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Fáilte

Yn chruinnaght

Tony award-winning Broadway producer David Binder once noted that “Festivals promote diversity, they bring neighbors into dialogue, they increase creativity, they offer opportunities for civic pride, they improve our general psychological well-being. In short, they make cities better places to live.”

Almost every community and place on this planet has some form of festival to celebrate the ties that bind us together, often through music, dance, food, art, and other cultural components. Celtic festivals are no different. Dating back at least 2,000 years, these were traditionally gatherings that recognized the changing of the seasons. Today, these events reach well beyond the Celtic Nations, taking place in such far-reaching spots as South Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia.

On a personal note, I have had the good fortune of attending Irish festivals in Italy - utterly charmed by the experience of enjoying a warm summer evening in a small piazza - under twinkling lights and surrounded by joyous laughter - exhilarated by the buoyant tempos and moving melodies of traditional Celtic music. Closer to home, the Fergus Scottish Festival & Highland Games is just a short drive that always rewards with a fun-filled day of music, food, dancing, and whisky.

Over the past two years, event organizers have had the unprecedented challenge of hosting festivals and games without an actual physical audience. Many embraced available technologies in an effort to pivot in-person events to a virtual realm while maintaining and/or attracting “crowds.” Other challenges proved daunting also, including developing sponsorship and funding opportunities. While not ideal, and certainly no substitute for the real thing, most survived the pandemic, and some even thrived amidst their new milieus. Those who persevered in their efforts to preserve and promote Celtic culture should be commended.

One notable success has been Celtic Connections. As stated on the event’s website, “Annually the festival welcomes the world to Glasgow, but this year Celtic Connections took Glasgow to the world...with audiences from over 60 countries and over 27,000 tickets and passes sold, the digital event has been a huge success.”

Going forward, the hope is that more gatherings will continue to explore and expand hybrid attendance options. For 2022, however, many people - including myself - are looking forward to being back on location.

Our July-August 2022 edition enthusiastically celebrates the return to in-person Celtic Festivals and Highland Games. In particular, we look at how people and events evolved during the pandemic, and what lessons have been taken from the past two years. It is my sincere wish that, wherever you are, you have the chance to once again attend one of these events in person and enjoy our rich and robust Celtic roots.

Sláinte!

Siobhán L. Covington, Publisher

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A Welsh organization aims to turn tragedy to triumph

Jac Lewis, a young athlete and a prominent member of his Welsh community, was 27 years old when he died by suicide in 2019. In the aftermath of tragedy, the Jac Lewis Foundation (JLF) emerged the following December.

“There was a huge surge of urgency from the local community in Ammanford, a small ex-mining community in the Wales Valleys, to set up support to prevent this from happening to another member of the community,” says Liz Thomas-Evans, the director of services for the Jac Lewis Foundation. “Jac had been trying to get support for his mental health for a long period of time but unfortunately, there were no services available to provide that support to him.”

The advocacy of Jac’s father, Jesse, and the Ammanford Association Football Club were major driving forces behind starting the foundation. According to the JLF website, the organization’s core mandate is “to provide easy access to free professional counselling at the heart of the community for any age and any issue.” Local businesses and builders contributed to building The Jac Lewis Wellbeing Centre, which now stands on the grounds of the Ammanford football pitch.

“I became involved to make a difference within my local community,” shares Thomas-Evans. “My background is working in public sector mental health services where I would always feel frustrated when I heard about people who were on long waiting lists or couldn’t find the support they needed. So, when this happened with Jac, I wanted to set up something that could provide hope and support to those experiencing mental health services

and take away the barriers to accessing mental health support. I knew I had the knowledge and experience to set up the foundation, so with the help and support of the local community, it became a working counselling service.”

In the beginning, the JLF had one professional part-time counsellor and five volunteer counsellors. The foundation has since expanded its geographical reach and its team, which now includes 60 staff members and volunteers. Thomas-Evans oversees the foundation as a whole by supporting and managing both paid and volunteer counsellors. She also takes on therapy with clients herself.

“We currently provide counselling for 14 GP surgeries (doctors’ offices) in the local area, we provide a Wales wide bereavement through suicide project, and we provide a mental health hub in Swansea City where people can walk in off the street and access mental health support instantly.”

The counselling services serve Ammanford, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, while the bereavement through suicide service is available across Wales.

The Swansea City Football Mental Health Hub was created with the help of Rebecca Edward-Symmons, Head of Commercial at the Swansea City Football Club. Every Friday, the hub (located at the Swansea.com Stadium) is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to help those in need. Representatives from multiple organizations, including the JLF and Samaritans Cymru, are available for guidance. For those who have come up against closed doors or lengthy waitlists, the hub provides tangible, in-person service.

“If someone needs support with their mental health, or with finances or benefits, they can receive that help in one place there and then,” Edward-Symmons said in a May press release.

“The foundation is based on a football pitch and in a football stadium to reduce the stigma of men talking about mental health and seeking support,” adds Thomas-Evans.

“We still have a long way to go in Wales, but services like ours help to promote positive mental health messages.”

The Jac Lewis Foundation exists due to the generosity of community members donating their time and money. As such, according to Thomas-Evans, the biggest challenge is “finding funding to sustain the foundation as it currently is but also to be able to grow the service.” The JLF is aiming to increase its visibility in schools, Welsh sport, and Welsh communities.

“We are growing on many levels and will continue to do so. The foundation will be looking to complete more preventative projects going forward consisting of building up the mental health hub in Swansea and setting up children’s and young people’s projects in schools.

“Ensuring that people in Wales can easily access free counselling without any barriers is at the forefront of the work that we will continue to strive to do.”

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one

Young Manx Actor Onscreen

If you've been on Netflix lately, you have probably heard of Heartstopper: a coming-of-age LGBTQ series based on the much-loved graphic novels by Alice Oseman. One of the leading actors, Joe Locke, hails from the Isle of Man. Like his character, Charlie Spring, Locke experienced high school as an "out" gay teenager. Locke landed the role (his first television gig) after an open audition. "I just thought it was so great that there's a story in which we can show younger queer kids that they deserve happiness," he told *Behind the Blinds* magazine recently.

two

Galician Translator

Microsoft Translator, a machine translation service, recently announced the addition of two languages to its program: Basque and Galician. And though the translator already had more than 100 languages and dialects, the addition of Basque and Galician brings attention to these lesser-known tongues. While both are among the official languages of Spain, Galician has Celtic and Germanic influence along with its Latin origins. There are an estimated 2.4 million Galician speakers, and the language is mainly spoken in Western Spain and Northern Portugal.

three

Mythological Irish Tapestry

Thanks to the work of more than 40 volunteers, an Irish myth has been immortalized on a magnificent tapestry. The artwork depicts the famous tale Táin Bó Cúailnge (in English, the Cattle Raid of Cooley), which tells the story of a conflict between Ancient Ulster and Connaught. Teams of sewers in the Irish counties of Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath, Meath and Louth worked on the project for months. They used techniques such as quilting, hand-dyeing and embroidery to bring the myth to life. In April, the tapestry was displayed at the An Táin Arts Centre in Dundalk, Co. Louth.

four

Passion for Cornish Pasties

In a recent radio interview, American actor Nicolas Cage made known his long-time love of Cornish pasties. He spoke to *Absolute Radio* about his cottage in Southwest England, which led to a tangent about the treat. "I used to have Cornish pasties, believe it or not, in Santa Monica, California. There was a place called Ye Old King's Pub," Cage recalled. "I used to go there as a child and have them and they were just so delicious, you know? They were the perfect thing to put in your lunch pail to go to school with."

five

Autonomy for Bretagne

Will the Celtic nation of Brittany (or Bretagne) soon gain autonomy from France? Time will tell. Autonomy differs from independence, as it "involves a transfer of more legislative and executive powers from central government to a region in areas which do not directly depend on the national state," reporter Brian McCulloch wrote for *The Connexion* recently. At the time, Brittany's regional council had just voted to ask France to consider autonomy for the nation. It's not yet clear if this would lead to a separate prime minister and government for Brittany.

six

Upcoming Doctor Who Star

Rwandan-Scottish actor Ncuti Gatwa will be the 14th person to take up the mantle of The Doctor on the popular science fiction series *Doctor Who*. Gatwa recently broke into the public eye through his role as Eric Effiong on the Netflix show *Sex Education*, for which he won both a Scottish Bafta and a Rose d'Or Award. Recently, the BBC announced Gatwa would take over from Jodi Whittaker - the first woman to ever play The Doctor - in 2023. Returning showrunner Russell T Davies praised Gatwa for his skills and was reportedly blown away by the 29-year-old's audition.

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Stuart Croxford

Recently, army veteran Stuart Croxford set out on his bicycle to traverse mainland Great Britain for charity. The Cornishman joined the British Army in 2007 and was deployed in both Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2014, he was injured in an explosion in Afghanistan and had his right leg amputated as a result. Just four months after his operation, Croxford gained a qualification to work as a ski instructor. He remained passionate about athletics and the outdoors, later completing an Ironman Triathlon in Spain as well as the London Marathon. In 2017, Croxford and his wife launched a fitness service called ThreeZero12. Even with all his experience in mind, Croxford noted that his latest lengthy cycling journey would come with challenges. "Riding for this distance and duration with little rest would push an able-bodied rider to their extreme both physically and mentally. As an amputee this will add extra stress and factors I will need to think about and overcome daily," Croxford wrote on his Just Giving page. "I've never put this amount of stress through my residual limb and prosthetic so will be riding into the unknown. To complete this challenge, I'll have to rely hugely on my own resilience to pull myself through some very challenging times." Croxford's route went from Land's End to John o' Groats, with 2,000 kilometres of England, Wales and Scotland in between. As of the end of May, Croxford had raised £4,680 for Blesma: a charity which aims to help veterans who have lost limbs (or the use of limbs).



The Newfoundland Pony Society

The Newfoundland Pony is a descendant of working ponies brought to Newfoundland and Labrador by settlers from the British Isles. In the late 20th Century, the breed was on the brink of extinction. Today, there is a small number of Newfoundland ponies across Canada: mainly in Nova Scotia, Ontario and Newfoundland itself. The Newfoundland Pony Society, which formed in 1979, is a public group that strives to protect and promote the breed. Thanks in part to the society's work, the Newfoundland and Labrador government passed the Heritage Animals Act in 1996, and the Newfoundland Pony became officially protected under the act the following year. "Once in the thousands, there are now an estimated 500-600 Newfoundland Ponies in Canada and the U.S., with the actual number of breeding ponies much lower," reads the Newfoundland Pony Society website. "This hard-working animal played an important role in the survival of rural Newfoundland; they hauled wood for building and heating houses, they pulled kelp from the beach for gardens, and were a dependable means of transportation for families." These days, the Newfoundland Pony Society is raising money for a heritage park in the Trinity Bay area of Newfoundland and Labrador. The society secured a 50-year agricultural lease on 25 acres of land, which will include a pasture for ponies and a visitor centre. The goal is to provide a permanent home and grazing land for Newfoundland ponies, as well as an opportunity for people to learn about the breed's importance.



Chris Garrett

A Manx bomb disposal expert is helping train troops in Ukraine. Chris Garrett, a 38-year-old from Peel, was originally a tree surgeon (a type of horticulturist maintenance engineer). After starting his military career, Garrett worked in Ukraine from 2014-2017. He switched from combat to explosives ordnance disposal during that time. Garrett didn't have plans to return to Ukraine, but when war broke out in February, he knew his experience could be valuable. Since then, he has been working with the Ukrainian National Guard to train troops in explosive disposal. Part of the job involves removing unexploded Russian landmines and submunitions from deserted battlefields. "You just know that with every single munition that you're removing - every bit of unexploded ordnance, you are removing a hazard for someone else. And the bulk of the time it's civilians that are getting hurt long after the war is finished," Garrett told Radio Free Europe recently. Despite the danger, he said the best part of the job is "being able to directly help the people that need it." Garrett's work is voluntary, and he relies on donations to purchase protective equipment. His popular Instagram account documents his experiences and work on the ground. He cautions people against travelling to Ukraine to fight - instead, he suggests, donate to charities already working on the front lines. "There's a number of organizations that have been set up to help move equipment around the country - so people don't actually need to get themselves into any dangerous positions," Garrett told ITV.



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MUSIC

Jocelyn Pettit

Wind Rose



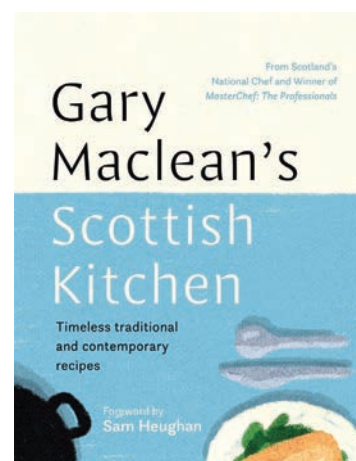
Canadian composer, fiddler, singer, step-dancer, and educator Jocelyn Pettit shows off her rich Scottish/Irish/French/Malaysian roots on her latest release *Wind Rose*. The all-original, 12-track recording does well to draw upon both the artist's multicultural heritage and her personal travel experiences. Traditional tunes - Kitchen Ceilidh, Mrs. Jamieson's Medley, and Transatlantic Jigs - are complemented by the light breezy airs of *Migrations*, *Cowcaddens*, and the Acadian-inspired lilt of *Cheminant à la Ville*, highlighting collaborations from musicians across two continents. While Pettit might be young of age, the new album showcases that sweet spot between energy and enthusiasm and the seasoned sound of a mature musician who has been mastering both her instrument and craft for years. As such, she has learned to let the songs breathe.

LITERATURE

Gary Maclean

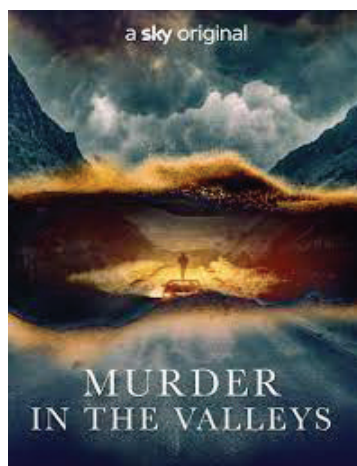
Gary Maclean's Scottish Kitchen

Scottish National Chef - and long-time Celtic Life International columnist - Gary Maclean brings it home with his latest cookbook, *Gary Maclean's Scottish Kitchen*. A fine blend of over 100 classic and contemporary recipes, each accompanied by stunning and salivating photographs, the work is both an homage to the country's unique culinary past and a look forward to future possibilities for the palate, including inspiring insights into foraging and food sustainability. All the while, Maclean's personal anecdotes and homespun humour reminds us that, more than anything, cooking is meant to be fun and a creative activity that can be enjoyed by the whole family. A solid work that will appeal to both master chefs and those just learning to whet their whistle in the kitchen.



STREAMING

Murder in the Valleys



The dark and haunting beauty of the Welsh landscape is the ideal backdrop for this true crime documentary that recounts the brutal 1999 murders of three generations of one family in the village of Clydach. The killings, which shocked the U.K. and made international headlines, resulted in the conviction of a local contractor. 20 years later, area police reopened the case based upon new evidence, dividing the local community. Kudos to the creative team for piecing together a masterful melange of narrative, stunning cinematography, and a stirring soundtrack. Exploring all the angles, the four-part series noir is well-paced, and, in the end, viewers are left to come to their own conclusions. A deeply disturbing examination of pure evil and the pitfalls of the justice system.

PODCAST

Irish History Podcast

Those with a passion and penchant for Eire's past won't want to miss this super selection of short and sweet audio blurbs that recount, and sometimes reframe, the country's robust heritage. With hundreds of episodes available on demand - and covering a vast array of topics, including the War of Independence, the Great Famine, the Phoenix Park Murders, Witches and Witchcraft, the Norman Invasion, Republicanism, Secret Societies, and many more - listeners are invited to deep-dive into Ireland's collective consciousness, towards a better understanding and appreciation of where its people come from, how they overcame centuries of terrible tragedies, and who they have become over that time. Engaging, entertaining, and educational, each piece is well-researched and presented in a lively and thought-provoking manner. Google it.





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Prickly Thistle

One woman taps into her Highland heritage to create sustainable clothing

Prickly Thistle founder Clare Campbell is a Scottish Highland woman on a mission.

“The paradox of the future is that it is actually the past,” she tells Celtic Life International. “We did all of this before. We don’t need to be super inventive, really. We just need to think about natural materials and buying less, buying ethically.”

Campbell has a background in accounting and says that her switch to the world of Scottish textiles was a matter of both “the head and the heart.” After grieving her brother and her father, she realized “how fragile and how short life can be.” In her mid-30s, she decided that it was time for a change.

“I’ve got this one shot, and I’ve got a longer ride than my brother, who we lost when he was 19. I have the opportunity to have a bigger impact that he didn’t have. I wanted to make that count.”

Growing up in the Scottish Highlands, Campbell had a basic understanding of tartan and what it was. However, it wasn’t until around 2015 that she “went down the rabbit hole” and started seriously looking into the industry.

“I started to relate to the whole legacy, identity and spirit of courage and passion. There were just all these amazingly powerful emotions attached to this cloth.”

After exploring the industrial landscape, Campbell realized that the traditional tartan

industry had become rather small. She wanted to “add to the traditional tartan story” while keeping integrity at the forefront of her work. As such, she sought to keep her business close to home and create things in an environmentally friendly way. She also had no desire to compete with any of the existing mills. “That is why we don’t do clan tartans, per se, because that is the bread and butter of many of these mills. We were just trying to do the right thing in the medium that we have fallen in love with.”

In the beginning, Campbell worked with other mills to create commissioned designs for clients. In 2017, she launched a crowdfunding campaign in hopes of starting her own mill. “I thought, ‘it’s Scotland, it’s textiles. It’s our thing. Come on, we need to do something with it.’”

The first crowdfunding venture failed, but Campbell didn’t give up: she set up a new crowdfunding goal in 2018 and divided it into smaller chunks. For example, she looked into renting a property rather than trying to build something new off the bat. Outlander star Sam Heughan even boosted the initiative on his Twitter account.

“I had no idea what I was doing. I had no idea what I was getting myself in for,” Campbell laughs. “But I believed.”

That belief soon paid off and, today, her company employs 14 staff members. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, all small businesses struggled, and Prickly Thistle was no exception. However, it was during this time that the company also found its niche. “We wanted to really champion and

really work on that relationship that women have with clothing.”

Through zero waste design, natural fabrics (wool doesn’t need to be machine washed), and made-to-measure sizing, Prickly Thistle creates clothing with the goal of lasting longer. Its mandate also encourages people to buy new clothing no more than four times a year. But how does a business survive while supporting an overall goal of less consumption?

“It is challenging,” admits Campbell. “At the end of the day, what will be a testament to businesses like ours is that we never compromise on our values. I hope that clearly lays out to people that when you buy from a company like us, you do make a difference.”

Today, Prickly Thistle’s tartan clothing includes tops, dresses, jumpsuits, “kick ass kilts” and more. Many of the items can be worn multiple ways. Campbell compares it to going to a restaurant with a condensed menu - it is likely that the small selection will be of good quality.

“We really believe in the simpleness of our collection. One of our missions is we just sell less to more people. That is how we become a sustainable business. You buy just a couple of pieces from Prickly Thistle, and quite often, that will be enough. But you are going to be so inspired that you will tell all of your pals.”

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We Banjo 3



The road reopens for a talented Irish quartet

We Banjo 3 has been making its mark in the Irish and Americana music scenes for more than a decade. Now, after a challenging two years of pandemic life, the group is releasing its latest album. “Open the Road” officially launches on July 15 while We Banjo 3 tours the United States.

Despite the band’s name, We Banjo 3 is made up of four members - two sets of brothers, in fact. Enda Scahill (tenor banjo, vocals), Martin Howley (tenor banjo, mandolin, vocals) and David Howley (lead vocals and guitar) first began playing small gigs together as a “passion project.” When Fergal Scahill joined the band to play the Milwaukee Irish Festival, the musicians didn’t bother changing their moniker. Fergal has remained with the Galway-based group, adding vocals, fiddle, mandolin and more. Today, the quartet has three Billboard #1 albums under its belt.

Like many musicians, the band’s members worked hard to keep in touch with their audience during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There was so much uncertainty and genuine fear in the world, and so many stories of loss, suffering and tragedy,” Enda tells Celtic Life International. “During the first year, we made huge efforts to remain in contact with our fans and community by livestreaming for four hours every week. This was both a rewarding and highly exhausting endeavor as it placed us way outside our normal musical comfort zones and deep into unfamiliar territories of streaming tech.”

Ultimately, however, Enda says they had the support they needed to keep them afloat. “As time rolled on, we realized how privileged and grateful we are for where we live and how well Ireland looked after its musi-

cians and artists during the pandemic. We were intensely lucky that our fans also supported us the entire time.”

We Banjo 3 originally had plans for a January 2022 tour, but another surge of COVID-19 trampled those hopes. But all was not lost, as the musicians decided to take the time to record a new album in Maryland. “When we were working remotely, we began to share ideas and a common theme emerged and thus the album began to come to life,” explains Martin. “We decided to instead convene at Waterford Studios, home of our engineer Frank Marchand. We bundled ourselves away and began to shape and craft this new recording.”

“Open the Road” came out of intense isolation in the dead of winter. After just two days in the studio, the musicians agreed they had something special. Lead vocalist David was the spearhead of the creative vision. “The biggest challenge with this album was being apart for so long,” he notes. “We were used to road life and always being together that the separation due to COVID-19 was really hard for us all. Trying to plan an album on Zoom is harder than you think.

“We had to lean into other parts of our creative process which brought out something new and unique for this album.”

Martin describes the process as “cathartic, visceral and elevating.” He adds: “We are deeply excited to share this music.”

Now that they are touring again, We Banjo 3 has already been able to share some of the new songs with its audience. “So far,



people are loving them,” says Fergal. “We can already see fans singing along and knowing more of the lyrics than we do. It’s really nice to have fans come up to us saying how excited they are to hear the recording, because they love the live versions so much.”

Of the new work, Fergal is partial to the “Open the Road” title track. “It was written as a fast Irish reel, but when we got into studio and played it over and over, it took on a life of its own and started to move and change the more we played it. The resulting track is a journey, starting out slow and moody and builds to a frenzy before dying away to a peaceful end.”

Speaking of journeys, We Banjo 3 will be making its way across the U.S. for album release dates and festival shows for the remainder of the summer. The band members are thrilled to have that live audience connection once again.

“The shared experience and energy transfer that happens during a live show cannot be replaced or replicated,” says Enda.

www.webanjo3.com

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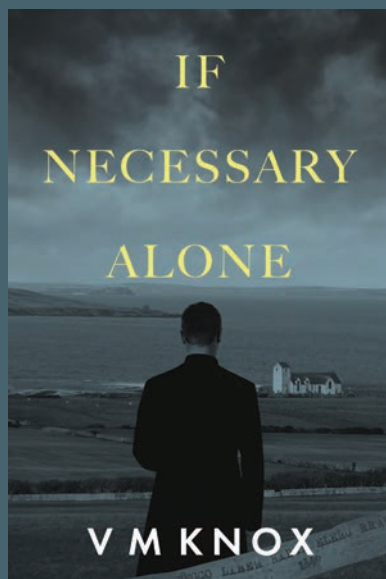
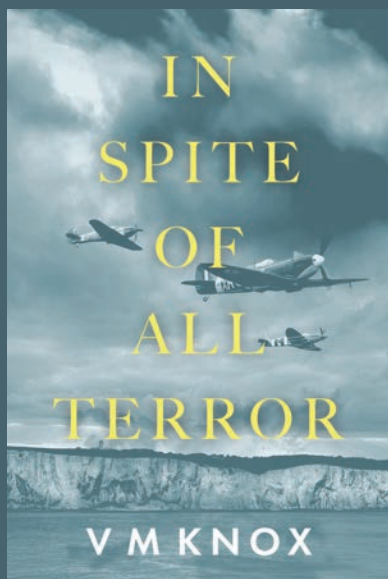
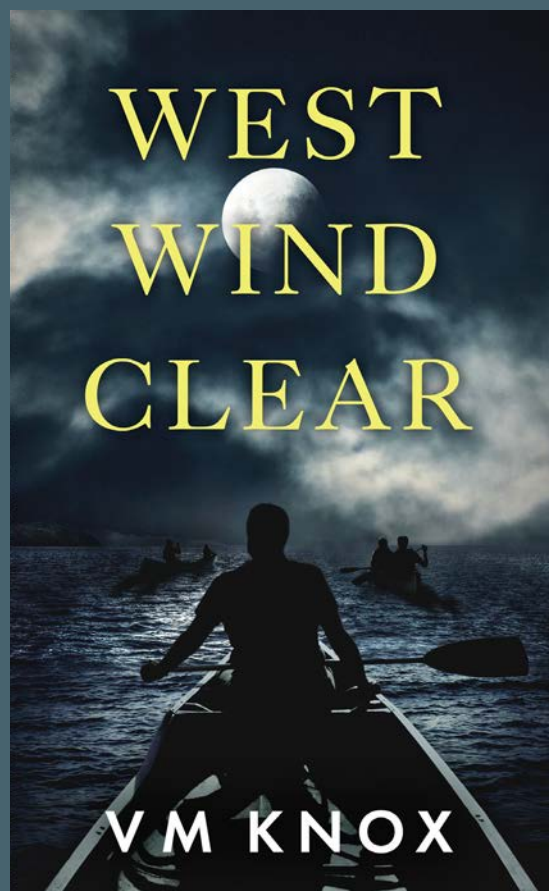
The fourth in the Clement Wisdom Series

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

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

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

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



Katia Rose

The Devil Wears Tartan brings sapphic romance to Highland dance

Canadian author Katia Rose (her pen name) was introduced to the romance genre in an unconventional way. Rose - who grew up in Gatineau, QC and now lives in Ottawa, ON - spent much of her early 20s travelling abroad. Unfortunately, her backpacking trip to Cambodia in 2016 came with a side of food poisoning.

"I was shut up in this hotel room - there were no windows," recalls Rose. "In the midst of lying in bed waiting to recover, I decided to read a romance novel."

In an effort to lighten her mood, she searched her Kindle for options. She was surprised to find how much independently published work was available and dove in. Prior to that, Rose says, she'd never been interested in the genre. "I think I shared a lot of people's stereotypical views: they are kind of silly or not valid as literature."

Once she started reading romance novels, however, she couldn't stop. "At some point a few months into reading, I decided I would like to write these books as well."

She had always been interested in creative writing but had never tried penning a novel before. Her first effort, *Latte Girl*, was "far from the best," she admits, laughing. "I'm still very proud of it, but it was my first time."

Since then, Rose has independently published more than a dozen other books. She spent a few years working part-time jobs while writing, and recently transitioned to writing full-time. "The biggest challenge was just to keep going."

She didn't get her "big break" until the release of her 11th book, *Catch and Cradle*. The novel tells the story of a relationship blooming between two athletes on a women's lacrosse team, and it was Rose's first book to focus on romance between two characters of the same gender.

"I am bisexual, personally, and when I



was coming out in my late teens and early 20s, there wasn't a lot of queer media aimed at that age group."

She saw LGBTQ+ books and shows for younger teens and older adults, but very little in between. Through *Catch and Cradle*, she tapped into that underserved market with her younger self in mind.

Her more recent queer romance, *The Devil Wears Tartan*, targets that demographic as well. Inspired by her own history with Highland dance, Rose saw the opportunity for a story of rivals-turned-lovers.

"I always wanted to write a book set in the Highland dance community. It was a big part of my life growing up."

"Being able to share that, to bring it to more people, and to show what it was like to grow up in that community was really special," she adds, noting that she danced from age 11 up until she graduated from high school.

The Devil Wears Tartan follows Moira and Kenzie, two former Highland dance champions who have since started college and become dance coaches. "Their childhood rivalry, they discover, is still going strong when they reconnect as adults," explains Rose.

The women soon learn that their local Highland dance association is offering a

hefty scholarship, and they both have their own reasons for wanting to win the money. "They end up taking to the stage again and battling it out for this scholarship during the Highland dance competition season. Through getting thrown into the same situations throughout the season, they find their feelings are starting to shift into something a little new."

Only recently released, *The Devil Wears Tartan* has already enjoyed positive feedback from readers both familiar and unfamiliar with the world of Highland dance. "I was so surprised. I had numerous people who told me, 'I was a queer Highland dancer - I can't believe this book exists,'" says Rose. "One of my long-time readers posted (on social media) some photos of their Highland dance years to go along with their post about the book, which was so fun to see. People see themselves reflected in this very niche topic in this book. That's been really special."

Additionally, some of Rose's other readers have a newfound appreciation for Highland dance after reading the novel. Although she generally tries to avoid reading reviews, she came across one that brought her joy: "Someone said something along the lines of, 'This was so good, it made me look up Highland dance on YouTube.'"

At the time of writing, Rose's next book - another queer romance - was scheduled to be released in June.

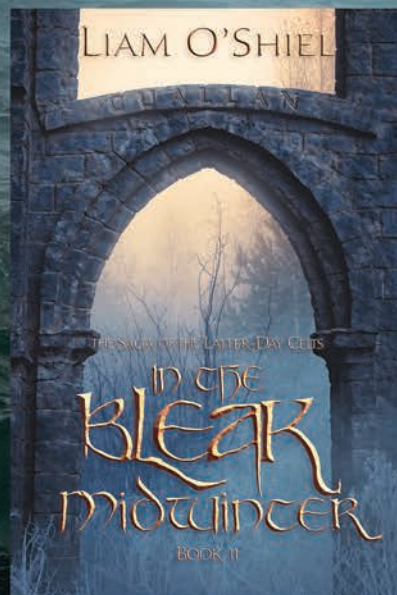
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Colin Barrett

A new short story collection celebrates Ireland



Born in Canada and raised in rural County Mayo in the west of Ireland, writer Colin Barrett has always had a passion for storytelling.

“From an early age I was interested in narrative and making up stories,” he tells Celtic Life International via email. “I drew little comics when I was a child. As a teenager, I turned to prose.”

Now 40, Barrett continues to write for many of the same reasons.

“I was first and foremost a reader, I loved and love stories. I wrote as a kid, and I am very lucky that I still get to write as an adult.”

Barrett’s professional career began notably: in 2014, his debut short story collection *Young Skins* would win the Frank O’Connor International Short Story Award, the Guardian First Book Award, and the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature.

One of the pieces in that collection, *Calm with Horses*, was adapted into a major motion picture by the same name, premiering at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival.

In 2015, he was named a National Book Foundation “5 Under 35.” His work has also appeared in many publications, including *The New Yorker*, *A Public Space*, *Granta* and *The Stinging Fly*.

He attributes his growth as a writer to both his life experiences and the types of books that he chooses to read.

“Your tastes change over time, even if

only subtly, and the kind of writing you want to do changes with that.”

Recently, Barrett released another short story collection, *Homesickness*. Described by the *New York Times* as “exact and poetic,” the eight stories explore unique characters through homespun warmth, wisdom and wit.

Among the anthology’s protagonists are a sword-wielding fugitive who appears at a local pub on a quiet night; a ghost that struggles to conceal itself at a funeral party; a policewoman battling with her own choices and existence following a shooting; and an aspiring writer whose life is turned upside down after his father receives a cancer diagnosis.

The scribe notes that *Homesickness* - as with most of his work - was inspired by the West of Ireland.

“Place is intrinsic to how I write, and it informs all the stories in Homesickness.”

“These kinds of collections kind of creep up on you,” he continues. “I write maybe two or three stories a year, and so after a few years, I have a collection. At a certain point, whatever its overall quality, you know that a story is ‘done.’ While you can finick endlessly with adjectives, you realize there is nothing more of significance you can do with it in terms of structure, character, or plot, that

it has reached its final form. It is what it is.

“Each story brings its own challenges - having a premise or set of characters and working out what to do with them in the confines of a given short story. It is often just a process of trial and error, trying different narrative paths, and seeing what works best.”

Since its release, *Homesickness* has enjoyed strong critical and popular acclaim. Irish writer Sally Rooney described it as “mesmerizingly powerful” and “full of strangeness,” and Irish novelist Colm Tóibín boasted that the collection was “crafted with skill and flair.”

Barrett is thrilled with the positive response.

“My assumption with both this book, and my first collection, was that nobody would be interested in stories about ordinary people on the margins of a provincial town on the edge of Ireland.”

He admits that it is hard to define what makes a “good book,” noting that, for him, it changes everyday.

“As far as my own books, I am trying to find language that has a charge and intensity and vividness to it. I look for that in the books I read, too. To try and keep things simple. It doesn’t matter how intricate a story is, you owe it to the reader to deliver the story as concisely and pleasurably as possible.”

Barrett is currently finishing up the final edits on his debut novel.

NEXT CHAPTER CAMPAIGN

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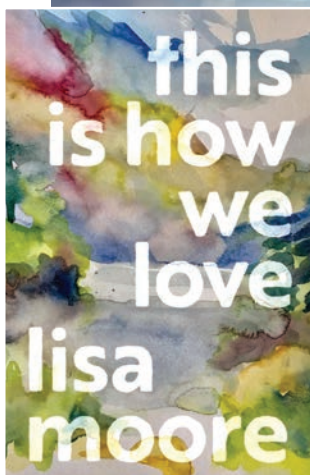
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MADE OF STORIES



Lisa Moore

In her latest novel, author Lisa Moore explores how we love

The last few years have been challenging for everyone. The world has experienced loss, violence, sickness, and hate on a global scale. “Love” may feel to some like an outdated concept that has been supplanted by aggression and hostility. This is the inspiration behind Lisa Moore’s newest book, *this is how we love*.

“There is a new permission to say things that are cruel or ugly,” shares the scribe from her home in Newfoundland and Labrador. “It made me wonder what ‘love’ was, and how we love and how we can love better, how we can love more and more people.”

Moore grew up in the countryside of Newfoundland - an upbringing that stoked her fire for storytelling.

“When I was a kid, I was absorbed in the world of imagination that comes with reading, when you, you know, have nothing else to do.

“I believe that there is a symbiotic relationship between literature and place. The stories that come from a place make the place. There is a beautiful relationship between the stories people tell about where they live and how that place changes to fit the stories.”

As a young adult, Moore attended a creative writing class at Memorial University (MUN) before studying visual arts at the College of North Atlantic and, later, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Although she spent many years working as an artist, she continued to write creatively with a small group of friends she met at MUN.

She is now a renowned name in Canada’s literary scene, having penned several novels and short story collections, including her debut *Alligator*, which was nominated for the 2005 Giller Prize and then won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize Best Book Award the following year. In addition, her follow-up novel *February* was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2010 and took home top honours in Canada Reads 2013: *Turf Wars*.

The greatest reward, however, has been the response from readers.

“If someone reads something that I have written and it touches them, that is always like a miracle. Sometimes people tell me that they have connected with a book. These are the joyous moments that come from trying to write something.”

She notes that her writing draws inspiration from Irish authors like Edna O’Brien and Anne Enright.

“These are writers who, when I read them, I can hear that voice that I grew up with. I mean, it’s different, but it’s also very familiar to me. Voice is very important in Irish writing. It is not just that you see images, or it is not just that the writing is cinematic, but it is oral, as well.

“There is this tradition of oral storytelling in Ireland that is rich and deep and full of humor and darkness in equal measure.”

Her latest full-length effort, *this is how we love*, follows a woman as she travels through a snowstorm to her son Xavier, who is lying in hospital following a brutal attack. As such, the heart of the new narrative, she explains, is not only love, but family.

“I am really looking at the relationship between children and adults, and what ‘love’ means between them, recognizing that children are going to be inheriting the space that adults vacate - and what our responsibility is to the next generation.”

She admits that the project proved difficult at times: in addition to the common challenges of bringing a book together, *this is how we love* contains more violence than Moore is typically comfortable with.

“I felt it was important to not shy away from that. I wanted to show the repercussions of violence and how, even though some of the violence we see happens quickly, it isn’t over quickly. It involves a whole web of people and waves of pain that shutter through communities.”

Her hope is that readers will take one very important lesson away.

“There are a lot of people out there who need love. It is a hard time that we are living in, and now is the moment to love more deeply and reach more widely.”



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The Carroll Sisters

Two siblings make fiddling a family affair



What is your own background?

Emilie: Our background is a bit unique. Our parents are not musicians from the Celtic music world, and we don't have a rich traditional music scene around us. We do have some Celtic ancestry, but that did not really influence our drive to start playing Celtic fiddle. We play the music because we love it, but sometimes it is hard to not have that support network of a big music scene around us.

Where do you currently reside?

Emilie: We are from Simsbury, Connecticut, about 20 minutes from the Massachusetts border. We have both lived here our whole lives. It is a great community of about 24,000 with good schools and open space.

How long have you been fiddling?

Nora: Emilie started playing the violin when she was five, and I begged to start soon after when I was four. We started on the Suzuki method to get good technique, but we always knew we wanted to transition to fiddle style. We started playing Celtic music when Emilie was nine and I was seven.

We initially learned Irish style from our first fiddle teacher, Jeanne Freeman at the Connecticut Academy of Irish Music.

What inspired you to start?

Nora: Emilie first was inspired to play fiddle from watching a concert by Wild Asparagus (a contra band with fiddler Becky Tracy) when she was four and decided that she wanted to be that fiddler. I don't remember that concert - I was too young! - but I was inspired to play the fiddle by hearing lots of music in our house and going to many concerts. Many fiddlers, such as Liz Carroll (no relation), Katie McNally, Natalie MacMaster, and many others, have inspired me to become the fiddler I am today.

Are they the same reasons you continue to play today?

Nora: For me, I play because I enjoy music and I believe that music is a way of expressing yourself in a way that talking cannot. However, I am still greatly inspired to continue to play the fiddle by watching my idols play, or even playing with famous fiddlers or our teachers! We both love being part of the tradition and the community that comes

with it. Both are strong motivators for us.

Are you traditional fiddlers in terms of style & sound?

Nora: We play many different styles. We initially started with Irish traditional, so we play lots of that style. But over the last 3 years or so we have expanded our styles to include and love Cape Breton, Scottish, and just a tad of Quebecois.

Emilie: We are traditional fiddlers in the sense that we play traditional tunes, and in a traditional style when we want to. We have been taught by two traditional Irish musicians, Jeanne Freeman and John Whelan, and as a result, our phrasing and style are widely parallel to Irish styles. For the last two years, we have also been taught by Katie McNally, who taught us how to play Cape Breton and Scottish fiddle. We are a little newer to that style, but our sound is pretty traditional there as well. In terms of our sound as a duo or as a band, we are not really traditional. We create different harmonies and arrangements for traditional Celtic tunes to make them our own, which is definitely a newer idea. Our sound can be described as a mash-up of

different American-Irish styles with Cape Breton and Scottish influences, sometimes even with contemporary rhythmical ideas. While we do try to separate those to sound traditional when we want to, our typical arranged sets can consist of tunes from different traditions with arrangements that usually have a bit of a contemporary spin. John Whelan, our teacher and the producer of our album, is absolutely genius when it comes to creating counterpoints that add syncopation to our arrangements to make them pop. Additionally, in 2020, we met Sammy Wetstein, a fantastic cello player who joined our band and added a depth to our sets that we did not have before. With him, we have created some really fun and engaging sets for our performances.

Who were your influences, and what are you listening to now from that genre?

Emilie: When we were very young, our parents would play mostly Irish fiddle music in the house. We would listen to many of the greats such as Liz Carroll, Mary Bergin, Martin Hayes, and Kevin Burke. Specifically, we had a live recording of the Boston College Irish Fiddle Festival from 1991 with many of the legendary fiddlers at the time. Our dad also loves bands such as Burning Bridget Cleary, Solas, and Gaelic Storm. The biggest Irish fiddle influences on our sound have been Martin Hayes, Brian Conway, Jeanne Freeman (our teacher), Dylan Foley, and Liz Carroll. We still listen to many of these artists now, but our style has broadened to include Scottish and Cape Breton music as well. I would say our biggest influences there would be Katie McNally, Hanneke Cassel, Natalie MacMaster, and Alasdair Fraser.

What makes a good tune?

Nora: I think that it is good when a tune tells a story or conveys an emotion. All the Celtic traditions have their own style of lift, and a good tune gives space for that lift to show. Although there are many amazing tunes in typical keys, such as G, A, and D, I also love the surprise of an atypical key, such as F, C, E, and B or B flat. Also, if a tune is too similar to another one, it takes a bit of the magic away from both of the tunes. I love tunes that have a range of pitches. Many trad tunes are in the mid-range, but sometimes I love a tune that explores the lower notes too. Emilie and I both have certain tunes that make a color, image, or even a short movie in our heads as we play them. That's a special tune that does that too.

What have been some career highlights?

Emilie: Our first big performance was in 2014 (I was nine and Nora was seven) when we played with our teachers, Jeanne Freeman and John Whelan, at St Joseph's University on Saint Patrick's Day. That was definitely a milestone, even though we only played one set! Other than that, most of our career highlights have come from the past two years. We recorded our first album, *Daybreak*, in June of 2021 and it was released in December. That was one of my favorite music experiences ever - we had several guest artists, almost all the people who have influenced us over the years - and we learned a lot about the recording process. More importantly, we are absolutely thrilled with how it came out! We could not have asked for a better producer than John Whelan! In January 2022, we played at Club Passim's virtual BCMFest, another huge milestone! We have been to BCMFest every year since 2015 and it was great to finally be a part of the show. Then in March, we played our CD release concert at Club Passim with Sammy Wetstein, Conor Hearn, Katie McNally, and Neil Pearlman. That was a dream come true for us to be on that stage in person! We have had an amazing two years musically, and I can't wait to see what opportunity might come our way next.

From your perspective, are young people still interested in fiddling?

Emilie: This is a hard question to answer because where we are from, there aren't really any other young people playing fiddle music. However, when we go to Boston or Ireland, we see lots of young people in college, young adults, and even people our age playing fiddle music of all types. I have started teaching some young violin players and I find that when they learn what fiddle music is, they beg to learn more of it. I am supposed to help them with their orchestra music, but we spend much of our time together learning fiddle tunes. It is great to see how much they love it when they are exposed to it.

How can that be improved?

Emilie: I think Celtic fiddle music is largely unknown to the general public. Young people know about what they are taught. However, most schools focus on classical music in the strings programs and songs from other cultures in the choral programs. America has a rich traditional music heritage (including



Celtic) that goes untaught. I really wish American schools taught more traditional music. I also think that while keeping true to older styles is really important for the longevity of the Celtic music traditions, people who are not familiar with the ins and outs of Celtic fiddle will be more attracted to arrangements and music with a more contemporary spin, which is part of the reason why so many Celtic musicians are deciding to take that route, and why our album is traditional tunes arranged to sound a little more inventive.

What are your fiddling plans for the rest of 2022?

Nora: Last year we learned so much about how we had to prepare to record an album, but we now need to learn how to navigate the world of Celtic radio stations, podcasts, and publications to market our new album. Additionally, we love to play out and do so quite a bit. So far this summer we have plans to play at some outdoor music series, farm festivals, and local pubs. We also plan on making a couple of new sets and arrangements. I also hope to write a tune or two over the summer. Lastly, we are excited to get to go to Swannanoa Celtic Week in North Carolina this year.

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A wide-angle photograph of the Cliffs of Moher, showing the rugged, moss-covered cliffs dropping steeply into the Atlantic Ocean. A path runs along the top of the cliffs, where a group of people can be seen. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

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Game of Thrones Studio Tour

*A new visitor experience in Northern Ireland
keeps the “Song of Ice and Fire” alive.*

Story by Chris Muise



Whether or not you are a fan of Game of Thrones, there is simply no denying that the blockbuster HBO series was - and remains - a juggernaut of the zeitgeist. Even the places where the series was shot over the show's 8-year run have continued to thrive as mega-fan pilgrimage hot spots.

"Because of the overwhelming success of the series, fans have been flocking to the filming locations for years," shares Brad Kelly, general manager of the recently opened Game of Thrones Studio Tour in Banbridge, Northern Ireland, just a few miles southwest of Belfast.

Kelly, who has been in the business of visitor attractions for the past decade, previously plied his trade at the live-platform Dr. Who Exhibition in Cardiff, Wales.

"You can't replace the magic of visitors coming from all over the world to that specific place, because they just want to be immersed in the world they are immersed in when they are watching the show on their

screens," he shares. "When Game of Thrones Legacy Attractions were announced a few years ago, and manifested themselves into this, it was an ideal situation for me to get involved with."

Game of Thrones was filmed in a number of locales, both across Northern Ireland and around the world, but one of its key production meccas was a reclaimed linen facility just outside of Belfast.

"Linen Mill Studios was an old bleaching building. That industry went offshore about 12 years ago, just before HBO started to look around for studio facilities. Obviously, with such a vast production, you would need more than one production facility. This space was adapted into filming studios."

With Game of Thrones over, the building - as well as a treasure trove of sets, props, and costumes to rival even the Lannister's fortune - lay unused. Rather than mothball it all, however, they were repurposed into a tourist destination for fans of the series.

"A couple of them are pretty much in the

same footprint as they were when production was rolling," says Kelly, himself an admitted fan of the franchise, pointing out that the Winterfell section remains unmoved from where it originally filmed several key moments throughout the series. "When you walk into that room of four walls, it's not missing a fourth wall that the camera comes in from."

Other key locations from the series that visitors can now experience first-hand include King's Landing, the land of the north beyond The Wall, and of course, the Iron Throne itself.

*"That is the hero moment
- when you sit on that throne
and momentarily get to rule
the Seven Kingdoms."*

The experience isn't just for GOT die-hards, however - Kelly says it appeals just as much to visitors who have never seen the series, as they can enjoy a behind-the-scenes peek into how a grand and cinematic television show like Game of Thrones gets made.

"You will see, stage-by-stage, the story behind the production; how the costumes were designed, how motion capture was used to create different scenes, a display of weaponry and props and the story of the weapons master and what goes into that design process.

"I love that our staff members and tour guides have been extras on the show," continues Kelly. "Because the cast was so vast, and obviously the filming was here, the local population was very much involved. Many of our staff have their own unique stories and anecdotes from behind the scenes that add a personal touch. You've got a perfect storm of fans with the appetite to consume more and experience that live platform, and the right people to deliver it."





While the show was certainly adult-themed, the tour is more than appropriate for kids of all ages - something that Kelly himself can vouch for.

"I brought my seven-year-old godson to some pre-launch events. He has never seen the show, but he was blown away and has not stopped talking about it since."

And while the COVID-19 pandemic did delay the opening of the facility somewhat, Kelly says that the difficulties of getting the doors open were counterbalanced by the advantageous timing of opening right as lockdowns ended.

"That is a challenge and an opportunity in itself - to be at the vanguard of tourism returning and growing. It is a great time to launch because you've got that appetite for people to go out and do stuff. There are a lot of bookings from 2019, pre-pandemic, being transferred over. As tourism comes back, we are a new product on the landscape."

He figures that the facility will still be around by the next time winter comes to Westeros. For one, it adds a whole new dimension to the potential tourist markets in the region.

"Game of Thrones has - literally - become part of the landscape..."

"To create that live platform for people to get another hit of the show is kind of a down-stream product of our film industry. And what's fantastic about using a region like Belfast - rather than somewhere like London - is that is totally fresh and unique. And it creates another identity. This region

has lots of ancient history, and it has a fantastic, thriving tourism industry through that. But this creates another completely different identity."

And the fandom itself fuels interest in the experience, Kelly muses, looking at franchises like Harry Potter and the Marvel Cinematic Universe as examples. So even if the story of Game of Thrones is over, the story of its fans is not.

"Game of Thrones had such an impact. It is still on television, in terms of repeats and everything. So, you are going to have that constant flow of new audiences finding it."

"With what we have on display here, one of the challenges when it was being designed was not what to include, but what to exclude. This is a massive facility, but it was an even bigger production. So as this grows,

we can add additional sets, and extend the experience, as that appetite grows. It just becomes a tourism mainstay."

That said, a dearth of new stories probably won't be anything to worry about in the immediate future.

"You've got a new production, a spin-off happening, so development of the story expands and builds continually," says Kelly. "We don't know where that is going to go yet - that might be a continued story arc that may go on for many years."

"The narrative never really goes away - it will exist in some form or another. And this studio tour will contribute to the continuation of that story."

www.gameofthronesstudiotour.com





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Everything But the Moose

In the final installment of a five-part series, Lesley Choyce bids farewell to Western Newfoundland

The Covid years changed us all in many ways and I would sound foolish (and even cruel) to say that there has been an upside to it all. But, for both my wife Linda and I, it did change our perspective on a number of things, especially with regard to travel. Before the big outbreak, we were charging across the big pond on a regular basis to England, Ireland, Scotland and France. Covid nixed all that, of course. However, as things began to open up somewhat here in Canada, we thought it might be a good time to explore more of our own backyard.

For us, this meant several trips around our native Nova Scotia. When the travel itch became more insistent, we turned our sights next door to Newfoundland and Labrador - first the Avalon Peninsula and then the spectacular west coast of the massive island. We Canadians know, of course, that Newfoundland is there - perched north and east of the bulk of the continent - although we probably don't always realize how much there is there. Newfoundland, itself, is a whopping 111,390 square kilometres. If you include the rest of the province, meaning Labrador, that adds an additional 294,330 square kilometres - all of which prompts the provincial tourist folks to brag, "We are almost one-and-three-quarter times the size of Great Britain."

Suffice to say, this is one large chunk of real estate and the great bulk of it remains pure wilderness. The wild Atlantic coast drew us first towards our re-discovery of Newfoundland, but then it was the rugged mountains of the western region that lured us into the woods

and scrambling up the scree of steep rocky slopes. On each foray here, we found exciting rural adventures, but we were also deeply appreciative of the warmth of the people, their lifestyle, and their unique culture. Profound Irish influences can be found in the music, the stories, and the literature of Newfoundland and that is enough to bring me back there to soak it all in again. Before this all starts to sound like I have been hired by those provincial tourist folks to say such nice things, let me just note that the breathtaking images of Gros Morne or Cape Spear may entice you to visit, but it is the culture that will spin your head around and leave you begging for more.

On one of our final days of cavorting about the western region of the island we ventured out onto another stretch of big empty coast, admiring the Tuckamore trees - wonderfully wind-sculpted coastal evergreens that grow into dense thorny refuges for birds and weary hikers. I kept looking off across the water wondering what was on the other side. I was pretty sure it was Labrador, but a quick check of the map told me I was looking across the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Lower North Shore of Quebec, probably somewhere near Harrington Harbour where I had once arrived in a helicopter with a faulty door. I recall being wedged between the pilot and a chubby Texan who was keeping the door closed with a bungee cord as we hopped from town to town. The Texan was a hunter, and I was a writer talking to kids in remote coastal schools about creativity and imagination. Those were the days.



Berry Hill Pond Trail

Linda and I scooted back to our rental home in Rocky Harbour and found sustenance from our refrigerator while I selected from a map what I believed to be an easy fairly-level hike around nearby Berry Hill Pond. Most folks coming to this part of the world probably skip this short two-kilometre loop as it doesn't get much press and doesn't have the flash and fame of Gros Morne Mountain, the Tablelands or Western Brook Pond. This was a godsend because we did the whole loop without encountering another person.

As soon as you get away from the road at Berry Hill Pond, the quiet serenity settles into your bones and, on this now warm, windless, muggy day you are transported into a world of Salvador Dalí misshapen trees that have been communally ravaged by storms. The tops and branches break off and then reform in an attempt to survive and the result is like some most admirable surrealist art.

Dragonflies the size of model airplanes kept us company and they seemed curious as to why we were here skirting the quiet, dark pond instead of someplace grander.

Near the boggy north end of the pond, I was sure we'd see the fabled moose that eluded us. But no luck. I would chalk this hike up to the equivalent of a good meditation session and emerged from the forest refreshed, recharged, grateful, and calm. Who needs pharmaceuticals when you have a quiet pond nearby?

It could be that I took a nap after that, and if so, it was top notch. When I awoke, I realized that we had not paid any attention to local lighthouses, so we drove past the Rocky Harbour tourist shops and on to Lobster Cove Head. Parks Canada has this to say about the place: "Lobster Cove Head - A Lighthouse and so much more! With a vibrant history, Lobster Cove Head features trails that lead you to coastal environments and tuckamore forests. It is among the top places in the park to fly a kite, spot whales, and take in the bril-

liant colours of the sunset." Such hyperbole often sets me to grinding my teeth and wanting to walk away, but I turned the other cheek as we strolled about the grounds, kiteless in the midafternoon, with no whales to be seen frolicking anywhere in the deep waters below. The website Canada's Historic Places cites the lighthouse this way: "A good example of a prefabricated component tower as it appeared in Newfoundland at the turn of the 20th century, the elegant Lobster Cove Head Lighthouse is a well-proportioned, functional structure." I preferred the rugged Tuckamore myself, but lighthouse buffs would certainly want to take the inside tour and appreciate the "well-proportioned elegant massing" and ponder what it was like here in the days of yore valiantly guiding storm-strafted fisherman home to Rocky Harbour on a blustery day.

Any visit to an official historic monument tends to make me work up a thirst, so we passed through Rocky Harbour again on our way to Norris Point, a town that clearly deserved a second look. Here we walked to the waterfront and returned to The Cat Stop, named for the harbour catamaran that picked up and disgorged passengers here. We sat out on the deck again with its million-dollar view and patiently waited for service. It was a delightful location but one of those establishments where we felt completely invisible. Waitstaff came and went as we watched the tide slipping away. The woman who seemed to cover our part of the dock doted on a large family ordering umbrella drinks and large plates of French fries. Clearly, their gift of gab left us ignored and parched for an unreasonable length of time. I counselled Linda that we should wait it out and that we were merely observing local hospitality which sometimes favoured the talkative local clans rather than the quiet impatient visitors. Eventually, I flagged down a teenager who was trying to pick up the slack and she brought us our Dayboil beers with an apology that we compensated with a sizable tip.

Lucky for us, an evening performer named Angus appeared on the dock to do his sound check and regaled us with an excellent rendition of "Joe Batt's Arm Longliners," which included the memorable lines:

*You can see their masthead light
With their hardy crews and captains.
They're the finest fishermen
And the girls are all excited
The longliners are comin' in.*

I couldn't help but wonder if that was still the case. Were the girls still really excited about the men coming home on the longliners up there at Joe Batt's Arm? I decided we should put that on the list for the future: a trip to that distant part of the island to take in Joe's appendage as well as Twillingate, Fogo Island, and dozens of other desirable ocean haunts.

Overall, it had been another relatively easy (compared to the Gros



Lesley & Linda



*Anchor your dreams to the mountains
tether your hopes to the wind
smile in the face of infinity
and balance the thick with the thin.*

Morne hike) day and we rewarded ourselves with a fine dinner at the Black Spruce Restaurant, a short distance down the road at Neddie's Harbour. The sea scallops were wonderful, but I kicked myself for not ordering the beloved cod. And, when you order a bottle of wine here, they bring a full litre instead of the miserly 750 ml bottles usually offered. So, I would argue, it deserves TripAdvisor's 4.5 stars.

Undoubtedly, it was that full litre of wine on top of the Quidi Vidi Dayboils that resulted in Linda and I dancing to the Chicks (formerly the Dixie Chicks) on our small green front lawn back at Rocky Harbour. As drivers of RVs and motorcyclists cruised up and down the drag, we provided the entertainment and were appropriately and heartily acknowledged with many smiling faces and honking horns.

On Saturday, our last day in Newfoundland, Linda bolted from bed at 7 a.m. to run her nine-kilometre path around town on a windless, oh-so-quiet morning. I sat on the small porch and wrote a poem, believing that exercising my mind and creativity was as good as a one-hour workout. The result, while not particularly monumental, was at least a proper warm-up for some serious work ahead of me once we had left the magic of western Newfoundland. It reads as follows:

*Sitting Quietly Doing Nothing
(Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland)*

*Well, nature does abhor a vacuum
although I don't approve of the word abhor
but there really is no such thing
as nothing
not even in the vacuum of space
but here in Rocky Harbour
doing next to nothing allows me
to admire the wild chamomile
thrusting up through the driveway
the lazy seagull on my neighbour's roof
the sweet saline sea breeze sweeping in from the Gulf
the almost empty sky
traced only with thin cirrus thoughts
and me
alone without a purpose for once
nursing my aching legs
punished by that mountain looming over my shoulder
to the east
so steep and tall it looks down on me
and wonders how such a creature so frail
once climbed its stony sides to greet the sky.*

Having come to the end of that one, I felt lonely and philosophical so added this to my notebook:



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On the Trail of Celtic Europe

*In the second instalment
of an ongoing series,
Celtic Life International
correspondent Steve Melia
pedals through the past.*



Heuneburg

In the first of these articles, I described the start of my cycle journey across Europe, visiting sites associated with the Celts of the Iron Age and trying to understand their origins. It was becoming a journey of discovery in several ways. As I travelled between the sites, I was also reading historical and archaeological books and articles, trying to unravel a mystery - who were the people the ancient writers called Celts?

Where did they come from and what, if anything, links them to the people we call Celts today?

Some of the sites I planned to visit were on my route; others would be more difficult to reach directly. Hannibal used elephants to cross the Alps and join his Celtic allies in their assault on Rome, and I thought I might need an elephant to carry all the weight on my bike over Alpine passes. Instead, I decided to follow the pan-European cycle route, Eurovelo 6, along the rivers Loire, Rhine, and Danube, staying north of the Alps. Two of the sites I would visit by public transport. The first of them, La Tène, was two hours from Basel by train. Switzerland has one of the best rail networks in the world.

In 1857, a local fisherman working for a rich collector discovered about 40 iron objects, including eight spearheads and 14 swords, at the mouth of Lake Neuchâtel near the village of La Tène. The full sig-

nificance of the find only emerged gradually over the next few years, by which time private collectors had helped themselves to many of the objects which are now scattered around the world. In total, over 2,500 objects have been recovered from that part of the lake. In 1874, an international archaeological conference agreed to name the late Iron Age as the “La Tène period” - a name still in use today. When similarities were found between the style of objects found there and Iron Age finds in France, Britain, and Ireland, La Tène culture became asso-

ciated with the Celts. Many archaeologists now question that link, but you will still find it all over the Internet, and in the Laténium museum on the shores of Lake Neuchâtel at Hauterive.

The museum’s press officer had warned me that the Celtic section was undergoing renovation. By the end of the year, it will house a much larger collection with interactive displays and the latest interpretations.

Despite those limitations it was well worth the visit. I passed through displays of earlier and later periods before reaching



Hôtel Palafitte



the Celtic section. There are well-preserved Roman sculptures and a huge flat-bottomed boat from the Gallo-Roman period. The Celtic section displays jewellery, weapons, a chariot wheel, and three human skulls. The objects found in the lake were put there over a long period of time. The reason for that may never be known for certain, but the preferred interpretation today is of a sacrificial site, where weapons, valued objects - and even people - were thrown into the water for ritual or religious reasons.

Before going outside to explore the surroundings I tried to operate one of the interactive displays. A girl who looked about five (I am not exaggerating) became concerned at my unsuccessful attempts. She asked me which section I was trying to enter, showed me the right way to do it and, when she was satisfied that I was following her instructions, went back to her own screen.

"So, you're the expert?" I asked her.

"I come here often," she explained.

The museum is surrounded by an "archaeological park" with reconstructions of wooden dwellings from the different eras of occupation.

The most striking of these is a "palafitte" raised on wooden piles, with a flat-bottomed

boat like the one in the museum underneath. It stands on dry land, but the originals were built over the water. The Iron Age objects found at the La Tène site (about 5 kilometres east of the museum) were thrown into the water from platforms or bridges built on similar piles; a reconstruction of the bridge where the three human skulls were found can also be seen in the park.

Entrance to the museum also gives you a free ferry trip along the lake to the town of Neuchâtel, 4.5 kilometres away. The next ferry was in a couple of hours, so I decided to walk along the path that follows the shore. Along the way I passed the Hôtel Palafitte, with individual apartments jutting over the water on stilts.

The material and artistic culture called La Tène replaced the early Iron Age 'Hallstatt culture', which was named after the Hallstatt salt mines in Austria. They lay further along my journey. In the meantime, on the banks of the Danube in Southern Germany, lies the most important settlement of the 'Hallstatt period' - Heuneburg - where I was heading next.

From Basel, I followed Eurovelo 6 along the Rhine to Lake Constance, where I took a short cut, climbing over some higher ground to rejoin the route beside the Danube at Sigmaringen. On a river lined with hundreds of historic buildings, Sigmaringen Castle is one of the most impressive, but I was keen to press on - a couple of hours' ride further east

lay the "Celtic city" of Heuneburg.

Like La Tène, the first archaeological discoveries at Heuneburg were made in the 19th century, but the full significance of the site has only become clear recently. At its height in the 6th century BC, Heuneburg was surrounded by an inner and an outer wall, enclosing the homes and workshops of 5,000 people within one square km. That might sound small by our standards but for its time and place it was unique. Today it is known as "the first city north of the Alps." You may also find it described as "Pyrene, the Celtic City" mentioned by the Ancient Greeks, and that's where things become more controversial.

In 1983, the village of Herberlingen opened a museum in a historic barn, a few kms from Heuneburg. As the importance of the site became clearer, in 1998 the European Union paid for a partial reconstruction of the original site. It is now an "open air museum," managed by the state of Baden-Württemberg. There are longer-term plans to merge the two, but my visit began in the village museum, which contains many of the original finds.

All the displays are in German, although there is a booklet available in English. If you were thinking of visiting and don't understand German, it would help to read up beforehand, and there is quite a lot available online. As Brigitte Steinacher, the curator, showed me around, I was struck by one big



difference between here and La Tène.

There were craftsmen's tools, beauty accessories, fragments of textiles, and containers of Greek wine, but the only weapons were arrowheads and ornate daggers. They might have been used for hunting or ceremonial purposes instead of warfare, she said.

The heyday of Heuneburg predated the La Tène artefacts by three centuries - it was a time of relative peace and progress. Then the site was destroyed by fire, for unknown reasons, and only partially rebuilt afterwards. By the 5th century BC, it was abandoned. The La Tène culture which followed, until the Roman conquest of the Celts, was more defensive and warlike.

An "archaeological" walking circuit 8 km long connects the indoor and outdoor museums with several surrounding sites. Of these, the most important is Hochmichele, the tallest burial tumulus in Europe. In a separate room at the museum, bathed in an eerie blue light, the burial chamber of a man and a woman in a chariot has been reconstructed. I decided to ride there on the way to Heuneburg.

I found it beside a forest track, with trees obscuring its summit, from where I could

hear the laughter of children. When I arrived at the top, I found myself surrounded by about 20 of them from a local primary school. They asked me to take a photograph and agreed to take one of me. They were posing lots of questions when a whistle summoned them back down. At the base of the tumulus, I met their teachers and a guide from the Heuneberg Association. When I mentioned that it was my 60th birthday, they gave me some cake, sang Happy Birthday in German and Turkish, and roped me into a mystical ceremony. I was given two sticks and told to beat them in time as we marched round the base of the tumulus, trying to raise the spirits of the Celts buried there.

The guide took me to one side. The teacher was really motivating the children, she said, but the archaeologists would be unhappy if I wrote anything about mystical ceremonies. "We have to stick to the facts," she said. "Oh, I think the readers will understand the difference," I replied, thinking of Tolkien's comment that "Celtic is a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come."

My first impression on reaching the Celtic settlement was: I can certainly see why

they built it here. The reconstructed wall stands on the edge of a precipice, dominating the river and its vast plain, 200 meters below. Behind the wall stand several wooden houses and buildings used as workshops. A larger building stands further back on its own. This was a "manor house" built after the big fire. As external threats were growing, it seems their society became more hierarchical.

Next to the houses, on a panel headed "Heuneburg - the Celtic City" is an image of Herodotus, the Ancient Greek "father of history," who described the Danube "beginning in the land of the Celts and the city of Pyrene." That quotation is the only written evidence linking Heuneburg with Pyrene, or the Celts. Unfortunately, he goes on to say that the source of the Danube lies beyond the Strait of Gibraltar, which is clearly wrong and might suggest that the "Land of the Celts" was further west.

Historians and archaeologists have been arguing over the meaning of those words for many years.



La Tène - Skulls

Today, the Celts are generally defined as the peoples who speak, or used to speak, Celtic languages. So, do we know what languages the people of Heuneburg or La Tène used to speak? The short answer is no. So, should we be using the same word to describe those people as we use today for the Scots, Irish, Welsh and Bretons?

I put this question to Dirk Krausse, the archaeologist who has led the excavations of Heuneburg for the State of Baden-Württemberg for 20 years. He pointed out that the term was first used by the Ancient Greeks, then he turned my question round, arguing that "It was misleading to name the linguistic group 'Celtic.'" The main culprits were a Welshman called Edward Lhuyd and a Breton called Paul-Yves Pezron, who were both writing in the early 18th century. Krausse says that if they and their successors "had called the linguistic family say 'Gaulish-British-Irish,' no one would speak of Celts in Scotland or Ireland nowadays. But it is like it is - quite complicated and misleading."

Alas, had I been wasting my time seeking the origins of my ancestors and their culture, here in Central Europe? The picture was certainly more complicated than I first thought, but my search was not over yet. Since my first article about Gergovie, I have been riding backwards through time and that was set to continue with my journey towards Hallstatt. In the next of these articles, I plan to visit the salt mines and museum there and learn how recent history has influenced the German and Austrian view of their Celtic heritage.

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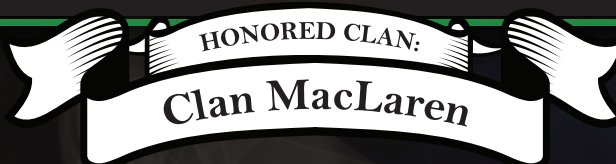


La Tène - Celtic Bridge



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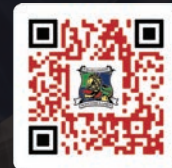
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The Japanese Garden at Cowden

*Our award-winning
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Isabella “Ella” Robertson Christie was a remarkable Scotswoman whose visionary legacy lives on in a Japanese Garden she named Sha Raku En - “the place of pleasure and delight.” Sitting on a wooden bench and looking across the still water of a lochan towards the thatch-roofed Garden Pavilion, and with the faint smell of cherry blossom drifting in the air, I can vouch for the accuracy of the name - Sha Raku En. It is a place of exquisite beauty also.

Christie was born in 1861 in Midlothian. When she was four years of age the family moved to Cowden Castle near Dollar in Clackmannanshire where the climate and soil suited her father, who was an enthusiastic arborist. Being wealthy landowners, the family enjoyed the privilege of foreign travel. By the time of her father’s death in 1902 she had travelled extensively across Europe as well as visiting Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. There then followed a series of ever more adventurous journeys that would have required a considerable degree of fortitude for a single woman at that time. She is known to have visited the ancient city of Samarkand lying on the Great Silk Road linking China and the Mediterranean, becoming the first Western woman to visit the Khanate of Khiva. Her travels took her through India, Ceylon, Kashmir, Tibet, Malaya, and Borneo. She met the Dalai Lama, attended a banquet hosted by the Maharaja of Kashmir, and had dinner with Commander in Chief, India, Lord Kitchener. Between 1907 and 1908 she visited China, Korea, Hong Kong, Russia, and Japan. While in Japan she developed an interest in Japanese gardens. In Kyoto she met sisters Ella and Florence du Cane. Together

they spent time visiting Japanese gardens. Ella du Cane produced acclaimed watercolour paintings and Florence was a writer. In 1908 they published jointly *The Flowers and Gardens of Japan*. That same year Christie returned to Scotland and started work on the creation of a Japanese Garden in the grounds of Cowden Castle.

Christie appointed Taki Handa - a female Japanese Garden designer and horticulturalist - to design the garden. She was affiliated with the Royal School of Garden Design in Nagoya, Japan, but in 1908 was studying in England. Handa’s design wraps the garden around a lochan created by damming a small burn running through the estate. Resting at the foot of the gentle slope of the Ochil Hills there is a similarity to geographical aspects of Japan with the slopes of Mount Fuji being

noted as a particular inspiration.

For 17 years following the garden’s completion, Professor Suzuki, the Hereditary Head of the Soami School of Imperial Garden Design at Nagoya visited regularly. Overseeing a team of Japanese gardeners, he ensured trees and shrubs were trimmed and pruned in accordance with the ethos and requirements of an authentic Japanese Garden. Working on Handa’s creation, he acknowledged it as being the best Japanese Garden in the Western World!

Prior to this, no woman had ever been officially credited with the design of an authentic Japanese Garden.





Suzuki wasn't the only Japanese responsible for the maintenance of the garden. Shinzaburo Matsuo lost his entire family in an earthquake and came to Scotland to embrace a new life as a gardener at Cowden. Arriving in 1925 and remaining until his death in 1937 he became a well-known figure in the local community. Fascinated by the man who had lost everything before coming to work in the Japanese Garden at Cowden and making Scotland his home, I went in search of his final resting place. I found it in a small peaceful corner of Muckhart Churchyard only a few miles from the garden he tended for 12 years.

Ella Christie passed away in 1949. Her adventurous, globetrotting spirit resulted in her being in the first group of women to be elected Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1913. She was elected also Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of Scotland, becoming Vice-President of the latter in 1934. With her death, the garden passed to her great nephew, Robert "Bobby" Christie Stewart. Cowden Castle was demolished in 1952 and, other than being opened a handful of times a year, the Japanese Garden closed to the public in 1955. Sadly, in a single night of mayhem in 1963, it suffered irreparable damage. Four teenagers entered the grounds, set fire to the buildings, destroyed the bridges, and threw the shrines and lanterns into the water. It had taken decades of painstaking work to bring to maturity and it was wrecked in a few hours of wanton destruction.

By the 1980s the garden had fallen into disrepair with vegetation out of control and the pond choked with weeds. Despite its



condition, it still attracted the interest of those in the West who knew of its existence, as well as Japanese visitors who understood its significance. During the 1990s the garden passed to Sara Stewart - the youngest daughter of Bobby Stewart and the great-great niece of Ella Christie. With Sara working in London, Bobby spent much of his retirement endeavouring to maintain control of a garden that was succumbing to nature. He used a carhorse to remove trees that were endangering rare shrubs and erected temporary bridges to access the overgrown island. The lochan was drained in 2012 to remove overgrown weeds and to locate fragments of the lanterns and shrines that had been vandalized in 1963. The scale of the task was daunting. As it happened, Professor Masao Fukuhara of Osaka University was in Scotland in 2013. He was responsible for the restoration of the Japanese Gardens at Kew, London and Tatton Park, Cheshire. In 2001 he received the gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show and his winning garden is now in the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Aware of the importance of the garden at Cowden he requested to visit it. After several hours of soulful contemplation on site he agreed to lead a full restoration project. Commissioned by Sara, he returned in the spring of 2014 with a team of volunteers, associates, and students. Within two weeks they restored the islands on the west side of the garden, but it became apparent that a significant investment would be needed in order to continue. Sara established the charity, The Japanese Garden at Cowden Castle

SCIO, with its purpose being the restoration and maintenance of this historic site. Since its formation, the charity has benefited from donations by various foundations and public funds with the National Heritage Lottery being the principal funder of the new Garden Pavilion. Although only partially restored, the garden opened again to the public in 2017. Visitor projections had been set at 10,000 per annum, and notwithstanding the impact of Covid lockdowns, the garden was able to remain open for 11 months between 2018 and March 2020 and attracted 30,000 visitors. In 2021 it welcomed over 40,000 visitors.

The restoration project is still ongoing. There are plans to build a Japanese Pavilion, housing a restaurant, lecture room, shop, and event space. Existing visitor facilities are adequate but don't complement the beauty of the place and need to be replaced. Raising funds for such ambitious plans remains the biggest challenge, but speaking with Sara it is evident that she remains passionate about the project, "I am an artist's agent by trade and I never imagined I would put myself through the cold fear of driving a project such as this from concept to fruition. The garden offers so much enjoyment to so many and I owe it to Ella Christie and all of our visitors to ensure that a day at the Japanese Garden at Cowden continues to be as wonderful and restorative as it was in her day."

www.cowdengarden.com
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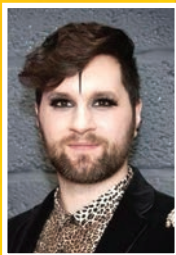
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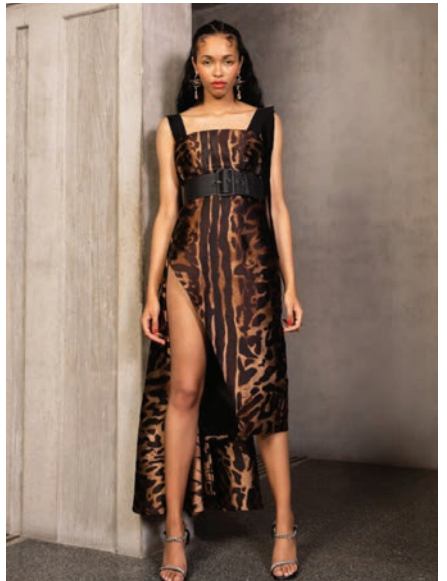


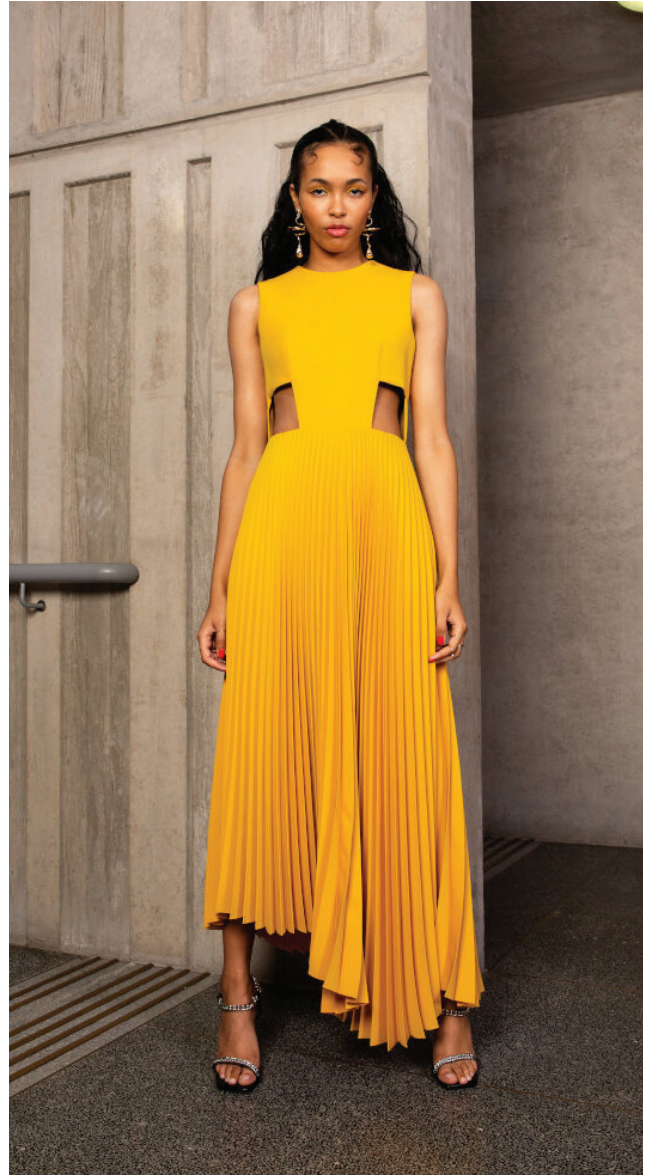
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As Highland Games and Celtic Festivals rebound in 2022, the Celtic community reflects on lessons learned after two years of lockdowns and layoffs.

Chris Muise tells us more.

A man with a beard, wearing a green t-shirt and a kilt, is captured in the middle of a hammer throw. He is holding a large, dark, spherical weight attached to a chain. His right arm is extended forward, and his left arm is bent at the elbow. He is wearing a black and blue plaid kilt and yellow and black patterned leggings. The background shows a grassy field with a white tent and other people in the distance. The text "the Celtic Comeback" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, serif font. The word "the" is in a smaller font size and is positioned above "Celtic". The word "Comeback" is in a larger font size and is positioned below "Celtic".

the Celtic Comeback



It is that time of year again - the days are longer, the weather is warmer, and Celts of all ages and backgrounds begin to feel the call to celebrate their heritage at one of the hundreds of Highland Games and Celtic Festivals around the world.

Celtic celebrations are big affairs right across the diaspora, and not just in the volumetric sense. They often play a significant role in people's life - maybe someone that makes and sells Celtic-themed goods or traditional Scottish/Irish grub, or perhaps someone that performs trad music locally and/or on tour. In most places where festivals take place the whole community benefits - culturally, socially, and economically.

"Most of the Highland games that we go to bring in a pretty big crowd as they are established, and the local attendees look forward to it every year," says Jacquie Habenicht, whose tannery business, Scottish Leather & Lassie Wear, reflects both a love of the craft and a love of attending Celtic events. "The first Celtic gathering that I ever went to was The Grandfather Mountain Highland Games in Linville, North Carolina, in July of 2000.

"As my husband and I continued to go to more of these events, we began purchasing garments to wear and eventually started making our own. I noticed that there were plenty of options for men with multiple kilt vendors, and they also had all the accessories available. There were very few, if any,





ladies clothing vendors. I would say that the interest in all things Celtic never seems to diminish, from what I can see.”

“The festivals are great, especially the ones with a real focus on the music - not that I am biased or anything,” smiles Trevor Lewington, guitarist with veteran Celt-rockers Enter The Haggis. “They are also a great chance to reconnect with our friends in other bands. Along with the enjoyment of performing at these annual gatherings, they are often a wonderful opportunity to share what we do with new people.”

Event organizers spend weeks, months, and often an entire year preparing for annual festivities.

“Ours is one of the largest events of its kind in our community,” shares Megan Visser, Head Cultural Chair of the yearly Iowa Irish Fest. “It not only has the impact of attracting a large number of people to our downtown area - plus everything that goes along with bringing a large number of people to town for an event, i.e. hotel stays, shopping, dining etc. - but also, in terms of what we are able to give back to our community with contributions to service groups who help out over the weekend, non-perishable food donations to the local food bank from our Sunday mass, gift baskets and tickets to charity auctions, and even with the picnic tables that we purchased with a grant and then donate back to our local parks.”

“The event has grown from a small evening performance - through various hosting venues - to a large complex that, during the rest of the summer, operates as a six-diamond baseball complex, with a parking lot and support areas,” adds Steve Tweedie, Co-Chairman of the Moncton Highland Games.

“We have the most pipe bands in attendance at any Highland Games in Atlantic Canada, as well as more attractions and individual events than typically seen at these types of gatherings. Given the way this event has grown, it has become one of the most important festivals on the City of Moncton’s calendar. We enjoy considerable support from City staff, through their provision of a venue, equipment, and labor to make this event happen each year.”

The games, ceilidhs, and festivals of today often fuel the events for the following year - and even longer - according to Reno Celtic Fest’s Willie Puchert.



“Back in 2009 - after being encouraged by my mother to go to the Reno Celtic Celebration - I became a volunteer for the festival,” recounts Puchert, who acts as Board Secretary, Clans & Associations Chair, and Publicist for the event. “I had dismissed her previous invitations growing up as being part of the ‘old plaid people.’ As my late father’s health was declining back then, I came to the realization that I should follow in family traditions.

“In addition to showcasing our Celtic Community organizations, our local pipe band, our Irish and Scottish dancers, and many others, it serves as the best recruiting tool for our local Irish and Scottish groups.

“It is an opportunity for members to learn about our culture and their ancestry. It is also a draw for our tourist-based economy.”

“My roles with the gathering today are a direct result of attending my first Celtic celebration, as it introduced me to a community that made me feel welcome.”

If continuity - a certainty that the community can continue to use these festivities as an engine of cultural rediscovery and recognition - is so vital, what happens when that connection is lost? Perhaps it is a case of - to quote Joni Mitchell - you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.

It is no secret that COVID-19 has thrown a wrench into all our lives at this point, and we are only just now starting to emerge from the other side. So, it begs the question, in a world of lockdowns, layoffs, social distancing, etc., how can Celtic festivals even begin to recover?



Dona Cruikshank is the promotion director of the Glengarry Highland Games in Ontario, one of Canada’s oldest annual Celtic gatherings. The pandemic, she laments, broke a decades-long streak of the games bringing glee and cultural pride to the community.

“The first year we were shut down, you could almost feel the shudder of disappointment that was felt across the region,” she says. “It really came as quite a shock that, after 72 years, our Games wouldn’t take place.”

Glengarry was among the many events that tried doing something virtually to maintain a sense of continuity. It was hardly ideal, however.

“Because we couldn’t leave our many fans without some semblance of the Games,



we created virtual events that we hoped they could enjoy at home, for their own mini-Games,” continues Cruikshank. “For pipers, there was an online piping competition run through the Pipers and Pipe Band Association of Ontario; a highland dancing competition and a virtual concert showcasing some of Games fiddlers, dancers, and great Celtic bands.

“It wasn’t the real thing, but it was at least something. That gave people a taste of the Games and kept us in their minds.”

Virtual events couldn’t keep all ships afloat, though. Due to any number of logistical factors - from geography to technological limitations to sheer cash flow issues - many vendors and performers who rely on these games for their careers struggled to adjust.

“It was pretty much a forced two-year sabbatical for us,” Lewington says of Enter the Haggis’ lockdown experience. “Since we don’t live near each other, we couldn’t rehearse together or even stream online performances. It was challenging. When the pandemic hit, we were on tour in the U.S. in support of an album (The Archer’s Parade). After a few shows, our agent called and said venues were cancelling. The writing was on the wall, so we packed up and went home

and didn’t see each other again for close to two years.

“We did want to do something for our supporters, so we decided to take a monthly deep dive into our past albums, reminiscing about writing and recording them. We streamed these ‘Throwback Thursdays’ for our fans and had a lot of fun.”

“We were pretty much shut down from March of 2020 to May of 2021, without any events or sales,” adds Habenicht. “I kept the website up and running, but I was not promoting it or sewing anything but masks over that time frame. At some point in the future we will have to decide how we want to continue the business.

“For growth, that would mean expanding our production and hiring employees to increasing our inventory for sale. It is also possible that we eventually sell off the business and just enjoy going to events as spectators. This decision is down the road and we do not anticipate any changes in the near future.

“It is hard to speculate on what the future of our country - or the world - will look like in this ever-changing environment.”

The news wasn’t all dour, though; while certainly a challenging adjustment, some vendors managed to not just adapt, but some eked out a new market they might not have discovered without the outside pressure of COVID-19.



Andrew and Anne Robinson

“As a food business, we never shut down during the pandemic,” says Anne Robinson, the gourmand behind Scottish Gourmet USA, which brings gastronomical goodies from the British Isles across the pond to both live Celtic events and an online marketplace. “The pandemic has forced us to be nimbler in responding to our customer requests. We added a lot of products for folks that didn’t want to visit their local store and stayed at home. We now stock items like HP Sauce and Heinz Beans - basic pantry items we never offered before.

“We also had a huge boom in business, with shoppers looking for gifts online from Scotland, as they had cancelled their trips due to the pandemic. In fact, we sold more food than ever before over the past two years. We can ship to any U.S. household and put food on their table.”

On the other hand, some mainstays in the Celtic festival circuit did not emerge from lockdown unscathed.

“The Celtic Celebration Board announced in March that, due to unexpected expenses and lack of revenue to support those costs, the 2022 festival at Bartley Ranch Regional Park was cancelled, and is in the process of dissolving,” Puchert informs Celtic Life International. “Since the organization was contractually obligated to compensate the bands, the board elected to offer a free concert that same date in an area of Downtown Reno called the Reno Brewery District.

“We intend for it to also be a parking lot party with Clan tents, vendors, food trucks and local Celtic performers - including our local pipe band - and offer a scaled-down version of our original event. If this event goes well, our hope is that we may be able to



have a repeat event next year and, hopefully, in the years to come.”

With COVID-19 slowly receding into the rear-view mirror of our lives, we have little recourse but to dust ourselves off, reflect on our experiences, and move on.

“I think the lesson we should learn is we are currently in a crisis,” warns Puchert. “This has created a lack of opportunities for festival participants to function; from specific vendors having a market to sell their products, to the Celtic musicians and entertainers having venues to perform, to Clans and Celtic organizations recruiting and sustaining their membership, to the economic fallout festival weekends bring to local economies.

“If we do not have Celtic festivals to engage people, how do we sustain our community?”

“We realized that the spirit of Highland Games is stronger than the effects of even a global pandemic,” Tweedie counters. “Peo-

ple thrive on social interaction, and this year, we are giving them something to help them recover from over two years of restricted events. 2022 will mark our biggest Highland Games ever, and we look forward to seeing everyone come out and celebrate with us.”

“I think we always thought we were fairly flexible, but the lockdown definitely put that to the test,” Visser admits. “It taught us just how flexible we can be, and how to excel at keeping multiple plans in play for any situations that may arise.”

“The one thing that really came home to me was how important the Games are in so many people’s lives,” shares Cruikshank. “And that the Games is more than a two-day event to many people. One of the lessons learned is that you must keep bringing your message to people, to keep them engaged and mindful that yes, the Games will be back.

“The best lesson learned,” she concludes, “is that these celebrations are bigger than a pandemic, a lockdown, and a layoff. So, we will see you at the Games!”

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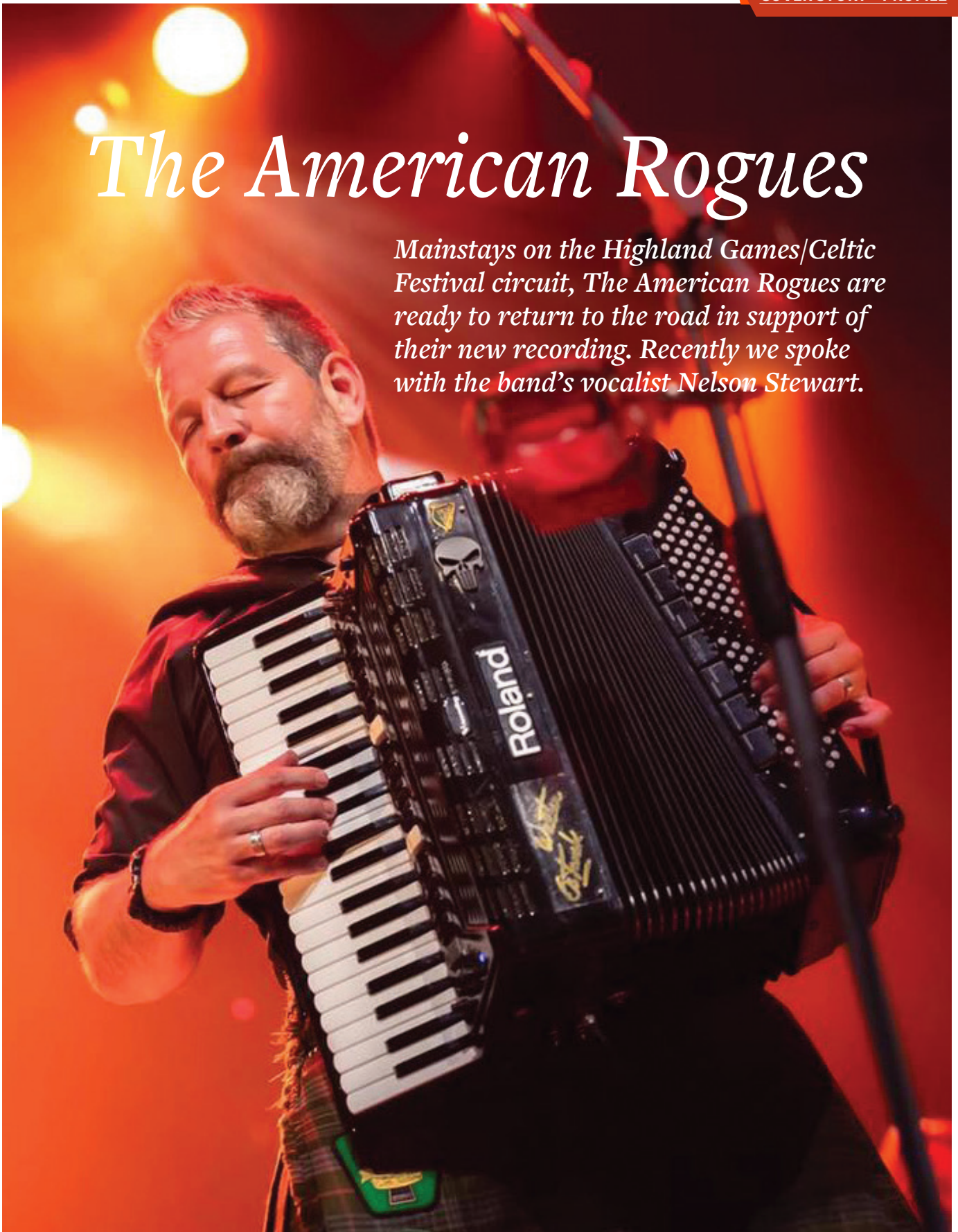
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The American Rogues

Mainstays on the Highland Games/Celtic Festival circuit, The American Rogues are ready to return to the road in support of their new recording. Recently we spoke with the band's vocalist Nelson Stewart.





What is your own heritage?

I often say I am part Scottish, part Welsh, part Irish, part English, and all Canadian.

When and why did you get involved with music?

Since I was young, I've been drawn to many different types of music - I would sit in front of our giant, velvet-fronted, 1970s radio/turntable/8-track player listening to Elvis, Abba, Johnny Horton, etc. and I regularly watched Soul Train, Lawrence Welk, and Hee Haw on TV. My parents took notice and signed me up for accordion lessons (knowing I was also into hockey they likely didn't want to invest in a piano on the chance that performing wouldn't last). I was fortunate enough to have Canadian Accordion Champion, Helen Milne, as my teacher. She was a wonderful lady who was very patient with me, particularly since I wasn't fond of practising. My first band was an accordion group comprised of her students that she would take to perform at retirement homes. When I started high school, I was again very fortunate to have some wonderful music teachers named Ryan Scott and Sylvia MacMillan who further nurtured my love of music and performance. I still keep in touch with Ryan and Mac and I tell my own music students that the thread of their inspiration continues on through them (and hopefully their own students).

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

I would say so - I still love music. Most people don't play music to get rich - it's something you love and, if you're lucky and surround yourself with good people, you might eventually start getting paid. For me the pay is secondary to the joy music brings. Getting to travel around the world and meet wonderful people from different cultures is deeply fulfilling.

What are the challenges of the vocation?

Everyone in our current lineup gets along really well and we all love playing music so when we come together it's always a great time and the music flows easily. I would say the biggest challenge is logistics. We have a lot of amazing musicians on our roster, but everyone has jobs, families, competitions, etc., and trying to line up a group for events is always a challenge. That, and the paperwork involved in visas, contracts, etc. are my least favourite parts of the job. I always say that when we make it to the big time the first thing I'll do is hire a secretary.

What are the rewards?

Music has given me so much, including great friends, seeing countries I may never have been able to visit, and even my incredible

wife of 14 years (she was in the audience at one of our shows). I get to share the stage with fantastic people, such as my grandson and the brilliant drummers from taiko group, Nagata Shachu, who are part of our Celtic/Japanese side-project, The Dragon & the Rising Sun. I've watched my music students grow and thrive to the point where they have been nominated for Junos and are touring the world themselves. One even performs with us and is our sound/video engineer. I have had the honour of spending time with Navy SEALs and other Veterans, and I've experienced the sadness of performing at their memorial services. Music has truly enriched and guided my life.

How has the band evolved over time?

When I joined this group's predecessor 20 years ago there were 4 of us playing pipes and drums. As the years progressed, after adding more instruments and musicians from across North America, I expanded our sound and we went from generally playing smaller acoustic sets to performing at large festivals and theatres, sometimes with orchestras and 8 or 9 members of our own. Along the way we began working with the Navy SEALs and started performing at their musters, reunions, memorial services, monument unveilings, and fundraisers, including shows at the SEAL base in Little Creek, Virginia and at Pebble Beach Golf Club in California. Around that time, we also began



playing USO-type tours of bases from Japan to Italy to the United Arab Emirates. These shows are extremely important to us as we have close friends and family members who have served in the military. A few years ago, my wife Jeania and I studied taiko drumming at Kiyoshi Nagata's studio in Toronto and I had the idea of joining forces with Kiyoshi's world-renowned taiko group, Nagata Shachū. We sold out our first show together at the Harbourfront Centre Theatre in Toronto and since then have become The Dragon & the Rising Sun and played other events, including the World Music Festival in Sherbrooke, Quebec, where we were the closing act in 2019. That group has tapped into my longtime love of Japanese culture and, after my wife, my dog, and my grandkids, has become one of my favourite things.

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the group?

As you know the first lockdown hit in March, the busiest month of the year for a Celtic band, and we watched as our shows in New York, Chicago, Niagara Falls, Detroit, etc. fell like dominos. At that point everyone was hoping it would just be a temporary thing and that we might all be back to performing by the summer. As time went on, we watched gigs in Scotland and Japan get canceled, as well as ones closer to home that hurt just as much, such as the Caledonia Celtic Festival near us in Ontario. Fortunately, a number of groups with whom we've worked for many years, including the Crieff and Cowal Highland Gatherings in Scotland, the Sherbrooke World Music Festival, the Moncton Highland Games, and the Ottawa Scottish Society, commissioned us to create videos for online performances. The Guelph Multicultural Festival also invited us to perform live online for them (this year we're excited

to be headlining that one in person). As it was for people everywhere all of this meant a creative, financial, and emotional blow - those are years none of us will ever get back. My other passion is being a schoolteacher, and not getting to see my students in person for months was very depressing, as well. Perhaps the worst of all was that my grandkids live in the States, and I live in Canada so for a year and half I couldn't see them (my granddaughter was going on two before I finally met her in person). One of the few upsides to being locked down was that my dog and I got to spend every day together - we were both quite happy about that.

How much did you miss performing at Highland Games/Celtic Festivals?

All of us have been performing for many years so there was definitely an emptiness when the bottom fell out - Celtic events are at the heart of what we do. Because our members live all over North America gigs are generally when we get to spend time together with each other's families, so that was upsetting, too, as this band is like a family. I've also become close with a number of event organizers, such as Lyne Giguere in Sherbrooke, Steve Tweedie in Moncton, and AO Lucy in New Hampshire, so I missed them also, as well as our friends from other groups, such as the Screaming Orphans (with whom we'll be playing in Quebec this year).

What lessons did you learn from the lockdown (as they pertain to the band)?

The lockdown definitely reinforced what I already believed - that life is short and people matter. As I mentioned people are

the best part of this job and, over the years, we've had the privilege of getting to meet some very fine ones from around the world. When that was taken from us it hurt.

What's on the group's agenda for the rest of 2022?

We're really looking forward to things picking up steam this year. This summer will see us share the stage at the Seaway Valley Folk Fest with Sean McCann from Great Big Sea and Heather Rankin, and in Guelph and Sherbrooke for their World Music Festivals. It will be our 11th time in Sherbrooke, and we have a very close relationship with the beautiful people of La Belle Province. The day after Sherbrooke we head to Scotland where we'll be playing the 150th Crieff Highland Gathering and the 128th Cowal Highland Gathering. We've played both festivals before and were extremely honoured to be invited back. We fell in love with the people of Scotland - they truly made us feel like we had come home. In between those events, a Canadian army friend of the band is working having us perform at NATO headquarters in Belgium. The remainder of the year has seen us receive invitations to perform at the Great American Irish Festival, the Maryland Concert Series, the Quebec City Celtic Festival, the Fergus Medieval Faire, the Dickens Christmas Festival in Maryland, and at the Algonquin Commons Theatre in Ottawa with The Dragon & the Rising Sun. November will also see me check off the #1 item on my bucket list because we've been invited to perform in New Zealand. Finally, if we decide to come back from New Zealand, we will be headlining New York City's 25th annual Tartan Day in early 2023 and then we'll be returning to Japan.

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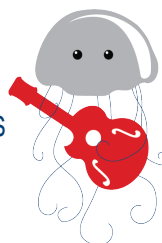
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Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival

July 16, 2022 - Florence, MA
www.glasgowlands.org

The Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival - a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving Scottish culture - celebrates its 27th anniversary this July. Over the past two decades, the annual gathering has become one of the most notable Celtic events in Massachusetts, earning its place as the only Scottish festival within the state and the second largest within all of New England. Visitors won't want to miss this year's celebrations, which include a Highland Pipe Band Competition featuring over 20 bands, a Highland Dance demonstration, and Heavy Athletic Competitions showcasing several world record-holding athletes. If you are in a toe-tapping mood, head over to the Celtic Pub Tent for some of the best in Scottish music, headlined by popular quintet Albannach, Celt-rockers Enter the Haggis, Sarah the Fiddler, and Charlie Zahm. Be sure to check out one of the many vendor booths for Celtic-inspired merchandise and food, or head over to the Clan Village to show off your Celtic pride. Also on tap are children's games, the Pioneer Valley Harpers Guild, spinning and weaving, sheep herding, and - new this year - whiskey tasting! A day-long event that is fun for the whole family!



New Brunswick Highland Games Festival

July 22-24, 2022 - Fredericton, NB
www.highlandgames.ca

Each year, the New Brunswick Highland Games Festival celebrates two equally important elements of Celtic culture: the Highland Games (piping and drumming, Highland dancing, and traditional athletics) and the Scottish Festival (entertainment, clans, and workshops). Although provincial in scope, the annual event draws hundreds of competitors and performers from across Canada and the North American eastern seaboard, and thousands of visitors from around the world. Listed as one of New Brunswick's "Top Festivals" and one of the American Bus Association's 100 Best Events in North America, the New Brunswick Highland Games Festival is one of the largest events of its kind in Atlantic Canada and is certainly a favourite amongst competitors and visitors alike. This year's event will host the Atlantic Canadian Highland Dance Championship and features fabulous entertainment with Friday evening headliners Les Fireflies and a Saturday night ceilidh headlined by Cape Breton supergroup and JUNO Award nominees Beòlach.



Glengarry Highland Games

July 29 & 30, 2022 - Maxville, ON
www.glengarryhighlandgames.com

Brush off your kilt and shine up your shoes because this year's Glengarry Highland Games is ready to roll and welcome everyone back for a fantastic gathering of all things Scottish. Pipe bands will once again mass on the infield, thrilling thousands of spectators. Highland dancers, heavyweights, and tug of war competitors will provide extra excitement, as will Scottish fiddle performances, Harp Workshops, Scotch tastings, and the Wee Bairs area. This year, the Friday night Tattoo will feature dynamic Cape Breton musical artists Beòlach. Guests are invited to explore the vendor's area, showcasing fine woolens, intricate jewelry, kilts, t-shirts, and everything tartan. Haggis and mushy peas are available for famished festival goers as well. Just a short drive from Ottawa, Montreal, and the US border, all roads lead to Maxville this summer!



Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival

August 4-7, 2022 - Lunenburg, NS
www.folkharbour.com

The quaint and cozy seaside town of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia may be small, but the world-renowned locale enjoys a big reputation for its history, hospitality, and abundance of culture. Each summer, thousands of guests flock to the UNESCO World Heritage community to take in the sights and sounds of the province's longest-running music gathering - and one of the oldest in Canada - the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival. This year, the all-ages event takes place over four days in early August and includes performances by the likes of Ashley MacIsaac, Stephen Fearing, the Ennis Sisters, Connie Kaldor, JP Cormier, Cassie & Maggie, and more. Like Lunenburg itself, the annual gathering's four indoor and two outdoor venues are warm, welcoming, and steeped in history. All are welcome to attend.



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Highland & Irish Dance Demonstrations, Heavy Athletics, Pipe & Drum Competition, Massed Bands, Clan Tents, Historic Highlanders, Scottish Food and vendors, beer and mead, harpers, weavers, water spray park.

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CARRY ME BACK
TO FERGUS
August 12-14, 2022



Fergus
Scottish
Festival
& Highland Games

HEAVY EVENTS • PIPES & DRUMS • HIGHLAND DANCE • HERITAGE
fergusscottishfestival.com



Iowa Irish Fest

August 5-7, 2022 - Waterloo, IA
www.iowairishfest.com

It is time to don the kilt and dance a little jig as the Iowa Irish Fest returns to downtown Waterloo! This year, the newly renovated Lincoln Park area will host over 20 live bands, including headliners The High Kings, The Red Hot Chilli Pipers, and Gaelic Storm. In addition to live music, this premier three-day gathering celebrates the best of the Emerald Isle - from the Highland Games to vendors to workshops - all the while showcasing Irish dance, instruments, language, and culture. While the event started out as a small, informal family picnic in 2006 - founded by the Cedar Valley Irish Cultural Association as a way to foster and develop Irish fellowship and outreach into the community - it now includes several fan-favorite activities, including the High Nelly Bike Rally and the Celtic Cruise motorcycle rally. Tickets are available via the festival's website, and all military and first responders will be admitted at no charge with proof of service.



Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games

August 12-14, 2022 - Fergus, ON
www.fergusscottishfestival.com

The Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games is one of the largest ongoing three-day events celebrating, promoting, and honouring Scottish heritage in Canada. With annual attendance nearing 20,000, the yearly gathering - which celebrates its 77th anniversary in 2022 - showcases the four pillars of traditional Scottish culture: Highland Dance, Heavies Competitions, Pipes and Drums, and over 50 Clans. This year the festival features Celt-rockers The Red Hot Chilli Pipers and welcomes actor Duncan Lacroix (Outlander, Outlaw King) as its featured guest. Other activities on the weekend agenda include a tattoo, a downtown parade, whisky and tea tents, traditional artisans and food, a Highland pub, and the always-popular McKiddies area for the wee ones. Visitors of all sorts can enjoy the very best of Scotland...without the airfare!



Féis an Eilein

August 16-20, 2022 - Gaelic Concert series every Tuesday from July 12-August 16 - Christmas Island, NS
www.feisaneilein.ca

The Féis an Eilein, located on Cape Breton's charming Christmas Island - the first place to host a Féis outside of Scotland - is the perfect place to brush up your Gaelic. Since its inception in 1991, organizers of the annual series of events have worked hard to educate, entertain, and engage visitors. This year, the five-day event will include the always-popular Piper's Ceilidh, a Gaelic day camp for youth with a symposium, Gaelic classes for adults, milling frolic, a square dance, a Gaelic song circle, as well as workshops for step dancing, fiddling, piano, drumming, and guitar. The locale also hosts a world-renowned concert series each summer where both emerging and established artists from Cape Breton and beyond gather to perform.



An Rí Rá Montana Irish Festival

August 12-14, 2022 - Butte, MT
www.mtgaelic.org

After a two-year break, the 2022 An Rí Rá Montana Irish Festival returns this August 12-14 at the Original Mine Yard in Butte. A world-renowned event of Irish culture, music, and dance, the three-day gathering features entertainers from all over the United States and Ireland, as well as regional Irish performance groups and dancers. Now in its 19th year in Butte, the festival also offers cultural, educational activities, and music from the likes of the Irish Music Masters (Cathie Ryan, Seamus Egan, John Doyle, John Williams, and Ivan Goff), Rory Makem & Donal Clancy, The Prodigals, Mick McAuley, and Ken O'Malley and the Twilight Lords. Regional performers include Dublin Gulch and the Tiernan Irish Dancers. Workshops - featuring the Trinity Irish Dancers, Cathie Ryan, Ashley Davis, Rory Makem, and Michael Punke - are an excellent opportunity for attendees to learn about topics not often found at many festivals. Guests are welcome to enjoy food and crafts from vendors and wash down a pint at the beer garden. Come and take part in the most Irish weekend found anywhere in the Pacific Northwest in the most Irish city in America! Admission is free, with activities for all ages!

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WWW.CELTICFEST.ORG

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- Celtic Merchants
- Highland Games
- Food/Beverages
- Cultural Area

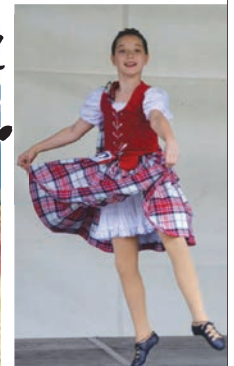


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2022

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Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering

August 20 & 21, 2022 - Hamilton, MT

www.bcg.org

The Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering returns this summer for its 13th year. Held annually on the third weekend in August at the historic Daly Mansion, the two-day festival is the largest cultural event of its kind in Montana. All weekend, guests will enjoy live music on the main stage, with performances from Téada, Blaggards, The Byrne Brothers, and The Gothard Sisters. Also on the agenda are pipe and drum competitions, Highland and Irish dance performances, a Clan Tent Village, and a daily Grand Parade of Clans and bands. Adult Highland Games competitions are scheduled throughout the grounds on Saturday, and jousting demonstrations by the Order of Epona will also be on tap. A Scotch, Irish whiskey, and mead tasting will tee-up the Saturday night Ceilidh, while a Celtic Tea will take place on Sunday. Also on Sunday, the young ones are invited to participate in Junior Highland Games, while all are welcome to participate in the Bonnie Knees contest, a Skillet Toss, a 'Beards & Braids' competition, and traditional Tug o' War contests. Guests can browse vendor stalls to sample traditional foods and wares. The Daly Mansion will also be open for the weekend. There is something for everyone at this wonderful, family-friendly event.



Jamestown Regional Celtic Festival & Gathering of the Clans

August 26 & 27, 2022 - Mayville, NY

www.96thhighlanders.com

Beautiful Mayville Lakeside Park in Chautauqua County in upper New York State is once again set to host the Jamestown Regional Celtic Festival & Gathering of the Clans this August. Along with presenting the largest pipe band selection for a one-day event in western New York, the annual gathering will feature a Scottish Gathering of the Clans, the New York State Heavy Men and Women's Scottish Athletic Championships, Scottish and Irish dancers, beer and wine gardens, an old-fashioned fiddle session, Celtic and craft vendors, as well as a Kid's Area - complete with a Clan hunt - that will keep the wee ones engaged and entertained. Live musical acts are sure to keep toes-a-tappin' throughout the day and will include a performance by Canadian Celt-rockers The Mudmen and, from Tennessee, Tuatha Dea - both are festival favorites. A family-friendly festival, Celts and non-Celts from all walks of life are welcome to attend.



Virginia Scottish Games

September 3 & 4, 2022 - The Plains, VA

www.vascottishgames.org

A Labor Day Weekend tradition, the Virginia Scottish Games at Great Meadow in the Plains celebrate the region's rich and robust Scottish roots. This year, the two-day event will feature an array of activities, including Highland Games heavy events, piping and drumming competitions, Highland dancing contests, a fiddling tent, Clans and Scottish societies, a Scottish dog showcase, a British car show, and a customary Kirkin' of the Tartan. Adults are welcome to savour a selection of spirits at the ever-popular Whisky Tasting, while an assortment of games will keep the kids busy. In addition, guests are invited to stroll through the vendors area and enjoy uniquely crafted goods and authentic Scottish cuisine. Live musical performance by the likes of North of Argyll, Ardmore, the Glengarry Bhoys, the Steel City Rovers, and more are sure to delight visitors.



Canmore Highland Games

September 3 & 4, 2022 - Canmore, AB

www.canmorehighlandgames.ca

Awaken your inner Scot at the 31st annual Canmore Highland Games this Labour Day weekend beneath the scenic peaks of the Canadian Rockies. This year, the 2-day gathering serves up a full slate of experiences at Centennial Park, and guests of all ages and backgrounds are invited to sip the spirits, mead and ale at the Taste of the Highlands, visit the clans, see the heavy sports, shop the Celtic market, watch the sheepdogs at work, observe the intense competitions of Highland dancing, piping and drumming, enliven the palate with a Scotch tasting, sample foods, quench the thirst while enjoying live Celtic music in the beer garden, and discover British automobiles on show. In addition, visitors can let loose at the Canmore Ceilidh, a kitchen-party style celebration featuring traditional music and dance. Always affordable, advance tickets and bundles are available via the event's website.

JULY

Embri Highland Games

July 1
www.embrihighlandgames.ca

Village of Pugwash – Gathering of the Clans

July 1
www.pugwashvillage.com/index.php/festivals-and-events/gathering-of-the-clans

Kincardine Scottish Festival

July 1 – 3
www.kincardinescottishfestival.ca

Feis a' Chidsin! KitchenFest

July 1 – 9
www.kitchenfest.ca

Aberdeen Highland Games

July 2
www.aberdeenhighlandgames.com

Forres Highland Games

July 2
www.forreshighlandgames.com

Luss Highland Games

July 2
www.lushighlandgames.co.uk

Penticton Scottish Festival

July 2
www.pentictonscottishfestival.ca

Almonte CeltFest

July 2 – 3
www.almonteceltfest.com

Sterling Renaissance Festival

July 2 – August 14
www.sterlingfestival.com

Kenmore Highland Games

July 6
www.kenmorehighlandgames.com

ScotDance Canada Championship Series

July 6 – 10
www.scotdance.ca/sdccc

Grandfather Mountain Highland

July 7 – 10
www.gmhg.org

Payson Scottish Festival

July 8 – 9
www.paysonscottish.blogspot.com

The Saline Celtic Festival

July 8 – 9
www.salineceltic.org

Antigonish Highland Games

July 8 – 10
www.antigonishhighlandgames.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival

July 8 – 10
www.nlfolk.com/festival/info

West Cork Literary Festival

July 8 – 15
www.westcorkmusic.ie/literary-festival

The Famous Alva Games

July 9
www.alva.ukctest.co.uk

Skagit Valley Highland Games

July 9
www.celticarts.org/skagit-valley-highland-games

Athena Scottish Games

July 9 – 10
www.athenacaledonian.org

Earagail Arts Festival

July 9 – 24
www.eaf.ie

Ennismore Shamrock Festival

July 10
www.selwyntownship.ca/en/discover-our-township/Ennismore-Shamrock-Festival.aspx

Harpenden Lion's Club Highland Gathering

July 10
www.harpenden-lions.co.uk/highland-gathering

Catskills Irish Arts Week

July 10 – 16
www.catskillsirishartsweek.com

The Swannanoa Gathering – Celtic Week

July 10 – 16
www.swangathering.com

Galway International Arts Festival

July 11 – 24
www.giaf.ie

Fleadh Cheoil na Mumhan

July 13 – 16
www.munsterfleadh.ie

HebCelt Festival

July 13 – 16
www.hebceltfest.com

Festival of Tartans

July 14 – 17
www.festivalofthetartans.com

Orillia Scottish Festival

July 15 – 17
www.scottishfestival.ca

Cambridge Scottish Festival

July 15 – 16
www.cambridgescottishfestival.ca

Badger State Feis

July 16
www.badgerstatefeis.com

Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival

July 16
www.glasgowlands.org

Inverness Highland Games

July 16
www.invernesshighlandgames.com

Loch Lomond Highland Games

July 16
www.llhgb.com/the-loch-lomond-highland-game-preserving-scottish-heritage

The Platinum Jubilee Lochcarron Highland Games

July 16
www.lochcarrongames.org.uk

Portland Highland Games

July 16
www.phga.org

Tomintoul Highland Games

July 16
www.tomintoulhighlandgames.co.uk

Arizona Highland Celtic Festival

July 16 – 17
www.nachs.info/celtic-festival

Camp DalFest

July 16 – 17
www.campdalfest.com

Elizabeth Celtic Festival

July 16 – 17
www.elizabethcelticfest.org

Monterey Scottish Games and Celtic Festival

July 16 – 17
www.montereycelticfest.com

Inveraray Highland Games

July 19
www.inveraray-games.co.uk

Stonehaven Highland Games

July 19
www.stonehavenhighlandgames.com

Mull Highland Games

July 21
www.mullhighlandgames.com

Festival de Cornouaille

July 21 – 24
www.festival-cornouaille.bzh

Virginia Highland Festival

July 22 – 23
www.vahighlandsfestival.com

Maine Celtic Celebration

July 22 – 24
www.facebook.com/MaineCelticCelebration

New Brunswick Highland Games Festival

July 22 – 24
www.highlandgames.ca

Speyfest 2022

July 22 – 24
www.speyfest.com

Balquhider, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Highland Games and Gathering

July 23
www.lochearnheadhighlandgames.co.uk

Mary from Dungloe Festival

July 23
www.maryfromdungloe.ie

Taynuilt Highland Games

July 23
www.taynuilthighlandgames.com

Okanagan Military Tattoo

July 23 – 24
www.okanagantattoo.ca

Pacific Northwest Scottish Highland Games and Gathering

July 23 – 24
www.sshga.org

Le Celti Cimes

July 23 – 29
www.celticimes.org

Cleveland Irish Cultural Festival

July 24 – 26
www.clevelandirish.org

Interceltic Festival of Aviles and Region

June 24 – 31
www.intercelticu.com

Scoil Alca – Summer School

July 25 – 30
www.scoilalca.ie

Arisaig Highland Games

July 27
www.arisaighhighlandgames.co.uk

Fiddler's Green Festival

July 27 – 31
www.fiddlersgreenfestival.com

St. Andrews Highland Games

July 28
www.standrewshighlandgames.co.uk

Durness Highland Games

July 29
www.secretary134.wixsite.com/highlandgathering

Glengarry Highland Games

July 29 – 30
www.glengarryhighlandgames.com

Buffalo Irish Festival

July 29 – 31
www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/event/buffalo-irish-festival-2022

Dayton Celtic Festival

July 29 – 31
www.daytoncelticfestival.com

O'Carolan Harp Festival

July 29 – August 1
www.ocarolanharpfestival.ie

Airth Highland Games
July 30
www.airthhighlandgames.com

Dufftown Highland Games
July 30
www.dufftownhighlandgames.com

Halkirk Highland Games
July 30
www.halkirkgames.co.uk

**National Eisteddfod
Caerdydd / Cardiff**
July 30 – August 6
[www.eisteddfod.cymru/
eisteddfod-2022](http://www.eisteddfod.cymru/eisteddfod-2022)

Montreal Highland Games
July 31
www.montrealhighlandgames.com
Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann
July 31 – August 7

AUGUST

Goderich Celtic Roots Festival
August 1 – 7
www.celticfestival.ca

Isle of Skye Highland Games
August 3
www.skye-highland-games.co.uk

Killing Highland Games
August 3
www.killingames.co.uk

Guinness Irish Festival
August 4 – 6
www.guinnessfestival.ch

Montelago Celtic Festival
August 4 – 6
www.montelagocelticfestival.it

Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival
August 4 – 7
www.folkharbour.com/2022-festival

Feakle Festival
August 4 – 8
www.feaklefestival.ie

Dornoch Highland Games
August 5
www.dornochhighlandgames.org

Balaklava Eisteddfod Society
August 5 – 6
www.balaklavaeisteddfod.org.au

**St. Andrew's Society of
Detroit Highland Games**
August 5 – 6
www.highlandgames.com

Dublin Irish Festival
August 5 – 7
www.dublinirishfestival.org

Iowa Irish Fest
August 5 – 7
www.iowairishfest.com

Festival Interceltique Lorient
August 5 – 14
www.festival-interceltique.bzh

**The Royal Edinburgh
Military Tattoo**
August 5 – 27
www.edintattoo.co.uk

Aboyne Highland Games
August 6
www.aboynegames.com

Brodrick Highland Games
August 6
[www.facebook.com/
BrodickHighlandGames/timeline](http://www.facebook.com/BrodickHighlandGames/timeline)

Dundonald Highland Games
August 6
www.dundonald-games.org.uk

**Minnesota Scottish
Fair Street Festival**
August 6 2022
www.mnscottishfair.org

**North Berwick International
Highland Games**
August 6
www.northberwickhighlandgames.org

Spokane Scottish Highland Games
August 6
www.spokanehighlandgames.net

Colorado Scottish Games
August 6 – 7
www.scottishgames.org

Piping Live! 2022
August 6 – 14
www.pipinglive.co.uk

Bridge of Allan Highland Games
August 7
www.bofagames.com

Ceol Cascadia Irish Music Week
August 7 – 13
www.ceolcascadia.org

Festival des Filets Bleus
August 11 – 15
www.festivaldesfiletsbleus.bzh

Aberfeldy Show and Games
August 12 – 13
www.aberfeldyshowandgames.co.uk

An Ri Ra Montana Celtic Festival
August 12 – 13
www.mtgaelic.org/anrira

Sparta Celtic Festival
August 12 – 13
www.spartacelticfest.org

World Pipe Band Championship
August 12-13
www.theworlds.co.uk
Fergus Scottish Festival
August 12 – 14
www.fergusscottishfestival.com

Irish Fair on Minnesota
August 12 – 14
www.irishfair.com

Irish Fest LaCrosse
August 12 – 14
www.irishfestlacrosse.org

**CNY Scottish Games
and Celtic Festival**
August 13
www.cnysscottishgames.org

Feis at the Falls
August 13
www.feisatthefalls.homestead.com

Abernethy Highland Games
August 13 – 14
[www.nethybridge.com/abernethy-
highland-games](http://www.nethybridge.com/abernethy-highland-games)

National Heritage Week
August 13 – 21
www.heritageweek.ie

Perth Highland Games
August 14
www.perthhighlandgames.co.uk

Saskatoon FolkFest
August 18 – 20
www.saskatoonfolkfest.com

Berea Celtic Fest
August 18 – 21
www.berea-celtic.com

Milwaukee Irish Fest
August 18 – 21
www.irishfest.com

**Glenisla Highland Games and
Friendly Society**
August 19
www.glenislahighlandgames.co.uk

**Maine Highland
Games and Festival**
August 19 – 20
www.mainehighlandgames.org

The Piper's Gathering
August 19 – 21
www.pipersgathering.org

Bute Highland Games
August 20
www.butehighlandgames.org

**Helmsdale and District
Highland Games**
August 20
www.helmsdalegames.co.uk

Nairn Highland Games
August 20
www.nairnhighlandgames.co.uk

Stirling Highland Games
August 20
www.stirlinghighlandgames.com

**Bitterroot Celtic Games
and Gathering**
August 20 – 21
www.bcg.org

Crieff Highland Gathering
August 21
www.crieffhighlandgathering.com

Will County Celtic Fest
August 24
www.willcountycelticfest.com

Master of Tradition Festival
August 24 – 28
[www.westcorkmusic.ie/masters-of-
tradition](http://www.westcorkmusic.ie/masters-of-tradition)

Tonder Festival
August 25 – 28
www.tf.dk/en/forside-tf

Cowal Gathering
August 26 – 27
www.cowalgathering.com

Argyllshire Gathering Oban Games
August 26
www.obangames.com

Peoria Irish Festival
August 26 – 28
www.peoriairishfest.com

Glenurquhart Highland Games
August 27
[www.glenurquhart-highland-games.
co.uk](http://www.glenurquhart-highland-games.co.uk)

Irish Hooley Music Festival
August 27
www.irishhooley.org

**Jamestown Regional Celtic Festival
and Gathering of the Clans**
August 27
[www.96thhighlanders.com/festival/
Festival.html](http://www.96thhighlanders.com/festival/Festival.html)

**Lonach Highland
Gathering and Games**
August 27
www.lonach.org

**Long Island Scottish
Festival and Games**
August 27
[www.liscots.org/festival_and_games.
htm](http://www.liscots.org/festival_and_games.htm)

North Lanark Highland Games
August 27
www.almonthighlandgames.com

Strathardle Highland Gathering
August 27
[www.strathardlehighlandgathering.
org.uk](http://www.strathardlehighlandgathering.org.uk)

Maryland Renaissance Festival
August 27 – October 23
www.rennfest.com

North American Festival of Wales
August 31 – Sept 4
www.festivalofwales.org/index.html

13th Annual Bitterroot Celtic Games & Gathering August 20-21, 2022

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FÉIS WEEK AUG 16-20

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September 3 & 4, 2022
www.vascottishgames.org



THE CELTIC CHEF
with Gary Maclean

Clams with Bacon and Kale

Scotland is renowned for its seafood, with more coastline than France and Spain combined. As such, the seafood industry is a vital part of the Scottish economy. Ironically, much of our seafood ends up on the plates of the Spanish and French. I love to vacation with my family on the south coast of Spain every year and I spend the week enjoying Scottish fish and shellfish from the markets there. I have always loved clams as they are easy to cook and are fun to eat. This simple, scrumptious recipe combines crisp bacon and kale, which work well with the sweet clams. Like most molluscs, the key is to cook them very quickly. While excellent anytime of the year, the meal is ideally enjoyed during the summer months.

Ingredients

2kg / 4-½lb fresh clams
50g / 2oz unsalted butter
2 shallots, finely diced
150g bacon, diced
200ml / 7fl oz white wine
200g bunch kale, chopped
100ml / 3-½fl oz double cream
Salt/pepper to taste

Instructions

Wash the clams under cold running water and drain them a few times, as they can gather sand inside. Discard any that are open. Heat up a large pot, adding the chopped bacon and the chopped shallots. Cook until the bacon has started to get crispy. Add the clams and the white wine and place the lid over top - the heat from the pot creates steam, cooking the clams very quickly. Once the clams have opened, add the shredded kale and the double cream, mix in. Bring back up to the boil and serve as soon as the kale is cooked.

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with Andrew Ferguson

I suspect that - if asked - even relative novices in the world of single malt Scotch, let alone the aficionados, could likely guess the names of the largest distilleries in Scotland today. With a production capacity of 21 million liters of spirit each per year, Glenfiddich and Glenlivet are by far the industry's largest producers. They are enormous, roughly 10 times the industry average. The next closest, at a still impressive 15 million liters is Macallan. The list drops off sharply from there. But ask the same question about the industry in the 1970s, and I suspect even the most knowledgeable aficionados would struggle to identify Tomatin as the era's largest distillery.

In 1974, the Tomatin distillery installed a dozen new stills, which would have been impressive in and of itself, but is even more so considering that they were adding them to the 11 they already had. This gave the distillery an annual production capacity of more than 10 million liters a year, the largest of any single malt distillery in Scotland at the time. The distillery, as with the rest of the industry, was chasing the post war distilling boom in demand for Scotch whisky - in particular Blended Scotch. All booms eventually turn to bust though, and by 1986 the distillery was in liquidation...no pun intended.

Tomatin was founded in the town of the same name in 1897, high up in the Highlands between Inverness and Aviemore. The town was a stopover point on a centuries-old cattle droving road, and it is likely that some form of illicit distillation took place there as far back as the 16th century. By the 1700s, illicit distilling in the area was rife, as it was in much of the rest of Scotland. The choice of location was partly personal as the founder, James MacDougall, was a local boy. But it was likely the announcement of the route for the

Highland Rail line in 1892, which would pass right by the town, which made the decision to open a distillery there all the more attractive.

As with many of the distilleries built during the Victorian whisky boom of the late 1900s, Tomatin's fortunes turned with the start of the new century.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, new distilleries opened, and existing ones expanded production to meet the new global demand for Scotch whisky. This all came to an abrupt end in 1898 with the Pattison Whisky Crash. As with close to a third of the industry, Tomatin would fall victim to the crash in the decade that followed and was forced to close in 1906. However, it was spared the fate of many of the others and reopened under new management in 1909. It would continue to grow steadily over the decades that followed, until the decision was made to abruptly double its size in 1974. As with its opening, the timing was poor, with another industry correction less than a decade away!

At its peak, the distillery covered an enormous site, with a couple of dozen warehouses, sizeable grain storage, homes for staff, its own sizeable cooperage, and many other facilities. There was even an eel farm on site, which took advantage of the waste heat from the stills. Much of this legacy can still be seen today. And while Tomatin is not one of the most beautiful and manicured distilleries, it is one of the most interesting and authentic. In 1986, the distillery was saved once more from oblivion by new management, when it was acquired by Takara Shuzo and Okura & Co. It in turn became one of the first Scottish

distilleries (but not the last) to be acquired by a Japanese firm.

In the 1990s, the new owners also acquired the well-known Blended Scotch Whisky brand Antiquary, giving the distillery new purpose, as well as ready demand for production. In 2000, 11 of the stills were removed, and a new direction was taken, with a focal shift toward single malts. Since then, production has rarely surpassed 2 million liters a year, with most of that increasingly destined to be bottled as single malt. The distillery's range has evolved over the last 20 years, and now includes both peated and unpeated single malts, with the peated whiskies bottled under the brand name Cu Bocan or "Ghost Dog."

Tomatin's whiskies offer very good value compared to many better-known single malt brands. Most of the spirit today is matured in first fill casks, primarily Bourbon and Sherry, but also a variety of ex-wine casks. The brand's reputation has grown over the years, and with that its distribution, with the whiskies widely available in most markets.

The distillery also offers a range of tours, 7 days a week, and is well worth a visit. A classic example of 'it's what's on the inside that counts,' Tomatin offers an excellent counterpoint to the more famous, polished, and picturesque distilleries in the nearby Speyside region. The distillery is conveniently located just off the A9, the main highway, and is a short drive from both Inverness and Aviemore, and just 20 minutes from other iconic attractions such as Loch Ness, Culloden, Fort George, and Cawdor Castle.

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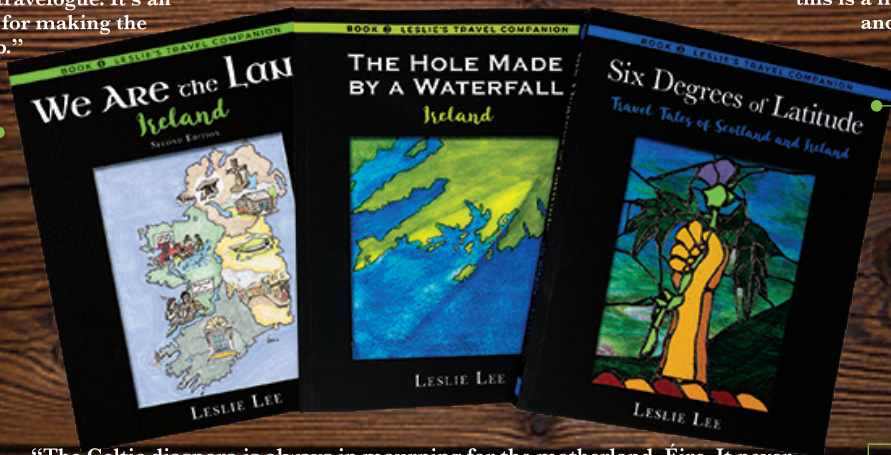


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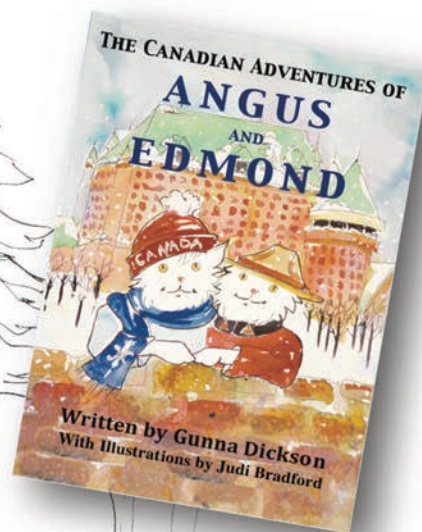
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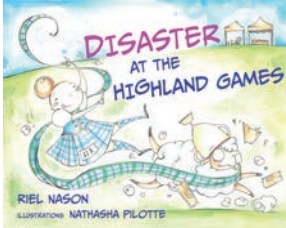
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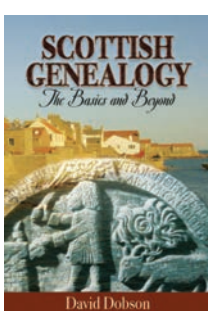
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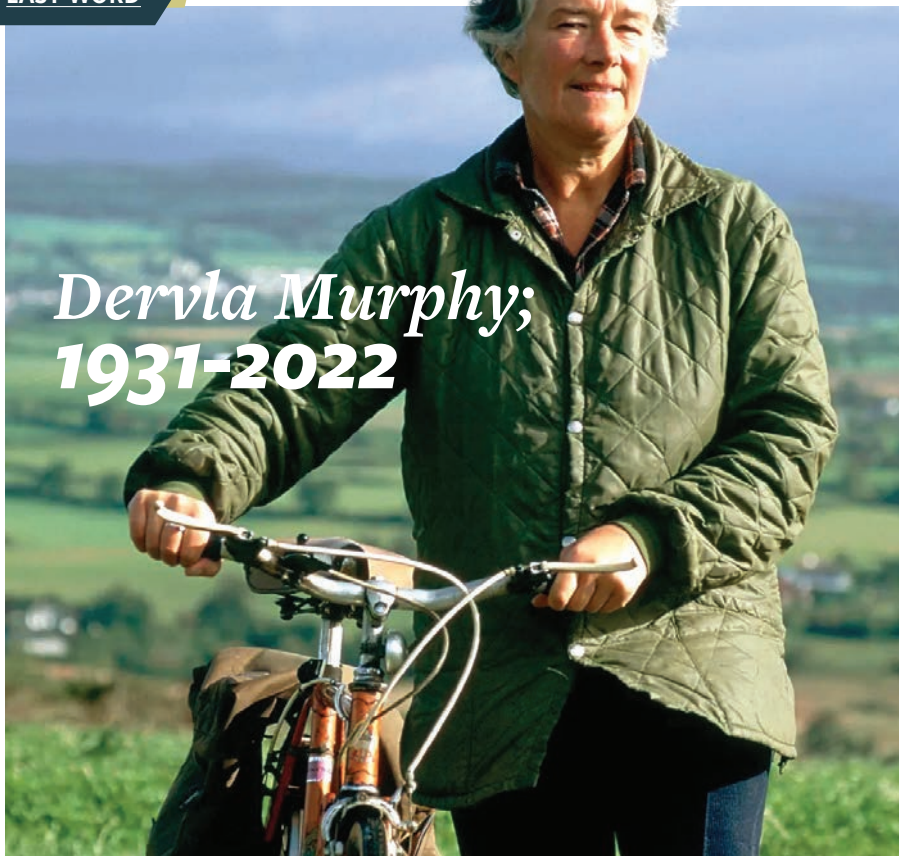
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CELTIC WINDS



Dervla Murphy; 1931-2022



As a young girl, Dervla Murphy had dreams of travelling the world. She followed those dreams - often using her bicycle to do so - but her journey came to an end in late May when she died in her hometown of Lismore, Ireland, at the age of 90.

Murphy was born on Nov. 28, 1931, to two Irish Catholics: a librarian father and a mother who struggled with rheumatoid arthritis from the time Murphy was one year old. (Murphy's official birthname was Dervilla Maria Murphy, as a priest claimed the name Dervla was pagan.) For her 10th birthday, Murphy's parents gave her a second-hand bicycle, and the youngster imagined riding it to India. "I have never forgotten the exact spot, on a steep hill near Lismore, where this decision was made," Murphy wrote in her autobiography, *Wheels Within Wheels*. "Half-way up I rather proudly looked at my legs, slowly pushing the pedals around, and the thought came 'If I went on doing this for long enough, I could get to India.'"

As a teenager, she attended the Ursuline Convent in Waterford. At 14, however, she left schooling behind in order to care for her ailing mother. Murphy soon began her small-scale travels and travel writing, but she was limited to a few weeks away due to her mother's illness. When her mother passed away in 1962, she knew it was time

to spread her wings. She finally took the trip she'd imagined when she was 10, cycling from Europe through West and Central Asia, eventually landing in India. She recounted the journey in her 1965 book, *Full Tilt: Ireland to India With a Bicycle*. "This was a moment I had thought about so often that when I actually found myself living through it, I felt as though some favourite scene from a novel had come, incredibly, to life," she wrote. She'd set out with a .25 pistol in hand and even had to use it to protect herself against animal and man. But Murphy's first major trip would not be her last. In fact, she went on to write more than two dozen other books about her life and travels.

In 1968, Murphy gave birth to her daughter, Rachel. She had no interest in marrying and lived her life as a single mother, but she eventually revealed that Rachel's father was Irish Times editor Terence de Vere White. After Rachel's birth, Murphy spent a few years close to home, working as a book reviewer to support them. Motherhood didn't stop her from travelling, however - sometimes with Rachel by her side. When Rachel was only nine, she accompanied her mother on a 1,300-mile journey from Cajamarca to Cuzco in the Peruvian Andes. This experience was immortalized in *Eight Feet in the Andes: Travels With a Mule in Unknown Peru*.

In the '70s, Murphy cycled to Northern Ireland and spoke to people on both sides of "The Troubles," which culminated in her book *A Place Apart*. Murphy didn't shy away from politics thereafter. "I found myself very dissatisfied with the travel book that just tells the story of a journey, which my first books did," she reflected in a 2006 interview with *The Guardian*.

"I have this interest in how people pick up the pieces after trauma and tragedy, and I think there needs to be a balance between the personal events and impressions and a bigger picture."

In the '80s, she took on topics such as the Handsworth riots, the impact of AIDS and the aftermath of apartheid.

Murphy continued to travel up until she was almost 80 years old, after a fall in Jerusalem led to a hip replacement. She was also living with arthritis and a lung condition called emphysema, which thwarted her plans of going to North Korea. Her final book, *Between River and Sea: Encounters in Israel and Palestine*, was published in 2015. "Of all the countries I visited, that is the only one where I felt it was my actual duty as a writer not to be neutral," Murphy said in an interview with travel writer Michael Kerr.

In 2019, the Royal Geographical Society honoured her with the Ness Award "for the popularisation of geography through travel literature." In 2021, she received the Edward Stanford Award for outstanding travel writing.

Murphy's publisher, Barnaby Rogerson at Eland Publishing, announced her death on May 23, 2022. He said she left behind one unpublished book: a follow-up to *Between River and Sea*. Murphy is survived by her daughter, Rachel, and her three grandchildren.

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