she could write down the air, and W. B. Yeats and others of the Dublin literati made pilgrimages to M. J.’s mystic mountain. It was an historic place teeming in myth and legend. It would fall to him to preserve its customs, stories and beliefs.

A Providential Meeting in a Pub

I first met Michael J. at Larkin’s Slieve Gullion Inn in Forkhill, South Armagh. It was August 18, 1964, and that night I thought the gods had smiled on me – I knew I had touched greatness. M. J. sat unobtrusively in a corner, drinking porter and scribbling in his ubiquitous little black book. Here was, I thought, Ben Kiely’s druid at home.

I sent a pint down to him and he doffed his cap in acknowledgment. That pint began a conversation that lasted more than thirty years.

Though M. J. never took himself seriously as an academic, he likely contributed more to the emerging discipline of folklore and influenced more folkloric scholarship than anyone else in the field. Yet, in spite of his immense talents and extraordinary influence, he has gone relatively unnoticed.

Born to the Trade

Michael was a storyteller descended from a long line of poets and storytellers, including his great-grandfather, the Gaelic scribe William Jordan, who once composed for the Pope. Michael’s mother Mary Campbell and his father Michael, were themselves renowned storytellers. Like poets of yore, Michael was, then, born to his trade. It was in the blood, and he wholeheartedly embraced it as his calling.

At thirteen he left Dromintee National School outside of Newry – the same school his father had been expelled from for throwing a slate at the master. His father later confessed to him that he only regretted missing the bastard and destroying a perfectly good schoolhouse clock.

Both M. J.’s parents were hired out at age ten to local farmers, and Michael never forgot the terrible toll that form of slavery wrought on young lives. He himself worked the fields as a farm laborer, all the while keeping journals and collecting local customs and lore. Providing a chronicle of life lived centuries ago in rural Ireland, he described weddings, wakes, and funerals, hiring fairs, and much more.

"I was writing folklore before I knew it was folklore," he said.

His jottings eventually made their way into *The Dundalk Democrat* and *The Newry Reporter* and later into the Dublin and Belfast dailies. By 1941, he had assembled and submitted his pieces to William Tempest at Dundalgan Press with the title, *At Slieve Gullion's Foot*, and, to his astonishment, Tempest published the collection that launched his career. On the strength of that publication, he abandoned the spade, accepting a part-time appointment as a collector for the Irish Folklore Commission from the legendary Seamus Delargy.

A Folkminder, Answering the Call

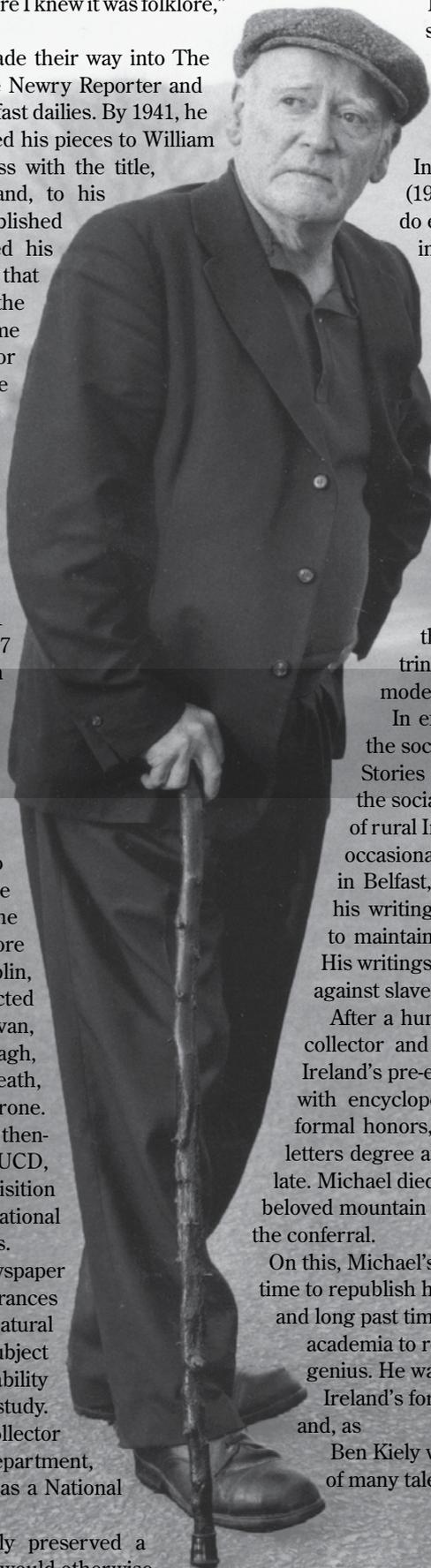
Michael got on well at the Commission. From 1941 to 1983, he logged 30,887 pages of text, "a million words from a mountain glen," as historian Sean MacMahon put it. In addition he transcribed literally hundreds of hours from tapes.

Over more than two score years with the Commission (later the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin, or UCD), Michael collected in Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo and Tyrone.

According to Bo Almquist, then-Head of Department at UCD, M.J.'s work led to the acquisition of valuable artifacts for the National Museum's folklife collections.

Moreover, his newspaper articles, radio and TV appearances on RTE and BBC, and his natural stylistic approach to his subject lent credibility and respectability to folklore as an academic study. Had he served only as a collector for the Commission and Department, he would merit recognition as a National Treasure.

He nearly single-handedly preserved a culture and a way of life that would otherwise have been lost.



M.J. was, after all, unique – a gifted collector, talented storyteller, folkminder and passionate keeper of tradition who, at his retirement in 1983, had added an entire shelf of bound volumes to the Department Library at UCD and who believed in and lived by the wisdom of ancient Irish triads.

In his brilliant book-length prose-poem *Mountain Year* (1964), he echoes that wisdom: "Three things a man should do every year: listen to a storyteller at a fireside, give a hand in a corn harvest field and climb an Irish mountain."

M.J.'s Writing and Storytelling

Michael's Tyrone Folk Quest (1973), an autobiographical account of the folklorist's life collecting in the Sperrin Mountains is now regarded a classic – it was required reading and adopted as a handbook and text in anthropology and folklore courses in the U.S.

Mountain Crack (1976) a folk novel set in the hill country around South Armagh, as well as Michael's 50 or so published short stories, should have earned him a place in Irish letters. And though he published fiction in the major periodicals of his day, his work in that genre has been eclipsed by the fiction of the "blessed trinity" – O'Flaherty, O'Connor, and O'Faolain – and by the moderns.

In effect, what William Carleton's fiction had contributed to the social history of nineteenth-century Ireland in his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, Michael J.'s fiction contributed to the social history of the twentieth. His was, in fact, a truer picture of rural Irish life. He wrote dramas, fiction, journalistic essays, and occasional poetry. In his plays, performed on radio and on stage in Belfast, Dublin and London in the 1940s and 1950s, and in all his writings, Michael J. was the iconoclast-reformer on a mission to maintain the societal good and rid the country of resident evil. His writings championed the poor and the disenfranchised and railed against slavery in the home, the fields and the workplace.

After a hundred years and more than a million words, this modest collector and teller-of-tales deserves recognition. He was, after all, Ireland's pre-eminent collector of lore and an "uneducated intellectual" with encyclopedic knowledge of his world. Though he rejected all formal honors, in 1996 M. J. was proposed for an honorary doctor of letters degree at a U.S. institution. Unfortunately, the proposal came too late. Michael died within sight of his beloved mountain two months before the conferral.

On this, Michael's centenary, it's time to republish his major works and long past time for Irish academia to recognize his genius. He was

Ireland's foremost folklorist and, as

Ben Kiely would say "a druid of many talents."



the Picts

During the late Iron and early Medieval Ages, the land that would become Scotland was fought over by diverse peoples. The west coast, around Argyll, was dominated by the Gaelic-speaking Dál Riata, whom the Romans referred to by the racially derogatory name of Scotti. The Dál Riata came from what is now Ireland and incorporated this part of modern Scotland into their powerful kingdom, which extended from modern day County Antrim in Northern Ireland.

To the south of the Dál Riata lands lay the territory of the Britons, while to the east, stretching northwards from modern day middle England to the Firth of Forth, was Northumbria, the land of the powerful Germanic Angles. The remainder of Scotland, north of a line drawn roughly between the Clyde and Forth estuaries, was the land that the Romans called Caledonni. It was a land occupied by tribes of fearsome people referred to, in Latin, as Picti – those with painted or tattooed bodies.

Reconstruction of the Pictish Stone

Aberlemno in Angus has four impressive Pictish carved stones but perhaps none more remarkable than one located in the small churchyard there. On this amazing stone, Pictish warriors are so vividly portrayed they seem to burst into life. With swords and spears, the warriors on foot and horseback are attacking helmeted horsemen, while nearby a raven pecks at the face of a fallen fighter. This stunning storyboard is believed to celebrate the victory of the Picts against the Angles of Northumbria at the battle of Dún Nechtain in 685AD. It was a pivotal moment in Pictish history that became a keystone in the evolution of the Scottish nation, so it is not surprising that the event was recorded by the finest artists of their day.

The Picts were clearly great fighters, but beyond that, who were they?

They may have been non-Celts, originating in mainland Europe; they could also have been aboriginal peoples, native to Scotland. Whatever their origins, their early society was likely no more than a loose confederation of disparate tribes. They left us with no written documents, although they did use a language we call Ogham. We do not know how it sounded, but strange marks sometimes found on the sides of stones, equating to 'letters', are believed to spell out names and provide clues as to what their alphabet looked like. Most of what we know about the Picts comes from the writings of others and archaeological discoveries. They

were masters at carving stone and could communicate in this way using a system of unique visual symbols. Sometimes, these were clearly representational, as in a hunting scene, while in other instances the meaning is far less obvious. The resultant stone art is among Europe's best of the period.

As Vice President of the Pictish Arts Society, that promotes research and discussion into all aspects of Pictish history, Stewart Mowatt is in no doubt about the contribution of the Picts to Scottish art and culture.

"The Picts were a cultured and artistic people," Mowatt said. "Evidence that has survived, in addition to the carved stones, includes jewellery such as brooches of precious metal and glass artefacts. Art historians have shown that the Picts made important contributions to the development of Insular art in the latter half of the first millennium."

Mowatt notes that their contribution also extended into music. "In music, the harps recorded on Pictish stones are the earliest record of such instruments in Western Europe," he said.

Battles over land and dominance often erupted between the Picts and the diverse peoples with whom they lived in uneasy proximity. By the 7th century, the Angles posed the biggest threat to the Picts. For some time, the Northumbrians had been flexing their muscles in an effort to expand their kingdom to the west and north. To the Picts' anger, they now controlled



much of the land as far north as the Firth of Tay. Following the death of the Anglian King Oswui, the Picts rebelled, but the consequences were nothing short of disastrous. The new Anglian King, Ecgrifith, and his army met the Pictish forces on the southern side of the Firth of Forth in 672AD and a bloody battle ensued. It is said that so many Picts died it was possible to walk across the bodies in the Rivers Carron and Avon without getting wet. The Picts needed a new strategy if they were to avoid further oppression and it came in the form of a new Pictish king - Bridei, son of Bili. It would not be long before he would be put to the test in a defining moment in Scottish history.

On May 20, 685AD, Ecgrifith, against the advice of his friends, councillors and his newly appointed bishop, led his army into Pictish territory. They stumbled across a Pictish war party that turned and fled and the Northumbrian army gave chase. Sensing first blood, Ecgrifith pursued the Picts into the paths of inaccessible mountains near to a place called Dún Nechtain (Nechtans' Fort). By the time he realized his mistake, it was too late. The trap was sprung and hordes of Pictish warriors emerged to slay Ecgrifith and his army.

The exact location of the battle is debated but it was to change the course of history. The Picts wasted no time in recovering all the land lost over many decades to the Northumbrians and, around the same time, the first references to Pictland or Pictavia emerge.

It's not surprising that today, most think of the Picts as woad-daubed warriors but, Stewart Mowatt reminds us that they had music to share and stories to tell, so it is possible to imagine something of their family life. Although our understanding of their social structure is scant, Mowatt explains that we are discovering more all the time.

"Some relatively recent excavations have revealed settlements that were quite large and included sophisticated infrastructure such as iron smelting facilities," he told Celtic Life Intl. Although the Picts did conquer the Dál Riata and overrun their power base

at the ancient hill fort of Dunnad in the 8th century it had little effect upon the spread of Gaelic culture. Dunnad's day was over but the dominance of Gaelic culture was far from finished. Slowly, there was a gradual merging of two great cultures, with that of the Picts being subsumed by the Gaels.

The final ingredient in the melting pot was delivered by the Vikings who arrived in Britain in the latter part of the eighth century. The Scandinavian marauders forcibly brought a new mix to the old order. It was from within this cauldron of cultures that Alba, the Gaelic word for Scotland, first appeared around the 10th century...and a nation was born.

Words and Photos by Tom Langlands



Gardening Scotland: Supporting the nation's gardeners

Gardening is popular in Scotland and becoming more so, although the challenging climate presents such different conditions across the country that Scotland's gardens vary widely.

"We have some fantastic gardeners. We have a lot of Alpine plant enthusiasts – high-altitude plants can thrive here," said Agnes Stevenson, communications manager for the event Gardening Scotland, a big annual celebration of gardening and outdoor living. Now in its 14th year, the event will occur during the first weekend of June at the Royal Highland Centre in Edinburgh.

Gardening Scotland is the first show after the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show, held in London every spring, and it represents the first chance to buy plants exhibited, but not sold at Chelsea, Agnes said. Nursery owners sell an amazing array of plants, both every day and exotic species, some of which they've introduced to cultivation themselves.

"Gardeners have a quiet image but many of them are very intrepid," said Agnes. "It's fantastic; some of these gardeners have been in remote parts of the world. They've been kidnapped and survived. They stand there in their anoraks looking benign, but they've been so adventurous...One fell off a mountain in China and ended up in Burma. He was lost in Burma for a week before he stumbled back into China – and all so we can have lovely gardens."

These lovely gardens take some nurturing but they can thrive. On Scotland's west coast, the warming influence of North Atlantic Drift means that South African plants can be grown, even though the area is at the same latitude as parts of Alaska. Argyle has areas of temperate rainforest, also known as the Celtic Rainforest.

"The west coast has ferns and mosses, it drips with water," said Agnes. "The east coast is dry and colder. The Highlands in the

central area are wilderness, although good gardens are found in the foothills."

Maybe it's a symptom of these tough economic times, but gardening is growing in popularity in part because more Scots are growing their own fruit and vegetables. Perthshire, Fife and Tayside famously provide good conditions for growing soft fruit, especially raspberries, strawberries and blackcurrants.

Wildflowers and grasses are popular as are Rhododendrons, and they grow well in moderate conditions. Blue Poppies from the

Himalayas, aka Meconopsis, thrive in cool, moist conditions. Snowdrops, which traditionally grow in sheets beneath Scottish woodlands, are another favourite, and Scotland has more than 50 snowdrop gardens that open to the public during the annual Scottish Snowdrop Festival held in February and March.

Some gardeners are hybridizing snowdrops, which are sought after by collectors who pay as much as £50 (about Can\$80) for one bulb. Agnes said that £275 (about Can\$440) is the record price paid for one hybridized snowdrop bulb.

All of this will be celebrated at Gardening Scotland. Every year, the event draws around 40,000 people, including large numbers of repeat visitors and families drawn to complementary events, such as the bonsai exhibition, the artisan food products and the cookery theatre, run by the Federation of Chefs of Scotland.

"It's a good time and the best plant sale in the country," said Agnes.

www.gardeningscotland.com





Photo credit: Vivien Russell

Shepherd House Garden: A Tiny Scottish Gem

Shepherd House Garden is just one acre in size, but is much admired and has been named one of Scotland's best small gardens. Situated in Inveresk in the eastern part of the country, this walled treasure offers classical herbaceous gardens and a profusion of snowdrops; all arranged by the owner, respected botanical artist Lady Ann Fraser.



The garden has evolved under the care of Ann and her husband Charles, ever since they bought 17th century Shepherd House in 1957.

“For our garden, we have borrowed ideas from around the world,” Ann told Celtic Life Intl. “I think our visitors find the garden special because it is small and they can relate to it and maybe find ideas that they can repeat in their own gardens.”

The garden bursts with colourful Tulips, Irises, Poppies, Snowdrops and Hellebores that all serve to inspire the artist-owner.

“Every flower that I paint is grown in the garden at Shepherd House, but I don't actually paint in the garden, rather I pick the flower and make the composition on paper in my studio,” the artist said. “It is the beauty of the flower that inspires me to paint its portrait. I sometimes make what I call my Dream Borders by putting plants together on paper that don't actually grow close to one another in the garden and may even be flowering slightly later.”

Like many in Scotland, the Frasers collect and cultivate snowdrops. They currently grow more than 50 named varieties and take part in Scotland's annual Snowdrop Festival.

“I have a growing collection of specialist snowdrops, having recently become very interested in growing and painting snowdrop hybrids and cultivars,” Ann said.

Snowdrops are all unique: “Some flower as early as October and some as late as April, some have bigger flowers, some have more green markings, some broader leaves, some grow tall and some are short. Believe it or not, there are over 600 different types. Collecting them is expensive and addictive.”

Ann began her artistic career by studying drawing and painting at Edinburgh College of Art, following up with a course in botanical illustration at the Royal Edinburgh Botanic Garden. She had her first solo exhibition in London in 1991 and since then has exhibited widely in London and Edinburgh. She has been awarded a silver, a silver gilt and a gold medal for her paintings by the Royal Horticultural Society in London.

Nowadays, her paintings can be found in many private collections in the U.K. and U.S.A. Her piece, *The Black Border*, is featured in the book *Contemporary Botanical Artists of the World* by Dr. Shirley Sherwood, a trustee of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London. *The Black Border* has been exhibited around the world, most recently at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington.

Ann says that each of her snowdrops has its own story of where and by whom it was found. But snowdrops fail to thrive in perennial borders, so the artist has planted hers in less formal areas at the back of the garden where, who knows, their delicate beauty may inspire others to take up a paintbrush.

www.shepherdhousegarden.co.uk





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Gretna Green: Still one of the world's top wedding destinations

Sara Butler dislikes being the centre of attention and she dreaded the stress of an extravagant wedding. So, when her fiancé Vince suggested they follow tradition and run away to Scotland's Gretna Green to wed, Sara happily agreed.

The English couple, both in their mid-thirties, live in West Sussex on the south coast of England, but they thought nothing of making the 610km trip to Gretna Green, a village synonymous with romance in the south of Scotland.

"We wanted it to be our day. We decided to do it without family. Other people who marry alone go abroad, to Jamaica or Europe, but I loved the idea of Gretna Green – the whole tradition of running away without anyone knowing," Sara told Celtic Life.

Gretna Green has been known for romance since 1754 when Lord Hardwicke introduced a law that became binding in England and Wales and that stipulated that those younger than 21 needed parental consent to marry. The law did not apply in Scotland, where boys could marry at 14 and girls at 12.

As a result, young couples began running away to Scotland, and Gretna Green was the first village they reached as they travelled north on the coaching route between London and Edinburgh. Many upper class girls, whose fathers refused to let them marry "beneath" them, fled to Gretna Green, often with their outraged fathers in pursuit.

The first building the young lovers reached was a Gretna Green blacksmith's shop, and the blacksmith soon got in the habit of stopping work, gathering two witnesses and marrying couples in 'marriages by declaration'.

"The escapes to Gretna Green made frequent headline news and helped secure the village's place in history," explained Susan Clark, the great grand-daughter of the original blacksmith's shop owner Hugh Mackie. The family still owns what is now the

Famous Blacksmith's Shop and many weddings are held there every year.

In the past, the so-called "anvil priests" would marry a couple for a wee dram or a few guineas, and the hammering of the anvil became synonymous with weddings. Some said that, like the metals he forged, the blacksmith joined couples forever in the heat of the moment.

The wider Gretna/Gretna Green area still hosts thousands of weddings each year in many diverse venues. The anvil forms part of every ceremony, religious or civil, and the tradition is that those who touch the anvil will be lucky in love.

"Gretna Green's long connection with weddings has endured because of the romanticism attached to the town," said Graham Smith, General Manager at the Mill Forge, a venue just outside the village where the Butlers wed in September 2012.

Sara and Vince certainly feel that Gretna Green gave them a warm and auspicious start. Staff at the Mill Forge had to assume the historic roles and act as witnesses and take the wedding photographs. "The staff were quite excited," Sara recalled, "And they were so friendly and lovely."

Nowadays, of course, most who marry at Gretna Green do so surrounded by family. The village is also popular with tourists who visit to soak up the romantic atmosphere and snap pictures of young couples setting out in life together.

Always keen to avoid being the centre of attention, Sara managed to avoid the camera-toting onlookers.

"It was a very, very special day and, given the choice, I'd do it again and again and again. Gretna Green is beautiful, traditional, quaint and scenic," she enthused.

The cost was also reasonable as Gretna Green weddings typically cost hundreds of pounds rather than thousands.

"The only thing I had to stress about was telling our families afterwards," Sara added with a grin, "but they understood and were happy for us."

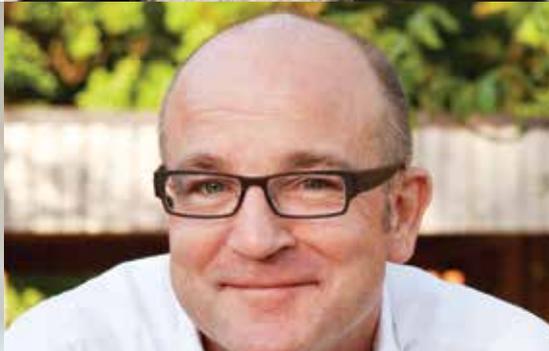
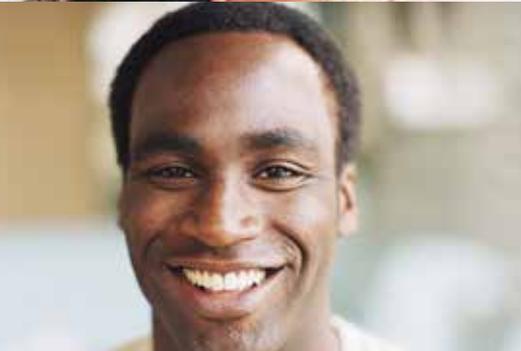


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DISCOVERING DUBLIN



In the first of a year-long, four-part series on Ireland, Celtic Life International's Managing Editor Stephen Patrick Clare explores the Emerald Isle's capital city.

Two Hearts Beat As One

I had not travelled to Ireland in close to a quarter-century. Inspired by the music of U2 and Leon Uris' brilliant novel *Trinity*, I last visited the land of my ancestors – both of my parents have Irish roots - in 1989, making my way from Dublin to Belfast, Derry and Donegal to Galway, and down to Kerry before returning to Dublin.

For a young Montrealer touring on his own for the first time, it was an epic journey of discovery, and the memories of the island's gentle people and gorgeous landscape lingered long after my leaving.

Dublin, in particular, was an epiphany, as it was again when I returned this past January.

Touching down, I felt the same rush of warmth that I had felt all those years ago; a sense of familiarity and belonging, like I was home.

But I am not the same man I was then, and neither is Dublin the same city.

Transition

"Indeed, a lot has changed since you last were here."

I am sipping coffee with Naoise Ó Muirí, the 343rd Lord Mayor of Dublin, at his official residence on Dawson Street in the city's downtown.

"The Celtic Tiger appeared, roared mightily, and then departed – all in just a few short years," said the friendly former city counselor.

Ó Muirí is referring to the country's recent economic rise and fall. Transitioning from a traditional resource-based economy to an IT powerhouse, the country – and its capital city in particular – shot to success.

"There was more money here than we knew what to do with," he confided. "We saw foreign investment like we had never seen before, pumping wads of cash into the economy. Very suddenly, Dubliners had all this disposable income to be spent in the new shops, pubs and restaurants."

The city experienced a renaissance, with new buildings sprouting up and older structures getting much-needed facelifts.

"People bought new homes and cars, and for the first time in our history we saw more Irish coming home than leaving."

The good times came to a crashing halt in 2008, however, with the onset of the global financial crisis.

"It was a reality check," acknowledged Ó Muirí, whose own IT firm managed to weather the storms. "We don't have it as bad as some countries, though, and we should be grateful for that."

While the country's unemployment rate rose from 6.5 percent in 2008 to 14.8 percent in just five years, Ó Muirí believes that things are turning around.

"The Irish are a very resilient people, and now that we've tasted prosperity we'll be hard-pressed to give it up. Take a drive through Dublin; the city is alive, buzzing. People have a spring in their step and hope in their hearts – the signs are everywhere."

Testament

Count the number of cabs zipping around a city at any given hour and it will tell you what you need to know about where you are.

"Don't kid yourself," smiled Madu Okoye, who has been driving a taxi in Dublin since arriving from Nigeria with his wife and children in 1997. "There's still a lot of money here."

The Okoyes prospered in their new surroundings. When the economy turned, they chose to stay.

"I like the spirit here," explained the 46-year-old. "Dubliners are tough, and they're up to the challenges. They have my respect because they're not afraid to roll up their sleeves when things get difficult."

Sure enough, the city's blue-collar Northside is a hive of activity on this day, with pedestrians shuffling to and from work. Things are also humming in the pseudo-suburban southeast neighbourhoods of Ballsbridge and Donnybrook, where stylish boutiques sit comfortably aside older shops. On the city's southern tip, the Georgian

properties by the beaches of Seapoint and Killiney speak to the long-term impact of the country's short economic boom.

"Like I told you, maybe people aren't spending like they were ten years ago, but there's still a lot of money here."

Later, as we whipped past U2's famous Windmill Lane Recording Studios and up through the refurbished Docklands, a light snow began to fall.

"Let me tell you a story," Okoye said with a laugh. "My mother visited with us here for the first time last winter. She had never



Mary Robinson



Naoise Ó Muirí

seen snow in her life, and after three days she wanted to go home. Me, I've grown to like it."

I ask why he has chosen to stay.

"We feel accepted here now, like we are family. Dublin has become an international city, filled with immigrants who came for work. It makes everything so much more colourful."

Temple Bar

Strolling through the famed Temple Bar district, I was taken aback by the variety of visitors. While Dublin is home to thousands of international students from September to April each year, there are those who simply come up for a weekend to partake in the bohemian quarter's brilliant nightlife.

"It is only a 90-minute flight from Paris," said 25-year-old Genevieve Delorme in a thick French accent. "My girlfriend and I leave right after work on Friday and go home on Sunday night."

Located on the south bank of the River Liffey, Temple Bar is a 350-year-old mélange of cobblestone streets and winding back alleys, and is home to the Irish Film Institute, the Gaiety School of Acting and a host of other cultural establishments.

On this night, Delorme and her travelling companion (Allaire)



are drinking and dancing at Alchemy, one of the area's many chic new clubs whose contemporary décor offsets its ancient exterior.

"It's gorgeous," Delorme shared about the venue. "The whole quarter is beautiful, really, and very romantic. And I love that everything is so close. The restaurants and bars are all squeezed together, and there is good shopping nearby, so we can do a lot in two days."

Isabel Pena can relate.

"We visit Dublin twice a year," said the 32-year-old Spaniard from Madrid over late-night fish and chips with her fiancé Mateo at The Porterhouse restaurant on Parliament Street.

"Temple Bar is unique and affordable, and I love the sense of culture here," she said, adding that the two-hour flight is just long enough to make the trip feel like a real holiday.

"The old pubs are my favourite part of the experience – the beer and the music and everyone singing along. It is like we step back in time."

Trinity College

Steeped in history and rich in tradition, Trinity College occupies 47 acres on College Green, just a few blocks east of Temple Bar.

Founded in 1592, the renowned institution has always been a hotbed of thought; Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett, Mairead Maguire and Sylvia O'Brien are just a few of the many well-known names that have walked its hallowed halls.

The long-standing dedication to academia continues to this day.

"Trinity College is first and foremost a home to ideas," noted current Chancellor, and former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson.

"It was, and it remains, a place where students of life meet to discuss both the details and the bigger pictures pertaining to politics, the arts, economics, education, history, and most other subjects."

That gift of the gab is not confined to the Irish, with over 20 percent of the school's estimated 20,000 full and part-time students coming from other parts of the globe.

"It's easy to understand the inspiration," said Robinson, pointing to the amazing array of antiquated architecture spread out over the site's four large quadrangles. "It is, in some ways, a sacred space."

Trinity College is also home to The Book of Kells, a 9th-century illuminated manuscript containing the four Gospels of the New Testament that is on permanent display in the facility's library.



"It's stunning," said second-year law student Michael Moffat, who returns regularly to contemplate the exhibit. "It's incredible to be this close to history, and it's a reminder for me of who we are as a people and where we come from."

Those roots are essential said Mary Robinson.

"Like the Irish, Trinity College today is very much the product of its heritage. Moving towards the future, it is vital that we continue to bridge that past with the present day."

Transported

It may be true, as American author Thomas Wolfe once wrote, that 'you can't go home again.' And yet, as I awaited my return flight at the revamped Dublin Airport, it occurred to me that while it might be impossible to rekindle past memories, you can still 'look homeward angel' to make new ones.

Somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean, I pondered how I might capture and convey a whirlwind week of activities, impressions, ideas and emotions in a mere 1,500 words. Processing an experience is a lifelong task, or at least a quarter-century. Still, as I dozed-off to the in-flight film, Mary Robinson's words ran through my mind; moving towards the future, it is vital that we continue to bridge that past with the present day.

Dublin / Best Bets

Irwin Johnston Tours

Personable, professional, knowledgeable, warm, friendly and funny, Dublin-based tour guide Irwin Johnston is all of these and more. Above all, Johnston knows the Irish capital city inside-out – literally. Along with informative jaunts to all the major attractions (Trinity College, Croke Park, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Phoenix Park, O2, etc), he is happy to scoot you around to many of the wonderfully quaint and quirky out-of-the-way spots that make Dublin unique. "There is so much more to this place than is immediate to the eye," he said. "You simply have to know which rocks to look under." johnstons@eircom.net



Glasnevin Cemetery

Established in 1832 under the direction of Daniel O'Connell, and encompassing 124 acres, Glasnevin Cemetery is home to over 1.5 million Irish souls. Here you will find the mortal remains of Charles Stewart Parnell, O'Donovan Rossa, Eamon De Valera, Michael Collins, Brendan Behan, and, of course, O'Connell himself, who is interred in a 51-foot tower. A museum and chapel stand alongside the grounds, though the real draws are the ornately detailed headstones, many of which share the stories behind the storied. A walking tour is an ideal way to get in touch with the country's bittersweet past. www.glasnevintrust.ie



Fabulous Food Trails

An engaging and enlightening way to enjoy a few hours exploring Dublin's downtown core, owner and guide Eveleen Coyle will whet your appetite on a journey of epicurean proportions. From a connoisseur cheesemonger's shop to a gourmet chocolatier, sample scrumptious and savoury snacks at a number of short stops, including an organic bakery, an open-concept fruit and vegetable market, an ages-old pub and a very hip wine bar. Gorge yourself on the goodies, and then burn off the calories en route to the next delicious destination. Coyle's complete culinary history of the city makes a great side dish. www.fabfoodtrails.ie



The Jeanie Johnston

Step down to the city's famed waterfront and step back in time aboard this exact replica of an 18th century famine ship. Built in Quebec City in the 1840s, the Jeanie Johnston carried thousands of Irish on a 3,000 mile voyage to the new world between 1847 and 1855 before being sold off. Work on the reproduction of the 408-ton cargo vessel began in 1993 and was completed in 2002. Now fully functional and located on the Custom House Quay, the ship is open for daily onboard historical tours, and available to hire for private functions.

www.jeanniejohnston.ie



The Cake Café

One of Dublin's yummy hidden gems, The Cake Café is a self-proclaimed "leafy courtyard oasis" in the heart of a busy city. Take a break from the hustle and bustle with a fresh cup of java accompanied by a myriad of mouthwatering morsels, including cakes and cookies of all shapes and sizes, and the café's world-renowned lemon slice. Eat-in or take-out, patrons are promised the real meal deal. "Like my mother I only use natural ingredients in our cakes and bread," said owner Michelle Darmody. "The eggs are all free range and we use real Irish butter." www.thecakecafe.ie



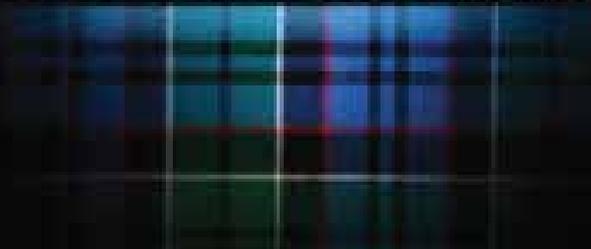
Michael Gibbons

The Emerald Isle's foremost field archeologist, Michael Gibbons is a virtual encyclopedia of Irish past, present and future. On day tours of nearby Newgrange, or of Connemara along the country's plush west coast, Gibbons' gift of the gab will fill your head with more information than you could possibly acquire in a year on your own. But this is no mere academic exercise; along the journey, Gibbons brings it all to life - often in vivid and vibrant accounts of personal and family triumphs and tragedies. "History is all around us," he notes. "And it's very much alive." www.newgrangetours.com





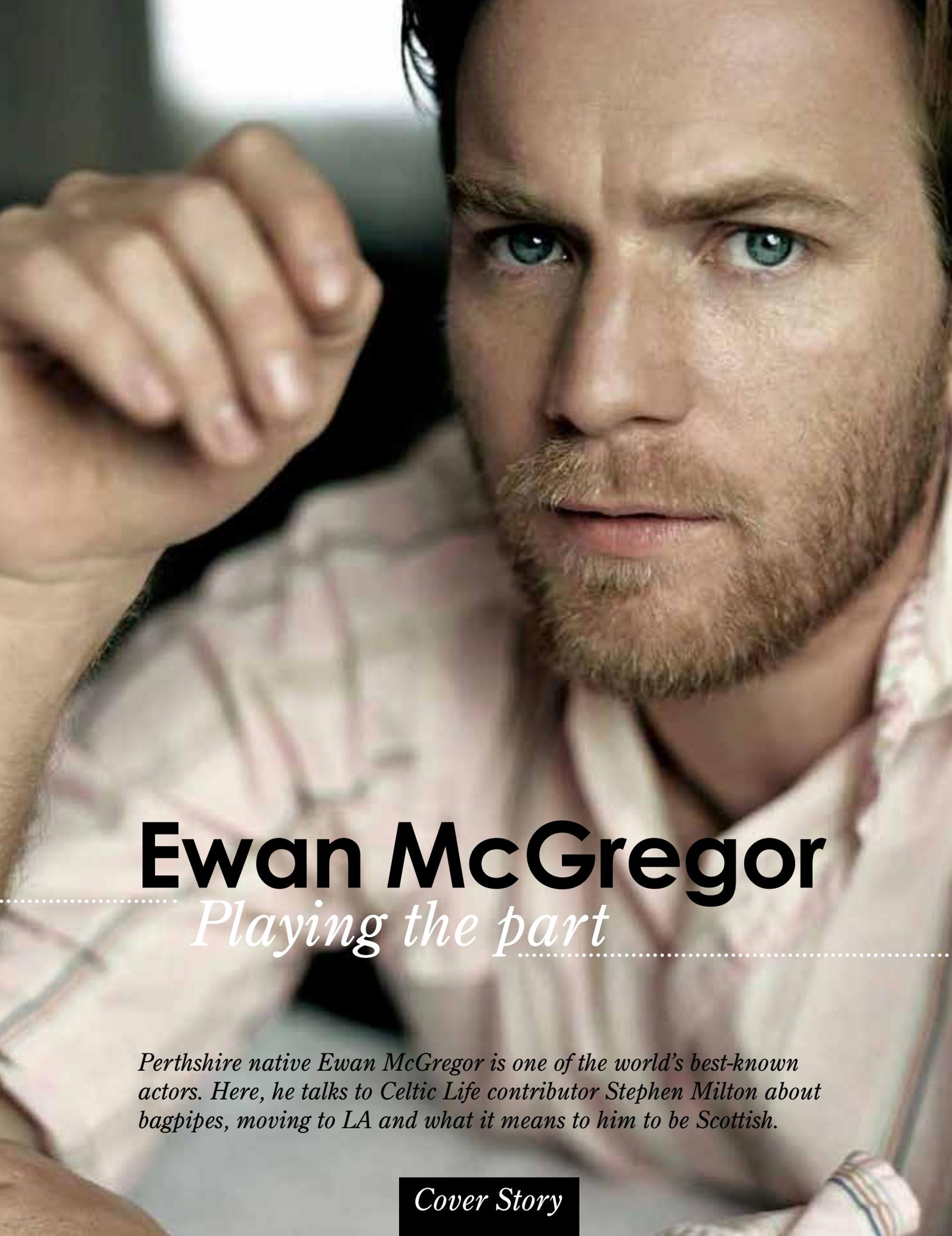
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Cape Breton Island



Ewan McGregor

Playing the part

Perthshire native Ewan McGregor is one of the world's best-known actors. Here, he talks to Celtic Life contributor Stephen Milton about bagpipes, moving to LA and what it means to him to be Scottish.

Cover Story

Ewan McGregor has become something of a national treasure, yes. But for a man whose career has taken him across the galaxy, he has remained remarkably true to his Celtic roots.

In his breakthrough role as Mark Renton in Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* however, he delivered a rather colourful ode to what it means to be Scottish. His words went something like, "It's shite being Scottish." Words he stands by?

"It actually pained me to say that when we were filming *Trainspotting*," he said. "I in no way stand by those words. I'm incredibly proud of my roots and will always be so. Anyway, I was also shooting heroin in that movie, and I've done many other questionable deeds as an actor. None of them however, reflect my actual life."

Raised in Crieff, Perthshire, the son of two teachers, James McGregor and Carole Lawson, McGregor always wanted to act. His parents allowed him to leave school at 16 to join the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Within a year, he was starring in the Dennis Potter television series *Lipstick on Your Collar*. Within two years, *Shallow Grave* arrived, and shortly afterwards came *Trainspotting*.

Fame was accompanied by all its disadvantages though. McGregor joked as he told the story of when he was strip searched by U.S. customs.

"It was just after *Trainspotting* had come out and the customs guy took me quietly aside into a booth. There was no doubt that he'd seen me in a movie about heroin and therefore assumed I'd be carrying heroin on me. I sort of took it as a compliment. Obviously I'd been quite convincing."

Returning to Scotland after *Trainspotting* hit theatres was an interesting experience for the actor. "I was in Glasgow a few months later, having been in America shooting

a movie, and people were calling out in the street, 'Renton, RENTON'. Everyone wanted to take me for a pint. I found I was doing a lot of very fast walking, head down, because it was very difficult to wander about. But I guess it was lovely that a movie like that, which was so important to Scotland, had made such an impression and I was part of that. I guess it was weird and strange in equal measure."

Does he accept the tag of being some sort of modern cultural ambassador for the country, following in the footsteps of Robbie Burns, Sean Connery and Arthur Conan Doyle?

"God, I hope not," he said with a laugh. "I think there are many greater exemplars of a population than me. I suppose you could say I was a passionate devotee of the country, and I'm fiercely defensive of our great nation. I won't allow anyone to talk it down, unless it's done in jest.

"Most criticism is based in ignorance anyway. Is there really anywhere more diverse than Scotland on this planet – the cities, the music, the arts, the tradition, the wide open spaces? It is a

magnificent country that continues to punch well above where it should.

"It's funny, but it's a very Scottish thing to love the place more the less you're there. It's easy to love Scotland from afar. And yes, I do yearn for it. I yearn to take a motorcycle ride and lose myself in the Highlands. It's the one thing I don't often do. These days, I seem to talk about that stuff with ex-pats rather than actually do it. I guess it's the idea of knowing I will one day do it again that really stops me from pining for it."

In a 20-year acting career, McGregor has made nearly 50 films – an exhausting average of two movies a year. Some of the highlights include *Moulin Rouge*, *Black Hawk Down*, *The Island* and the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy, where he played a young Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Four years ago, he and his French wife of 17 years, Eve Mavrakis, moved to Los Angeles with their four children, Clara, 16, Esther, 10, Jamiyan, 10, and two-year-old, Anouk. It was a strange move for someone so staunchly proud of his roots, particularly someone who swore, some 11 years previously, that he'd never move to Hollywood.

"I didn't have any desire to live in Los Angeles then," he explained. "I moved to London when I was 18 and I just thought that this is where I live. But our friends here in LA said, 'You should see this house,' so Eve and I saw it and just fell for it."

They bought their new home in 2005, rented it out, and stayed there now and again. "And then every time we came to stay, we liked being here more and more and then we just decided – on a whim, I suppose – to try living here. And we like it very much. The truth is I have to go away to work, and Eve finds it easier to be here with the kids when I'm away."

Does Ewan have any desire to move back to Scotland down the line? "I think it would be a nice idea in the future, but right now, our kids like the LA lifestyle and it suits us, but who knows? We change our minds all the time, the fickle bunch we are!"

With a demanding schedule to cope with, McGregor, 41, took a well-earned four-month break after shooting Oscar-nominated South Asian tsunami drama *The Impossible*, which the father found emotionally draining.

Recreating the experiences of the Belon family, who miraculously survived when the disaster hit the Thai beach resort of Khao Lak on Boxing Day 2004, McGregor admits it's his encounters with survivors since the movie's release in January which he finds most affecting.

"There's a woman I met in London who is a friend of a friend of mine who sat with me for three hours. She told me her whole story which was very similar to my character's in the film, really. And she lost her husband, sadly, and they have three children.

"During the tsunami, her husband was separated from her





and her two kids, much the same as I am separated from Naomi (Watts) in this film. So there were some kind of parallels between her story and the character I was playing in this, except that her story ended in a terrible way, which was incredibly difficult for me to hear. It stays with you.”

After wrapping domestic saga *August: Osage County* with Julia Roberts and Meryl Streep, McGregor will move on to *Our Kind of Traitor*, a bare-knuckle thriller opposite Ralph Fiennes, before shooting starts on a movie in Australia with new director Julius Avery.

“He is a brilliant young director who wrote and directed a film called *Jerrycan*, which is fantastic, and won the short film festival in Cannes and an array of other awards. I am making a film with him called *Son of a Gun*. He wrote it and is going to direct it too. It’s his first feature, and it’s going to shoot in parts of Australia for nine weeks later this year. I like to help foster new talent if I can; it’s important to me.”

We’ll next catch the Scot in *Jack the Giant Killer*, a Hollywood revisiting of fabled fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk. With a rumoured budget of £250million, it’s his largest scale movie since the *Star Wars* prequels. It’s a clear turnaround from his initial reservations on big budget movies.

“I still don’t like big, meaningless blockbusters. I don’t think I have been in any particularly. The *Star Wars* films are the most blockbuster type of thing I have been in, but they are also unique in the sense that they are *Star Wars*.”

“And *The Island* was another big blockbuster film, but it was a Michael Bay film. And again it had something in its heart. It was a story about something, and the idea of cloning. I still like it.

“*Jack and the Giant Killer*, I didn’t do it because it was a blockbuster; I did it because I thought it was a good script. But I also have lived and learned. I am 41 now, and I have changed my attitude about some things since I was 22.”

Like what?

“I think I’m a lot more relaxed. We Scots are renowned for a fiery passion that sometimes emerges before our brains are

engaged. I love that, but I think these days I can be calm in what I’m doing. Scotland makes hard people, and I was probably too thirsty to climb the tree at times when I was younger.”

With so much accomplished already, what’s next for the Perthshire native?

“I’d just like to carry on. If it’s a dream about my career, it would be carrying on doing different kinds of films. I’d like to direct something. At one point, I could have pursued a book that I really liked and thought I wanted to direct it, but then I got the fear and didn’t do it. And funnily enough I got sent it sometime later to act in. And I’ve got lots of silly, crazy dreams, involving old vehicles and long distances.”

There are rumours that McGregor, who was recently nominated for Best Actor at the Golden Globes for his performance in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, was fulfilling a lifelong dream by learning the bagpipes.

“Where’d you hear that,” he laughed heartedly. “Well, again, it’s the Scottish roots. I played in the McGregor Family Band as a boy and I’ve always been keen to learn so I thought, why not now?”

“I’m hoping I can whip them out for dinner parties and get-togethers down the line... really get the party going. I want it to be my fun party piece.”

Is he having lessons?

“I’ve had a few and I think I’m coming along nicely, although my family isn’t quite so sure. I think they might stash them away from me. The pipes will mysteriously disappear!”

So we’re back to talking about McGregor as an ambassador for Scotland...

“I think Scottish culture is pretty unique, and most people the world over understand and respect that. We don’t need the fanfare or the extravagant marketing campaigns. We’re a nation that has always stood out from the crowd and that makes us really special in the eyes of the world, of that much I’m certain.”



Alan Moore
www.ten30.co.uk





Silvia Pellegrino

www.chouchoucouture.com





NY TARTAN WEEK

Don't miss the major events in 2013:

Tartan Day on Ellis Island Sails into
South Street Seaport - *March 30*

Whisky Live - *April 3*

David Eustace: Highland Heart - *April 5-7*

MacBeth on Broadway - *April 5 - June 30*

From Scotland With Love - *April 8*

National Trust For Scotland Foundation USA,
A Celebration of Scotland's Treasures - *April 9*

Celebrating Scotland in NY since 2002!
tartanweek.com

Photos by Brent McCombs

From Scotland *With Love*

New York City is the epicenter of Celtic fashion again this spring, as designers, fashionistas, celebrities and media come together for one stylish soiree



Dr. Geoffrey Scott Carroll is a man of his word. "Prior to coming to New York, I spent time with my father before he passed away," shared the native of Peebles, Scotland. "He made me promise that I would help other Scots. As I have been fortunate in my business pursuits, I have been able to keep that promise."

A founding member of the GlobalScot network, and one of the two finalists for the first CEO of Scottish Enterprise, Carroll is also the originator and producer of From Scotland With Love, the largest and most prestigious Scottish fashion event in the world.

From modest beginnings - the idea was conceived over single malts in his New York City kitchen - the mandate for Carroll and his longtime friend and FSWL co-host Peter Morris has remained the same since its inception; "to put a modern glove over the traditional Scottish hand and provide a more contemporary vision of Scotland."

Originally called Dressed To Kilt, the annual gathering has not only raised significant funds for noble and charitable causes - including this year's beneficiaries the Wounded Warrior Project and the McConnell International Foundation - but has become a major fixture on the New York fashion scene and calendar.

All worthwhile causes, noted Carroll, though he never forgets the promise made to his father.

"When I arrived in New York, there was an absence of groups here trying to help the young and talented Scots. There were many events and groups that focused on the more traditional events - highland games and parades - but very few that offered a helping hand to younger people. I also found that the image of Scotland among many New Yorkers was somewhat distorted and focused more on the past rather than the present."

To that end, FSWL aims to engage a different demographic, including many non-Scots.

"We have been able to successfully attract a younger and more diversified audience around the globe with what we have done. And we have helped numerous young Scots become more established over here. Designers, manufacturers, entertainers, photographers, caterers - the show has provided them with new commercial opportunities that they could not afford on their own."

Those efforts are again in place for April's gala.

"The theme of this year's show is The Scottish Lion Meets The Asian Dragon," explained Carroll. "We hope to further grow commercial opportunities and relationships for Scottish manufacturers and designers with new Asian partners, and expand our press and media coverage into those markets."

To do so, he and his partners have enlisted the help of a number of notable Asian personalities, including designers Vivienne Tam, Gemma Kahgn, Jimmy Choo, Zang Toi and Chloe Chen, as well as world-renowned Japanese fiddler Sarina Suno and the first Asian supermodel Ling Tan.

"We are also extremely pleased to have the support of some of the major Asian organizations here in New York," added Carroll, "including the Asia Society, the China Institute, the Asian in NY





Group and the Asian Women in Business Group.”

Other celebrities likely to be taking part in this year’s proceedings include actors Gerard Butler, Steve Buscemi, Claire Holt, Matthew Rhys, Kelly Hu, Mike Myers, Michelle Kwan and Meghan Orey. Current Miss Scotland Nicole Treacy and Canadian fiddler Ashley MacIsaac are also on the bill.

For the designers themselves, it is an opportunity to showcase both their work and Celtic fashion to an international audience of an estimated 2 billion.

“In the last 10 years there has been a renewed interest in the wearing of Scottish fabrics,” said Glasgow designer Spencer Railton, whose work will again be featured in this year’s festivities. “Tartan and tweed, in particular - which had once been considered too countrified or upper-class or both – have become extremely popular.”

Stylist Janis Sue Smith sees the same trend.

“I have noticed that there has been a huge revival for traditional Scottish fabrics in recent years,” she said by email. “I find them very beautiful and often use them in my work.”

Others have a different perspective.

“Celtic Fashion isn’t all about tartan and muted colours,” shared designer Joyce Paton, also an event regular. “Just take a walk down any high-street in Glasgow or Edinburgh and you will see that Scots love all sorts of style and are very creative in how they wear it.”

Alan Moore, the talent behind Glasgow-based brand ten30, echoes the sentiment, explaining that the stereotype of “Celtic fashion” is no longer a fully accurate reflection of the genre.

“It has become a mix of new and old. Scotland has always had style and a wealth of fantastic products. However, designers here are now embracing new technologies such as laser cutting and etching, digital and 3D printing, as well as 3D mapping and working with SMART textiles, whilst retaining a respect for, and still using, traditional, classic, luxury Scottish-made products such as tweed, cashmere and leather.”

Designer Rebecca Torres, also a native of Glasgow, noted that a variety of factors are bringing Scottish fashion into the spotlight.

“People have generally become more aware of our style and fashion in recent years due to the internet, especially social media,” she shared. “There has also been greater support for home-grown talent in Scotland, mostly via the Scottish press, so people take greater pride in what they are wearing. Events like From Scotland With Love, the Scottish Fashion Awards, the Mobo awards and the recent Chanel show in Linlithgow Palace, are also creating greater visibility for our industry.”

Geoffrey Scott Carroll said it’s all part of the plan.

“We do have a very proud and distinguished culture and it is a unique one. In a world where literally everything is becoming homogenized, I personally think that it is essential to highlight the differences. Also, the world is growing at a very rapid rate, and our Celtic countries are not. This presents very obvious problems moving forward, and I believe that it is vital to continue to highlight the relevance and importance of our culture.

“From Scotland With Love achieves that, and it also fulfills my promise to my father.”



FSWL PROFILES



**Peter
Morris**

The first couple of shows were pretty much for fun and purely to raise the profile of Scotland and all things Scottish in what we hoped was a fun way – to show us as a country that very much looks forward as well as being proud of our traditions and heritage- and while we still do that today we realized quite early on that our show did have an appeal far greater than we'd first considered.

So we decided that we wanted to use this platform to promote not just our up and coming new designers but also the great bands and musicians that we have produced and are producing – and to use any monies raised to promote some of the better traditions of our past heritage.

While it is ostensibly a Scottish event we all know that the Celts are really very similar in outlook on a lot of things. We have more in common than we have to divide us and we've all punched above our weight in terms of our impact on the world at large. It's good to remind ourselves of our connected history and also to remind the world that while our cultures are ancient they also continue to develop and adapt to the modern world and we still have a great deal to offer.

Peter Morris is the co-host of From Scotland With Love, and the C.O.O. of Affirmative Entertainment in Los Angeles.

I am thrilled to be involved with From Scotland With Love. The organizers keep asking me back each year, so I must be behaving myself. It truly is a wonderful evening and a real opportunity to both showcase our brilliant designers and to bring their work to the rest of the world. It's a good chance to give Scotland a bigger share of the international spotlight also.

Scottish design has always been there, but up until recently it wouldn't have been the first thing to come to mind when you think of fashion. We've got the goods, but we don't make a point of blowing our own horn about it. And really, it wouldn't be Scottish if it weren't like that. Still, it's time for us to stand up and be seen and heard a wee bit more – and what's happening in our fashion industry these days give us a good chance to do that.

The most rewarding aspect of it for me is that two very worthy benefactors – the Wounded Warrior Project and The McConnell International Foundation – will be the direct recipients of support. It's a real win-win-win scenario. I am equally honoured and humbled to be able to contribute and, if I keep behaving myself, I'm hoping that they'll ask me to participate for at least another dozen years.

Geoff Day is the Edinburgh-born U.S. Director of Communications for Mercedes-Benz.



Geoff Day



**Jack
McConnell**

I was an enthusiastic supporter of From Scotland With Love from the very first show over ten years ago. Using the traditional fabrics of Scotland to promote a modern and fashionable industry in an entertaining way is a great boost for Scottish textiles and it is good for Scotland's image internationally. And...it is a lot of fun!

Although I am no longer First Minister, I continue to promote Scotland and Scottish industries around the world. So I decided to remain involved with From Scotland With Love and to attend as often as possible.

As an annual event it not only promotes Scottish textiles and Scottish culture but it brings together people of Scottish heritage based in North America and helps all of us stay in contact. These opportunities help keep our culture and heritage vibrant in the busy modern world.

I think there has been a positive increase in the celebration of our heritage and culture over recent years. But in a world where fashions and trends change quickly we need to work hard at refreshing and energising that culture year after year.

Modern Scottish culture is in many ways multicultural and I think we need to convey that message more around the world as it indicates that we welcome new people.

Jack McConnell is the Director of the McConnell International Foundation, an international charity that supports funding development programs in impoverished and conflict-affected communities.

www.jackmcconnell.org

TARTAN week



New York City turns a thousand shades of plaid this April, as Tartan Week festivities take a bite out of The Big Apple.

With events planned from March 30 to April 12 - including a parade, concerts, award galas, seminars, film premiers, theatre productions, a fashion show, a whisky tasting soiree, a 10km run, an old-school Kirkin' o' the Tartan, and an Ellis Island tour - there will be no shortage of kilts and sporrans to be seen across Manhattan.

"It promises to be a grand time," shared Magnus Orr, co-founder and co-organizer of the festivities, via email from his office in Edinburgh. "There's a wee something for everyone this year, whether you are Scottish or not."

Orr said that the idea for Tartan Week had humble beginnings.

"It started back in 2000. One of my friends and I - we're both keen pipers - had organized a parade through Edinburgh with 7,000 other pipers to mark the Millennium. Pipers and drummers from all over the World took part including Australia, Canada and the USA. Many of the players approached me afterwards, wondering where and when we might host another event. Several of the pipe-bands suggested New York City - there was no street parade for Tartan Day there at that time - and so we set our sights on April 6 of 2002."

He and his peers began working out the details. Then, amidst the planning, New York was shaken to its foundations by the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

What followed, Orr recalled, was nothing short of miraculous.

"Instead of groups cancelling, we received message after message from bands wanting to support NYC and their fellow pipers, especially the FDNY and NYPD pipe-bands. Groups from nearly every U.S. state took part in the parade, as well as Scottish Power Pipe Band and Lothian Borders Police Pipe Band from Scotland."

Others threw their weight behind the event also, including Sir Sean Connery and NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who turned up to lead the procession along Sixth Avenue.

The parade was a huge success, as was the gala dinner that night which raised over \$400,000 for cancer care.

"More than 7,500 Scottish, Irish, Canadian and American pipers and drummers gave up their time to take part," remembered Orr. "It always struck me that when the call went out, not one pipe-band let us down. And it was that parade that really put Tartan Day on the map in NYC."

In 2004, the parade was handed over to a local, volunteer committee which has run it since, with Orr moving on to bringing his bigger vision for Tartan Week to life.

"The internet, social media and media partnerships have been great tools to help promote Tartan Week, and I play a role in that by running the website."

He is also planning to present a new stage show in 2014 - Spirit of the Gael, which is inspired by the Edinburgh Tattoo.

"The goal of this project is to provide a proper platform for performers from Scotland, Ireland, Canada and the USA," he explained. "There has been a great response to the idea of making a high-energy show a regular part of the gathering."

Orr is also a key player in the Tartan Week Alliance, a new umbrella organization which has been set-up to coordinate the gathering's bigger happenings.

"The Alliance's mandate is to establish Tartan Week as an International event rather than just as an American event, or even just as a Scottish event that happens in New York City. The organization is taking a very proactive approach to making sure this happens.

"It also presents a great opportunity to expand our audience base," he added. "Celtic Connections (festival) in Glasgow sells over 220,000 tickets in January each year, and I see no reason why the Celtic Arts can't be promoted to this level in New York City each April."

Significance, he noted, is as important as success.

"Scottish, Irish, Canadian, American - we are all part of the Celtic community - it is important to work together to help promote the Celtic Arts; appreciation will help boost interest in our roots, and will keep our traditions alive for generations to come."

www.tartanweek.com



BARBADOS

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23RD - 29TH MAY 2013



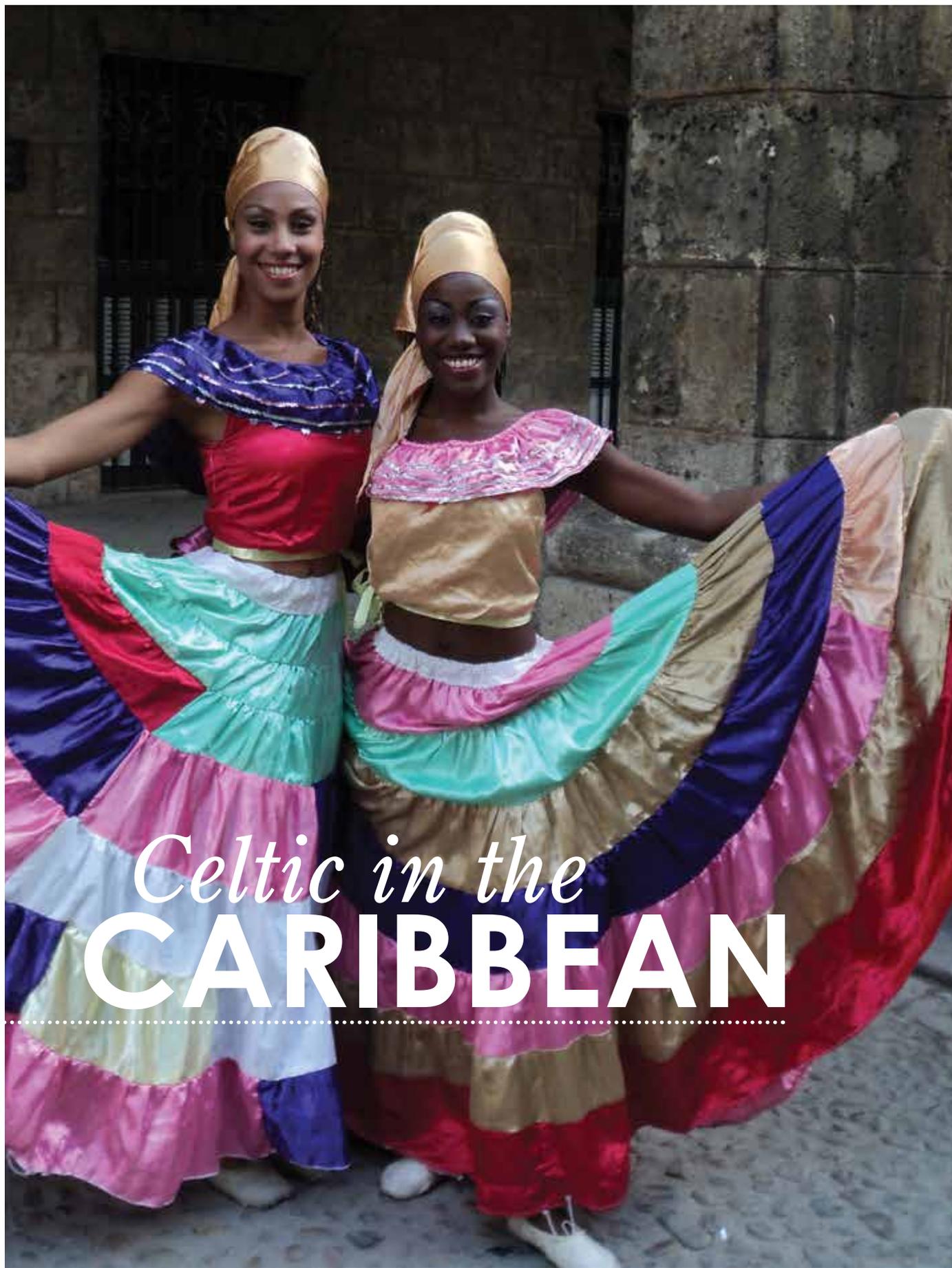
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Celtic in the
CARIBBEAN



CELTIC *Festival* BARBADOS

Carol Anderson remembers it well.

“The first time I visited Barbados in 1999 I thought I had arrived in heaven,” recalled the organizer of Celtic Festival Barbados via email from her office in Edinburgh, Scotland.

“It was warm and breezy, friendly and enchanting, exotic and tropical with bright sunshine, bright colours, beautiful beaches, and amazing people.

“Barbados is a tropical destination that’s easy to get to – a friendly island with a long and interesting history and great attributes for many different kinds of visitors.”

It didn’t take much convincing for her to get involved with the annual celebration.

“After many more visits, I met some pipers one May who piped me in to my hotel as a surprise,” she shared. “Someone had set me up during the Celtic festival! Years later, friends of mine on the island asked me if I would be interested in running the festival. In 2010 I said yes, and 2011 was my first festival.

“The festival actually began in the 1990s,” she continued. “A Welsh lady living there named Ruth Williams brought in a male voice Welsh Choir led by her father, who performed in the Frank Collymore Hall. Everyone remembers this amazing concert. In subsequent years, pipers played all over the island, sometimes surprising newlyweds from Scotland at their weddings!”

Anderson, whose background includes producing large events with two international aid organizations in the U.K., and working as a consultant with The Prince’s Scottish Youth Business Trust, began networking to grow the event.

“In the last three years, thanks to major sponsorship from the Barbados Tourism Authority and the Barbados Beach Club Hotel, and our partners Mount Gay Rum, Chivas Whisky, Banks Beer, Drive-a-Matic car hire, as well as local radio station Love FM, we have encouraged some big names from the Celtic music circuit to attend and take part in our week-long folk festival.”

This year’s musical line-up is already in place, and includes Scottish group Seudan, duo Jeana Leslie and Siobhan Miller, the Alan Kelly Gang from Ireland, piper Hamish Moore, the MacKenzie Brothers from Mabou, Cape Breton and others.

Award-winning chef, Paul Wedgwood, from Wedgwood the

Restaurant in Edinburgh will also be on hand.

“Paul will work with local chefs to fuse together flavours from Scotland with West Indian ingredients. In 2011, he created the first Bajan Haggis, using local black belly sheep! One of his signature dishes is Lobster Crème Brulee and he has included Guinness Chocolate Cake and Cock-a-Leekie skewers in previous menus at the festival.”

Events are scheduled for various locations across the island, including at the Barbados Beach Club, along Maxwell Coast Road in Christ Church.

Anderson explained that the region enjoys a unique Celtic connection.

“There is a very strong Scottish and Irish history in Barbados. The Scots and Irish were driven out of their home countries and shipped to Barbados in the 1700s to be indentured servants on the sugar plantations all over the Caribbean. Many Bajans tell me about their Scottish ancestors – and there are some direct descendants living quietly in Martin’s Bay – they were nicknamed the “Redlegs” because of the effect the Caribbean sun had on very pale skin on legs beneath kilts all those years ago.”

She said that the level of interest in the yearly gathering from both tourists and locals has grown significantly in a short time.

“We now have people coming from many countries to watch or take part – from Canada, the United States, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and many parts of Europe, as well as local Bajans from across the island, who have Scottish ancestry, and ex-pat Scots, Irish and Welsh who live on the island or on other Caribbean islands nearby.”

The end result is a week of fun under the sun for everyone involved.

“The ex-pat Scots, Welsh and Irish truly enjoy the festival and turn out in their kilts to dance and support. They frequently tell me that it brings tears to their eyes to hear the music of good Scottish musicians playing for them in Barbados and makes them quite homesick!

“Still,” she laughed, “I don’t know why anyone would ever want to leave such a heavenly place as this!”

www.celticfestivalbarbados.com





CeltFest Cuba

Each April, musicians from around the world converge on the colourful capital city of Havana for CeltFest Cuba, a week-long celebration of Celtic song and dance.

With workshops, seminars, walking tours, concerts and nightly jam sessions, the gathering – now in its fourth year – is a labour of love for event co-founder Kilian Kennedy.

“The festival is really about celebrating the Celtic cultural traditions in Cuba, and reuniting them with the “old world” traditions of their Celtic cousins,” he shared via email from his home near Dublin. “It is primarily a teaching festival with recitals, concerts, historical talks and more adding to the fun. It is operated without profit, and as it builds in popularity it will provide benefits to the local Cuban economy and culture.”

CeltFest has had a profound impact on its participants as well.

Canadian fiddler Roy Johnston said that the fiesta broadened his sonic horizons.

“I had travelled to Cuba before and I was trying to find an ongoing musical connection to that place when I read about CeltFest Cuba. It was like a dream come true for me. I love Celtic music and the first festival for me was amazing. I played with musicians from Galicia, Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Cape Breton, and of course, the Cuban musicians who are descendants of the Galicians and Austurians that came to Cuba in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was a feast of music and dance that started with workshops in the morning, lectures and talks in the afternoon, evening concerts and then a late night session lasting till the wee hours, and this went on every night for 10 days.”

Fellow Canadian Chrissy Crowley had a similar experience.

“I’ve travelled quite a bit and I don’t think any place has had an effect on me like Cuba,” said the Cape Breton fiddler via email.

“The country has an amazing history to begin with, but it’s the appreciation of music in general down there that touches me the most. There are an incredible number of musicians in Havana of all styles who always look forward to sharing their music and having you share yours. In the first year of CeltFest, I went from dancing with a tango troupe to being hauled up on stage to play with a Caribbean style drum band.”

She believes that the best way to preserve and promote Celtic culture in Cuba is by passing it on to future generations.

“In the fiddle, guitar, pipes, dance and flute workshops we do

for CeltFest, all the students are appreciative of the opportunity to learn, and they work harder than any group of students I’ve ever had. The Cubans don’t really have an option to go elsewhere for Celtic studies. It’s very difficult for them to leave the country and very expensive to fly someone in. CeltFest workshops provide them with what they need to learn and study further on their own. Last year, we all brought down books and spare strings for the fiddlers, and recorders for the pipers to practice on.”

More importantly, she explained, the event recognizes Cuba as a Celtic nation among Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Brittany, Cornwall, Galicia and the Isle of Man.

“The Cuban pipe bands deserve recognition for the hard work they’ve put into their craft, and they ought to have more opportunities to perform on international stages. Celtic Colours International Festival brought in several Cuban pipers a couple of years ago, demonstrating that the Spanish Celtic influence in Cuba cannot be ignored.”

One of those Cuban-Celtic musicians to visit Celtic Colours was Gaitero Arturo Miguel Perez, the leader of La Banda de Gaitas de La Habana.

“The musical exchanges between my country and Canada have been invaluable,” said the 29-year-old. “CeltFest, in particular, gives our little community the chance to come together and grow with the help of others.”

Bodhran player Luis Guitierrez echoes the sentiment.

“For many years there was very little recognition of the Celtic influence here,” he explained. “CeltFest has allowed us to explore and express our roots and our passion for this music.”

Roy Johnston sums up the relationship.

“Cubans are very passionate about culture, about music and dance and art. They are hungry to learn and so appreciative of what we can teach them, but they are equally generous in sharing what they know.”

*CeltFest Cuba, April 13-20, Havana
www.celtfestcuba.com*



the Irish *in* Havana

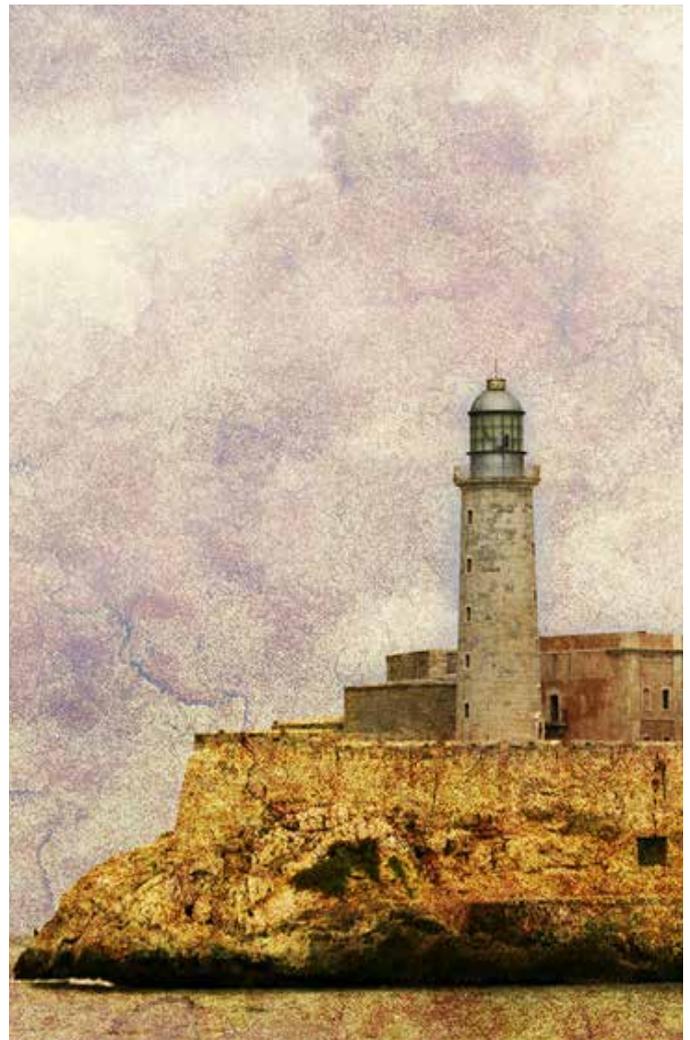
Maria Watson is a Canadian fiddler and a member of the Canadian-Cuban Celtic Society. Here, she looks at the history behind some of Cuba's many connections with Ireland.

Spain's Irish soldiers in Havana, pirates, priests and the wealthy traders the O'Farrills

"Cuba and Ireland, two island peoples in the same sea of struggle and hope," so reads a plaque at the corner of the streets O'Reilly and Tacon in Old Havana, Cuba. Havana, the most fascinating city in the Caribbean, has long drawn artists, architecture aficionados and history buffs. Cuba and Ireland are forever connected with a shared past, and a walk through Old Havana, where brightly painted classic cars rumble through the streets, rewards the curious with many interesting sights. O'Reilly Street was named after Dublin-born Alejandro O' Reilly, one of the Wild Geese – the name given to Irish soldiers who served in foreign Catholic armies after the defeat of the Irish Jacobite soldiers in 1691. Irish Catholics sought refuge in Spain after the Williamite War in the 17th century and were awarded citizenship by the sympathetic Spaniards. The Cathedral of Havana was built in the 18th century by the Jesuits, one of whom was named Thomas Ignatius Butler of Ireland. Today, this gorgeous Baroque building is the dominant structure on the Plaza de la Catedral, the square that is often filled with costumed entertainers and fortune-tellers.

Many Irish names are represented in Cuba's Spanish military as Spain hired Irish soldiers for their skill and determination. For a long time, Spain had no fewer than four regiments of Irish soldiers. In 1598, Diego Brochero de Anaya wrote to the Spanish King Philip III to recommend Irish soldiers. "That every year Your Highness should order to recruit in Ireland some Irish soldiers, who are people tough and strong, and nor the cold weather or bad food could kill them easily as they would with the Spanish, as in their island, which is much colder than this one, they are almost naked, they sleep on the floor and eat oats bread, meat and water, without drinking any wine."

Spain had to defend Cuba, not only against invasion by other European countries seeking to colonize the Caribbean, but also against the troublesome pirates that plundered ships of the Spanish crown. Of those intriguing stories, the legends around the female pirate Anne Bonney are among the most captivating. It's thought that Anne was born at the turn of the 18th century in Ireland. She later moved to the New World with her family and



abandoned the life of a proper lady to become a pirate. She lived in Cuba long enough to give birth to the child of her lover, the pirate "Calico Jack" Rackham. It's said that Anne left her child in Cuba and resumed her life as a buccaneer with Rackham until he was captured and hanged in 1720.

Alejandro O'Reilly proved to be a competent leader in the Spanish army and was made Inspector General in Havana when Spain regained control of Cuba following the successful British siege of 1762. The siege was a humiliating defeat for the Spanish and, to regain control of Cuba, Spain was forced to surrender the colony of Florida to Britain. General O'Reilly organized Cuba's military forces, in particular the Black and Mulatto Militias. He redesigned Havana's defenses and began the construction of the Cabana Fortress to protect the port of Havana. Never again would Britain rule Cuba. A canon firing ceremony is re-enacted every evening at the fortress by soldiers dressed in period costume. Locals set their watches to the thundering boom of the cannon at exactly 9pm every evening; the time when the city gates used to close in colonial Havana.

In 1784, Spain reclaimed Florida after a force of 600 men from the regiments Rey, Dragones and Hibernia left Havana to re-take possession. The Hibernia regiment consisted of Irishmen.

At the entrance to Havana's harbour there is a lighthouse, once

called O'Donnell's lighthouse after Captain General Leopoldo O'Donnell who gained high rank in the Spanish army. The lighthouse is part of the Morro Castle Fortress and there visitors can read on a plaque the poem *Mi Bandera (My Flag)*, written by celebrated Cuban poet Bonifacio Byrne, whose Irish ancestor was a tailor from Offaly County in Ireland. His poem states that only the flag of Cuba should be displayed here and that it should never fly alongside the flag of a foreign power as Cuba is a proud, free and independent nation.

Havana boasts many historical town squares called plazas. The Plaza de Armas featured prominently in the city's military history and, facing this square, is the Captain General's Palace where Leopoldo O'Donnell once lived. In front of this beautiful restored building, which is now a museum, is a wooden street, built to dampen the sound of the passing horses and carriages. To the south of Plaza de Armas lies the Plaza Vieja. The former home of Pedro O'Reilly, Alejandro O'Reilly's son, faces this square. Now restored, it houses Havana's popular microbrewery, Taberna de Muralla, where chilled beer is served in tall vessels that contain an inner cylinder of ice that ingeniously keeps the beer cold in Havana's heat. The Cuban Government's official tourist company Habaguanex operates this tavern as well as many historical hotels and restaurants in Old Havana.

Habaguanex is a division of the Havana Historian's Office. Dr. Eusebio Leal is the City Historian and under his direction the preservation and restoration of Old Havana have high importance. These enormous efforts have been acknowledged internationally and Havana is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The second floor of the Taverna de Muralla is used as a luthier workshop and fine musical instruments are made and repaired here by skilled craftsmen. The Pedro O'Reilly abode is impressive, but even more so is the former home of the Havana O'Farrills, originally from County Longford in Ireland. Standing on Cuba St., the Hotel Palacio O'Farrill is now a boutique hotel but was once the palace of the O'Farrills. The family moved to Havana in the early 18th century and became vastly wealthy as sugar and slave traders. The incredible opulence of this former family home has been preserved with a careful restoration overseen by The City Historian's Department of Architecture. Here, I heard a lecture on Cuba's Irish links by Sr. Rafael Fernández Moya, a Cuban researcher, whose impressively detailed work can be found in his 2007 paper, *The Irish Presence in the History and Place Names of Cuba*, and which is the basis for much of this article. Every St. Patrick's Day, the culture of the Irish immigrants to Cuba is celebrated with Irish music and dance at the O'Farrill hotel.

The American-Irish in Cuba and Eamon De Valera's mysterious paternal Cuban links

Of course, not all the Irish who found their way to Cuba were rich like the O'Farrills, and some found themselves on the island in impoverished circumstances. The Capitolio is Havana's former seat of government and it looks remarkably similar to the Washington D.C. Capital building. Behind the Capitolio is a curious collection of rusting locomotives, too heavy to easily move. They remain there as a testament to the original use of the Capitolio site as the Villanueva Railway Station, built in 1839.

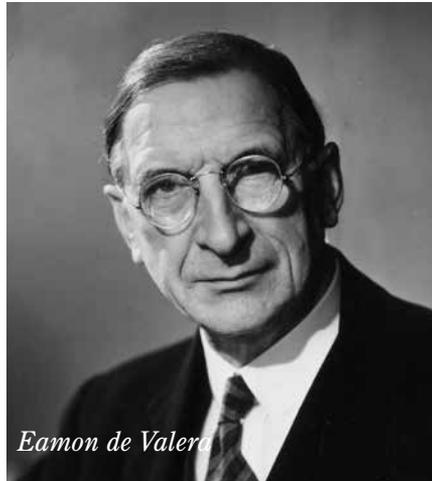
Irish labourers were contracted from New York to help build Cuba's first railroads, alongside other poorly paid bonded workers. The brutal working conditions and insufficient food sparked a strike led by the Irish and Canary Islander workers which was violently suppressed. Upon completion of their employment, those who survived – and many died from hunger and exhaustion – found themselves abandoned without the resources to leave Cuba.

The slums of New York City where the Irish railway workers had been recruited were ministered to by a humble Cuban-born priest named Felix Varela, regarded in America as "The Vicar to the Irish". He escaped persecution in Spain by fleeing to America after he published his views advocating the independence of Cuba. A brilliant polymath gifted in science, music and languages, Varela learned the Irish language so he could better minister to the poor Irish immigrants of his New York City parish. A bust of Varela stands at the entrance to the San Carlos Seminary near Havana's Cathedral and he is being considered for canonization in the Catholic Church.

The Cubans who fought the War of Independence against Spain at the end of the 19th century found sympathetic supporters in New York. Cuban independence hero Jose Marti lived in New York when he was in exile and there he garnered much support for his

cause of Cuban independence. Marti returned in 1895 and fought and died in the War of Independence. Marti is memorialized in monuments throughout Cuba as a martyr and a national hero. Like Marti, other Cuban exiles in America dedicated themselves to Cuban independence. An organization in New York called Junta Cubana recruited volunteers to fight the Spanish forces. One Junta Cubana recruit was Irish-Canadian William O'Ryan, who died in the conflict, and is honoured by Cuba for his bravery.

Another fascinating story concerns an Irish-American scowflaw who aided the revolutionary forces during the struggle for independence. Sea Captain Johnny "Dynamite" O' Brien, a New



Eamon de Valera



John F. Kennedy

Yorker of Irish descent, got his nickname after he delivered the dangerous cargo of 60 tons of dynamite to rebels in Cuba. He evaded capture by the Spanish forces and died an old man in America after a life of adventure.

Possibly the most intriguing link to the Irish immigrants of New York and Cuba is the story of Irish revolutionary leader and third president of Ireland, Eamon De Valera. De Valera was born in New York in October, 1882, and it is speculated that his father, Juan De Valera, emigrated from Matanzas, Cuba, a town east of Havana. At the time of Eamon's birth, Cuba was still a Spanish colony and Cubans were considered Spanish citizens, so biographical information stating that Eamon De Valera's father was Spanish does not necessarily contradict this theory. Modern DNA science could provide some answers if Cuban relatives of De Valera are found. Until more evidence is uncovered De Valera's paternal heritage remains a historical mystery.

The prohibition laws of 1919 shut down Irish-American Pat Cody's New York bar, causing Cody to move his saloon, Jigg's Uptown Bar, to Havana. America's Law of Prohibition was a boon for other entrepreneurs of the liquor, beer and wine trade in Cuba. Irishman Ed Donovan moved the furnishings and contents of his entire bar from Newark, New Jersey to the Hotel Telegrafo, the blue and white hotel at the corner of Paseo de Prado and Neptuno .

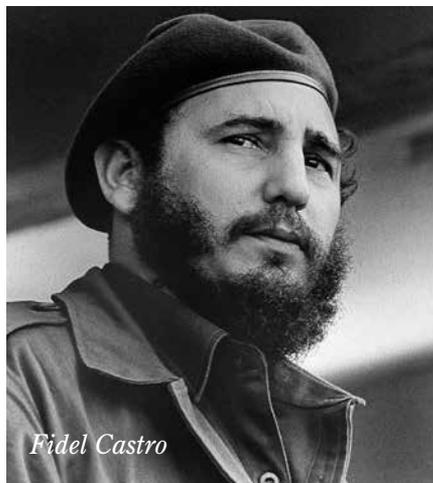
Tourism flourished in Cuba from the 1920s until the Cuban Revolution in 1959 as visitors patronized gambling and drinking establishments that catered to American demand. After the Cuban Revolution, the casinos operated under the new government but it was an uneasy coexistence. Casino bosses found they could not intimidate or bribe the new leaders. The new rebel government had more important priorities than the gambling industry and they launched a national literacy campaign as over 40 per cent of rural Cubans could not read or write. Instead of military brigades the new government organized literacy brigades of educated volunteers of all ages. Many teen and pre-teen volunteers, too young to fight in the rebellion that overthrew the dictator Batista, instead threw themselves into the literacy work, and by the end of 1961 Cuba had achieved an astounding 96 per cent literacy rate. On September 29th that year, the Miami News recorded that the last of Havana's gambling casinos had closed after Castro announced his plan to clean up the city.

"He warned dealers in the vice they face stiff penalties and told them to "go to Miami if they want. We will even pay their plane tickets," the paper reported.

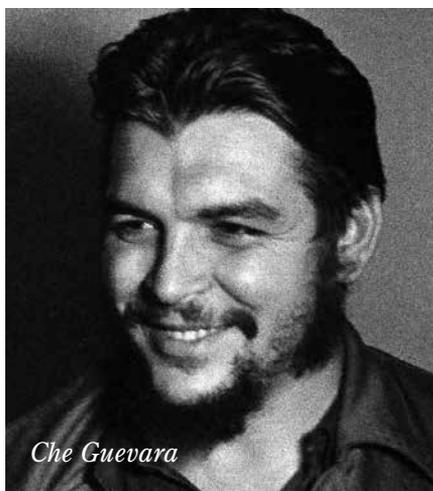
The revolution thwarted plans by the mafia to build new

casinos in Havana. Many historical buildings had been destined for demolition to make way for the glitzy high-rises before the mob was forced to abandon the city. The Cuban capital would have been drastically altered had history been different.

Perhaps the most famous Irish-American to sample Havana's wild nightlife before the revolution was John F. Kennedy, who visited as a senator in 1957. Later, as President during the Cold War, Kennedy imposed an embargo on Cuban goods and banned American travel as he viewed Cuba as a satellite of the Soviet state, but not before he'd acquired a large quantity of Cuban cigars for his own use. At the old Partagas cigar factory there is a shop that sells many varieties of cigars, including Kennedy's favourite Petite Upmanns. Tourists from across the world savour premium cigars in the leather chairs of the shop's elegant cigar lounge, but few are from the United States. Decades after the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union the embargo remains in place, and travel to Cuba is still severely restricted for American citizens.



Fidel Castro



Che Guevara

Cuba's Celtic warriors, Fidel Castro, Julio Antonio Mella and Che Guevara

Just four months after the 1959 Cuban revolution, the movie, *Our Man in Havana*, was filmed in the city using the Sevilla Hotel as a setting. The hotel was once owned by Canadian John McEntee Bowman and operated by Irish-American Charles Francis Flynn. It still stands today and has a fascinating history, featuring gangsters, glamorous socialites, famous actors and actresses, many of whom can be seen in the photos that adorn the walls of the hotel's upper-floor bar. While in Cuba, Irish actress Maureen O'Hara met Che Guevara. Born Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, son of Ernesto Rafael Guevara Lynch and Celia de la Serna, the iconic revolutionary hero's grandmother was Ana Isabel Lynch from Galway, Ireland. Che's father famously stated, "The first thing to note is that in my son's veins

flowed the blood of the Irish rebels." Che talked to O'Hara, impressing her with his knowledge of Ireland's struggle for independence. In her memoirs, *Tis' Herself*, O'Hara remarked, "That famous cap he wore was an Irish rebel's cap. I spent a great deal of time with Che Guevara while I was in Havana. Today he is a symbol for freedom fighters wherever they are in the world and I think he is a good one."

The leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, and his brother, Cuban President Raul Castro, are sons of Galician immigrant, Angel Castro. The principalities of Galicia and neighbouring Asturias, now part of Northern Spain, are

considered Celtic nations. The impressive Great Theatre of Havana that faces the city's Central Park was once the Galician Centre. Opposite the Great Theatre, facing the other side of the park is the equally impressive Fine Art Museum, which was originally the Asturian Centre. The size and elegance of these buildings, constructed during the first quarter of the 20th century at the height of Spanish immigration, show that Galicia and Asturias were the dominant immigrant groups at the time. In Havana, the traditional music of Asturias and Galicia is celebrated by several pipe bands and dance groups that preserve the ancient customs of their Spanish Celtic ancestors. Recent research confirms the genetic link between these people of Northern Spain and their Celtic cousins, the Irish. Fidel Castro showed his affinity with the Irish Republican prisoners opposed to British rule when he erected a memorial to the Irish hunger strikers of 1981. The plaque, in a park at Calle 21 and Calle I in Vedado Havana, reads, "They sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Ireland," written in Spanish and Irish.

As well as monuments to 19th century Independence hero Jose Marti, the three other Cuban heroes most honoured with memorials in Cuba are the 20th century freedom fighters Julio Antonio Mella, Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara. The profile images of these three men, who all died young, can be seen in the ubiquitous logo on walls, billboards and other signage throughout Cuba, alongside the words, Estudio, Trabajo, Fusil, meaning, Study, Work, Rifle. Two of these three Cuban heroes were part Irish.

Fidel Castro became a revolutionary during his time as a student political organizer at Havana's university. Castro admired and emulated the 1920's university student leader Julio Antonio Mella, who fled in exile to Mexico after he became a threat to Cuban president Gerardo Machado's bloody dictatorship. Mella's mother, Cecilia McPartland, was born in Ireland, thus one of the greatest heroes of Cuban history who inspired the Cuban revolutionaries of the 1950s was of Irish ancestry. His remains are entombed in a monument in front of Havana's University.

From Mexico, Mella planned to launch a rebel attack against Machado, but the 25-year-old was assassinated before he could enact his plan. A generation later, the students of Havana University vigorously opposed Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, a military strongman who, like the previous dictator Machado,

was supported by the U.S. Government. Castro, with a law degree from Havana University, launched several lawsuits against the Batista administration. When legal attempts to oppose the corrupt regime failed, Castro organized a group of fighters and launched an attack on the heavily armed Moncada Barracks. The bloody attack failed with many casualties, and Castro and the other rebel survivors were imprisoned. Once released, in historic parallel to the life of Mella, Castro fled in exile to Mexico. From Mexico, along with 81 other revolutionaries, he launched an attack on Batista in a boat called the Granma.

A bust of Mella can be seen inside La Manzana de Gomez (the Gomez block) facing Havana's Central Park. Built in 1910, the building was once full of bustling shoppers, all seeking the fine imported goods demanded by Havana's upper-classes. The five-story building's interior boasts two diagonal open air pedestrian walkways with the bust of Mella at the intersection. Foreign businesses and shops were closed after the revolution and replaced by state-owned enterprises. Now the stores are eerily half-empty, and pigeons roost on the upper floors that show decades of decline. A walk through the interior of the block reveals that it looks like a set in a post-apocalypse movie. Vegetation sprouts from cracks in the concrete and pounding tropical storms have left their mark with broken windows and crumbling masonry. But it would be a mistake to assume that the once grand building has been forgotten. Plans are underway to restore the structure and convert the empty upper floors into modern hotel accommodations. The Saratoga Hotel and Parque Central Hotel are evidence of the accomplishments achieved through the vision of the Historiador's office.

Habaguanex and the Historiador's office face the challenge of satisfying the ever-increasing demand for visitor accommodation, while retaining the charm and character of Old Havana through restoration rather than demolition. When the United States finally drops its travel ban there will be a flood of American visitors to Cuba, the proud and independent island nation located less than 100 miles from Key West, Florida. Havana's history and culture are the greatest commodities the city of Havana has to offer the world. And part of that history is the story of the Irish diaspora to the New World; echoes of the past that still reverberate in the cobblestone streets and old buildings of historic Havana.



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Che's CELTIC CONNECTION

Jim Fitzpatrick, the artist who created the iconic Che Guevara image known around the world, is sticking to his pacifist principals as he awaits the legal transfer of his artwork to Cuba. Here he tells Donald Wiedman why.

In today's world where hundreds of people are 'famous just for being famous', Dublin resident and Celtic Art master draftsman Jim Fitzpatrick is perhaps the exact opposite.

Fitzpatrick is, and has been since 1968, the unknown Irish artist behind the famous, un-copyrighted, widely reproduced – and now truly iconic – red and black Che Guevara poster, and the millions of lookalike t-shirts, murals, accessories and tattoos since.

Fitzpatrick's artwork, based on a photo by then unknown Cuban photographer Alberto Korda, was creatively spurred on by his own youthful outrage over the death of his revolutionary hero in October 1967. Hand drawn – with Che's eyes altered to look slightly upwards, and a jagged 'F' for Fitzpatrick tucked into the lower right hand corner – Fitzpatrick's artistic inspiration also came from his Irish Catholic education.

"My 'ideas' come from a lot of different sources," he said, "but my 'ideals' I was given by my educators. I went to a Catholic school, and the Franciscans who educated me taught long lessons on injustice in Latin America. It was Father Leonardo Boff of Brazil, the Franciscan, who came up with 'Liberation Theology' – a most revolutionary concept.

"Being a Catholic Christian, I take the teachings of Jesus, and apply them in a revolutionary way," Fitzpatrick explained,



Jim Fitzpatrick

believing that if Che had been a Christian, he would have followed the same ideals. "Of course he wasn't. But if you're dealing with a brutal regime like the Batista regime, pacifism will get you nowhere. I just stick to pacifist principals if I can, so I disagree with Che on certain things."

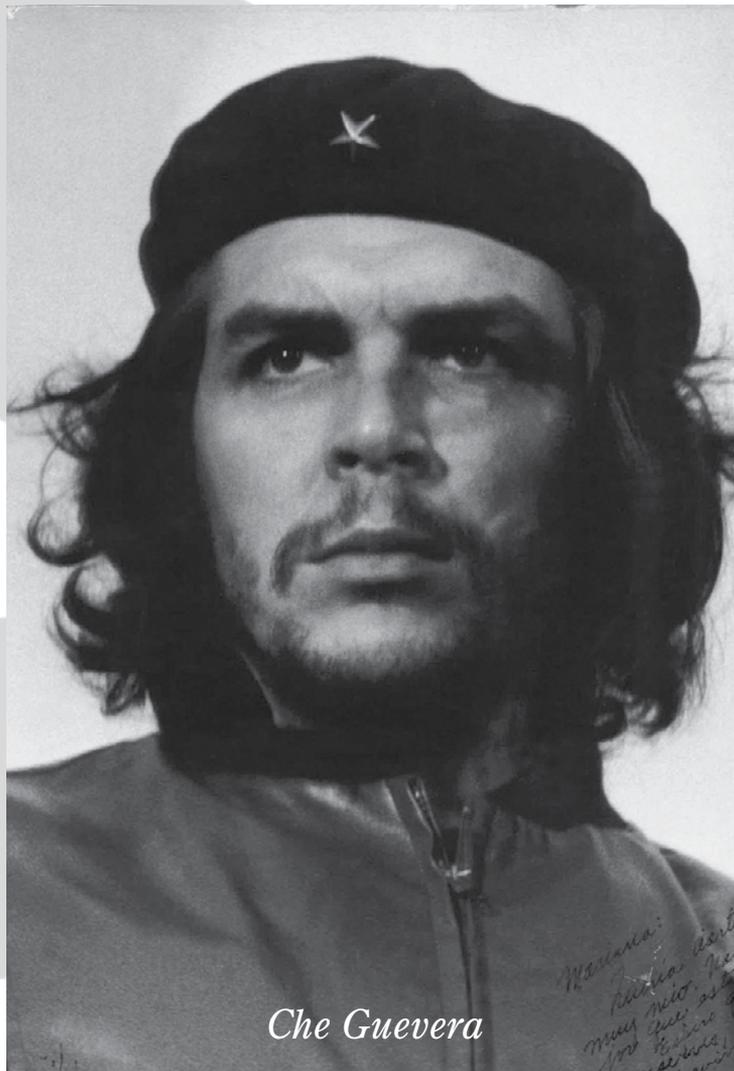
Fitzpatrick once briefly crossed paths with the famous Guevara, in 1963

when Fitzpatrick was 15 and working in a hotel in Kilkee, County Clare. With Che's plane grounded by fog during a refueling, Fitzpatrick recounted, "Che and his entourage came into the pub I was working in. I came from a very 'lefty' political family, so it was no surprise to me that I recognized him immediately – though he was surprised that I recognized him.

"You don't see very many tough-looking, Latin cowboy types – but that's what they reminded me of. There were swing doors in the hotel, and they just walked in like they were walking into a Wild West saloon. They had this very militaristic look about them, but they were very amiable, very funny."

Fitzpatrick remembered Che's English as excellent. "Really the essence of our brief conversation was that he was very proud to be Irish, and have Irish blood." Che's paternal grandmother was Ana Lynch, a descendent of the Lynch family from Galway. Family head Patrick Lynch immigrated to Buenos Aires in the mid-1800s. "Which amazed me," Fitzpatrick exclaimed, "I'd never heard of that!"

After Che's murder in Bolivia in 1967, Fitzpatrick – by then a grown working artist in Dublin – was moved to create his historic red and black Che poster, one of an original series of different



Che Guevara

multi-coloured renditions. True to form, the passionate pacifist never thought to copyright his artwork. It was free for all to use, anytime. To Fitzpatrick, it is a work of propaganda and better people accept it as such.

Now, forty-five years later, his 1968 poster is partnered in world history with Korda's 1960 photograph as one of the most powerful symbols of our times.

However, undeniably over the years, the iconic image's fame has also been bolstered by its unrelenting, unlicensed usage all over the world in consumer product branding, packaging, advertising and much more.

So now Jim Fitzpatrick is "doing the right thing" and gathering and transferring the legal rights to his Che artwork to the people of Cuba, via the Guevara and Korda families. "I had all the legal documentation drawn up pro bono by a lawyer who's the copyright expert in the whole of Ireland," Fitzpatrick said. "I would like to see it resolved in such a way that would stop someone else from making vast amounts of money from it. I don't want to see it disappear off t-shirts, but I do have problems with cigarette companies, condom makers and people like that using the image.

"The Cuban Ambassador to Ireland, Teresita Trujillo is one of my greatest allies in trying to get this thing sorted, and I've spent a considerable amount of time with Che's daughter. For me it's simply a matter of signing the piece of paper and handing it over. But both the Guevara and Korda families live in Cuba, so you have to be very diplomatic. I promised them I would do nothing until I hear from them, and I'm still waiting. So this could be a long wait.

"The Ambassador gets it, but in Cuba – because of isolation and

sanctions – I don't think they have any idea how important holding the copyright to this image is long term. Trujillo is leaving this country at the end of the year, so I definitely have to get it done. Then I will be able to go to Cuba and hold my up head high, and say I've done the right thing."

Fitzpatrick hopes the legal licensing of his artwork might one day go to help all

Cubans. "I would love to see it end up paying for some of the bills in the Cuban medical system. It's huge and extraordinary and all free, but very expensive."

On top of the fine artistic skill and passion he brings to all of his artwork – be it his catalogues of Celtic Art, Rock Art album covers or 20-year portfolio of "Mostly Women" – Fitzpatrick is driven by his love for Irish genetics. He is particularly fascinated by the way genetics works, and the way people can misinterpret it.

"I am a six-foot-two, red haired Irishman," he explained. "My genes are Mesopotamian, so where does the red hair gene come from?" He laughed, "We're late-comers who arrived around 100 BC, 'Neo-Celtic' you know. I recently met Che's two granddaughters. One was typically Cuban, with dark hair. The other was light skinned, with red hair and freckles. So you see," just like Fitzpatrick's famous poster, "the Irish gene does come back to stir up trouble every now and then."

www.JimFitzpatrick.com

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Las Estaciones

254 Calle Amargura, Havana, Cuba

Old Havana is a cornucopia of culture; a city of over 2 million people that has a rich and diverse history and heritage, the Cuban capital is an onslaught of sights and sounds that will overwhelm the senses of even the most seasoned traveller.

There, along the narrow Calle Amargura (between Calle Cuba and Calle Havana) sits Las Estaciones paladar bar, a small lounge that is quickly becoming popular with both Cubans and visitors from all countries.

Las Estaciones is one of those special places in Cuba where foreigners can enjoy a delicious meal and a drink, mingle with locals, try out a few Spanish phrases and make new friendships.

“Our clients are from everywhere,” shared co-owner Maria Elina Marín via email. “Cubans, foreign people, young people, old people...it is a very diverse group of patrons. And we are very happy to say that, in almost one year of operations, we have not had a bad client!”

A paladar bar is vastly different from the larger, state-owned and controlled restaurants. As a privately run business, it usually provides better and less-expensive food, and offers stronger customer service in clean and comfortable surroundings.

Originally from the Spanish Canary Islands, Marín and her partner Julio Curiel opened the doors of their establishment just a few weeks before CeltFest Cuba in 2012.

“The place was a ruined old store that we converted into a pub,” she explained.

The couple’s passion for Celtic culture became core to the locale’s mandate.

“From the very start, we wanted to support the Celtic arts here,” she noted, “and so we began hosting regular events during CeltFest last year.”

The nightly jam-sessions proved so popular with local players that, after the festival ended, a group of Cuban-Celtic musicians opted to carry on with the informal get-togethers; meeting there on Monday and Wednesday evenings, a handful of pipers, fiddlers, singers and dancers commemorate Celtic customs with jigs and reels.

The Caribbean nation has a storied connection with Ireland that goes back hundreds of years (see our story on the Irish in Havana in this issue). And, while that relationship has remained, it

hasn’t always been easy for Cubans of Celtic descent to celebrate their ancestry.

Canadian fiddler Maria Watson remembers an ill-fated attempt to host an initial session at a state-owned bar during the first CeltFest in 2010.

“We had asked the bartender if we could play a few acoustic tunes and he cheerfully agreed and we played some music. The bartender liked it. The other patrons liked it. We had only started the third or fourth tune when a military man swept in and angrily demanded that we stop. The session came to an abrupt halt. We packed up our instruments and, as we left, the bartender gave us an apologetic look, but there was very little he could do. That particular bar was not an authorized music venue, and the uniformed official was not going to make any exceptions.”

It was a very different experience on her most recent visit to Cuba this winter.

“Las Estaciones is much more free-spirited. There were many Cuban musicians performing the evening I arrived. A harpist named Cynthia Coto Picart was there with her mother, Gina Picart, a writer of Celtic-themed Cuban books. Will Calver, the tall handsome Cuban gaitero known as the “Ebony Piper” dropped by and played his Galician gaita. The duo “Sean am” (Angélica Góngora and Luis Gutiérrez) played fiddle and bodhran. And the fabulous Cuban bagpiper Alexander “Winnie” Suarez Mendez performed with his Uilleann pipes.

“I congratulated Julio for having the best Celtic session in Cuba. He laughed that it was probably the only regular Celtic session in Cuba.”

Recently, the restaurant was named by Celtic Life International as the Best Celtic Pub in the Caribbean for 2013. The award was presented to Marín and Curiel at a special ceremony this past St. Patrick’s Day.

The celebrations continue on April 6, as the venue hosts its first Tartan Day festivities, and also later in the month during this year’s CeltFest, April 13-20.

“The Celtic artists love the atmosphere of the pub,” said Marín. “The place, the people and the music are a fantastic mix you cannot find at any other place in Cuba.”



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Saturday Aug. 24th Workshops, Gaelic Song Circle, Gaelic Story-telling, and an evening Square Dance

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Lobster Crêpes

Spring has come once again to rescue us from the icy grip of winter. The signs are everywhere, but I am noticing in particular the fishermen along the Arisaig, NS Northumberland Strait from where my husband hails. The fisher folk who grow up by the ocean and fall in love with it are readying for a new season. Traps are being investigated and holes mended, if need be. Boats and their motors are checked before being slipped into the waters. The parish priest will come down to the shore, where he will bless the fishermen and their boats and pray for safe voyages and abundant catches. Cape Breton singer-songwriter Allister MacGillivray, captured these feelings so well in his beautiful ballad, Sea People. Here are just a few lines – be sure to read the rest of it!

*They go down with their nets to the shore,
They go down like their fathers before;
And the sea seems to say, "If you ride me today,
I will grant you the wealth of my store."*

It is time for lobster! Prepare a lobster crêpe, pair it with salad, white wine or beer and you have a meal fit for a king.

INGREDIENTS

Crêpes

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp white sugar
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 cups milk
- 2 tbsp melted butter
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 eggs

Lobster Fill

- 2 cups lobster meat cooked and chopped
- ¼ cup butter
- 2 tbsp minced onion
- 2 tbsp chives
- 1 cup mushroom
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup warm milk
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- ½ cup yellow peppers

PREPARATION

Crêpes

Mix dry ingredients together

In a separate bowl blend the butter and milk together

Whisk the eggs and add to the liquid

Add vanilla to liquids and stir. Blend in the dry ingredients and beat until a smooth batter is formed.

To cook the crepes, spread about 3 tablespoons of batter in a lightly buttered skillet

Cook for about 1 ½ minutes, then turn the crepe and cook for about 1 minute over medium heat

These can be prepared ahead and kept in a covered container with a piece of wax paper between each one.

Lobster Fill

Melt butter in a skillet

Add onion, chives, mushrooms and cook over medium heat until the onion is translucent

Put flour and milk in a covered jar and shake

Add milk mixture to the skillet with vegetables and heat until thickened

Add lemon juice, zest, lobster and pepper

Cook just until the pepper is softened – about five more minutes on medium heat.

-Spread about three tablespoons of fill on each crepe and roll

-Serve at once with a salad of your choice

Bon Appétit! Cabrini 

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with Andrew Ferguson

The recent St. Patrick's Day celebration reminded me that for the first time in a century the Irish whiskey industry is experiencing a revival. In the 1700s, there were thousands of stills operating in Ireland. At the turn of the 20th century, there were just 28 Irish distilleries, albeit large ones and their whiskey was considered the finest in the world. By comparison, the Scots had more than 200, mostly small independent producers. By the 1970s, there were just two distilleries operating in Ireland, one in the North and another in the Republic, yet there were still more than 100 in Scotland. What happened?

The Irish, proud of their whiskey's reputation, were not as quick to adopt new technologies, like the Coffey or Column still. Then there was World War I, the Irish War of Independence and finally the Irish Civil War. Excluded from the British Empire, the Irish whiskey industry was hanging on by a thread when the nearly fatal final blow was struck – prohibition in the U.S. Contrary to what you might think, prohibition was a boon for the whisky producers of Scotland and Canada, as their products could be smuggled into the U.S. across the Canadian border and from other British possessions in the Atlantic and Caribbean. The Irish had no such opportunity. Their final hope rested on a visit from Joseph Kennedy, JFK's father, in the 1930s.

Claiming to have advance knowledge of when prohibition would end, Kennedy presented Irish whiskey producers with a plan to store their whiskey in warehouses around the U.S., and then flood the market with it after prohibition. This would have given them a strategic leg up on other whisky producers. But the pragmatic Irish were not swayed by Kennedy, and even if they had been, they had virtually nothing to sell him. So, he crossed the Irish Sea and struck deals with a number of Scottish firms, including a small grocer with its own blend – John Walker & Sons.

The first glimmers of hope for the Irish whiskey industry emerged in the late 1980s, when the enterprising John Teeling bought a potato ethanol plant and converted it into the Cooley Whiskey Distillery. When its doors opened, there were only two other distilleries operating in the whole of Ireland – Bushmills

in the North, and the juggernaut Midleton Distillery in Cork. Both distilleries were owned by Irish Distillers, a subsidiary of Pernod Ricard. Midleton produced most Irish whiskey brands, both under license and for themselves including: Jameson; Tullamore Dew; Red Breast; Paddy's; and Powers, to name just a few. Irish Distillers made a hostile bid to take over Cooley, but the Irish government, concerned the industry was already in too few hands, dismissed the idea.

In 2007, Cooley reopened the old Kilbeggan Distillery (Est. 1757), the oldest surviving whiskey distillery in the World. Then in 2010, William Grant & Sons of Scotland (Glenfiddich & Balvenie) bought the rights to the Tullamore Dew brand, and immediately announced plans to rebuild the long closed distillery. Over the last three years, plans have been announced for an additional three to four independent distilleries in Ireland. It seems the fortunes of the Irish whiskey industry have finally turned. Here are some Irish whiskeys with which to toast the industry's future:

Bushmills 16 Year – Always a great single malt, half matured in Bourbon and the other half in Sherry casks then married and finished in Port Pipes, \$64.49.

Connemara Cask Strength – It's a myth that Irish whiskey is never peated. This lightly peated single malt is rich and balanced. \$69.99.

Jameson Select Reserve – A small batch pot still Irish whiskey, this very small batch bottling is surprisingly rich, yet very smooth, having been matured in both Bourbon & Sherry casks, \$55.99.

Kilbeggan 18 Year – This is a tropical, creamy and round blended Irish whiskey with soft oak notes and a long clean finish, \$156.49.

Midleton Very Rare 2011 – This triple distilled pot still Irish whiskey is released once a year in very small batches. It consists of whiskeys from 12-25 years of age, depending on the batch, \$160.49.

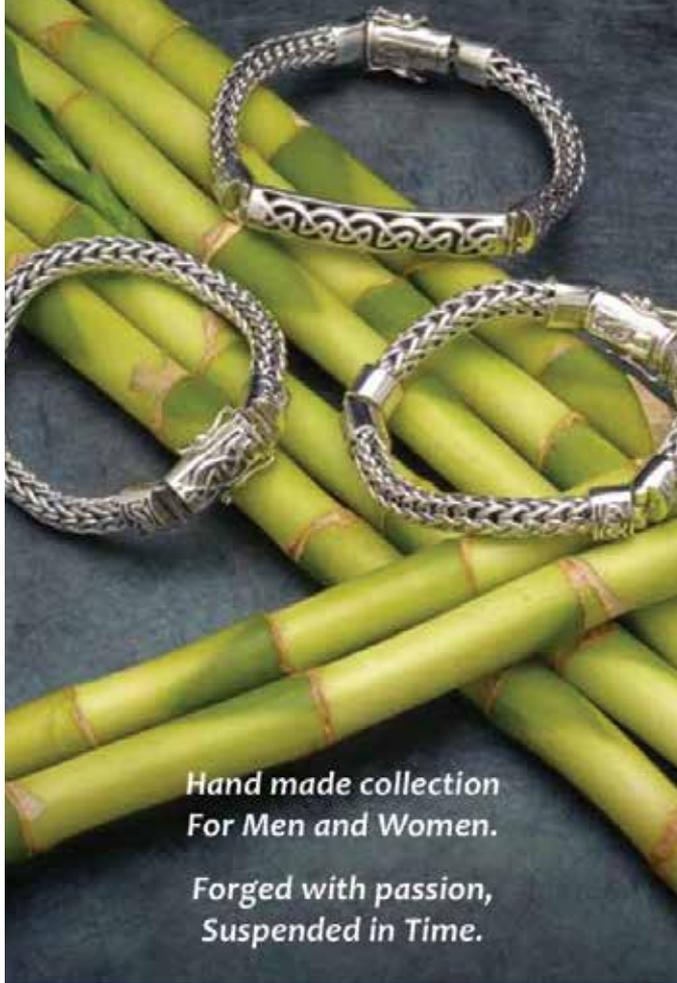
Teeling Hybrid – A vatting of single malt whiskeys from Cooley Distillery in Ireland and Bruichladdich Distillery on Islay in Scotland. Matured 10 years, 8 of them vatted together, \$64.99.

Tullamore Dew – There are still some rough edges to this blended Irish whiskey, which comes from the pot still component, but overall it is soft and clean, \$31.99.



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Fade Street Social

Fade Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

Dublin is a city at a crossroads. With one foot steeped in a rich and storied heritage and the other on the contemporary cutting edge, the signs are everywhere: architecture that seamlessly blends past, present and future and art and culture that both pays homage to history and aims to rise from its ashes. It is a place and a people that aches to hold onto its identity and yet embraces the politics and economy of globalization.

Perhaps nowhere is this mingling of new and old better displayed than at Fade Street Social Restaurant, an open-concept, multi-level eatery in Dublin's famed Temple Bar district where celebrity chef Dylan McGrath's latest venture offers the complete Irish dining experience; a mouthwatering mélange of traditional fare with a modern twist.

Starting with a half-dozen Oysters in the Shell (€11.95), a tasty tone was set for the soiree; bathed in chilled, cured salmon cream, cucumber, lemon shallot dressing and seaweed, the salty serving was succulent, savoury and simply scrumptious.

Next up was the wood-fired Flatbread (€9); a fresh feast of fried chorizo, chorizo oil, tomato sauce, tomato petals, onion lyonnaise, pesto, rosemary, black olives, red pepper slices, red pepper hummus, baby squid, baby mozzarella, baba ghanoush, smoked paprika, torn basil and coriander that both teased and pleased the palate.

Similarly, the tender tastes and textures of in-house appetizers Colcannon (€4.75 - creamy mashed potatoes with creamed kale) and Celeric Cabbage and Apple (€7 - celeriac purée with sticky glazed cabbage, apple purée topped with potato mousse) were equally light and gentle on the belly.

The real treat this night, however, was to follow with the Braised Lamb Stew (€16.5). An updated take on a classic Irish dish, the perfectly proportioned platter was smothered with spiced cream drops of potato mousse and crispy balsamic fillet, scented with lovage and celery leaves and served with crusty bread and hazelnut butter. Subtly seasoned and sautéed, the satisfying entrée

exemplified all that is delicious and delectable about Dublin's transition from yesteryear.



The selections would not have been complete without proper offerings from both the fully-stocked bar and the fine wine list. A cache of creative cocktails included the Slippery Sloe (€10.20 - a mixture of Sipsmiths sloe gin with a quinine-based aperitif, flavoured with fresh citrus oils and almond) and Murphy's Measure (€12.95 - Becherovka and French aperitif Lillet Blanc, combined in equal parts and shaken hard over ice with a large measure of Chopin Potato Vodka and two dashes of aromatic bitters).

The recommended vins du soir did well to complement the meal also; both the Pieve de Pitti Cerretello, Chianti Superiore, 2008 (€44 - Tuscany, Italy) and the Marble Leaf Sauvignon Blanc, 2011 (€39 - Marlborough, New Zealand) were well-balanced, bringing out the best in the banquet.

The Banoffi (€7.5) - a not-too-sweet sampling of banana purée and sorbet, caramelized condensed milk, vanilla crème fraiche, caramel jelly and foam, and sided with digestive biscuits and crisps - was an ideal companion for a rich dessert of time-honored Irish coffee, bringing the culinary quest to a close.

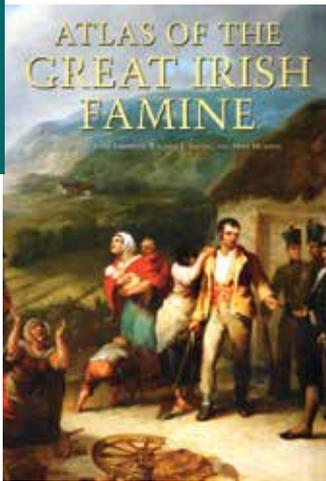
Suffice to say that service was superior and sincere, with Aoife ("it's pronounced EE-FA here") checking in every quarter hour to ensure that both my plate and glass were topped-up. Likewise, several of the staff and kitchen crew could be seen chatting-up the diverse clientele - the

world-renowned Irish hospitality on exhibit, and in keeping with the welcoming locale and décor.

Credit Chef McGrath for his efforts to redefine, and refine, the modern Irish menu; much like Dublin itself, his pairing of past and present leaves a lasting, lingering impression. Reservations are recommended. - SPC

www.fadestreetsocial.com



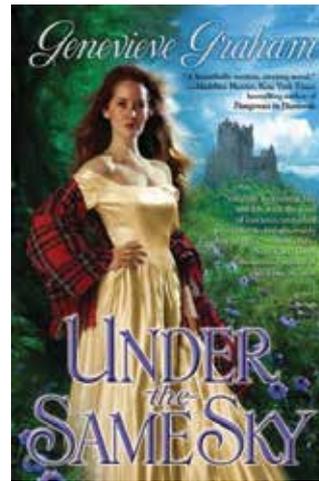
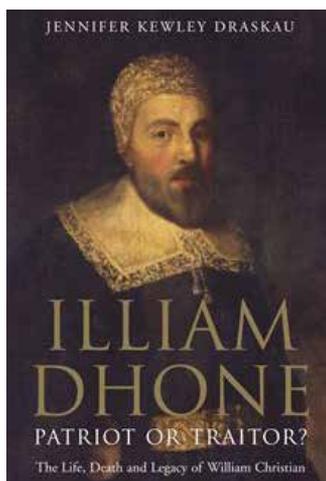


Atlas of the Great Irish Famine
New York University Press / 710pp / \$75

At more than 700 pages, and with over 100 illustrations, the Atlas of the Great Irish Famine is an epic exploration of the root causes and ongoing impact of the most crucial event in modern Irish history. Drawing upon a host of editors and experts, the terrific tome is a captivating collection of facts, figures and essays. More than a mere academic exercise, the work succeeds at telling the tale behind the terrible tragedy by bringing both the people and place to life with a series of real-life accounts and recollections. This often-overlooked, long-overdue take on the perilous plight will attract and inspire not only those already familiar with the calamity, but younger readers wishing to better understand where, and who, they come from. ~ SPC

Illiam Dhone: Patriot or Traitor?
By Jennifer Kewley Draskau
Profile Books / 288pp / £20

William Christian, aka Illiam Dhone (dark-haired William), who led the Rising during the English Civil War that facilitated Oliver Cromwell's take-over of the Island, was executed for treason in 1663 by the 8th Earl of Derby, (feudal lord of the Isle of Man), and remains the most controversial figure in Manx history. Jennifer Kewley Draskau's new biography may help readers determine whether he was a patriot or a traitor. Born into a powerful Manx family, Illiam was later appointed Receiver-General and became the only Manx Governor of the Isle of Man, but accusations of incest and misappropriation of funds tarnished his reputation. This well-researched book confronts Illiam's actions, and invites the reader to judge why this seemingly obscure seventeenth-century Manx official inspired in the powerful Earl of Derby a desire for bloodthirsty vengeance, leading to Illiam's hasty execution by firing squad at Hango Hill, near Castletown – an event that incurred the wrath of King Charles II and rocked the English legal system to its foundations. ~ Valerie Caine

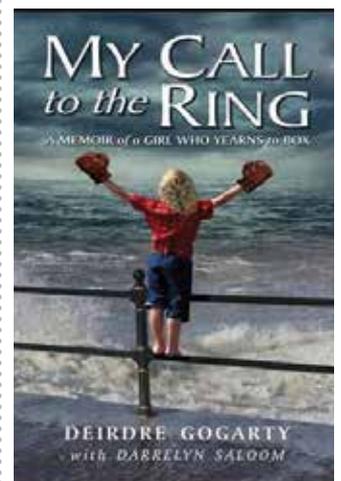


Under the Same Sky / Sound of the Heart
By Genevieve Graham
Penguin / 336pp / \$12

Strong sales of Genevieve Graham's historical romances Under the Same Sky and Sound of the Heart mean the books will be re-published in mass market format later this year, just months after being launched as trade paperbacks. The Canadian author and her publisher are clearly hoping that the new, smaller format will create a fresh market for the books that bring a romantic and mysterious element (several characters have second sight) to the upheavals that occurred in Scotland during the 18th century and which led many to flee to North America. Although the books are billed as historical romances, some might think their greatest strength lies in Graham's skill in evoking historical detail and conveying the complex emotions precipitated by war, forced emigration and the strangeness of a new country. Under the Same Sky will be republished on July 2 and Sound of the Heart on October 1. A third book, called Somewhere to Dream, will be released in mass market format on November 5. ~ C.M.

My Call to the Ring; A Memoir of a Girl Who Yearns to Box
By Deirdre Gogarty and Darrelyn Saloom
Glasnevin Press / 228pp / \$20

Irish pugilist Deidre Gogarty fought the odds during the 1980s and 1990s on her way to becoming the Women's International Boxing Federation's World Featherweight Champion; as, owing to the age-old prejudices inherent to a male-dominated sport women's boxing was outlawed in Ireland until only recently. Gritty and gutsy, Gogarty's story comes to life through a strong, confessional voice and a solid, sweeping narrative arc. The detailed descriptions of her regimen, her thoughts in and out of the ring, and her struggle for acceptance, both from herself and from governing bodies, bring added colour and flair to the work. My Call to the Ring is an inspiring insider's look at a courageous career that laid the foundation for others – including champion and 2012 gold-medalist Katie Taylor – to follow. ~ SPC

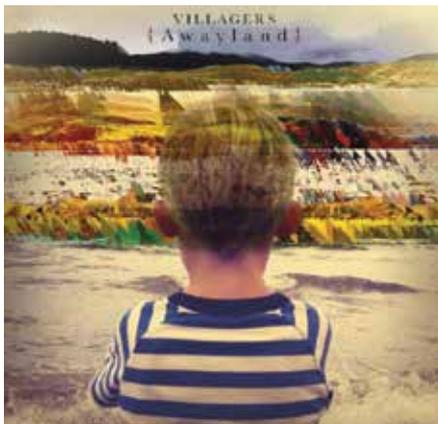




Dropkick Murphys

Signed and Sealed in Blood

Quincy, Massachusetts mainstays The Dropkick Murphys waste no time getting down to business with their eighth studio recording; *The Boys Are Back* signals a return to their Celt-Punk roots; things roll right along with the rollicking Prisoner's Song and Rose Tattoo; *The Battle Rages On* hits like a fist, while *Burn and My Hero* tip a hat to The Clash and The Ramones. The gentler *End of the Night* closes the bar with a nod and wink to The Pogues and Bruce Springsteen. Despite the influx of influences, *Signed and Sealed in Blood* is an American original, firmly cementing the band's head, heart, hands and reputation as one of the genre's all-time musical heavyweights. As such, this one best works its magic at maximum volume. ~ SPC



Villagers

Awayland

After all the accolades and awards following the release of 2010's *Becoming A Jackal*, Dublin's Villagers skip the sophomore jinx with this 11-song selection that runs an edgy emotional gamut. From the soft-spoken folk of *My Lighthouse* to the supple electronic beats of *Rhythm Composer*, *Awayland* is an intriguing and introspective foray through fresh musical frontiers. With hints of Radiohead, U2, Snow Patrol and Leonard Cohen, the Irish quintet dives deep in *Earthly Pleasure*, *The Waves*, *Judgment Call*, *Grateful Song* and the gorgeous, plush title-track. Atmospheric arrangements and instrumentation are plenty, but it is the sheer strength of the songwriting that sets Villagers apart from their peers and helps redefine contemporary Celtic music. A must hear, and an early frontrunner for album of the year. ~ SPC



Alycia Putnam

Wired For Sound

Halifax, Nova Scotia-based fiddler Alycia Putnam comes of age with her third full-length recording *Wired for Sound*, a 13-song mélange of melodic medleys that bridge past and present. *The Mystery Motorcycle* and *Banshee* on the Harbour open in sure, steady foot-stompin' style; *Johsefin's Waltz* is a traditional ballad, while *The Mad Bulgar* explores gypsy soul. *The Tippy Butterfly* shines a light on Putnam's newfound musical maturity as both a player and arranger, and the diversity of *Colin's Fiddle* and *The One with the Strathspeys* showcases a solid supporting cast, specifically the stylings of multi-instrumentalists Dave Gunning and Darren McMullen. An engaging and entertaining selection from one of North America's finest young fiddlers, *Wired for Sound* captures and conveys the Celtic Heart with great creative charm. ~ SPC



The Mahones

Angels & Devils

The other great band from Kingston, Ontario kick-starts its ninth recording - and its twenty-fourth year (!) - with *Shakespeare Road*, a down 'n' dirty little ditty that sets the tone for an upbeat array of Celt-Rock classics to come, including a nasty title-track, the Doughboys-esque *The Waiting*, the Iggy-inspired raw power of *The King of Copenhagen* and *Past the Pint of No Return*, and two kick-ass medleys that will get the Celtic blood boiling. The closing chaos of *Stiff Little Fingers' Tin Soldiers* puts a punk-pop exclamation point to the proceedings, leaving listeners reeling with the feeling that they have been taken out to the woodshed for a good, old-fashioned sonic spankin'. Make sure to catch The Mahones on tour in the coming months. ~ SPC



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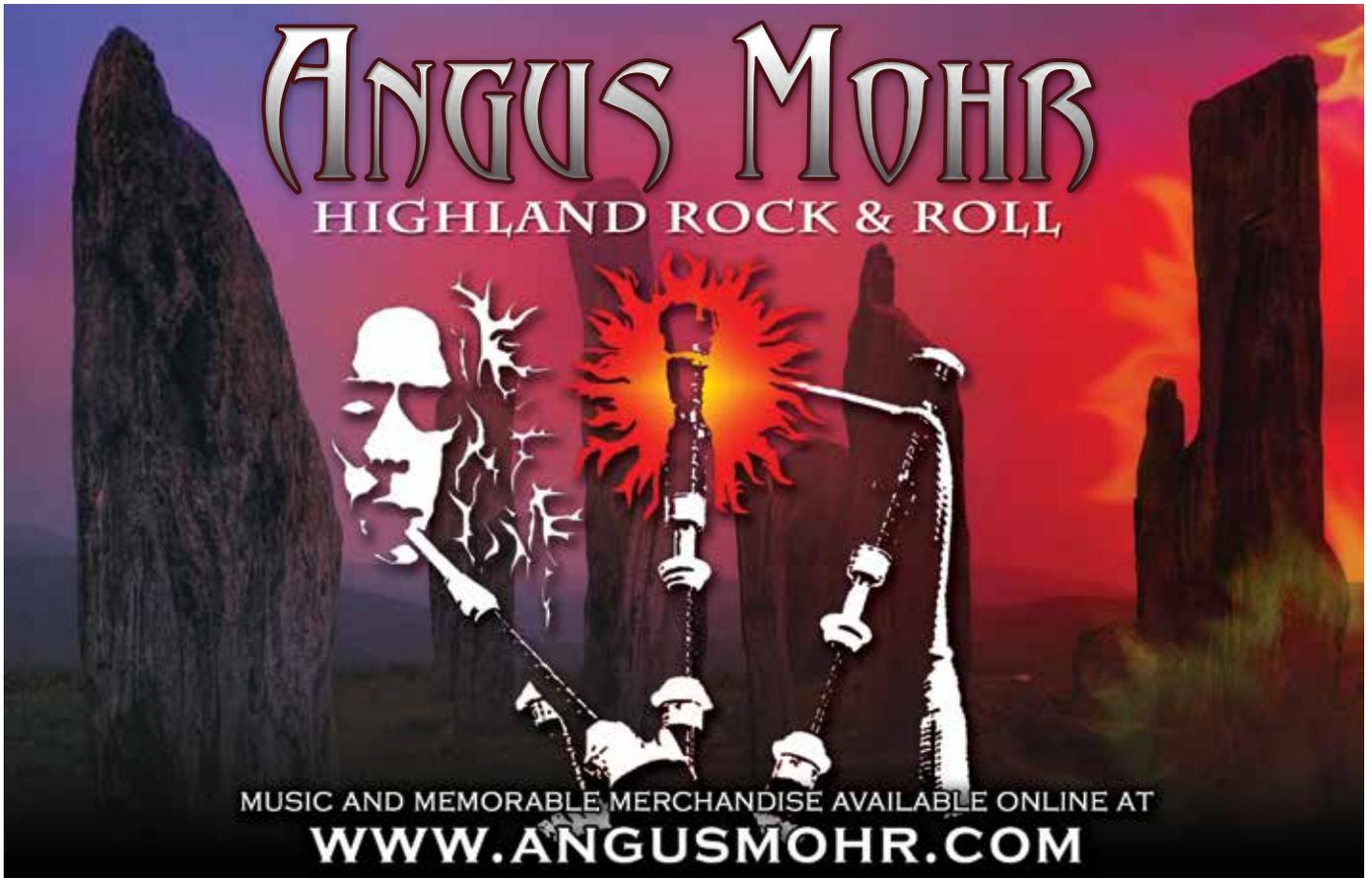


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Wilber Calver

Cuban piper Wilber Calver, aka The Ebony Piper, is celebrating the recent release of his first album, *Diaspora*, an achievement that feels doubly special as Calver has never had formal music lessons and has had to overcome many hurdles.

The piper, who now lives in the Swiss Alps, said his album blends Celtic melodies, which he plays on the Galician bagpipe or *gaita*, with Afro-Cuban roots.

"I'm not a traditional bagpiper, and neither's my style or sound, although I would be grateful to have the techniques of a traditional piper," Calver told *Celtic Life Intl.*

"My style and sound have always been Afro-Cuban-Celtic. My cadence is a bit more syncopated. There are elements of Cuban son, Afro-Cuban rumba, jazz, jig, reggae and more."

Reviewers have praised this unusual blending of styles. According to *The Jazz Mann*, *Diaspora* is an extraordinary record, made unique by Calver's playing. Saxophone star Courtney Pine described the album as "a brilliant-sounding original".

Calver said the *Diaspora* project started more than 13 years ago, but progress was slow.

"In Cuba, if you were not a music school graduate you would not be accepted into any of the artistic companies and, if you did not belong to any of these companies, you could not play at official places such as cabaret, nightclubs, hotels and theaters. I was offered contracts to play in Turkey and the Bahamas, but for those reasons it was not possible for me."

His luck changed when he arrived in Switzerland in 2009 and found friends and musicians, including British composer and producer, Alex Wilson. He and Wilson began working on *Diaspora* in May, 2010, assisted by Swiss cultural groups *SüdKulturFonds* and *Schwyz-Kultur*.

As a child, Calver saw the bagpipes only in old movies.

"Thanks to the USSR children's magazine *Micha* I knew that this amazing instrument is called the *gaita*. I did not have any idea about this instrument, but was deeply impressed by it. I felt

that it made me travel within time. Today, I know that the first bagpipes I ever heard were Highland Pipes. It was strange to see men in skirts, but I loved their costumes and the elegant way they played. I wanted to be like them.

"In 1996, when I met a piper in Havana, I wondered how the pipes would sound with bagpipes and Bata drums. From that moment, I had the desire to hear the two instruments played together. Some thought I was crazy, and others thought that what I said was not important as I did not study music. My first musical blending was the *Dance of San Roque* with *Guaguancó* pace (a form of rumba). I wanted to demonstrate the blend was possible."

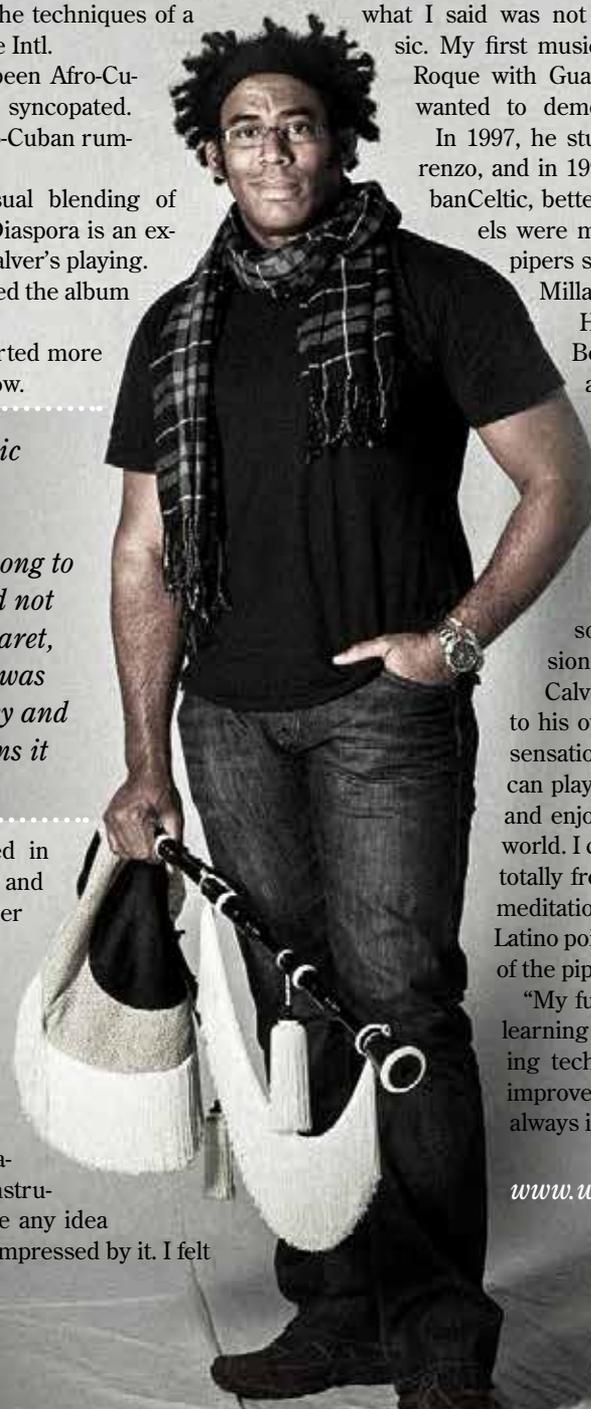
In 1997, he studied with the teacher Eduardo Lorenzo, and in 1999 he formed his first band *AfroCubanCeltic*, better known as *Iberoson*. His role models were musicians from Galicia and Asturias; pipers such as Carlos Nuñez and bands like *Milladoiro* and *Llan de cubel*.

He was most inspired by Martyn Bennett, the genre-blurring musician and producer, who died of cancer in 2005, aged 33. "Whenever I have the blues, I listen to *Spree* from his album *Hardland* and I feel better. When I arrived in Europe in 2006, one of the first things I did was look for information about him. His story touched me a lot – he was so young and he played with such passion and energy."

Calver said the bagpipes are now central to his own life. "Not only because I feel the sensation of time travelling, but because I can play. When I play, I go deep into myself and enjoy the sensation of being in my own world. I combine different melodies and I feel totally free... The sound of the drones is like meditation to me. I can express my own Afro-Latino point of view without losing the essence of the pipes.

"My future plans are simple and consist of learning more about the bagpipes – the playing techniques and history - so that I can improve and express the many ideas I have always in my mind."

www.wilbercalver.com



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Chrissy Crowley



Always keen to keep things innovative, award-winning Canadian fiddler Chrissy Crowley has named her new CD *Last Night's Fun*, a reference to the approach she takes to studio work.

"To keep things fresh and lively, we do a lot of the final arranging the night before so that it's still exciting for everyone going into the studio and the ideas are still rolling," Crowley told Celtic Life Intl. "Everything you hear is literally last night's fun."

"For years, I've had people tell me that fiddle records lack the energy and spontaneity of live shows. I recorded after a full summer of touring and I focused on capturing a raw and live off-the-floor feeling in the studio."

It's been three years since Crowley's last CD, *The Departure*, and she says her new recording maintains a traditional style of playing but is more contemporary than her last.

"Fiddle is a loud instrument...I paid more attention to what roles I want the fiddle to have in the arrangements," she said.

"The fiddle is taking the strongest role obviously, but there are tasteful ways to enter and exit a solo and I experimented in finding the right entry points, so the overall musicianship is heard, not just the technicality." Crowley also strove to make the new album's arrangements more complex, while still incorporating different genres into traditional tunes.

"I wanted to let the various genres sound more prominently in the final mix. My music has grown a lot over the last few years as I've been exposed to exciting new sounds. As soon as I sat back and started listening to some of the final mixes of the tunes and

arrangements, I thought, jeez, it's not too hard to tell I've been travelling."

She certainly has been travelling. Still only 23 years old, Crowley has been a professional musician since the age of 15 and is often found performing around the world. Wherever she is, she finds audiences keen to experience the fiery style and pulse of Celtic music.

Her own musical roots lie on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, Canada. Her family is half Scottish and half Irish; her mom coming from Cape Breton and her father from Grand Bank, Newfoundland. Her "Newfie" grandfather played Irish fiddle and her Cape Breton grandfather played Cape Breton-Scottish fiddle.

"Both of my grandfathers passed away when I was very young so it wasn't until I was 12 that I realized how musical a family I come from. Jason Roach, a piano player, brought a fiddler to my grandmother's house and I fell in love with the music. Jason taught me the basics, and I taught myself from that point on. I used to pretend I was sick so I could stay home from school and play. I studied the Irish music as well and I've become a bit of a hybrid fiddler. I don't consider myself limited to one genre, but there will always be hints of Cape Breton in my music."

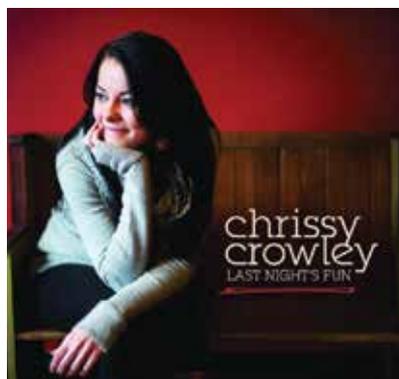
Her large family is proud to see the fiddling lineage continue.

"The only time my six siblings weren't okay with my music was when I practiced during a hockey game," Crowley said with a grin.

"I learned that lesson when I found my fiddle in the garbage."

This year, her many overseas appearances will include CeltFest Cuba in April, the Shetland Folk Festival in Scotland, and upcoming tours and festivals throughout the United States this summer.

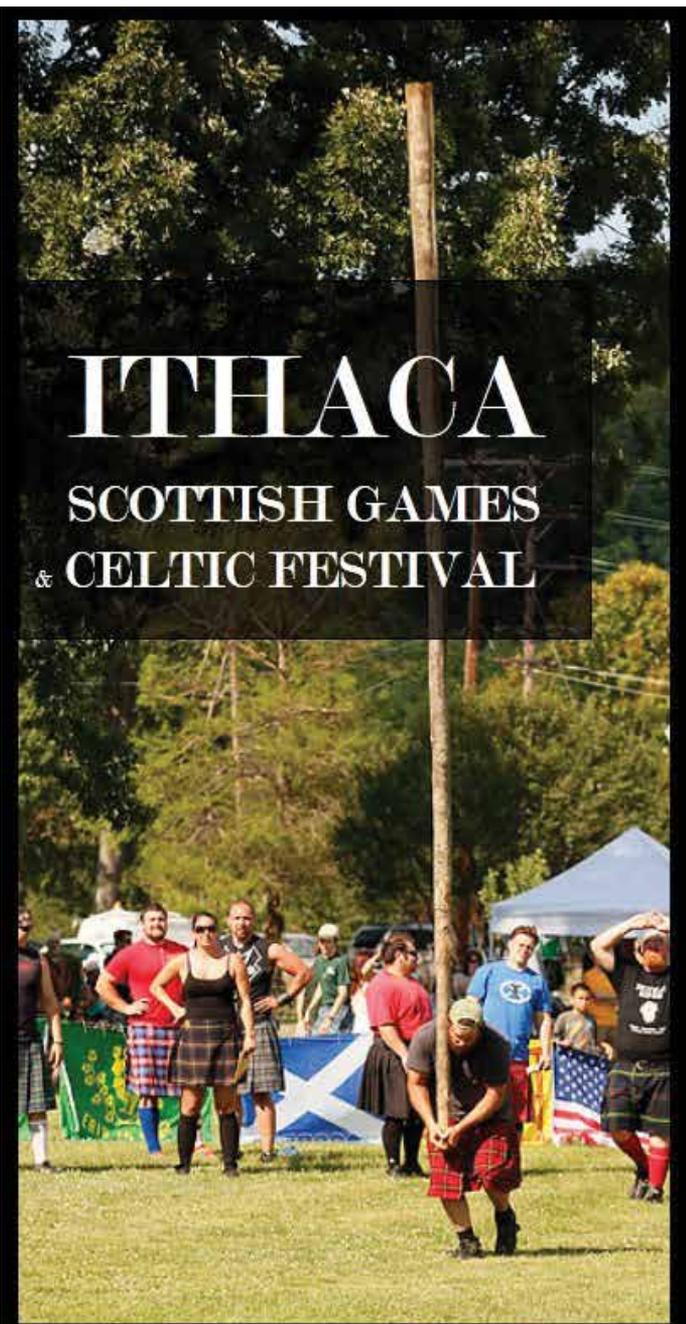
www.chrissycrowley.com



Last Night's Fun Chrissy Crowley

True to title, *Last Night's Fun* soars like an old-school, live off-the-floor Cape Breton kitchen party; Parmar's, Doodlesack Jigs, Stepdance Set, Trundle's and Castlebay Scrap are sonic single-malts, while Shenanigans and Coig highlight Crowley's fury and finesse on the fretboard. The new recording is more than a rootsy romp in Celtic hay, however; both the stirring Hillbilly Lullabily and Archibald's Aire showcase a softer side, while the pretty lull of Paddy's Perambulation portrays the energetic artist as musically wise beyond her years. Still, the crux of this collection hinges on fun, frolic and the simple joy of a young woman letting loose on her fiddle. Easy on the ears and eyes, the twenty-something performer is quickly establishing herself as the masterful heir-apparent to Natalie McMaster. ~ SPC





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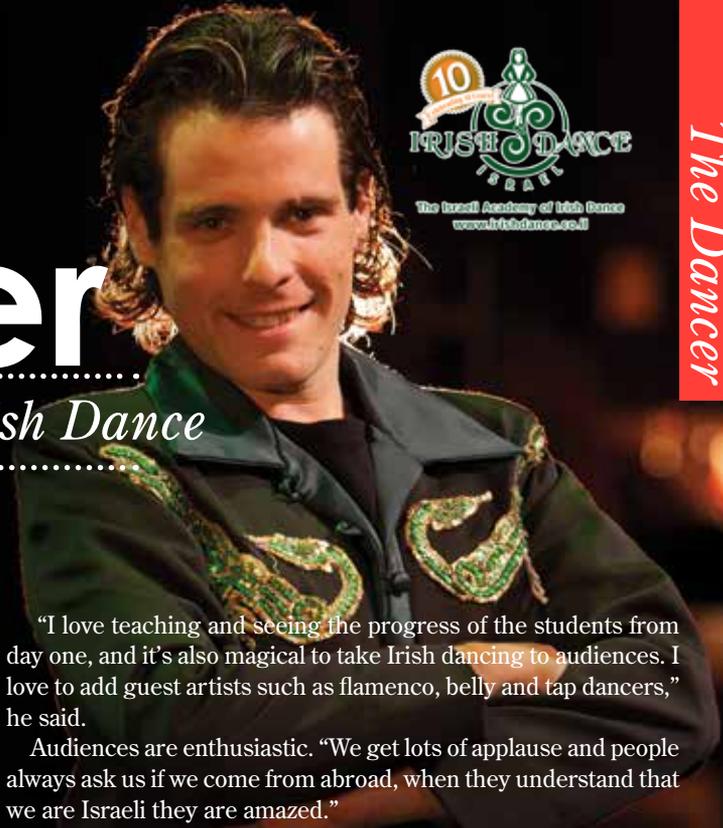
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Yair Werdyger

and the Israeli Academy of Irish Dance



Like many artistic youngsters, Yair Werdyger was captivated when he first saw the Irish dance segment that later became the hit show *Riverdance*. It was 1994 and the 13-year-old was at home in Petach Tiqwa, Israel, watching the seven-minute Irish dance segment that was performed during the Eurovision song contest.

Two years later, Werdyger saw a performance of the show *Lord of the Dance*. There and then, the young man decided he had to learn Irish dance, and now he has his own Irish dance troupe – The Israeli Academy of Irish Dance; the only one in Israel.

“I was amazed by the speed of the moves and the fact everybody moved perfectly and at exactly the same time, and of course the Irish music,” Werdyger said of those first glimpses of the art form that would direct his life.

“I’m the first and only Irish dance teacher and adjudicator in Israel certified by the Coimisiún le Rinci Gaelacha (CLRG) organization in Dublin. I danced in *Lord of the Dance* when it toured Israel last January,” Werdyger said from Hamburg where he was judging the Hamburg open feis, his first feis as an adjudicator.

Werdyger began his dance academy in 2002, changing the name to the Israeli Academy of Irish Dance in 2008. Based in Ra’anana, a city in the southern Sharon Plain in the centre of Israel, the academy now has 250 members of all ages. The students are mostly Israeli, although there are also students who come from abroad and study at the academy while in Israel.

They, and their dance troupe, *Trikotera*, which is named for the Celtic Trinity Knot symbol the triquetra, often perform around the country at corporate and private events.

“We have a show called *Magic of Ireland: The Irish Music and Dance Show of Israel* that I choreographed with my partner Alex Reznikovich, who also composed the music, which has a strong Mediterranean influence,” said Werdyger.

As well as directing, Werdyger is the lead dancer in the show.

“I love teaching and seeing the progress of the students from day one, and it’s also magical to take Irish dancing to audiences. I love to add guest artists such as flamenco, belly and tap dancers,” he said.

Audiences are enthusiastic. “We get lots of applause and people always ask us if we come from abroad, when they understand that we are Israeli they are amazed.”

Sharing his love of Irish dance with audiences is his passion.

“In our academy, I do céilí dance (Irish folk dance) to share the heritage of these dances. In Israel, there are Irish pubs and Irish bands, but we feel proud to have brought Irish dance to the country through our shows and classes.”

On St. Patrick’s Day, the dancers always perform at the Irish Ambassador’s residence in Herzliya, a city on the central coast.

At the moment, the dancers are awaiting the arrival of ‘their’ first baby.

“Tamar Lahav-Ritte, one of my former students, who is now one of my instructors and a soloist in my show, met her husband Guy in my class six years ago. They married three years ago and in March they will have their first baby. So, in my academy, people can find their love of Irish dance and Irish culture, and also their one true love,” Werdyger said with a smile.

He is planning to start more classes around Israel and take the show to new venues in Israel and abroad.

“We want to take the show to Europe, the States and elsewhere to perform to Jewish communities as well as everybody else. We have a great show and I’m proud to be Israeli – to represent the Irish culture in Israel and to take the show abroad because music and dance connect people wherever they are.”

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Eire's Kids

Ireland's recent economic downturn has forced many Irish people abroad. Over the last few years, Derek Mulveen and Michelle Melville, a married couple from Galway on Ireland's west coast, have had to watch loved ones move away. Determined to remain at home themselves, they created their own company – Eire's Kids, a business that produces Irish-themed souvenirs, gifts and books for youngsters aged three to ten.

“Both my husband and I were in the construction industry and, like many people, we found ourselves facing an uncertain future,” Melville told Celtic Life Intl. “At the same time, many of our friends and family had to travel abroad for work. As a result, they have begun their families abroad.

“Because we all married at the same time, a lot of my friends have children of a similar age and it would have been nice to have shared with them experiences such as play dates, birthday parties, Christmas and helping out when needed.

“We had always struggled to find perfect but inexpensive children's gifts that would give the recipient a little memory of Ireland, and we decided we would like to address this issue with a business of our own.”

While holidaying in the south-west of Ireland in April 2011 with their young daughter, Mikaela, the couple started work.

“We began researching the market and designing characters and products that would be recognisably Irish,” Melville said.

They came up with souvenirs and gifts, such as picture frames, clothes hooks, necklaces and bracelets and mugs. Their contemporary-looking products are decorated with pictures of the compelling Irish characters they have created, including Oisín the Brave, Princess Eire, an Irish Dancer and Girl and Boy Hurlers.

All Eire's Kids products are bright, colourful and, where possible, educational.

“We wanted always to invoke, at the heart of each product, our Irish heritage, culture and language,” Melville said. “While the look is distinctly Irish, we have ensured that the design does not create the perception of a transient product aimed at the tourist

market. Our products are designed to address all markets, especially the recently emigrated, so that their children can keep in touch with their Irish roots.”

The couple first presented their designs at Showcase Ireland in Dublin in February 2012 and began manufacturing the following month.

“From Showcase, we secured top clients such as Dublin, Shannon and Cork Duty Free, Shannon Heritage, Bunnary Castle, Blarney Woollen Mills and various North American and Irish gift stores,” Melville said. “In June 2012, we delivered our first finished products. We have now secured another 50 stores nationwide, and agreed terms with a North American distributor. In September 2012, our website came online and we had our first on-line sales by the end of the month.”

The couple are also creating books in the Irish language and have recently launched their first children's book based on Oisín the Brave, Princess Eire and their dragon, Orane of N'Scaul. Oisín the Brave - Moon Adventure is the first of six books based on the characters' adventures.

“We introduce the Irish language slowly into all storylines with visual Irish learning at the back of each book,” Melville explained.

Eire's Kids faces considerable competition from within the gift market but has no direct competitors, Melville said. The couple has chosen to widen the appeal of their products by keeping prices low.

“As with any new company, finance is tight and getting our message across without a large marketing budget is hard work, although we have found our products are hitting a nerve with customers who are then spreading the word. But there is still a lot of work to do.

“In 2013, we hope to break the U.K, American, Canadian and Australian markets and have books picked up by a publishing house. We also want to develop two further ideas; these are our range of Love Irish Dancing products and Making Irish Easy, which is the method we will use to develop our books, web pages, and hopefully apps. We want children abroad to stay in touch with the Irish language in an easy and fun way.”

www.eireskids.com





Given its bardic roots, it's no surprise that the Clan Currie Society organizes and supports many artistic projects. This year will be an especially busy one for the Clan, whose members began organizing elements of New York's Tartan Week celebrations as soon as 2013 dawned.

"Clan Currie created and produces Tartan Day on Ellis Island, which last year was the largest attended Tartan Day event in the world with over 72,000 attendees," said Clan Society President Bob Currie. The Society is a member of the Tartan Week Alliance which aims to help coordinate the anchor events of New York Tartan Week, and to aid organizations which may want to host an exhibition, concert or other program.

Tartan Week is a collaboration of events that celebrate and promote Scotland in America's coolest city. The Clan is linked to other high-profile events, including their annual Pipes of Christmas concert (now in its 15th year), which showcases music and poetry from the Celtic regions of the British Isles.

"We perform both traditional and obscure Christmas carols and poems and are committed to performing parts of the program in Scots Gaelic," Bob said. "We took the concert to New York City from our base in New Jersey seven years ago to see if we had what it takes to be a viable cultural event in the Big Apple. We now sell out our concerts in both states. In fact, Clan Currie's Pipes of Christmas was named one of New York's Top Ten holiday events in 2010. Recently, we began to commission new music from Scottish composers."

The 2012 event featured the NYC debut of Gaelic Mod two-time champion singer, Paul McCallum and new works by Scottish composers Steve Gibb and James Ross. Proceeds from the concert support an active scholarship program for students in the U.S., Canada and Scotland.

"The challenge – and the opportunity – is to reach as broad an audience as possible. There are many Scottish societies and events in Manhattan, but the cost of access, economically or socially, is often too restrictive," Bob said. Clan Currie charges no fee to attend their Tartan Day on Ellis Island program and their Pipes of Christmas concerts cost the same as an Off-Broadway show.

The Clan's links with the arts date back to its origins, which began with a poetic axe murderer. "The founder of the clan was Muireadach O'Daly of Sligo [1180-1222 AD], an outstanding

the Clan Currie Society

Gaelic poet. Muireadach was highly respected as the King's Poet at the court of Cathal Crodhearg of Connaught. He was forced to flee from Ireland in 1213 after making an enemy of the powerful O'Donnell chief whose steward had demanded rent from the haughty bard. O'Daly's response was to split the steward's head in two with a battle axe," Bob explained.

After being chased through Ireland, it's recorded that O'Daly settled in Islay in Scotland where he became friendly with the ruling Lord of the Isles. "Muireadach's fame and stature as a poet was without parallel and he remained in Scotland to begin a line of hereditary bards," Bob said.

"With the fall of the Lordship in 1493, a MacMhuirich bard was re-established by the MacDonalds of Clanranald in South Uist.

The Clanranald line of MacMhuirich bards produced the famous Red Book of Clanranald – a Gaelic treasure."

Over time, many old Gaelic names became anglicized and MacMhuirich became Currie. The first Clan Currie Society was formed in 1959 by Glasgow's Colonel William McMurdo Currie, who later published the Clan history, *With Sword and Harp*. Members of the Clan continue writing poetry today.

The Clan's other activities include museum exhibitions, documentary films and hosting the annual MacMhuirich Symposium which brings together many of the world's leading Scottish historians. Clan Currie is also lead sponsor of the National Scottish Harp Championship.

Future plans include funding an archaeological dig at Baile nam Bàrd, the MacMhuirich home on the island of South Uist, where the Society recently held their annual symposium and constructed a MacMhuirich memorial cairn.

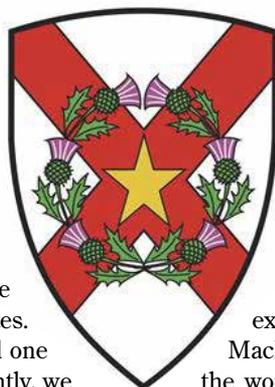
"Historians believe the site is quite significant," Bob said. "We also want to continue to build partnerships with colleges and universities to help support young people interested in our Gaelic heritage."

www.clancurriegathering.com

www.pipesofchristmas.com

www.tartandayonellisland.com

www.tartanweek.com





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CLANS

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Pan Cheilteach
April 2-7

New York Tartan Week
April 3-9

Clifden Trad Fest
April 4-7

Tartan Day South
April 4-7

Missouri Tartan Day
April 5-7

Scottish Heritage Symposium and Awards Banquet
April 5-7

Brigadoon Highland Gathering
April 6

Colorado Tartan Day
April 6

Dunedin Military Tattoo
April 6

Michigan Tartan Day Celebration
April 6

Minnesota Tartan Day
April 6

National Tartan Day
April 6

Tartan Day Scottish Faire
April 6

Whiskies of the World Expo
April 6

Hawaiian Scottish Festival
April 6-7

San Antonio Scottish Festival
April 6-7

From Scotland With Love
April 8

Arkansas Scottish Festival
April 12-14

Oregon Scottish Heritage Festival
April 13

Peace River Celtic Festival
April 13

CeltFest Cuba
April 13-20

Dunedin's Highland Games and Festival
April 13-14

New Hampshire Scottish Indoor Festival
April 13

Four Winds Celtic Music Fest
April 13-14

National Kirkin' O' the Tartan
April 14

Ringwood Highland Games
April 14

St. Louis Tionol
April 19

Highlands in the 'Burg Highland Games and Celtic Festival
April 20

Scottish & Celtic Heritage Festival
April 20

Highland Games Weekend Scarborough Renaissance Festival
April 20-21

Ormond Beach Celtic Festival
April 20-21
Rural Hill Scottish Festival and Loch Norman Highland Games
April 20-21

The Vegas Games
April 20-21

Celtic Media Festival
April 24-26

Festival Les Anthonnoises
April 25-27

Triad Highland Games
April 26-27

Iron Thistle Scottish Heritage Festival and Highland Games
April 26-28

Koroit Irish Festival
April 26-28

Brandon Highland Festival
April 27

Sacramento Scottish Games and Highland Festival
April 27

Southern Maryland Celtic Festival
April 27

Houston Celtic Festival and Highland Games
April 27-28

MAY

Australian Celtic Festival
May 2-5

Mint Hill Scottish Festival and Highland Games
May 3-4

Scottish Festival and Celtic Gathering
May 3-5

Texas Scottish Festival and Highland Games
May 3-5

Th' Gatherin' Ancient Festival O'Beltane
May 3-5

Feile Chois Cuain
May 3-6

The Cup of Taa Traditional Music Festival
May 3-6

Minnesota Scottish Fair
May 4

Peine International Pipe Band Championships
May 4-5

Belgium Highland Games
May 5

Irish Arts Center NYC Dance Festival
May 5

Baltimore Fiddle Fair
May 9-12

Galway Early Music Festival
May 9-12

CCF Mid-Atlantic Fleadh
May 10-12

Cork Fleadh
May 10-12

Kentucky Scottish Weekend
May 10-12

Celtic Fest South Africa
May 10-13

Bethabara Park Highland Games
May 11

Frederick Celtic Festival
May 11

Prescott Highland Games
May 11

Savannah Scottish Games
May 11

Fleadh Cheoil Uibh Fhaili
May 11-12

Victoria Highland Games
May 11-19

Gourock Highland Games
May 12

Louth Fleadh
May 12

Springfield Area Highland Games
May 17-18

Midwest Fleadh
May 17-19

Smoky Mountain Highland Games
May 17-19

Colonial Highland Gathering
May 18

Comox Valley Highland Games
May 18

Finger Lakes Celtic Games and Festival
May 18

Eugene Scottish Festival
May 18

Celtic Beltane Festival
May 18

West Lothian Highland Games
May 18

Rio Grande Valley Celtic Festival and Highland Games
May 18-19

MC Sinclair Highland Games
May 19

Fleadh Nua
May 19-27

Copper Coast Cornish Festival
May 20-26

Celtic Fest Barbados
May 23-29

Gallabrae
May 24-26

Irish Fest – Chicago Gaelic Park
May 24-27

Blackford Highland Games
May 25

British Piping Championship
May 25

The Berry Celtic Festival
May 25

Alma Highland Festival
May 25-26

Atholl Gathering and Highland Games
May 25-26

California Scots Fests
May 25-26

East Durham Irish Fest
May 25-26

Missouri River Irish Fest
May 25-26

Shawnee Celtic Festival
May 25-26

Festival Euroceltes
May 29-June 2

Bellingham Scottish Highland Games
May 31-June 2

Bonnie Wingham Scottish Festival
May 31-June 2

Oshkosh Irish Festival
May 31-June 2

Glasgow Highland Games
May 31-June 2

JUNE

Bonnie Brae Scottish Games
June 1

Cornhill Highland Games
June 1

Helensburgh and Lomond Highland Games
June 1

Laurel Hill Highland Games and Festival
June 1

Milwaukee Highland Games
June 1

Modesto Highland Games
June 1

Scottish Highland Games and Gathering of the Clans
June 1

Shotts Highland Games
June 1

Greater Sudbury Celtic Festival and Highland Games
June 1-2

McHenry Highland Festival
June 1-2

Carrick Lowland Games
June 2

Zoukfest
June 5-9

Utah Scottish Festival and Highland Games
June 7-8

Boston Irish Festival
June 7-9

Kansas Scottish Highland Games
June 7-9

National Celtic Festival
June 7-10

Newport Celtic Festival and Highland Games
June 7-9

The Riverfront Irish Festival
June 7-9

Canadian International Military Tattoo
June 8

Clover Highland Games
June 8

Cupar Highland Games
June 8

Georgetown Highland Games
June 8

Grand Prairie Highland Games
June 8

Rhode Island Scottish Highland Festival
June 8

Blairsville Scottish Festival
June 8-9

Stepping Stone Celtic Festival
June 8-9

Ardrrossan Highland Games
June 9

New Jersey Irish Festival
June 9

Strathmore Highland Games
June 9

WNC Highlands Celtic Festival
June 13-15

Minnesota Irish Music Weekend
June 13-16

Taste of Scotland & Celtic Festival
June 13-16

Fairfield County Irish Festival
June 14-16

Motor City Irish Festival
June 14-16

Scottish Festival and Highland Games
June 14-16

Bermuda Highland Games
June 15

Cobourg Highland Games
June 15

Front Royal Celtic Festival
June 15

Legion Highland Gathering
June 15

Lesmahagow Highland Games
June 15

Louisville Feis
June 15

Oldmeldrum Sports and Highland Games
June 15

Penn-Mar Irish Festival
June 15

Prosser Scottish Fest
June 15

Loch Lomond Highland Games
June 15-16

Santa Cruz Celtic Music Festival
June 15-16

Scottish Renaissance Festival
June 15-16

The Big Irish Festival
June 15-16

Sierra Fiddle Camp
June 15-23

City of Aberdeen Highland Games
June 16

Ohio Scottish Games
June 20-22

Celtic Fling and Highland Games
June 21-23

Triskell
June 21-30

BC Highland Games & Scottish Festival
June 22

BC Legion Highland Gathering
June 22

Drumtochty Highland Games
June 22

Manitoba Highland Gathering
June 22

Moncton Highland Games
June 22

Tacoma Highland Games
June 22

Water Valley Traditional Celtic Folk Festival
June 22

San Diego Highland Games & Gathering of the Clans
June 22-23

Wichita Highland Games & Celtic Festival
June 22-23

Red Deer Highland Games
June 23

Connecticut Irish Festival
June 23-24

Yellowstone Highland Games
June 27

Michigan Irish Fest
June 28-29

Cheyenne Celtic Musical Arts Festival
June 28-30

Ohio Celtic Fest
June 28-30

Summerside Highland Gathering
June 28-30

Alaskan Scottish Highland Games
June 29

Ceres Highland Games
June 29

Ithaca Scottish Games and Celtic Festival
June 29-30

An Chuir Chruiti-reachta – International Harp Festival
June 30-July 5

The Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo
June 30-July 7

the Hay Festival

Situated so close to the national border that it nudges England, the Welsh town of Hay-on-Wye offers views of some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain. It's a rural idyll, but this tiny community of fewer than 2,000 is also known as The Town of Books and for 10 days every spring it is swollen by the world's bibliophiles, who gather for the famous Hay Festival.

Each year, around 85,000 book-lovers arrive in Hay to enjoy the writing of poets, novelists, lyricists and scientists, comedians and environmentalists.

"It's all about celebrating the power of great ideas to transform our way of thinking," explained festival director Peter Florence. "Hay is, in Bill Clinton's phrase, The Woodstock of the mind."

This year is the festival's 26th and the program of 500 events will be held between May 23 and June 2. Notable attendees will include novelist John le Carre, journalist Carl Bernstein and comedian Dara O'Briain. The festival also includes Hay Fever, an event for families and children, and Hf2, a festival for teens, offering high-tech workshops in music and film as well as sessions with cutting-edge writers.

The events are held in a tented festival village, a space that allows the crowds to come together to discuss ideas, eat, drink and be merry. Hay is an easy place to be merry. The charming 800-year-old town is known for its bookstores (there are more than 30, many selling specialist or used books) and pubs (there are six) as well as two Norman castles, restaurants, galleries and antique stores. When weary of wandering Hay's narrow streets, visitors can explore the glorious scenery that surrounds the town. Options include Brecon Beacons National Park, the Black Mountains, the hills of Radnorshire and the Golden Valley.

The Hay event is also linked to other festivals around the world as Hay employees now run 15 festivals across five continents, attracting a total of 250,000 attendees. This year's international events began with January's Hay Festival Cartagena de Indias in Colombia. Florence said that at all the events current political thought and the ideas of writers combine to blur boundaries of culture and genre and foster mutual understanding and the exchange of ideas.

"The more we learn about cultures abroad the more we want to learn, so the appetite to bust out of little Britainism keeps growing," Florence said. "The English Language seems so powerful and dominant that it's easy to forget that it's spoken by less than 10 per cent of the people in the world, and that every other culture has their Shakespeares and Mantels and Austens and Stoppards too. And that's an amazing wealth of stories to explore."

At each of the international festivals, Hay staff work closely with local teams or partners.

"Every society has its own reality and we work to nurture the free voices and thinking wherever we set up our tents," Florence said. "There are different models for each culture, but the driving force is to provide a place for people to meet and to have conversations that wouldn't otherwise happen, and to share new stories and ideas – to imagine the world differently."

The Welsh festival is driven by the loyal and demanding audience in Wales, Florence said. Media support has been integral to the festival's success, although when visitors are asked how they learned about the festival, 82 per cent say they heard from a friend.



"The aim is to manage both that word-of-mouth and the media communications so that the growth of the physical, face-to-face festival can be married to an extended reach through new media."

Hay-on-Wye's association with books began with bibliophile Richard Booth, who opened his first book store in Hay in 1961. In 1977, Booth declared the town independent and himself its king. Many credit the publicity around his stunt with the growth of the town's reputation as a bibliophile's paradise.

Situated as it is at the border of Wales and England, Hay has endured a tumultuous past, often suffering at the hands of Welsh patriots, English aristocrats and monarchs. It is interesting that this little town, so long a pawn in parochial power struggles, is now known for fostering a tolerant, global outlook.

www.hayfestival.org



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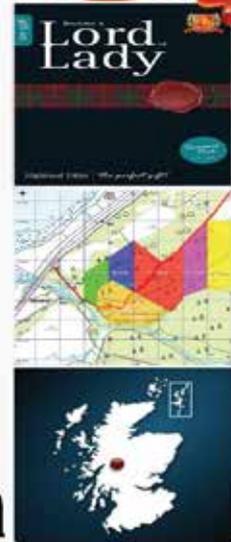
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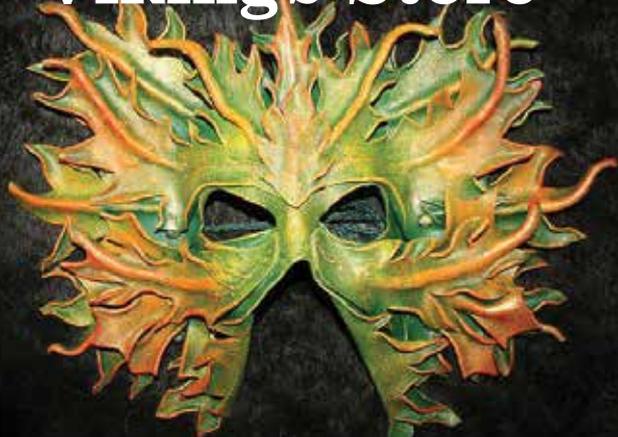
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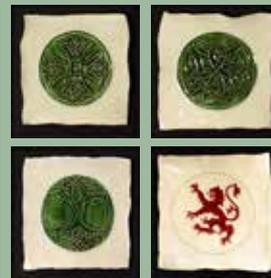
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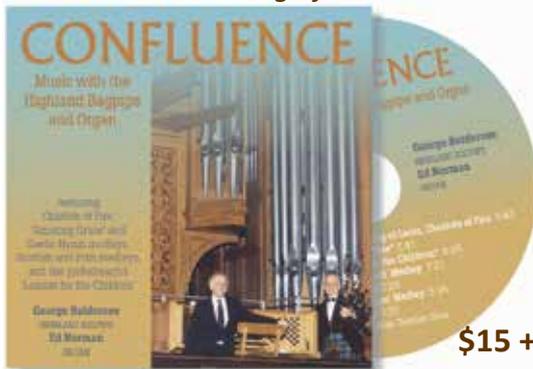
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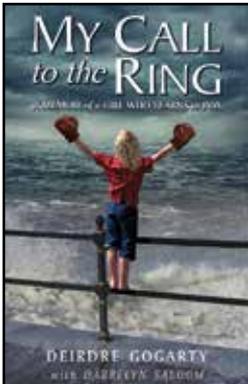


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LASTword



Cary Rideout and his father, Douglas Rideout, in the woods of Carlton County, New Brunswick. Photo credit: Loxain Ebbett-Rideout

Glancing across our noon fire, my father asks if I remember the Burke farm and where the house was. I've heard this story many times, but saying yes would rob Father of the opportunity to tell me, so I listen as he talks about farms long gone and family names long forgotten as we eat our hunter's lunch; his words drifting like the snowflakes on this raw cloudy day.

Father has always talked about the Irish who settled the rocky hill country of Carlton County, New Brunswick on Canada's east coast. "The Old People" he calls them and, as I listen to him on this autumn afternoon, his voice is like some ancient sage telling the legends of the past.

Father was born among these hills, surrounded by farms with names like Shugrue, Quinn, Stitham and Foley. He knew old men who recalled fields full of blackened stumps with potatoes growing between them. He remembers hearing Gaelic, a magical language to his child's ear, and endless tales of the hardships of clearing a new land.

Arriving in the mid-1870s, the Irish settlers stayed only for a generation or two, abandoning the farms by the start of the Great War. "Too rough to farm and the young folks moved to town or over the line to the States," Father tells me.

Today, at 81, Father talks slowly and sometimes falls silent as he dredges up a name or event. His face is lined by work and worry and he looks small in his winter jacket. Very few people are left who can find all the farms, even fewer who know the original owners' names.

"They's all Irish here, Irish to a man," he says, chewing his fire-toasted sandwich. "Not a thing but trees to see once they got here and nothing but axes, maybe an iron crowbar or a pickaxe. Tough! Those Old People has iron in their veins and never stopped working. No choice! Couldn't go back across the sea; money all spent coming up the St. John River. Had to succeed or die".

And many did perish from sickness or accident, or perhaps a broken heart, because pioneering can crush the strongest spirit. Imagine nights of -30 C when you are living in a log cabin fresh from Ireland 130 years ago. The hills behind my family's farm are dotted with the lone graves of immigrants, buried by families unable to get to a graveyard. My own great-grandfather lies alone by a stream, many miles from consecrated ground, under a black, wrought-iron grave marker.

"You're named after him. He was carried to his rest by six men on snowshoes in February's deep snow. So cold the tears wouldn't fall."

Father has names for every part of this now empty country. Names like The Interval, The Gore and Chapmanville, as familiar to him as his children's names. Country I have chosen to live my life in as well, despite better opportunities away. I built my home on the family farm and seldom go more than a day without seeing my father.

Father never asks me to recite his stories back to him. He spins out the past in a detailed oral account and it's up me to take it all in for future telling. This is how tales of Celtic heroes were handed down in the smoky past before writing.

Today, we are supposed to be after a brace of grouse or hares but, like so many times before, we have gone a 'wandering.

"Know where the O'Briens' root cellar was? The rocks are laid so neat a cigarette paper wouldn't fit between em," he says, looking off across a hardwood ridge. At a time when most men his age are riding a wheelchair my father is still walking the high ground, pointing out a barn's faint outline or where a bobsled toppled over. Slower yes, but upright and steady in his steps. "I'd like to show you. Maybe, if you have time..."

Later as we walk, Father looks at me and says, "You got to remember all this cause no one else will." His face clouds with the concern that perhaps I haven't been listening this half-century.

"No," I promise. "I won't forget."

By Cary Rideout





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Your local Celtic Shop features an incredible array of gifts for all occasions. For birthdays and anniversaries; for christenings and weddings; for all tastes and budgets.

When you want to say more than words ever can, your local Celtic shop speaks your language. Discover the wealth of unique gift options fashioned by artists, designers and craftspeople from the Celtic nations. From exquisite jewelry in traditional and contemporary designs, classic crystal, handcrafted linens, modern ceramics, rich textiles, bold new knitwear, art & wall hangings and unique decorative accessories in pottery, pewter and wood. All fashioned to the highest quality standards. All waiting to be discovered, wrapped and rediscovered.

What do those most precious to you really deserve: a chain store or something truly choice? Speak from the heart and express yourself more exclusively.

When you want to make the thought really count, count on your local Celtic Shop. For a list of NACTA member shops in the USA and Canada, go to www.celticshopsinamerica.com or call toll-free **1-866-622-2244**



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