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Belfast, Reborn

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Fáilte

Looking Forward

Founded in 1788, the Linen Hall Library in Belfast is home to a collection of over 350,000 items, most of which pertain to Irish studies. It is certainly a destination not to be missed when visiting Northern Ireland's capital city.

Awash in history, the facility - the oldest of its kind in the area - is linked to an era when keen minds were bringing forth ideas of social and parliamentary reform, freedom, and independence. As the original home to the Belfast Society for the Promotion of Knowledge (which, at the time, was seen as an extreme, albeit enlightened organization), the building's first librarian was Thomas Russell - a revolutionary and a founding member of The Society of United Irishmen, a sworn association dedicated to securing equal representation for all people in national government.

By all accounts, Russell was a man ahead of his times - rejecting slavery, promoting women's rights, and revulsed by the region's deeply entrenched religious inequities. During a period when the majority of the population was excluded from political participation on religious and property ownership grounds, his views were considered radical and revolutionary.

The Irish Rebellion of 1798 would see the United Irishmen defeated during a summer of uncoordinated - and mostly failed - bloody uprisings. Although Russell would be sidelined in prison, others took up the fight, including Beauchamp Bagenal Harvey, Chairman of The United Irishmen, and a Commander in the Battle of New Ross.

Harvey's family lived in Bargey Castle - a Norman fortress near the village of Tomhaggard, Wexford County. Interestingly, almost a century and a half later, my mum would spend the war years away from London with her Aunt Hetty and Uncle Jim Harvey in Bargey Castle. Aunt Hetty and Uncle Jim were the last Harveys to live there. Mum's memory was so rich that her retelling of Bagenal's tragic story blurred the lines between past and present.

Many lives were lost in the 1798 uprisings, including that of Bagenal, who was hanged from Wexford Bridge on June 28 of that year. In true Irish fashion, however, he and The United Irishmen are still remembered to this day in the haunting lyrics of Bagenal Harvey's Lament, sung by traditional singer Seán Garvey.

Just down the street from the Linen Hall Library is The Garrick pub. Established in 1870, the tavern is still in operation and as busy as ever with both locals and tourists. A sign atop the pub's door is a testament to Belfast's bittersweet legacy, "A nation that keeps one eye in the past is wise. A nation that keeps two eyes on the past is blind."

As our Editor-in-Chief Stephen Patrick Clare notes in the cover story for our May-June edition, Belfast is no longer an "English" city, nor is it an "Irish" city - it is now an international city. As such, it is a place that has reconciled its past, with its eyes firmly focused on the future.

Happy Travels!

Siobhán L. Covington, Publisher

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Before and after Adam Murray “came out” as gay, he struggled with depression and shame. “I had lost friends who were belittling and unsupportive, and eventually began drinking heavily while at university, spending all my time in gay bars trying to find new friends,” he recalls via email to Celtic Life International.

As luck would have it, he met a young woman named Bronagh in one of those bars, and she introduced him to Cara-Friend - a group that aims to support LGBTQI+ people in Northern Ireland. Cara-Friend has been around since 1974, before homosexuality was even decriminalized in the nation. Today, the organization has eight professional staff members and participates in advocacy, campaigning, policy and more.

“Bronagh said Cara-Friend was a great place to meet other people like myself, so I began to attend the group,” shares Murray. “For a long time, I would sit in the corner and not talk to anyone, it was such a culture shock! But when I did start to feel at home in the group, I began to gain a lot of confidence and have never looked back.”

Murray eventually took on a volunteer role with Cara-Friend, which led him to his part-time job as an admin officer. Now, a decade later, he works full time for Cara-Friend as its Community Development Manager and Office Manager. “I couldn’t be happier to be working for an organization that helped me to become the confident and proud gay person I am today.

“Cara-Friend began life as a listening ear service and a helpline,” he continues. “And our LGBTQI+ Switchboard continues to support the community every week, via telephone, email, and online chat.”

However, there are a wide range of other supports on offer as well. LGBTQI+ domestic abuse support, youth services and awareness trainings are just a few of the options that Cara-Friend provides.

“Cara-Friend supports the LGBTQI+ community, but we also support parents and family members of LGBTQI+ people, we support professionals who in turn support our community, and we educate any organization interested in learning about the LGBTQI+ community. Sexual orientation and gender identity are part of society, and we work with anyone who requires support or information.”

Murray notes that while there have been “big wins” for LGBTQI+ folks in recent years (such as the right to adopt, get married and donate blood), there are still a multitude of issues facing the community. For example, young people often have to deal with homophobia, biphobia and transphobia at school. Murray also points out how difficult it is for transgender people to navigate the health system. “Many trans members of the community are languishing on waiting lists for years.”

Fortunately, public opinion polls consistently show that most people in Northern Ireland support the advancement of LGBTQI+ rights.

“One big change in recent years is that members of our community are coming out more, and often younger, than in previous years. This has had a snowball effect, as more families, schools, businesses, and communities realize

that they include LGBTQI+ people they love and value. Whilst homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia still plague our society in many ways, including hate crimes and violence, we are seeing huge public support and awareness grow every year.”

It is important not to take these successes for granted. At the same time, people and organizations such as Cara-Friend must continue to push for improvements. For instance, Cara-Friend is involved with the Ban Conversion Therapy NI Campaign: a movement with the goal of ending the practice of forcing LGBTQI+ people to live as heterosexual and/or cisgender. The hope is to put a legislative ban on this so-called “therapy.”

“There are still many ignorant perceptions about our community which exist in society,” says Murray. “This is especially true when it comes to trans, non-binary and gender diverse members of our society. The media and politicians have an important role to play to combat prejudice and discriminatory views but, sadly, too often it is the media or politics which promotes negative and harmful perceptions. There is still a lot of work to do, but we are committed and energized to improve the situation.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how Cara-Friend can deliver its services, but Murray says the organization has adapted. As for the rest of 2022, the organization will have to play everything by ear. One thing is certain, however - “We will continue to help lift the voices of LGBTQI+ people, and advocate for our community’s equal treatment and respect.”

cara-friend.org.uk

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one

Swim to the Isle

Adam Diver hopes to be the first person to swim from England to the Isle of Man. The English man, who hails from Fleetwood, is a former Army captain who is no stranger to the water. He has been swimming since the age of five and represented Great Britain at the Europe Triathlon Championship last year. His upcoming trek is scheduled to take place this July, when conditions will hopefully be optimal. The plan is to complete the 51-kilometre swim in four six-hour blocks, due to the Irish Sea tides.

two

Stamp of Honour

Recently, Ireland's postal service An Post unveiled a colourful set of stamps featuring some of the nation's female sports heroes. The stamps were officially released ahead of International Women's Day (March 8). The set of six stamps features Rachel Blackmore, Kellie Harrington, Katie Taylor, Sonia O'Sullivan, Ellen Keane, and the Ireland Women's Hockey team. Blackmore, for instance, became the first female jockey to win the Grand National when she crossed the finish line last year. Keane, a paralympic swimmer, won a gold medal after a record-breaking swim last August.

three

Cornish Seals

Six seals were recently returned to the wild after a stay with the Cornish Seal Sanctuary. The charity also provides a permanent home to seals who need special care, but in this case, these animals were able to be released back into nature. The Cornish Seal Sanctuary rescues an estimated 65 seal pups a year. They come to the sanctuary sick, injured or otherwise distressed, and volunteers help rehabilitate them. As of March, a total of 22 seals have been released this past season (from September to March).

four

Ghost Village

It isn't the lost city of Atlantis: it is a Galician village. In 1992, the village of Acedo was flooded to create the Alto Lindoso Dam. This year, due to drought, remnants of the lost village began re-emerging from the reservoir. In mid-February, it was only at 15 percent of its capacity for water. Visitors were drawn to the village ruins, finding evidence of what life used to be in Acedo: a former café, a rusted car, and even a drinking fountain are among the dilapidated buildings.

five

Wordle to the Wise

The word puzzle app known as "Wordle" has taken the world - and social media - by storm. What some fans may not know, however, is that the game is the brainchild of a man from a small Welsh village. Josh Wardle, a software engineer who now lives in Brooklyn, once called Llanddewi Rhydderch his home. Wardle came up with Wordle during the pandemic lockdown, to bring his partner some joy while staying home. Little did he know it would "go viral." Recently, the New York Times bought the rights to the game.

six

Showing Solidarity

Those who passed Julie Austin's West Cornwall farm in recent months may have taken in a strange sight: some unusually colourful sheep grazing in the field. To show support for the Ukrainian people facing an invasion from Russian forces, Austin painted her sheep's wool with the colours of the Ukrainian flag. A photo published by Cornwall Live shows the sheep sporting vibrant blue and yellow in a rectangular shape, mimicking the flag. Although it is a small show of solidarity, it is no doubt a memorable one.

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

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Sisilia Tuipulotu

At age 18, Welsh athlete Sisilia Tuipulotu is making her mark on the world of rugby. Tuipulotu's parents didn't allow her to play the sport growing up for fear of injury, and she instead took up netball: a non-contact sport similar to basketball. However, it became apparent that she wanted to play something more physical, and her family eventually conceded when she chose rugby. Perhaps it was inevitable: Tuipulotu has multiple cousins, including Taulupe Faletau, who are big names in the sport. Tuipulotu's talent became undeniable after starting at Hereford Sixth Form College, and Wales Women U18s coach Liza Burgess heard tell of the young athlete. Today, just two years after taking to rugby, Tuipulotu is playing on a semi-professional level. Despite her parents' initial misgivings, Tuipulotu credits her family as a big part of her success. "Seeing how hard they work inspires me to push, to do whatever it takes, reach for my goals. They've always reached what they've put their heads to so why can't I?" she told Wales Online recently. "My dad has always said to just be me. On that field, off that field, he'll be proud. However I perform, whatever I do, he'll still be there. The main thing is to be myself and play how I play." Tuipulotu is now part of the Welsh Rugby Union's performance program, which includes a retainer contract. At the time of writing, she was on track to make her international debut at The Women's Six Nations Championship.



ShelterBox

Cornwall-based charity ShelterBox is doing its part to support people fleeing Ukraine - and struggling within Ukraine - due to the Russian invasion. By collaborating with humanitarian service Rotary, as well as local authorities, ShelterBox worked to determine what forms of shelter and aid are most suitable. This also helped them decide which locations made sense for the organization's workers to attend. "Hundreds of thousands of people have already crossed Ukraine's borders and that number is rising quickly as the situation continues to deteriorate," Chief Executive Sanj Srikanthan told Cornwall Live recently. "The indications are that this will not be a short conflict. ShelterBox is responding and sending a team to the region who will be positioned to inform how we respond and coordinate our work." Founded in 2000, ShelterBox provides emergency shelter and essential items to people after disaster. Tents, solar lights, water filters, and mosquito nets are a few of the things the charity can donate. According to the organization's U.K. website, the charity is partnering with People in Need to send mattresses to those sheltering in Ukraine's schools or sports centres. They are also supporting those fleeing the country by providing "high priority items," such as hygiene products. "Every disaster is different, so we have a flexible approach. We listen and learn from the communities we work with to make sure we provide the right support," reads the website. In addition to its work aid to Ukraine, ShelterBox has sent volunteers to nations such as the Philippines, Haiti, and Yemen.



Ruth Dodsworth

Last year, Welsh television presenter Ruth Dodsworth opened up about her past experiences with domestic abuse. She said it took her 18 years to realize she was in an abusive relationship with her now-ex husband, who was sent to jail in April 2021 for harassment and stalking. Among other things, Jonathan Wignall would access Dodsworth's phone while she slept and call her constantly when she was at work. He even assaulted her physically. Fortunately, Dodsworth was eventually able to leave the relationship and has since encouraged other abuse survivors by sharing her story. "From people who recognize what's happening to themselves, to other people, who have said to me, 'gosh Ruth we didn't realize what coercive and controlling behaviour was but it is only because your story went public that we are now able to recognise those signs,'" Dodsworth wrote in a piece for ITV, where she works. "It's just absolutely blown me away, and I think it's horrifying and surprising all rolled into one. Just the sheer number of other people who have been through, or know someone who has been through, or is going through, something similar: it's been such an eye-opener." One woman even contacted Dodsworth to tell her she'd found the strength to report her own abusive husband, after reading about Dodsworth's experiences. For Dodsworth, that woman's message was a sign that speaking up had been worth it. In February, she was shortlisted for the 2022 St David Awards, the national Welsh awards which celebrate "everyday heroes."

Celtic Woman

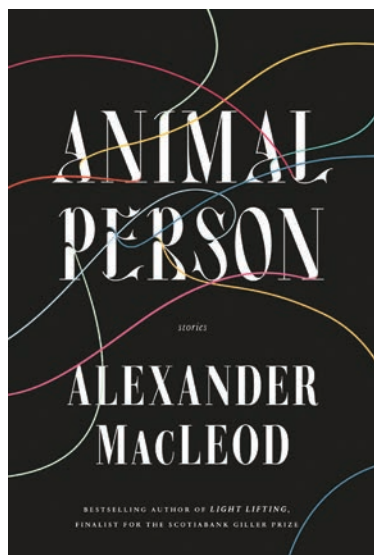


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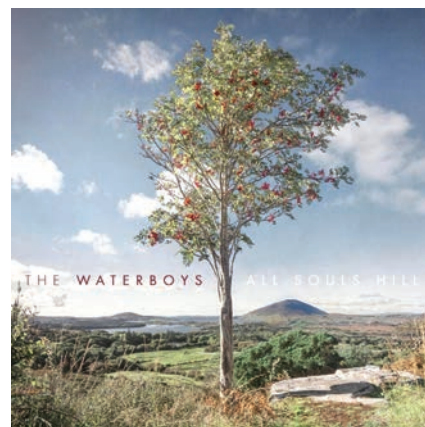


Literature

Animal Person*By Alexander MacLeod*

It has been over a decade since Nova Scotia scribe Alexander MacLeod released a book. His previous effort, *Light Lifting* (2011), was shortlisted for both the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. Well worth the wait, *Animal Person* features pieces that first appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, and *O. Henry Prize Stories*, including the award-winning tale *Lagomorph*. The new, eight-story selection explores existential themes of meaning, truth, beauty, faith, and desire. Like his father, Alistair (*No Great Mischief*), the author masterfully weaves universal threads of human experience into the mosaic of daily life, wisely leaving space to invoke and invite the imagination of readers into the narrative tapestry. Hopefully we won't have to wait as long for a follow-up.

Music

The Waterboys*All Souls Hill*

While Mike Scott might not always be the most pleasant of people, there is no denying his prolific pen. Here, on The Waterboys' 15th studio recording, he and his merry band of musicians dole-out nine simple sonic gems. Buoyed by three singles - *The Liar*, *Here We Go Again*, and the title track - *All Souls Hill* picks up where the band left off with 2020's critically acclaimed *Good Luck, Seeker* - the Scottish Bard waxing poetically on matters of both body and soul over an array of guitars, keyboards, bass, drums, and more. Like Bob Dylan, social commentary is crafted seamlessly through harmony and melody, a Trojan Horse of ideas and emotions. As always, the Celtic cadence is ever-present, carrying the torch of tradition.



Cinema

Belfast*Kenneth Branagh*

One of the finest films to appear in the cinematic canon in recent years, Kenneth Branagh's brilliant and beautiful autobiographical motion picture is a prolific portrait of both a people and a place. Set in 1969 amidst the turmoil of The Troubles, the film follows the trials of a young Protestant family from East Belfast as they navigate turbulent political, economic, and social waters. And while it is impossible to create a period piece about peace in that place at that time, the Northern Irish director does well to details the daily joys of a father and mother and their two sons. Shot in black and white for impact, the true colours of familial warmth, wit, and wisdom leap off the screen into viewers' hearts.

DVD

Celtic Woman*Postcards From Ireland*

Full disclosure - I can't remember the last time I watched a DVD. In fact, it took hours to dig out my aging DVD player. Miraculously, it still worked. Full disclosure two - although I have listened to, reviewed, and interviewed the lovely lasses from Celtic Woman, I have never actually seen them in concert. Full disclosure three - the live performance film, a companion piece to the group's latest recording, took me by (pleasant) surprise. Shot in Ireland, the 16-song spectacle showcases four stunning talents that shine both as soloists and as an ensemble. And it was great to see the girls let their hair down in the bonus, behind-the-scenes footage. Full disclosure four - I had to dry my eyes by the end.

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Regina, Saskatchewan • May 21, 2022

www.saskhighland.ca

The Saskatchewan Highland Gathering & Celtic Festival is a must for anyone with a keen interest in Scottish history and culture. Held this May in Regina's beautiful Victoria Park, the one-day affair will host a variety of engaging activities, including piping and drumming, Highland dance performances and an all-day entertainment tent, where visitors can enjoy locally brewed beer (courtesy of Piles O' Bones Brewing Co.) while listening to an assortment of live musical performances. The gathering's main event, the Scottish Heavy Athletics, will take place throughout the day, featuring competitions in the hammer throw, the caber toss, the Braemar stone, and more. The children's area will host its own, scaled-down version of the games with mini competitions in the caber toss, as well as age-appropriate musical performances, and a Celtic bouncy castle. The festival's Celtic Vendor Market - an impressive assortment of Scottish-inspired fares and wares - will be open for business, with booths booked for Saskatoon's The Kilt Lady, balloon sculptor Patrick Roth, and fish 'n' chip truck The Frying Deutschman, among others.



Garrett County Celtic Festival

Friendsville, Maryland • June 4, 2022

www.gccelticfestival.com

The 34th Garrett County Celtic Festival welcomes you to the beautiful highlands of Appalachian Maryland. Awash in living history, Clan representation, field exhibits, and Chautauqua-style presentations on Scots, Irish, and Welsh heritage in Western Maryland, the annual gathering showcases Highland Games, pipes and drums, four stages of musicians and dancers, and wholesome family entertainment with all-day activities for all ages. New in 2022 are workshops (for those aged 12-22) in music and dance performance, writing and character presentation, living history and volunteerism. Local authors will chat with aspiring writers and discuss their work, and all types of instruments and ensemble playing are explored. Dance instruction will cover Irish, Scottish country, and clogging, and volunteer opportunities are available to help with costuming, theater, face painting, making fairie gardens, storytelling, and art activities. Guests are welcome to enjoy outstanding food and drink, cruise the vendor's area, and take a scenic stroll along the nearby Yough River for an inspiring day along the Celtic way!



The Motor City Irish Fest

Livonia, Michigan • June 10-12, 2022

www.motorcityirishfest.com

The Motor City Irish Fest, Southeast Michigan's premier Irish-themed, family friendly gathering, celebrates its 12th year this June with a weekend of Celtic culture and entertainment. Held at Greenmead Historic Park, the three-day event will feature 19 musical artists, with headline performances from internationally renowned quartet The Fitzgeralds and Co. Kildare's The Druids. Visitors are sure to enjoy an array of activities, including traditional dancing and dance lessons, Irish football demonstrations, a .001-K Run, pipe band performances, and the always popular Cultural Tent showcasing Irish history and heritage. For those wanting to whet their whistle, the annual gathering serves up samples of hand-selected spirits in its several "pubs", while the wee ones are welcome to take in storytelling and more in the Children's tent. In addition, vendors will be on site all weekend with a variety of Celtic themed wares and fares.



Greater Moncton Highland Games & Scottish Festival

Moncton, New Brunswick • June 17-19, 2022

www.monctonhighlandgames.com

This year's Greater Moncton Highland Games & Scottish Festival is an international affair, with the New Brunswick event acting as Host Games for the 2022 Scottish Masters Athletics International Masters World Championships (MWC). The MWC features nearly 200 of the world's best heavy events athletes, aged 40 and above, competing in various feats of strength on Saturday and Sunday. Amateur and other heavy event classes will compete on Friday. In addition to the MWC, this year's gathering also includes piping, drumming, pipe band, and Highland dance competitions, as well as agricultural, military, and cultural displays and dozens of workshops and demonstrations. Other highlights for 2022 include music by The Barra MacNeils, the RCMP Pipes & Drums, American Rogues, and more, as well as the largest gathering of redheads east of Montreal, with a live taping of Authentic Ginger podcast. In addition, author Riel Nason will read from her new children's book, *Disaster at the Highland Games*. Guests are sure to enjoy the Craft Beer & Spirits Market, featuring local, national, and international brands.



Malad Valley Welsh Festival

Malad City, Idaho • June 24-25, 2022

www.welshfestival.com

This June, the 16th annual Malad Valley Welsh Festival will celebrate 156 years of Welsh history in southeastern Idaho. Pioneers from Wales settled Malad Valley in the 1850s and 1860s as the region reminded them of their home country. This year's gathering at Malad City Park will include an opening ceremony featuring the 2019 Festival Bard and the Knight of the Festival. Also on the weekend agenda are presentations on Welsh heroes and history, adult and youth poetry contests and readings, a photographic "Walk Through Wales," family history and census displays of pioneer families, a fiction competition, Celtic music performances (including a harp and choral concert, a youth concert, and a piano ensemble concert), wagon rides to historic sites, a quilt show, art displays, food and craft/gift vendors, and kids' pioneer games and activities. Things come to a close on Saturday with the Chaining of the Festival Bard and a short gymnafa ganu. On Sunday a celebration of the 140th anniversary of the founding of the Malad Presbyterian Church will feature traditional music and memories of this historic landmark.



Embro Highland Games

Embro, Ontario • July 1st, 2022

www.embrohighlandgames.ca

Whether you are a local, a visitor, or a competitor, Embro Highland Games - the oldest Scottish games in Ontario - warmly welcomes you back. The annual gathering is a celebration of the region's rich Scottish heritage and tradition, complete with competitive Highland dancing, massed pipe bands, piping competitions, and heavy events. It is a day of fierce rivalry; hammers will be thrown, cabers will be tossed, runners will race for the finish line, bagpipes will skirl, and the flash of Clan tartans will surely catch the eye. This family-friendly event will be a hit with the children, as they pet Highland cows, Shetland ponies (as well as other animals native to Scotland) and participate in the Scottish-themed crafts and activities. Also on the agenda is sheep herding, Scottish dogs on parade, and kilted yoga. Adults are welcome to enjoy the fully licensed grounds with an outdoor bar, stocked with local craft beers and gin. In addition, live Celtic music, a vendor's area, and fabulous food trucks are also on offer. On July 1st the festival will welcome a delegation of dignitaries from Taiwan to celebrate the 150th year of the "The Black Bearded Barbarian" - Rev. George Leslie Mackay's arrival in Taiwan. Find out how the son of a local Scottish immigrant family became so highly revered by the Taiwanese people!



Maine Celtic Celebration

Belfast, Maine • July 22-24, 2022

www.mainecelebration.com

This July 22 -24, the Maine Celtic Celebration returns to downtown Belfast for a weekend of music, dance, and Celtic heritage. Located on two nearby parks overlooking the harbor (the Steamboat Landing and the Belfast Commons), the three-day, family-friendly gathering aims to preserve and promote Maine's strong Celtic roots through musical performances and cultural activities. Things kick-off in grand style on Friday evening with live music on the Commons stage, while visitors can enjoy a pint from the beer tent and food from a variety of vendors. Saturday starts with both a 5K Kilted Kanter through historic districts of Belfast and an opening Celtic Dog Parade and Show, followed by a full day of music on two stages (headlined by Mick Maloney and Jimmy Keane), dancing, a Scottish Clans gathering, workshops, and a performance of "the Scottish play" by the Recycled Shakespeare Company. Fireworks will finish the day's festivities. Sunday features the always popular Highland Heavy Games, the US National Cheese Roll Championship (open to all age groups, and hilarious to watch) and more great music and workshops. The festival is open to all by donation.



Okanagan Military Tattoo

Vernon, British Columbia • July 23-24, 2022

www.okanaganatattoo.ca

Following a 2-year hiatus, the seventh annual Okanagan Military Tattoo - Vernon's largest annual indoor event - returns this summer with over 400 performers, including First Nations, massed pipes & drums, precision drills, Highland and ethnic dancers, and much more. Headliners this year will include the Naden Band of the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Regimental Band of the Canadian Scottish Regiment from Victoria. The Calgary Police Service Pipe Band has also been invited to participate. The term Tattoo evolved from a European tradition dating back to the 17th century when Low Country innkeepers would cry "doe den tap toe" Turn off the taps! as the fifes and drums of the local regiment signaled a return to quarters. Today the word Tattoo refers to a ceremonial performance of military music by massed bands. Like an epic Hollywood film, the Okanagan Military Tattoo features a huge cast, stunning costumes, intricate choreography, a dramatic musical soundtrack, moments of sheer spectacle, stirring pride and patriotism, and something to make you smile.



Dayton Celtic Festival

Dayton, Ohio • July 29-31, 2022

www.daytoncelticfestival.com

The Dayton Celtic Festival returns this summer for another three-day celebration of culture and history. Presented by United Irish of Dayton, in partnership with Five River Metro Parks, this year's gathering will "saturate the senses" with Celtic culture, featuring three stages of entertainment showcasing musical acts and cultural exhibits. This year's headline performers include Gaelic Storm, Scythian, Socks in the Frying Pan, The Drowsy Lads, and more. Cultural demonstrations will include discussions with author Cindy Thompson and storyteller Cathy Jo Smith, among others. The event also plans to bring back many of its staple activities, such as the Celtic breakfast, whisky tastings, Sunday Mass, Irish music lessons, food and vendor booths, and the Parade of Kilts. The festival will also host a Rainbow's End Children's area, where the wee ones can enjoy games, Celtic crafts, picture boards, and more. For those who can't wait, the Dayton Celtic Festival is holding a free "countdown concert" featuring music from Donegal's The Screaming Orphans on June 30 at the city's RiverScape Pavilion.

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Celtic Illusion Reimagined

A long-standing spectacle brings new flavours into the mix



Celtic Illusion - a fusion show featuring Irish dance and magic illusion - was created by Anthony Street (formerly of Lord of the Dance) and premiered in 2011. Street combined his love of magic and dance - both of which he has been passionate about since a young age. The spectacle has since found success throughout Australia, Street's home country, as well as in New Zealand. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the show's 2020 tour plans, but it recently hit the road again.

Having already touched down in Canada and the United States earlier this year, Celtic Illusion Reimagined is spending the rest of the summer touring its Australian home.

Georgia May, lead dancer for one of the show's two troupes, has been a part of Celtic Illusion since 2013. "Initially, I did not fully appreciate what the role would entail," she admits. "Once I started rehearsals, I quickly realized that I had quite the challenge ahead of me. Even though it was daunting, I was excited to tackle it and give it everything I had."

"No two days are the same in this role," she continues. "Things are constantly moving, changing, and improving. It makes the entire show and experience so exciting - not only for me, but for audiences as well."

May herself began dancing at the age of three, starting with jazz, ballet, and tap. "I think my mum thought I was going to be a ballerina with the Australian Ballet."

However, she soon fell in love with Irish dance. "When I was 9 years old, I saw a local Irish Dance school performing for St. Patrick's Day and I begged my mum to take me to lessons."



Since then, she has trained in Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, London, and Birmingham. She also has a Bachelor of Dance Performance under her belt, which includes acting, singing and musical theatre, "but Irish dance has taken my dance career to the next level."

As for her role with Celtic Illusion, there has never been a dull moment - both the illusion and dance elements bring their own sets of challenges. "I don't stop from the moment I arrive at the venue to the final curtain call. One minute I am performing a complex illusion that has multiple elements to line up, and the next, it is an emotional lyrical-style duet with high-flying lifts and intricate choreography. When performing illusions, you need to be hyper-focused on so many things at once. It is not just as simple as vanishing into thin air! It is physically and mentally challenging."

While travelling from venue to venue, the challenges only intensify. Different places have different lighting, tech, and space. The performance itself also must continue to evolve and improve. As with any job in show business, it is important to keep things fresh and surprising.

"You have to be different, you have to go bigger, be crazier, and take risks to be successful..."

"Especially with magic, you need to surprise the audience by performing the classic tricks in a new and unexpected format. The dancing has to be world class, too. The show is made up of two very unique art forms, and one must complement the other."

Along with being a performer, May also has directorial and tour management duties, such as props management, liaising with venues, and marketing. "Your finger has to be on the pulse at all times to make the magic happen day after day."

However, the hard work is all worth it. "After the hardship of the pandemic, it feels great to get back out on stage to entertain and transport our audiences for a few hours. Chatting with them after the show leaves you with such a sense of happiness."

"Another highlight is when all of the planning and hard work leading up to a tour all comes together. Planning begins 8-12 months out from a tour, and - given the scale of the show - it is a huge effort to pull it all together. My 'to do' list seems to grow every day in the lead up, but with hyper-focus, hard work and determination to be the best, seeing it come together and be successful is always satisfying."

celticillusion.com

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On The Trail of Celtic Europe

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



Four hundred metres above the city of Clermont-Ferrand in central France stands the plateau of Gergovie. It is a long slow climb to the site where Celtic-speaking Gaulish tribes once resisted the legions of Julius Caesar. Gergovie is the first of several Iron Age sites on my ride across Europe. Since leaving my home in Bristol, England, I have cycled across half of France and will spend the next few months crossing the countries of central and southeast Europe once dominated by Celtic tribes.

My interest in all things Celtic goes back many years. I was born in Liverpool - the first port of refuge for Irish emigrants looking for work or fleeing starvation during the potato famines of the mid-19th Century. My father's family were Catholics, descended from those emigrants. I have a searing memory, from an earlier cycling trip, of the Great Famine Exhibition in Skibbereen on the southern coast of Ireland.

A few years ago, I did a DNA test which showed that I am nearly half Irish. Most of the rest of my heritage, from my mother's side, is Scottish. So, I would qualify as a Celt by ancestry, but what does that really mean? Is there such a thing as a Celtic "race" and if so, where did they come from? Those questions have vexed historians, archaeologists, geneticists, and linguists. They have fascinated me for many years, leading up to this trip.

The word "Celtic" mainly refers to a branch of languages. The peoples of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany speak (or their recent ancestors spoke) Celtic languages. Where and when did that branch emerge and how did it travel to the western fringes of Europe? Historians used to think they knew - they believed it arrived in the Iron Age with invaders from central Europe: the people called Keltoi by the Greeks. More recent evidence has cast doubt on that theory.

There is growing support for the view that Celtic languages spread in several directions from Gaul, which is mostly in France today. Little remains of several Iron Age languages believed to be Celtic, but the few fragments we have in the Gaulish language confirm that it was definitely Celtic.

During the second and first centuries BC the Roman Empire expanded into Gaul, subjugating the Celtic tribes.

In 52 BC, a local chief Vercingetorix persuaded the surrounding tribes to join him in a war of liberation. His tribe, the Arvernes, occupied several important settlements, including Gergovie, around the modern city of Clermont-Ferrand.

I approached Clermont-Ferrand from the north, passed the football stadium with Vercingetorix as its emblem, and passed the Place de Jaude, where his statue dominates the heart of the city. I passed the neo-classical facade of the Bargoin Museum and decided to go there first. It was the right decision. The Bargoin has an impressive collection of Iron Age artifacts, including many discovered at Gergovie. It puts Vercingetorix and the Gauls in the broader context of Celtic Europe, displaying their technology and the artistic styles associated with La Tène in Switzerland and Hallstatt in Austria, which lie later in my journey.

Screens in the Bargoin Museum show cinematic reconstructions of the battle of Gergovie. In one memorable moment, the Romans approach a lightly defended section of its walls. From above the ramparts the Gaulish women throw down clothes and money, baring their breasts and leaning over with outstretched arms, beseeching the in-

vaders to spare the women and children.

That image kept returning to me as I climbed the road to Gergovie. It snakes through Mediterranean-looking suburbs and past a medieval village with a castle, before revealing panoramic views towards the mountains of the Massif Central. I stopped to take in the scene and imagine the trepidation of the defenders as they watched their enemies climbing towards them.

The new museum of Gergovie is an ultra-modern glass and metal structure perched on the edge of the plateau, looking down over the slopes where Caesar's troops made their ascent. An animated display shows how the Romans set up two camps on smaller hilltops you can see below. They created a diversion, distracting the Gaulish troops and allowing a raiding party to reach the walls unchallenged. But then, as the women begged for mercy, the Gaulish cavalry arrived, forcing them to retreat and to lift the siege. Their victory bought some respite and fleeting hope for a united Gaul, free from Roman domination. We know all this from Caesar's writings, biased though they are, supplemented by archaeological excavations, which began in the 19th century and continue today.

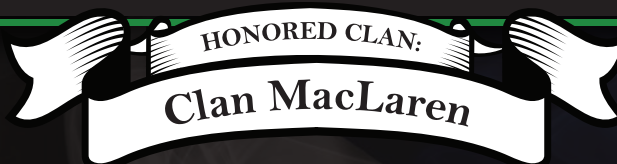
Some people still question the precise location of the battle but Emilie Pacaud, one of the curators, says the archaeological evidence is now clear. It took place in the spring, and they fought again in the autumn, further north, where Caesar finally prevailed. I told her where I was heading next, and she said: "La Tène? Of all the museums I have visited outside of France, the Laténium is one of the best. If you are interested in Celtic culture, you really must go there."

stevemelia.co.uk



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SYR

Celtic rock band SYR sets a new standard with their third studio recording

Kyle MacCallum - lead singer of Celtic Rock band SYR (pronounced sire) - says that music has always been a significant part of his life.

"My mother is a Celtic musician and singer, so I grew up surrounded by music at an early age," he shares via email. "I remember being in and around recording studios with her when I was a child and trying to emulate her by 'writing' my own little songs."

At age 13, MacCallum began playing guitar and started to take songwriting more seriously.

"It was what I felt called to do. I was pretty set on making a career of it even at that age."

He has done just that. Based in Columbia, South Carolina, SYR released their debut self-titled album in 2015, which was followed up in 2017 with their sophomore effort *The Winter King*.

In addition to MacCallum, the six-piece ensemble consists of Lauren MacCallum (vocals and percussion), Kelly Vance (bass), Greg Vance (drums), Ben Campbell (guitar) and Worth Lewallen (fiddle).

"Our music is influenced a lot by Celtic history, the Roman invasions of the Isles and Gaul, and the heroes and stories found in the Irish Cycles," notes MacCallum. "Within all these things, we look for themes that might also be relatable to a modern perspective and try to pair them with a sound that fits the story or message. I am inspired a lot by movie scores and game soundtracks, which are all meant to invoke a specific feeling depending on what is happening onscreen. We try to approach our sound in the same way."

MacCallum explains that the band's musical style has evolved over time.

"I think our first CD was, thematically, a broad canvas. At that time, it was more about showing what we could do live, which has changed considerably since then. Our second CD was more of a cohesive production, and the beginning of us developing the overall themes and sound we wanted."

The band recently released their third album *Sentinel*. MacCallum says that the



13-track recording has "set a new bar" for the team in both sound and production.

"For *Sentinel*, I wanted to expand upon what we had done in our second album *The Winter King*, while introducing more traditional instruments and sounds. We wanted to honor the traditional, while at the same time taking things in our own direction. We were also fortunate to have many fantastic trad musicians that lent us their skills during the recording process, despite the difficulty and chaos of navigating schedules during a pandemic.

"One of the challenges of this vocation is trying to balance the investment of personal resources," he continues. "It gets much more difficult during something as world shaking as a global pandemic. It can feel impossible to persevere when all your resources are being drained simultaneously, and that definitely had an effect on the process.

"There was so much personal growth and things we had to overcome during the making of Sentinel, but we did make it through - and put everything into it."

Even with the negative impact COVID-19 has had on musicians, MacCallum believes that the Celtic music scene is on "the verge of a renaissance."

"That excitement is continuing to build for the full return of live shows. We are seeing a lot of other young bands and musicians doing an awesome job writing and crafting their own Celtic sound, and that does a lot



to bring the next few generations into something that we all love so much."

He does have concerns about the preservation of Celtic culture, however, taking issue with cultural gatekeeping and the spreading of misinformation on Celtic history.

"We need to start elevating the voices of Celtic academics and historians. Dr. Jennifer Paxton, for example, has an awesome series on Celtic culture and history, titled *The Celtic World* - and there are many others doing great work in similar fields.

"I also believe that maintaining a welcoming attitude to those who are interested in learning about, or experiencing Celtic culture does a lot to promote and preserve it. Gatekeeping, in all of its forms, hurts the culture much more than it helps."

MacCallum, and the rest of SYR, are hoping to get back to touring very soon.

"We are also looking at the possibility of touring outside of the U.S. depending on the pandemic. We also have some music videos, live streams, and other surprises in store."

syrmusic.com



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Canadian fiddler Irish Millie tells her own story through traditional tunes

"When I was three years old, all of us kids were invited to sit on the floor in front of the stage," she recalls. "I remember sitting next to my five-year-old brother, all sweaty from dancing ourselves silly, when Natalie MacMaster herself began to play. I had no idea who she was. I just knew that I had never heard anything like it in my three years of life."

"I jumped up to my feet and frantically looked to the back of the room for my parents," she continues. "As my brother tugged on my hand to sit, and my mom and dad motioned for me to be quiet, I yelled at the top of my lungs 'Mommy! Daddy! I do that! I do that!' while pointing at my new idol."

Three years later, she received her first fiddle. These days, she plies her trade on an Ernst Kreusler model.

"I play because I want to make beautiful music."

"And there are a lot of new reasons why I continue to play. One of them is the amazing relationship that I have developed with my dad, Murray. He is an occasional guitarist and started accompanying me when I was about eight. I also know that I have a gift and that I was given this gift to help others. My fiddling has helped me to raise a lot of money for cancer research, to support families who have lost a loved one or who are struggling with illness. I also like to think that my music brings joy to people, lifts folks up, and maybe even inspires them the way that Natalie's music touched me that first day."

Millie released her debut album *Thirteen* last year, and the album has earned her a nomination for Young Performer of the Year at this year's Canadian Folk Music Awards.

She notes that the 11-track recording - and her overall musical style - honors the traditional tunes while adding her own personal style.

"I take these tunes and tell my own story with them. It may just be adding ornaments or a cool tag ending but I really enjoy making tunes my own. I am creative when it comes to sound and do not take a traditional approach with regard to playing and writing songs. I think that my sound is unique to me."

She believes young people are still very interested in fiddling and Celtic music.

"I think my journey, arriving at this style of music and this instrument might be a bit unique, yes, but there are tons of kids who are playing fiddle. The music camps I have attended (Leahy Music Camp and Rollo Bay Fiddle Camp) are filled with folks of all ages, but many of them are kids learning to play."

Millie will be busy for the remainder of 2022. In addition to attending the Canadian Folk Music Awards this spring, she will also be touring Denmark through the month of August.

"I am also hoping to record my second album with a bunch of new and different tracks that I have been working on over the last year."

irishmillie.ca

Although only 15 years of age, Amelia Shadgett - known professionally as Irish Millie - is already carving out a new direction in Celtic music.

A self-professed "first-generation fiddler," the Ontario native comes by her stage name honestly with ancestral roots in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

"There was nobody in my home that I could learn from," she shares with Celtic Life International via email. "My first teacher, Sally Pirie, specialized in Old Time fiddling, so that is what I learned to play early on. Mostly these were tunes that followed the Ontario style of fiddling, with some French-Canadian tunes incorporated as well. When I was 12, I started taking lessons from Alanna Jenish, an amazing fiddle player from Oshawa. She introduced the Bluegrass style to me and helped me explore the world of Celtic music."

Millie was inspired to pick up the fiddle after attending a summer square-dancing event with her family at Ontario's Stoney Lake. Several noteworthy performers, including the world-renowned MacMaster and Leahy families, attended each week to perform for the dancers.

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One Celtic trio expands their musical palette

Given their mutual harmonic heritage, it is understandable that Andriette Redman and Kath Green were destined to connect through music.

"We each grew up in musical households, so music has been a part of our lives since we can remember," Redman shares with Celtic Life International via email. "Kath's dad with his barbershop and choir-singing, and her mom as a piano teacher."

"Andriette's grandparents, aunts and uncles with their music store, music school, and entertaining," adds Green. "Andriette and I, friends from the same floor of our apartment building, founded Avon Faire with our mate Betsy Long from England, in 2013. Starting with local Irish pubs and community garden gigs, we developed our sound and repertoire."

"After being seen on a YouTube video, we were invited to play a Renaissance Faire, The Loxwood Joust, in Sussex, England," Redman chimes back in. "We shared a stage with the well-known Mediaeval Baebes in 2015, and nearly every year since. Riddles and Love Songs, our first CD, received good reviews."

Betsy left the group shortly thereafter, leaving the door open for Anna Marie Spallina to step in. Filling out the roster is percussionist John Rokosny and step dancer Dawn Daniels.

"We also have a revolving set of talented friends who join us on occasion," notes Green. "Cáit O'Riordan of the Pogues, piper Cillian Vallely of Lúnasa, rock cellist Jane Scarpantoni, and others."

Along with regular gigs in NYC, the

troupe has performed in pubs and other venues across North America and the United Kingdom.

"Our summer tours in England have been fabulous," shares Green. "We have met so many wonderful people there who love and support traditional folk music. Playing a stage at the Cropredy Festival was fulfilling, especially getting the nod of approval from Fairport Convention fans."

"Performing in historic churches on mini tours with the medieval Wilde Roses, complete with candlelight and rapt crowds, was also enchanting," adds Redman. "Sharing our songs at English pubs and popping in at their special folk nights has a magic, too, where all sing along."

"Sometimes they will initiate Irish songs for us, figuring we may be on the Irish American side. A town hall in Cornwall, on a remote, blustery coast, had everyone singing their Cadgwith Anthem and sea shanties with us."

"We are inspired while traveling and playing in areas from where our songs originate, and we hope to tour in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales as soon as we can."

Most recently, Avon Faire released a new album, *Tales of Love and Adventure*, featuring the whole extended group and their frequent collaborators - all of whom have some Irish, Scottish, or other Celtic history in their lineage. Redman explains that the group

pushed the boundaries of their stylistic influences for this record and tried to incorporate as much of that Celtic heritage in its tunes as possible.

"We wanted to do an album of rich and diverse repertoire, so we have Scottish and Irish songs, sea shanties, medieval ballads, fun, danceable tunes, and so on."

"It is a nice mix of styles, genres, and time periods," pipes in Green. "But it still manages to sound like a cohesive work."

She adds that some of their favourite new tracks include "our richly-arranged version of Skye Boat Song, the moody beauty of *Flowers of The Forest*, and the rollicking fun of the sea shanties and *The Jolly Beggar*."

Redman believes that the Celtic music scene is enjoying an era of vibrance, but she would like to share the mic with more all-women acts like theirs and ensure that they can make a decent living at it.

"The biggest challenge by far - and one that we share with so many other artists - is earning a living through our craft."

Green concurs. "We hope for fairer payment for all musicians, for their streaming and performances. Another thing we need to pay heed to is nurturing our health, physical and vocal, especially while on tour."

Whatever the challenges, Avon Faire expects to remain busy in 2022 and beyond.

"The joy of making music and sharing it with others is a delight that keeps us going," says Redman. "We will be promoting our new album with gigs, God willing, and hoping everyone stays healthy 'round the world."

avonfaire.com

The Fitz-Patrick Mythology

Historical Genealogy of the Kings, Chiefs, and Lords of Ossory

From "The Beginning" to the Present

The Fitz-Patrick Mythology

by

John Hylas Smith



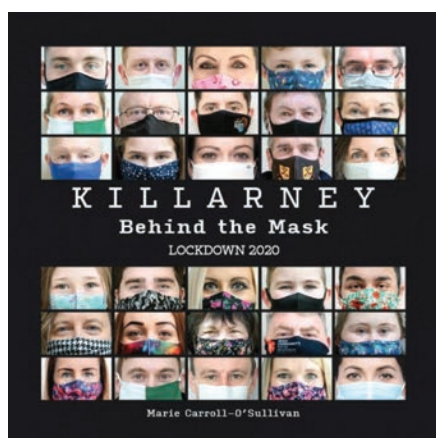
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Marie Carroll O'Sullivan

An Irish woman raises money for local charities with her debut book



Born and raised in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, lifestyle and press photographer Marie Carroll O'Sullivan has always had a passion for photography.

"I took a summer job in a ribbon factory in Roscrea one year and out of my first pay cheque I purchased a camera," she tells Celtic Life International via email. "I was always the friend who had a pocket camera on nights out."

In 2004, O'Sullivan lost a close friend to cystic fibrosis (CF). After this loss, she began fundraising for CF each year.

"This is where my press photography began. I started taking photos [for CF] annually and exporting to the press. In and around the same time I opened my own photography page The Little Memory Gallery."

Today, O'Sullivan says that press photography has "taken a little back seat" to her private work, which includes baby photoshoots, christenings, communions, parties, engagements, and weddings.

Her most recent project, a book called Killarney Behind the Mask, was a labour of love.

"Not being one to sit still for long where my work is to document I found the COVID-19 pandemic difficult, as did many. We were restricted to two kilometres initially. I was fortunate to live in a densely populated area which allowed me to visit the parents and relatives of my friends that lived further afield.

"I began making back garden visits for a snap and a chat as well as photographing empty streets at a time that we would call high season," she continues. "At the end of 2020, I realized there was a book in me!"

The 364-page coffee table book documents O'Sullivan's local pandemic findings through images, interviews, and COVID-19 facts. On her Instagram page, she notes that Killarney Behind the Mask is a history book that is "oozing positivity and resilience through tough times."

"It is in no means a sad book – it is uplifting and heartfelt. I think many of us came out of the pandemic with fewer notions and a slower pace of life – but a more meaningful one. It was rewarding, but I don't think anyone will ever know the extent of what goes into creating a book."

"Compiling these stories and recording these images is all about the light it brought to people's faces – especially the elderly."

O'Sullivan explains that all proceeds will go to three local charities that she has hand-selected: Keeping it Local, the Kerry branch of the Irish Cancer Society; Nathan's Walk Pieta House, an annual event held in memory of Nathan O'Carroll, a 14-year-old Killarney native who took his own life; and the COVID-19 2020 team at the UHK.

Understandably, the project took a

considerable amount of research.

"The book is a timeline of events from January to December of 2020. I recorded the restrictions we were under monthly and documented images that were relevant as well as people's stories and how they were managing the restrictions in their daily life."

O'Sullivan adds that she couldn't be happier with the response.

"We made the Christmas market locally by the skin of my teeth and have just recently begun selling the book online through my website. I cannot explain how great the product is – no photo will do the quality and the content justice.

"Unfortunately, COVID escalated just after Christmas 2021 so there wasn't much socializing to hear what the word on the street was initially. But since then, I have been out and about again with my camera and the feedback has been overwhelming. Behind the Mask has featured hugely in the media in Kerry and I am as proud as punch to say that a copy of my book resides at Trinity College Library, the National Library of Ireland together with many local libraries in Ireland."

She is ready to get back into lifestyle-based projects for the rest of 2022.

"I am very much looking forward to getting back into the swing of things and enjoying documenting my clients' lives and that of the community. I have missed it so much and now that the ever-changing weather in Ireland is picking up and the days are getting longer, you could find me anywhere!"

thelittlememorygallery.com

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A tale of struggle and survival, in a distant future where the Celts' courage, love and honor are all that stand between civilization and destruction.

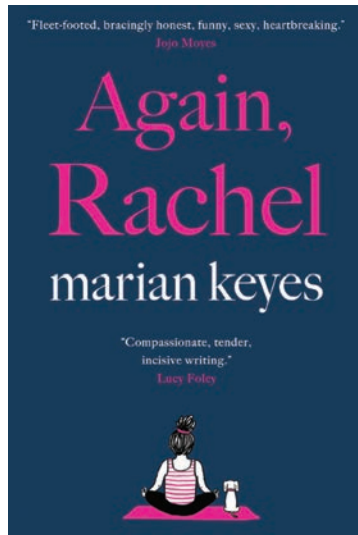
This is their story...



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Marian Keyes



Over the course of her prolific career as a novelist, Marian Keyes has never written a direct sequel to any of her previous works. However, during the COVID-19 lockdowns - and unable to visit her own family - the Irish scribe reconnected with one of her earliest characters, and found some comfort writing about, once again, Rachel Walsh. Recently Keyes chatted with Celtic Life International's Chris Muise about her latest effort *Again, Rachel*.

Tell us about your Celtic heritage. Where do you reside, currently?

I was born in Limerick, which is a city in the west of Ireland. When I was 22, I moved to London, and then I moved back to Ireland about 25 years ago. I live in a suburb of Dublin now, called Dunleary. It's on the sea, which always makes people go dreamy-eyed, but it's nothing like as delicious as it sounds. It used to be a ferry port, and the ferries don't come anymore. But it's busy, a really nice mix of people. I live very near where I was brought up; my mother, who is still alive, is within walking distance from me and two of my brothers. I really like it. I didn't think I would. When I left Ireland at 22, I wanted to never come back. I wanted bright lights and glamour. But I outgrew it; I really love living here now.

At what point did you want to become an author?

It was never part of my plan. I studied law in university, and as soon as I qualified, I delighted my parents by leaving Ireland,

going to London, and getting a job as a waitress. I just didn't want to have a regular life, but I had no real idea of what I wanted to do. And, unbeknownst to myself, I was a drinking alcoholic. I didn't know I was, because I was a woman in my 20s, I had a job, and a flatmate - all the things that ordinary, middle-class people had. But just shortly after my 30th birthday, things began to get far worse very quickly. There was one afternoon, when I should have been at work and I was at home with yet another hangover, and I had read a short story in a magazine that had won a prize. Something in it kind of appealed to me. Made me feel that I could attempt something similar. There and then, I wrote my first short story. It was the first thing in my life I felt I'd ever been proud of. Over the next four months, I wrote several more. I ended up going to rehab in January of 1994, and when I came out, I remembered the writing I had been doing - how it made me feel, and the joy it gave me. That is how it all started. And then I got a publishing deal very, very quickly, which is unusual. I was lucky, because if I had been rejected early, I'm not sure if I'd ever had the confidence to try again.

It sounds like there's some cross-over between *Rachel's Holiday* and your own life experiences.

That was the third book I wrote. It was so interesting to find that if I - a young woman who was educated, had a job, and all the infrastructure of a middle-class life - am that person, and an alcoholic, it means that addiction is not something on the margins of life. People with all kinds of addictions are walking around and trying to manage their lives, wondering why it's all so difficult. I wanted to write about addiction as something that's very mainstream. And about the denial that goes with the condition, because I was in massive denial when I arrived at rehab. I honestly thought that I drank the way that I drank - which was a lot - but that it would be temporary, and that when things improved in my life, I wouldn't need to drink so much. That's kind of Rachel's attitude, as well. It wasn't something to worry about. It's about moving from denial to realization. The rehab in the book, the Cloisters - which appears in *Again, Rachel* - was sort of a tough love place. It was inspired by The Rutland Centre, which is where I went. In other ways, Rachel



isn't me. Our drug of choice was different. I lived in London, she lived in New York. Our educational backgrounds and places in our families had been different. But the mindset of an addict was almost identical.

Again, Rachel is your first sequel.

It is my first sequel, and I always said I would never write one, because it always made me feel a little bit uncomfortable. It felt like I was short-changing the reader. For me, it just felt a little bit cheeky. But I think enough time had passed that I felt it would be an entirely new story. A storyline came that I thought would work for Rachel and Luke. I decided I'd give it a go and started writing it as the first lockdown kicked off here two years ago. But I made a deal with myself; if the book felt half-baked or not quite good enough, I'd abandon it. And here we are now, with *Again, Rachel* on bookshelves. It became my friend really quickly. I believed what I was writing about, which was a massive relief. I couldn't see my own family during that time, but I could write about the Walsh family, who have featured in several of my other books. They were nearly as good as the real thing. I was so grateful to have the book to write.

What do you think will resonate with the current generation of young, modern readers? And do you think there's been a cultural shift that makes now a good time to talk about addiction and coping again?

Yeah, maybe. In *Again, Rachel*, she's now working as an addiction counsellor in the Cloisters. One of the things I really liked

about writing *Again*, Rachel was writing about the group therapy sessions she has. There's still an urge in us all to regard addiction as a moral failing, rather than an illness or a response to trauma. I still think we have some work to do. We still try to "other" addicts because we're afraid of it happening to us. But the attitude towards addiction has widened. Now, people understand that you can be addicted to sex, to food, to spending money, or to gambling. But it's hard for people's first response to be compassion. "Why don't they just stop?" As if anybody would live that way if they had any say in the matter. So, there've been some changes, but we're not there. Yet.

How is that reflected in the book?

Well...I'd be giving a spoiler if I told you. Something does come up for Rachel, and it's very handy that she's working with addicts all day long, because in those circumstances, it becomes impossible to hide her own truth from herself. I know that's a cagey answer.

Will you revisit Rachel again down the road?

Maybe not Rachel. But you see, in that family, there are five sisters, and I have written about all five of them. And it's so odd; after resisting the whole idea of writing a sequel for 25 years, I'm now very drawn to doing another one, with one of the sisters. It's incredibly nice, being back in that world. I think the pandemic has changed so much for so many people. Now, I'm craving comfort, the familiar. One of the sisters is named Helen, and I'd really like to write her story now. And I'd be writing it as much for myself as for the reader.

Does *Again, Rachel* tackle mental health and addiction from a uniquely Irish perspective? Or is it more universal?

That's...a big question! My response is that Irish people cope - with pain, trauma, or loss - with humour. It's our go-to, and in many ways, it's very useful. It makes it possible to talk about something that would be unmentionable if you spoke about it as it really was. The Walsh sisters communicate with each other by insulting each other, in a humorous way. That's very much how me and my siblings communicate. Another thing Irish people will do, we find it very hard to say "I" was assaulted. They'll say, "you're finding it hard to sleep." We talk about ourselves in the second person, almost third-personing it. It's connective; it's a shared thing when that kind of language is spoken. But I think most countries have terrible difficulty articulating their pain.

Where does our cultural attitude towards trauma need to go, moving forward? And are we on that path today?

I believe a big effort is being made, especially with our younger people. To let them know that it's okay to not be okay. But a lot needs to happen across the board, and it involves countless individuals taking risks - speaking out and articulating their stories. For "unlikely" traumas to be discussed; for men, let's say, to talk about their experiences with anorexia. Every time someone in the media mocks a person for speaking out, they should be absolutely across-the-board called out for it. We should not stand for it. Younger and younger in schools, kids need to be given language to speak about uncomfortable feelings. It's on us all, to be honest when we'd prefer maybe not to be. We've all got to be braver.

mariankeyes.com

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Camp 21 Cultybraggan

*The past permeates the present in southern Scotland.
Tom Langlands tells us more.*





A little more than two miles south of the village of Comrie in Scotland's southern Highlands lies an unusual complex of elongated buildings with curved, red roofs and white painted gables. This is the remains of Camp 21 - also known as Cultybraggan. It is one of the United Kingdom's three remaining purpose-built, prisoner-of-war camps from World War II and it is the best preserved in Scotland.

I met Susan Holoran by the camp gates. She is the Visitor Experience Officer with Comrie Development Trust that owns and manages the site. "Take a moment," she says, "Imagine that you have just come from the horrors of fighting the D-Day allied invasion forces in Normandy and are now captive in a foreign land where you don't speak the language. Along with dozens of your fellow soldiers you have marched the last two miles from the railway station to find yourself standing at these gates." As the sun shone on the surrounding hills, I observed a deer in an adjacent field and listened to birdsong drifting from nearby woods. I commented that I could think of worse places to be. "Well, let's see," she added, and we headed into the camp.

Construction of Camp 21 began in 1941 and was undertaken by mainly Austrian and German Jewish refugees. Encompassing 90 acres of land, the site was surrounded by a high, barbed wire fence. Inside the encl-

sure, 16-foot wide prefabricated Nissen huts of varying length were assembled. These buildings would function as prison dormitories, kitchen and dining facilities, officers' mess, latrines, and site offices. In addition, there was a brick-built detention block. Today, some 80 Nissen huts and the detention block remain, representing around 50 per cent of what once existed here.

When the camp opened in 1942 it was intended to house Italian prisoners of war, but one of the first occupants was a sergeant

from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who had gone AWOL over concerns for his pregnant wife. Only several hundred Italians were ever held here and, following the Italian armistice of 1943, these numbers fell further with the camp becoming a transit base for German POWs before they were moved to more permanent camps. In May 1944, Cultybraggan - which had capacity for 4,500 persons - held 785 German POWs. By December of the same year - and following the D-Day landings at Normandy in June - it housed



3,988. It became known as a “Black Camp” - one which fell under the grip of diehard Nazis. “Here,” according to Holoran, “were housed members of the Waffen-SS, Afrika Corps, Fallschirmjäger (Luftwaffe paratroopers) and U-boat crewmen. Many of these individuals were fanatical supporters of Hitler and considered dangerous.” Inside the camp they formed their own Rollkommando - a military gang - doling out brutal justice to anyone perceived as aiding or abetting their captors or displaying disloyalty to the Führer. It was at Cultybraggan on Dec. 22, 1944, that the infamous murder of POW Feldwebel (Sergeant Major) Wolfgang Rosterg occurred, although events that led to his death could be traced to a camp in the south of England. In the weeks prior to his murder, a group of hardened Nazis planned an audacious, mass escape from Camp 23 at Devizes, Wiltshire. Their plan was discovered and 27 of them were moved to Cultybraggan. Rosterg (who was not involved with the escape plan) openly opposed Hitler and had acted as translator at Devizes. He was also sent north as part of this group. Within hours of arriving at Camp 21, he found himself before a kangaroo court, wrongly accused of being a traitor. He was horribly beaten, and his lifeless body was found hanging in the latrines the following morning. Three days previously another inmate, Oberleutnant (lieutenant) Willy Thormann, was also found hanged in suspicious circumstances. No-one was ever charged with Thormann’s death, but eight individuals were charged with Rosterg’s murder and five were hanged for it at Pentonville prison, London in 1945. The oldest was 21 years old.

Given the nature of some of the individuals held at Cultybraggan, maintaining discipline was difficult.

The camp was fenced into four main sections - A, B, C and D - and, in 1944, Polish guards were deployed. Because of what had happened to their homeland, they harboured a particular hatred of Germans. After their deployment, life for the POWs got harsher. Straying too close to a fence or communicating across different camp sections was forbidden and could result in a warning shot being fired. At least one German - Heinrich Schwarz - is known to have been shot dead for this reason.

Over time, some of the prisoners regarded as being the most dangerous came to realize that they had fallen victim to Hitler’s pro-



paganda machine. Heinrich Steinmeyer, who was 19 years of age, had come up through the ranks of the Hitler Youth and was serving with the notorious 12th SS Panzer company when he was captured in Normandy in 1944 and sent to Camp 21 where he stayed until June 1945. He was then sent to a camp in Fife where he worked on neighbouring farms. Following his release in 1948, he remained in Scotland and, along with another prisoner, made frequent return visits to Comrie where he established lasting friendships. In 1970, he returned to Germany to look after his ageing mother. When he died in 2014 at the age of 90, he left his life savings of £384,000 to benefit the elderly of the Comrie community. A tree was planted inside the camp in his memory and his ashes were scattered on the surrounding hills.

History has recorded some of the legacies of good and evil that percolated the barbed wire perimeter of Camp 21, but it can be harder to establish what everyday life was like for the average prisoner. Inside one of the huts, Holoran shows me a copy of a pen and ink sketch of prisoners having a snowball fight. “Thanks to a unique and significant collection of over 60 drawings by a German POW that has surfaced depicting everything from the interiors of dormitories to men playing games, reading, attending concerts and gathered around a stove we have a better understanding of life behind the wire,” she shares.

Although the war ended in 1945, some prisoners were not repatriated until three years later. That was due to logistical problems given the numbers involved and a desire to ensure huge numbers of diehard prisoners wouldn’t immediately regroup and restart the fighting. Significant efforts were made to de-Nazify prisoners prior to repatriation after the war.

After the last of the POWs were repatri-

ated, the camp was used by the military for training purposes before being acquired in 2007 by Comrie Development Trust. A masterplan has now been prepared for the conservation and regeneration of this historic site. It focuses on four principal approaches: commercial lets, events, self-catering, and museum/interpretation. Five of the Nissen huts have been converted to provide self-catering, holiday accommodation with a further four planned and another destined to become a cafe. The site boasts a Men’s Shed - also used by women on different days - and huts used by local Scouts and Beavers groups as well as a karate training club. Other buildings are used for storage purposes by a range of community organizations and some 35 different businesses now have a presence here. A large area is set aside for community allotments and there is even a small orchard. Previous uses of the site have included concerts, craft fairs, European Open Day events and school education days. Holoran is busy creating an interpretation centre and museum and with the help of an actor, an atmospheric video has been produced that takes visitors back inside Cultybraggan when it was PoW Camp 21.

It may look like an odd collection of red-roofed sheds in a remote corner of a beautiful Scottish landscape, but Camp 21 at Cultybraggan played a vital role in subduing Hitler’s Nazis during WWII. Today, Comrie Development Trust is embracing admirably the conservation challenge of looking to the future while remembering and respecting the past.

Photos courtesy of Tom Langland and the Comrie Development Trust

www.comriedevelopmenttrust.org.uk
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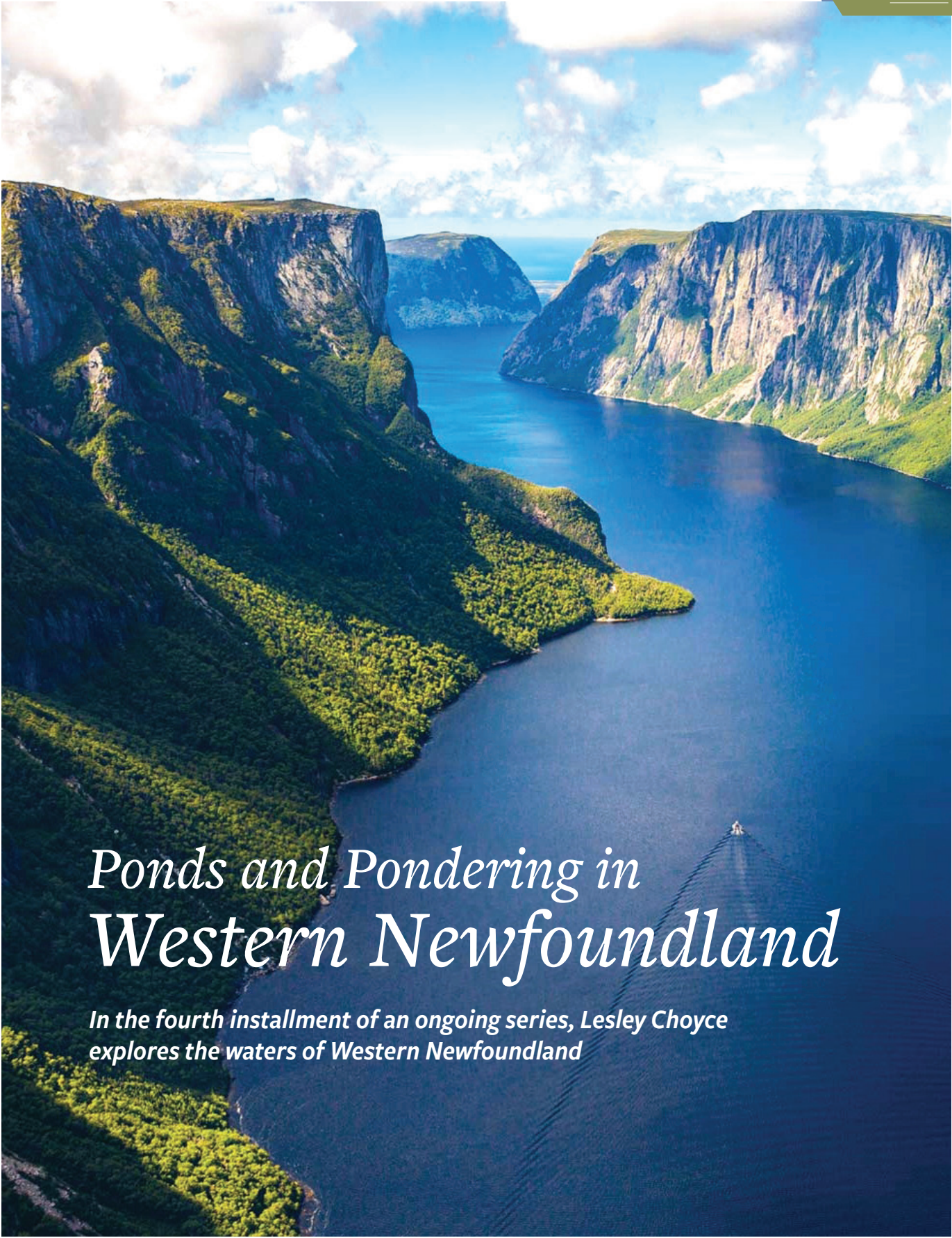
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Ponds and Pondering in Western Newfoundland

*In the fourth installment of an ongoing series, Lesley Choyce
explores the waters of Western Newfoundland*



Before leaving Newfoundland and Labrador, Linda and I were more than ready for another hiking challenge, so we took a long drive around Bonne Bay to tackle the nine-kilometre roundtrip trail to a remote coastal stretch called Green Gardens. The trail starts out on some of the desert-like Tablelands terrain, but quickly changes from raw red rock and scrubby trees to a healthier coastal forest of mixed foliage. According to Gros Morne guru Michael Burzynski, “Surprisingly, Green Gardens is idyllically verdant and pastoral (ignoring the odd thistle and nettle - both called needles locally).”

The long trek from parking lot to the coast was worth it - the entire shoreline was unique and striking. We emerged from the forests to find sea stacks and tall basalt “pillows.” The coastal formations were left “high and dry” 11,500 years ago when the sea level dropped. We hiked along the clifftops through lush meadows, pricked on a regular basis by those ever present “needles.” We lingered atop a high narrow peninsula where we could rest and eat our packed sandwiches while gulls studied us from above. After lunch we came across a sign that indicated the trail beyond was closed due to a footbridge that had washed out, so we retreated and took the welcoming steep wooden stairway that led down to sea level on a Jurassic-looking beach of smooth stones, driftwood and seaweed known locally as Old Man Cove.

There we found about twenty sheep, young and old, black and white, feeding on kelp and other seaweed. At first, I couldn’t quite fathom how they got down here but once they became annoyed at our human presence, I realized they could scale the stairs or the steeper walls of the beach with ease. Later I learned that it was traditional for the shepherds of Trout River to bring their flocks here by boat in early summer and let them fatten in the thistly meadows but, apparently, also on the iodine and nutrient rich fresh seaweed that created a veri-

table sushi bar for the woolly beasts.

The waters here were clear as glass and the “beach” is mostly polished stones, each wave-soaked stone speaking to me in a loud resonant voice about how pleased they were that we were walking upon them on such a fine day as this. I think it’s because I grew up on the sandy soils of South Jersey that made me believe any place with an abundance of colourful rocks was exotic. As such, you couldn’t get much more exotic than this.

Well, the ascent back up the stairs did a number on my right knee, so I decided to find an appropriate and user-friendly walking stick which turned out to be a gnarled spikey branch that I promptly nicknamed Gandalf. When it broke, it was replaced by a crooked bouncy spruce branch (christened Frodo) which allowed me to stumble on like a world-weary but determined old hobbit back towards the car in the Tablelands.

We stopped to check out the Discovery Centre on our way back and I watched a David Suzuki documentary about the local geology while we refreshed ourselves with a store-bought purchase of a Coke (which we do religiously at least three times each year). The Discovery Centre has a fine range of colourful informative displays concerning Mi’kmaq culture, geology, and local history.

Alas, I am one of those people who gets easily restless looking at story boards and displays of wilderness when the real thing is there for the taking just outside the doors.

This polished house of nature worship deserved far more time than we gave it (and it is free with your park pass) but we were still feeling awestruck by the delights of Old Man Cove and Green Gardens, so we drove on down to the South Arm for ice cream in Woody Point before the long drive back to our roost on the corner of Sam’s Lane back in Rocky Harbour for a quiet night at home.

The following day, we awoke early and drove north on the 430 to the large, paved parking lot at the trailhead to Western Brook Pond. Remember that a “pond” in Newfoundland can be anything from a small pool in a boggy wilderness to a massive lake. Western Brook is actually a long deep arm of water that has been cut off from the sea for millennia and is now an inland fjord. If you have seen any tourist propaganda for Western Newfoundland, you have probably seen the iconic image of hikers sitting atop a high rock promontory looking out over this majestic body of water.

I suppose the Parks Canada visionaries were thankfully restrained



Lesley & Linda

when they did not put in a fully paved road to the boat station at the pond itself, but they did create a fairly level, wide graded trail to get you through the sparse woods and marshy lowlands. Some locals, like former Parks employee Michael Burzynski, saw this event as an invasion of civilization, an abomination on the pristine rugged landscape. I guess part of me agrees that, in a wilderness as unblemished as this, you want to mess with Mother Nature as little as possible and to hell with the comfort of Come-From-Aways who don't want to muddy their fashionable footwear.

It was still early morning, and the parking lot would not fill up until later - as it did in many if not most days during peak tourist season. The air was cool and crisp now but warming quickly as the sun rose in the sky. Linda was off running the path and I decided to take my time, maybe find a good spot to sit and absorb the surroundings so as to have this place imprint on my subconscious enough to carry the images into the next life.

I found my writer's retreat on a wooden bench in the middle of a vast marshy expanse.

Here there were no black flies or mosquitoes and enough friendly pitcher plants posing as amicable writing coaches to allow me to write the following poem:

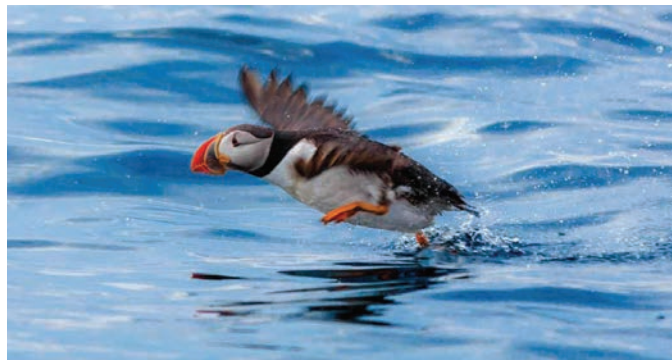
Trail Into Western Brook Pond

*I'm sitting down in a bog
the size of Chicago
on a warm, warm day in western Newfoundland.
Last night I watched the Taliban on TV
retaking Afghanistan
and then saw raging fires in Algeria –
soaking in the sadness of it all
overtaking my resilient joy.*

*But now on a calm morning like this
I am permitted to feel
at home again in this gentler world
thanks to the untamed wilderness
the sparse tamarack trees
the splendid black mud
the divinity of moss
the sudden mountain breeze
the tea-coloured pond
the air dance of the dragonfly
the universal croaking crows
and the misty sight of you
headed my way on the lazy trail
that led me here
to sit and breathe
the comforting mountain air
so welcome to my lungs.*

Somehow, I failed to squeeze into my verse my appreciation of the gnarly stunted black spruce that survive here, the delicate effervescence of the tamarack trees, the faint scent of the knickinick and the lily pads in the unnamed lake near me. But it was a good reminder that, on a hike to anywhere, you just need to stop, sit down in some location that speaks to you and take it all in.

Once I had penned what I believed for the fleeting moment was one of the 10 best poems ever concocted in the history of the English language (but of course that was far from the mark), I was interrupted by a team of park workers in a golf cart careening by with water jugs



slapping the sides. This was followed by the expected army of tourists of various sizes and shapes, all headed to the Pond to take the boat tour to the distant eastern end of Western Brook. Like me, they had been seduced by the heavily promoted spectacular images of the fjord and, like me, realized it was easier to visit Newfoundland instead of Norway. So here we all were.

Linda, who was ping-ponging back and forth on the trail to get in her 10-kilometre run, found me putting away my notebook and looking wordstruck so she joined me as I continued on to the end of the trail. We arrived at a very pleasant (but oh-so-civilized) wooden structure with a respectable array of solar panels. Inside was a restaurant, and a wooden deck in the front had some great information panels concerning rocks and wildlife, reminding me that these two things were probably what Canada should boast about most.

The boat was loading, and I had determined that we would not be on it. Stubbornness, perhaps, but, without a guide, we could not hike the eastern end of the lake to that iconic rocky perch, so it was time for us to head back the easy three kilometers to the parking lot and find yet another path in the wild less-travelled West of Newfoundland.

lesleychoyce.com



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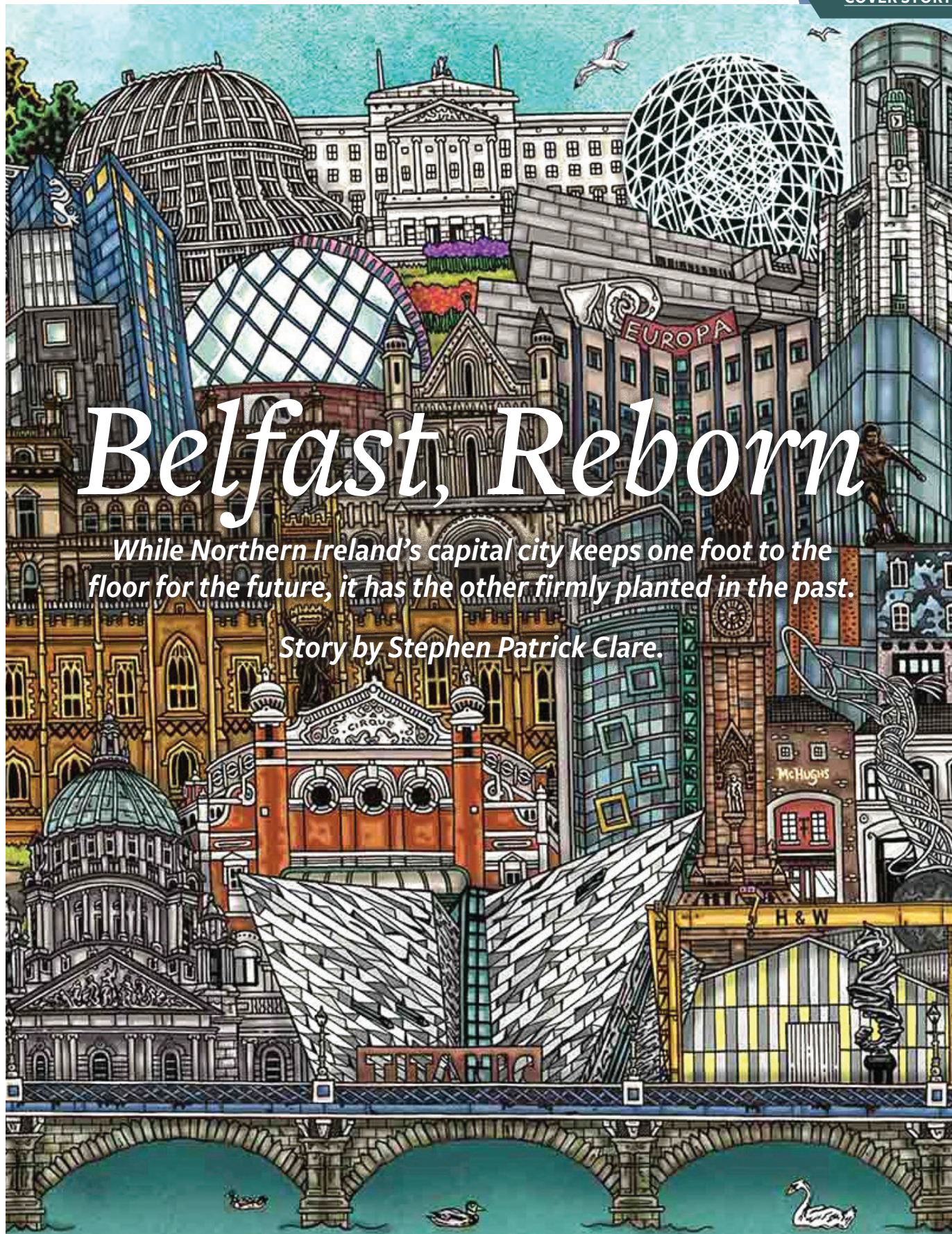
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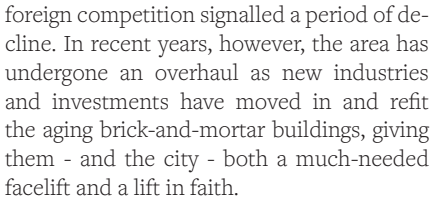
 Ireland.com



Belfast, Reborn

While Northern Ireland's capital city keeps one foot to the floor for the future, it has the other firmly planted in the past.

Story by Stephen Patrick Clare.



Ryan Stringer

“Everything used to just close right up around here during the summer months,” says Bronagh Smith, manager of the casual/chic Meat Locker restaurant on Howard St. “In the past 20 years or so - except during the COVID-19 pandemic - the streets have been filled with people. And not just tourists, students, and workers from other countries, but many Irish from other counties as well. We’ve become the Celtic Tiger of the North.”

*For the ones who stayed.
For the ones who left.
And for all the ones who were lost.*

Perhaps an epitaph for the past, or a eulogy for troubled times, Branagh's black and white coming-of-age tale - which is set in the late 1960s - is both an homage to his hometown and one last, lingering look over his shoulder.

And though the film has garnered great popular and critical acclaim since its release last November (including an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay), the director - who grew up in the city's Tigers Bay area as the son of

working-class Protestant parents - has insisted in interviews that, while Belfast was a movie that he had to make, it was time for him to move on.

The implications to residents of his hometown were obvious - it is time to move on.

However, as much as Belfast - and all Northern Ireland - keeps one foot to the floor for the future, it has the other firmly planted in the past. As such, and instead of ignoring its history - or weeding it out altogether - the city continues to bloom atop its rich and robust roots, reimagining and reinventing both its scenery and its storylines.

Restored

Nowhere is this replanting more evident than in Belfast's famed Linen Quarter, where old-world charm meets new-world charisma.

Situated just south of City Hall, only a few blocks from both railyards and shipyards, the heritage district was the hub of the world's garment industry from the late-1700s to the mid-1900s. After WWII, rising costs, the advent of synthetic materials, and



Ken McNeely

James St. restaurant. “And not just with regard to food, but also with our understanding and appreciation of spirits as well. Guinness and Jameson’s will always be a part of our liquid landscape, of course, however we now produce all sorts of craft spirits and creative cocktails, and the city’s wine culture has evolved significantly.”

Evidence of that refinement is on display at Coppi, one of several elegant eateries located by the city’s magnificent Metropolitan Arts Center.

“Oh, we are pretty much regulars here,” says 24-year-old Liz Keller, sitting with a table of girlfriends. “It is quite contemporary - the food is fantastic, the drinks are delicious, and the ambiance is amazing.”

Like Keller, many of the diners are young, well-dressed, and well-versed in culinary matters.

“In the past few months, we have tried dishes from all over the world right here in Belfast - Italian, French, Spanish, Greek, Polish, Turkish, Korean, Thai, Cuban, Columbian, African. It has been an education for sure.

“And the nightlife is brilliant,” she continues, looking around the room. “There is real joie de vivre here now; restaurants, pubs, clubs, music, theater, festivals...it’s very exciting!”

Refined

Part of the attraction is the upscale culinary culture.

“We have come a long way, quite quickly,” notes Smith’s boss Chef Michael Deane, who returned home to Belfast in the mid-1990s and today owns and operates five restaurants in the city, including the Michelin-starred Epic.

“At one time it was all just fish ‘n’ chips and chowder, but now we have an incredible variety of world-class cuisine, much of which is produced locally.”

“And, as eaters have upped their standards and demands, we have had to up our game also. The shift in people’s palates has been quite profound.”

Ryan Stringer agrees.

“What we are doing now was unheard of just a few years ago,” shares the chef of



Belfast ~ Basics

- Name derived from Irish “Béal Feirsde” - meaning “river-mouth”
- First known settlers 5,000 BC
- Founded as a town in 1613 by Sir Arthur Chichester
- Granted city status in 1888 by Queen Victoria
- Current population 341,877 (city), 671,559 (Metropolitan area)
- Demographic
 - Caucasian 97%
 - Catholic 49%, Protestant 43%, Other 8%
 - Female 51%, Male 49%
 - Median Age 35
 - Average Annual Income \$33,294 (USD)
- Economy; Engineering, Manufacturing, Tourism and Hospitality, Information Technology, Financial Services, Life and Health Sciences
- Unemployment Rate 2.5% (February 2022)

“We still have a way to go,” admits Michael Deane, “both with our culinary offerings and as a city in general. However, at least we are moving in the right direction.”

Recreated

Belfast’s creative class is certainly moving forward, enjoying a cultural renaissance not seen since the early 1900s.

Along with a bevy of world-class restaurants, concert halls, live theatre venues, festivals, art galleries, and the like, the city is home to a thriving underground arts scene.

In particular, the quirky and quaint Cathedral Quarter is awash in funky cafes, used record stores, bookshops, boutiques, pop-up shops, tattoo parlours, salons, speakeasys, and more.

“I have been here for almost six years,” shares Ken McNeely, owner of Young Savage, which specializes in vintage clothing and alternative paraphernalia. “This area has grown quite significantly since I first opened. It used to be sort of our little secret part of the city, but that’s not the case at all anymore.”

“It has become a bit of a hipster hotspot,” laughs Aoife Downie, a Fine Art graduate from Ulster University.

“When you go down there now, it’s all young people with beards and tattoos and piercings. It certainly makes the city more interesting and colourful.”

On cue, she points to the variety of vibrant graffiti that adorns the sides of many of the neighbourhood’s buildings.

“It’s great to see the growth and to have all of these new businesses and buildings,” she smiles, adding that she intends to stay and work in Belfast “because someone has to make them beautiful.”

Like Downie, local artisan Alison McBride has chosen to make Belfast her permanent residence.

“There was a time when I seriously considered leaving and going to London,” admits the 48-year-old craft-jewelry maker from her stall at nearby St. George’s Market. “My husband and I simply couldn’t make a proper living doing what we love here. That has all changed.”

Built between 1890 and 1896, St. George’s Market remains the beating heart of the city, bustling with thousands of visitors each weekend.

“For one thing, there are more jobs here now,” continues McBride. “More jobs means more disposable income for local people. On top of that, we have seen greater amounts of tourists in recent years.”

Revisited

Despite the difficulties brought on by COVID-19 and the ongoing uncertainty of Brexit, tourism in Belfast is expected to rebound in 2022, with millions of guests bringing travel numbers back to pre-pandemic levels. Fittingly, given the region’s strong nautical heritage, many of them will arrive on one of the 130 cruise liners due to dock in the city’s harbour.

There, it is only a short stroll to Titanic Belfast, the city’s premier museum and one of the most popular tourist attractions on the planet.

Opened in March of 2012, the iconic six-floor building - which features nine interpretive and interactive galleries - recently celebrated its 10th anniversary with a number of events, including a special photographic exhibition titled “The People Who Built Titanic Belfast” featuring 123 photographs and illustrations telling the story of the iconic building from its inception and design to the

Belfast ~ Best Of

- Stay** ~ Grand Central Hotel
- Eat** ~ EIPIC / James St & Co. / Coppi
- Drink** ~ Crown Liquor Saloon
Lavery / Berts Jazz Bar
- Shop** ~ St. George’s Market
- See** ~ The Cathedral Quarter
- Do** ~ Titanic Belfast Museum

structure being fitted and built.

Over the last decade, the facility has welcomed more than six million visitors from over 145 countries. Titanic Belfast is part of the area’s “Maritime Mile,” which includes an array of attractions, exhibitions, historic buildings, public art, and even a Glass of Thrones Trail - a series of six stained-glass installations which celebrate Northern Ireland as the home of Game of Thrones.

“We are huge, huge fans of the show,” notes 26-year-old Pierre Mouliot who, along with his fiancée Monique, are visiting from Paris. “This is our first time here, and we came specifically to see all the Game of Thrones sites. Before the show, I couldn’t even have told you where Belfast was on a map.”

Nicknamed “Thronies” by locals, fans of the blockbuster HBO series - which ran for 73 episodes over eight seasons from 2011-2019 - can enjoy a full-gamut of GOT experiences in Belfast, and across Northern Ireland, including touring filming locations and immersing themselves the new, multi-media Game of Thrones Studio Tour in nearby Banbridge.

“We have only been open a couple of months, but we are already seeing heavy traffic,” explains Alex McGreevy, the facility’s Public Relations and Communications Manager.

“People are coming from all over the world. It’s great for the local economy, and Northern Ireland as a whole.”

While Belfast and its environs have long been a cinematic hotspot, the popularity of streaming services has upped the ante; smash-hit series such as Line of Duty, The Fall, and Derry Girls were all filmed in and around the Northern Irish capital.

“After watching Game of Thrones, I became very fascinated with the culture here,” says Pierre Mouliot. “I started exploring other television shows, then movies, blogs, books, records, and lots of stuff online. And I discovered the sounds of Van Morrison.”



Van Morrison

Revered

Along with their Game of Thrones excursions, Moiré and his bride-to-be have numerous other adventures awaiting them in Belfast, including stops at local museums, a night at the Grand Opera House, and a trip down the Van Morrison trail.

The Belfast Bard, the Mystic of the East... Morrison has been called many things since first emerging on the city's music scene in the mid-1960s - not all of them pleasant. A notorious curmudgeon and recluse, the songsman has nonetheless spoken highly of his hometown on many occasions.

"Belfast is my home," he shares via his website. "It is where I first heard the music that influenced and inspired me, it is where I first performed, and it is somewhere I have referred back to many times in my song writing over the past 50 years."

Just as Van Morrison's music provided the bittersweet soundtrack to Branagh's Belfast, so his work has informed and inspired music lovers for more than half a century. Long time listeners and those new to his tunes will cherish the chance to walk in his footsteps - literally.

Launched in 2014, the self-guided 3.5-kilometer Van Morrison Trail begins at Elmgrove Primary School, before winding its way through the nearby Hollow, along the Beechie River, by the bard's childhood home on Hyndford Street, around the neigh-

bourhood where he held his first jobs, past Orangefield Park and High School, by the now-defunct Belfast & County Down railway station, up Cyprus Avenue, past Saint Donard's Church, before coming to a close at the former site of his favourite eatery Davy's Chipper.

Drawn from memory, Morrison has referenced these places repeatedly over the course of his prolific career, during which time he has written and recorded more than

40 studio albums. It is no wonder that he is revered by both fans and critics alike.

"When you find an artist, a writer or a musician who has been creating for decades, it feels like you've discovered a planet that you'll spend the rest of your life exploring," writes Northern Irish author Darran Anderson. "Van Morrison was never a polemic figure. He no doubt understands that explaining his music is like undertaking a live autopsy, which partly explains his caginess with interviewers. He didn't set out to defy the either/or binary of Northern Ireland. He didn't need to explain that you can be both an East Belfast musician and an Irish poet (and vice versa). He just did his own thing and thus embodied a different way of being and showed us another way forward, or rather many ways. And perhaps he tired of all this talk of the past. He's an artist who has always moved on. So, he's moving on. And so - if our luck, empathy, and spirit hold out - are we."

Reflected

Just west of the downtown core, the Falls Road area remains the city's core Catholic enclave. I stop in at a small, non-descript café for breakfast, noting with interest that, here, the "Ulster Fry" is called an "Irish Fry."

A group of four young men come in and sit next to me. They are in their late teens, each attired in jeans, hoodies, ballcaps, bling, and expensive Nike shoes. They are upbeat and pleasant. They introduce themselves - Kevin, Timothy, Ronan, and Liam.

"You're from away?" Kevin asks me, detecting my accent.



Belfast ~ Ones to Watch

Kate Nicholl (*councillor & Lord Mayor*)
Andra Vladu (*activist*)
Dean Farquhar (*youth worker*)
John Johnston (*entrepreneur*)
Michael Thompson (*chef*)
Katharine Timoney (*jazz vocalist*)
Ruedi Maguire (*designer*)
Kelly McCaughrain (*author*)
Dean Kane (*graffiti artist*)
Keri Halliday (*athlete*)

"Canada," I answer

"Do you know Drake?" asks Ronan, referencing the Toronto hip-hop star.

"We're on a first name basis," I reply, with a wink.

"Does he have a second name?" he queries with a smile, and the room erupts in laughter.

We chit-chat for awhile, before Kevin tells me that he has relatives - an aunt, uncle, and cousins - in Mississauga, outside of Toronto. I inquire about them.

"They were from the Divas Flats," he recounts. "They left here years ago - they'd had enough of the Troubles. Their kids were born in Canada. I was over to visit with them before COVID. Bloody cold over there!"

I smile knowingly, before asking them about the Troubles.

"Ah, that's done with," says Timothy, adding, "before our time."

"Well, maybe not totally over, y'know?" pipes in Kevin. "There are still some idiots out there, but it's not really a part of our lives, y'know? I don't know anyone that's involved with that crap. Maybe my parents would have known a few people, but it's not really discussed, y'know?"

Outside, the colourful political murals are reminders of past struggles, as are the traditional Black Taxis that weave their way through traffic.

Nearby, at the Peace Wall - the concrete divide that separates the Nationalist Falls Road from the Loyalist Shankill Road - a group of American tourists emerge from a minivan. Black and red markers in hand, they sign their names on the wall.

Their driver, a young man from Ballymena, just northwest of the city, smiles and hands me a marker.

"First time here?" he asks.

I tell him that I have been to Belfast several times, going back to 1989.

"Ah, it's not the same city," he notes. "Even here, in this neighbourhood, it's completely changed. It may not look like it, but the attitudes are very different than before."

I ask about the murals and the Peace Wall.

"We don't really see it as propaganda anymore...it's more just like street art now. It's a huge draw though...visitors are really fascinated with this stuff. I mean, who can blame them, really? For years the only news you got out of Northern Ireland was bad news, and this area was at the center of it all."

As in the Falls Road district, "political tourism" is alive and well a few blocks over on the Shankill Road, where Union Jacks still fly, portraits of Queen Elizabeth II fill storefront windows, and historical frescoes tower over corner lots.

"That's just for show, mostly," shares Claire, a 20-year-old waitress who was born and raised in the community. "Young people, like myself, don't give a shite about that stuff to be honest. I've got a lot of friends from the Falls. We go dancing and drinking downtown each weekend. We never discuss politics. Not because it's taboo or anything... it's just that we don't really care."

Despite an upcoming election for the Northern Ireland Assembly (as of this writing, Sinn Féin were leading in the polls), young people here - as elsewhere - have other things on their mind.

"I'm in university, studying psychology," continues Claire. "Afterwards, I'd like to stay here and find a good job - you can do that now. Maybe travel a bit before settling down. I'd like to have a family, maybe two or three children. I have to find a husband first though! You know any good, single Canadian boys?"

Like Kevin, Timothy, Ronan, Liam and most others their age from Belfast, Claire has only known peaceful times. Their perspective is mostly one of indifference to, or intolerance of, matters of division.

Revealed

While the Troubles may have brought out the worst in people from the two communities over three decades, it appears that peace has brought out the best in them.

"What you have in Belfast, and Northern Ireland, is nothing more than two sides of the same coin," says Michael Doherty, who, at the age of 61, has been driving a cab in Belfast for 40 years. "We're the same people, for Christ's sake, from the same stock!"

"You see, once we had put down the guns and started talking and listening with one another, I think we saw how foolish it all was...and that we had more in common with one another than we thought. What we are starting to see now, I believe - and I get this from talking with my own grandchildren (ages 20, 17, 15) - is that Belfast is no longer

Belfast ~ Notable Names

James Galway (*musician*)
Van Morrison (*musician*)
Gary Moore (*musician*)
Jamie Dornan (*actor*)
Kenneth Branagh (*director*)
Chloe Dougan (*designer*)
C.S. Lewis (*author*)
Lyra McKee (*journalist*)
Mary McAleese (*politician*)
Chaim Herzog (*politician*)
Mairéad Corrigan (*activist*)
Betty Williams (*activist*)
George Best (*footballer*)
Eddie Irvine (*F1 driver*)
Jocelyn Bell Burnell (*scientist*)

an "English" city, nor is it an "Irish" city - it is its own place, with its own unique identity."

Interestingly, and to Doherty's point, the most recent census for Northern Ireland lists 39 per cent of the population identifying as Irish, 35 per cent identifying as English, and 26 per cent identifying as Northern Irish.

"That is the first time that has happened," notes Doherty. "The first time in our long history that so many people here have identified as Northern Irish. It speaks volumes about how we now see ourselves and how far we have come in such a short time."

"What I believed has happened is that the younger generation has taken the best of both worlds and simply discarded the rest."

And while those influences remain apparent across the cityscape - the English, Victorian-era architecture and Savile Row style, and the Irish warmth, wisdom, and wit - Doherty is correct in his assessment; Belfast is no longer an 'English' city, nor is it an 'Irish' city. It is, rather, an international city. And it is an inclusive city.

Respect

"I arrived in Belfast from Nigeria four years ago," recounts 24-year-old Ada Yakuba. "I came here to study hospitality and just fell in love with the city. After graduating I took a job at a restaurant, and now I work at a hotel."

At first - and as a young, gay, black woman with a distinct sense of style that honours her African heritage - Yakuba was concerned that she might not feel at home in her new environs.

"It was the opposite, actually," she shares. "From my very first class I had other



Those same sentiments are echoed by many young people in the region today. That inclusivity, that sense of belonging, was certainly aided when Northern Ireland legalized gay marriage two years ago. That youth-driven sense of unity has since been strengthened by peaceful rallies around the city against climate change, racism, COVID-19 mandates, and the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"We - and by we, I mean people my age in Belfast - aren't interested in local, petty partisan politics. Our concerns are bigger than that, though we do what we can on the ground right here at home. What's the saying? Think globally, act locally."

Renaissance

It has been said that spiritual awakenings are most often preceded by rude awakenings, and that - to quote Churchill - those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

"Peace here was hard-won, and it has been prosperous," shares Michael Doherty from the front seat of his cab. "Trust me when I tell you we won't be giving it up anytime soon, if ever again."

As we pull over in front of The Garrick Bar on Chichester St in downtown Belfast, I request one final question.

"Go ahead," he replies.

I pause and take a deep breath before blurting out, "How in God's name do you people manage to drive on the wrong side of the street with a steering wheel on the wrong side of the car?"

"Ha!" he laughs, turning to me with a smile. "Go on, get out of here you crazy Canuck!"

I pay the fare, close the door, and bid my newfound friend adieu. The pub is buzzing with music as young people of all sorts stand outside, drinks in hand, laughing and smiling.

I look up to the sun. And then, on the side of the building, I see it.

*A nation that keeps one eye on the past is wise.
A nation that keeps two eyes on the past is blind.*

Stephen Patrick Clare, Spring 2022

*(For the ones who stayed.
For the ones who left.
And for all the ones who were lost.)*

students coming up to me, welcoming me, inviting me out. Within a few days I had a whole new group of friends. Since then, I have become active within the LGBTQI+ community and, just recently, I joined a climate action campaign."

Like Yakuba, thousands of young people from other countries have arrived in Belfast over the last decade, enticed by a solid education system and a strong economy.

"There are lots of jobs here these days," notes Yakuba, "especially in the hospitality sector. In fact, staffing shortages have become a real issue for some businesses - we have seen it right here at the hotel. Of course, COVID-19 didn't help. But we stayed positive, and things seem to be bouncing back now."

With pandemic lockdowns fading in the rear-view mirror, Yakuba and her friends are enjoying their freedom once again.

"I love the lifestyle here. It is so much fun. On any given night we can eat at a great restaurant, go clubbing, have a few drinks at a pub, see a show...I even went to my first ice hockey game a few weeks ago! It was awesome! And there are excellent shops here -

from higher-end clothing stores to bespoke boutiques to funky, out-of-the-way second-hand spots - I love it. It's funny; my family just came for a week-long visit, and they had to stay at a hotel because I had no room to put them up - I have so many clothes!

"My father was skeptical about me staying here after I graduated," she continues, "until he met my friends. They are all so sweet and nice, and he sees that I am happy when I am with them. About half of them are from here, and the other half are from Europe, Africa, Australia, and North America."

Similarly, members of both her LGBTQI+ community and her climate action group are a mix of both locals and those from other parts of the world.

*"For whatever reason we have
found each other and feel
comfortable with one another
here. Belfast is a safe place, and
it is very multicultural, very
inclusive. I belong here."*



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A photograph of a stone archway with a colorful mural on a blue door. The mural features a large red apple with a white skull-like face, set against a blue background with white clouds and a white crescent moon. The archway is made of stone and has a decorative keystone with a carved face. The door is framed by stone columns and has a red brick step leading up to it.

Belfast, Reviewed

Northern Ireland's capital city lends itself well to the lens.

Photos & text by Stephen Patrick Clare



I had been to Belfast several times previously - as far back as 1989 and most recently in 2017. However, this was the first time that I spent more than 36 hours in the city.

Usually, I have a pretty good idea of what I am looking for on these assignments before I arrive. I took a different approach this time, instead allowing the city - and the story - to reveal itself to me a little bit each day.

I set out from the hotel each morning - armed with a pen and journal, a digital recording device, my iPhone, and my Canon SX540 camera - not knowing where I would traverse, who I would speak with, or what I would experience. Aside from a few "must-see" spots, I had room to roam, scouring every nook & cranny of the city, stopping only for afternoon tea and scones.

Over the course of six days, I spoke with about 70 people, filled-in more than 100 pages of my journal, and snapped over 1,000 images.

Each night, after supper, I would review my notes, photos, and recordings from the day's adventure. In time, ideas and emotions would emerge, and I began to sketch a basic storyline. It wasn't until I returned home, however, that the big picture came into focus.

As any journalist will tell you, the craft of storytelling is a process of experience, evocation, and expression. As such, Belfast, Reborn wrote itself - all I had to do was get out of the way.

Stephen Patrick Clare, Spring 2022





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Born and Bred



One Belfast business is leading the way towards enviro-economic sustainability



For Belfast artisan and business owner Linzi Rooney, it all started with some simple questions.

"What if I start something?" she wonders on her website. "Something for makers like me who work alone? Something for artists who maybe have kids or another job? And something that would bring us all together to help us thrive?"

That something soon became a community of people who felt the same way, coming together in a space they called Studio Souk.

With a background in the creative industry, Rooney started her career as a photographer before retraining as a silversmith. Encouraged by the spirit of Studio Souk, she opened her first store at the age of 28.

"Born and Bred has been in Belfast City Centre since 2016, but it has only been since 2019 that we have had an online presence. However, it was during the 2020 lockdown that our website really took off. Our passion is supporting local producers and giving them a platform - both online and offline - not only to showcase their craft but to also let their business grow and thrive."

Since opening, Rooney estimates that her company - which currently employs six people, including her brother David - has supported over 300 local makers.

"We are raw, colourful and proud of what we have built," she shares on the company's website. "Our plants are real, there is paint on the floor and our stock room could do with a good clean out. But we are a safe, welcoming space where visitors can come out of the rain to have a look around."

In time, Rooney's passion inspired her to develop the company's own products.

"With an ever-changing environment you are forced to adapt your business - you have to listen to what the customer wants. And by creating our own collection it means we can really do that. As a business owner, I am always pulled in hundreds of different directions, but I love nothing more than getting into the studio to create our products. I can be very messy, and I have a habit of leaving half-drunk cups of coffee around my desk with apple cores and banana skins."

Those in-house products include candles, clothing, mugs, and other homeware accessories.

"It is a fine balance between 'tacky' Irish souvenirs and items that have a story and a passion behind them - I feel that we achieve the latter."

Along with nurturing the business' bottom line, Rooney stresses sustainability as a motivating factor.

"Our key goals in the company are to use zero plastic packaging and cut out any other unnecessary packaging. We use recycled shredded cardboard and starch biodegradable peanuts for our online orders also."

She is of two minds about the local and international eco-economy.

"Most small companies here are trying to make changes to create more sustainable products and business solutions to help our planet."

"But unfortunately, until plastic is more expensive than environmentally friendly materials, I feel that the only concern of most

large companies across the world is their profit margin. I think there should be heavy penalties on large organizations who use single-use plastic. Only when governments have a zero tolerance on this will things really improve."

Closer to home she keeps an eye on the marketplace.

"The challenge of owning and operating a business is the ever-changing environment; as the world changes, people's shopping habits change...so its important to stay really focused."

Despite the obstacles brought on by both Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, Belfast's economy appears to be booming.

"It seems that tourists actually want to come here now and lots of people are opening more cool restaurants and bars - it has evolved a lot.

"Plus, being born and bred in Belfast myself (see what I did there?), I am dead set on changing the negative attitudes about our wee country by creating a culture where we are proud of the place we call home. Sure, sharing local stories play a huge role in that, but they are not the full solution. That is why over the next few years we are ramping up the mentoring side to what we do."

Like any business, growth is also on the agenda.

"There are 64 million Irish in the diaspora around the world, and I would love them all to have a wee piece of Born and Bred."

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Ursula Burns

The Dangerous Harpist



When you think of a harpist, you probably picture an angelic figure, seated gracefully next to an ornate, gilded instrument, plucking sonic ambrosia out of the chords.

One long-time harpist from Belfast has spent her entire musical career trying to change that image and remind listeners that a harp - like a sharp wit - can be dangerous, too.

Ursula Burns grew up around music. However, rather than follow in the footsteps of her forebears, she was more inclined to buck tradition.

"Musically, my mum's family were folk musicians," explains Burns via email. "My mum had a love for the poetry of W.B. Yeats and made an album in the 1980s of his work set to music. I spent my childhood steeped in music and poetry and began performing folk music with my mum at a very early age. We performed at medieval banquets and folk clubs.

"I was not interested in learning classical or folk," she continues. "I failed my grade one music, and never even had a harp lesson. I was 25 before I started playing harp. I wanted to bring my own style of playing, which evolved to be a hybrid between Celtic and Paraguayan, with a focus on self-expression."

Her father was an entertainer too, and his influence would help guide her acoustic approach.

"My dad was very comedic and a natural emcee. I inherited the music from my mum, and the comedy from my dad."

Burns also showed an early proclivity towards songwriting, creating her own odd

ditties on a piano left to her by an elderly neighbour. Today, she incorporates all three - harp, songwriting, and comedy - into her career as The Dangerous Harpist.

"When I was 25, I became self-employed in music and my relationship to music changed. When you are earning a living, it is harder to do it for pleasure. I enjoy my work. I love my work, and I keep it diverse to keep it spicy.

"I am an entertainer," she continues, "and all my income is live, so it is not just about the musical quality. To play comedy on the harp, I needed to master the harp. And yet, 'quality' harping is not my aim. Connection with the audience is."

A stirrer of many pots, Burns has dabbled in the quirkier realms of performance art, including theatre and even circus, often while juggling her role as a mother - all with the uncertainty of how to make ends meet as a self-made harpist. But that sits fine with her. As she puts it, music runs red through her veins.

"I don't know how else to exist. I keep finding new ways to do what I do, and the road finds itself and propels me forward.

*"Music is about passion.
I do anything to keep it interesting
because if it ever gets ordinary,
it will be time to quit."*

Burns has had many proud, peak moments in her career.

"That time - pre-Internet - Jimmy Nail heard me on Women's Hour, and it took him

six weeks to find me," she begins to recount. "He asked me to come on a 50-date On the Boards tour, playing to 3,000 people a night and ending in the Albert Hall.

"Winning the Irish Comedy Award in 2012," she continues, running down her mental checklist. "Getting lost in the composing of children's theatre, Snail and the Whale and Little Red. All the festivals and gigs - from big tops to little tops. Palladiums to Pandoriums. Flea Pits to Gypsy Wagons, and horseboxes to the Glider. I don't know where to stop. A lot of things happened."

By all accounts, a lot of things are yet to happen still. Just for 2022 alone, Burns has a few novel ideas set to launch.

"I am working on a new show, supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland; an audible, theatrical, surrealist, and fantastical version of Beauty and the Beast, entitled 'The Blue Rose'. Also, last year, I bought a truck, and Paddy Bloomer built me a mobile venue. It is called Harpula's Pandorium. I am a trucker now! A trucking harpist. I shall truck to places that invite me and play harp."

And whether that harp is a Brobdingnagian cacophony, or played with plucky aplomb, Burns gets why the instrument resonates with her audience.

"The harp is iconic. It is annoyingly beautiful and nice. I tried for years to make it edgy, to knock the poshness out of it. It is so hard to do. Whatever angle you come from; the harp is always beautiful. And, though it does not rock, people still love it."

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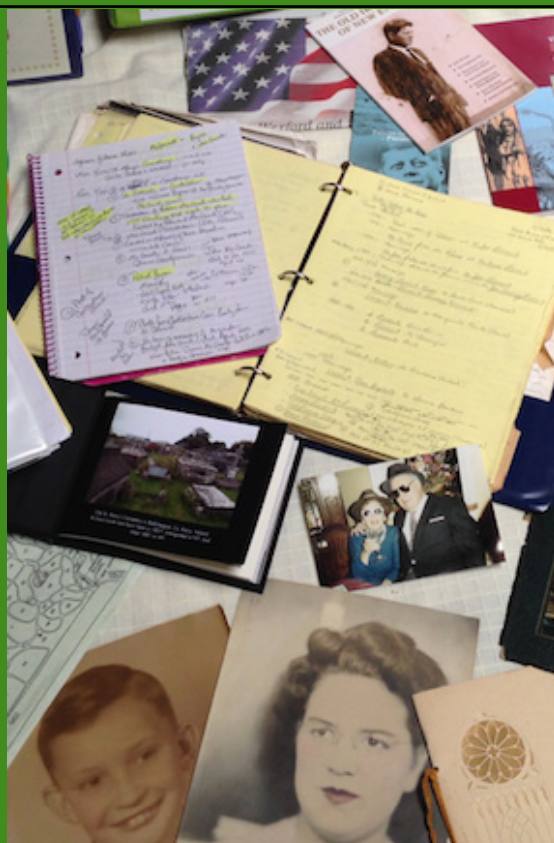
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AJ Tinsley @ajxtinsley

I am a 24-year-old fashion designer and content creator from Belfast. I grew up in the Shankill and moved to London in 2019 to study fashion design and development at the London College of Fashion.

I first became interested in fashion as a young man. I would have the craziest style and would DIY my clothes. I enrolled at the Belfast Met for art and design and fell in love with sewing. I knew fashion was my calling, and it was the first time in my

life I found something that I was good at. My career has only grown since then, and now I can actually call it a real job.

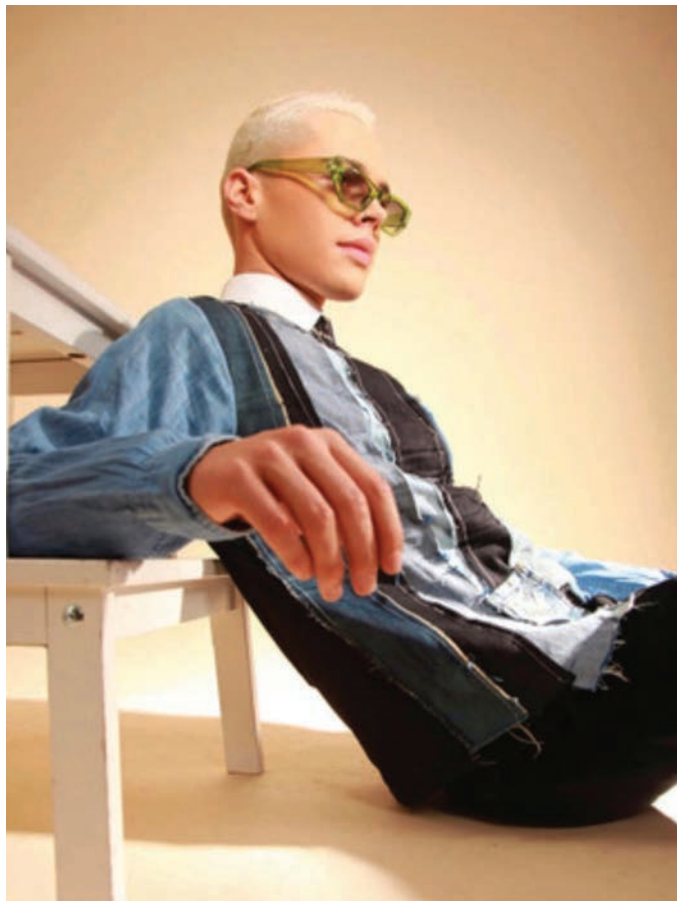
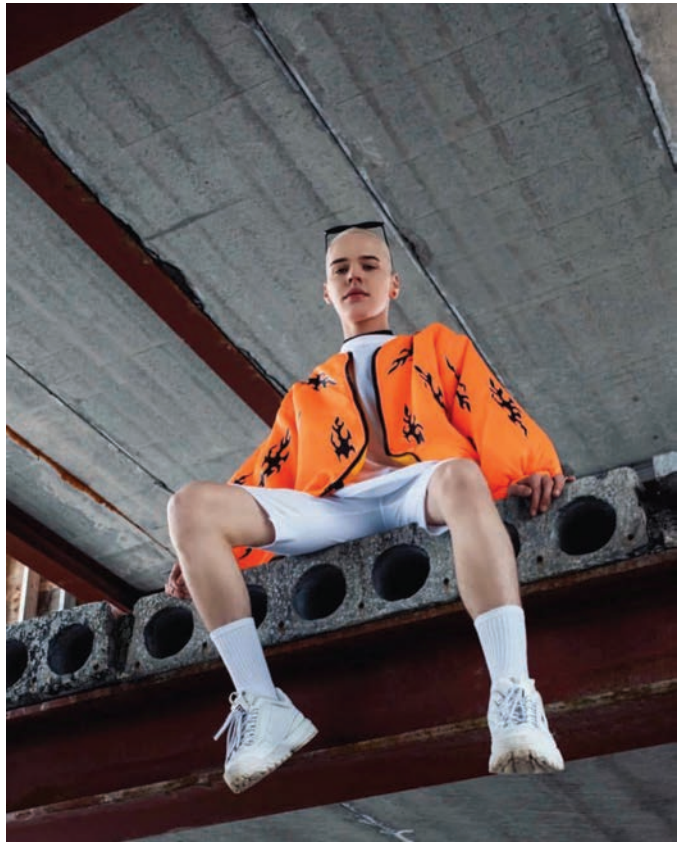
I started with my own clothing brand and, although I loved it, I knew that I wanted to do more and get out there and make a name for myself. During the COVID-19 lockdown I started uploading my DIY and fashion design content work to TikTok, and I now have over 71k followers from all around the world.

My days are mostly filled with thinking up ideas, going out and buying stuff, cutting

and sewing, editing and uploading videos, marketing and campaigning, emails, etc. I love doing it, so I don't see it as a job.

I am forever being inspired with new ideas, and everything I make I would 100 per cent wear. I am currently working on a new custom line of upcycled pieces and focusing on selling my fashion sketchbook.

A good piece of clothing should fit well and complement your body and style. It should also be built to last years and mix well with your other clothing.





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This work is the result of nearly thirty years of intermittent research in the National Records of Scotland, National Library of Scotland, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, National Archives of the UK, and University of St Andrews for the purpose of identifying persons of Scots-Irish (Ulster Scot) heritage. The references cited by the author include wills, testaments, deeds, sasines, family papers, burgess rolls, contemporary journals, newspapers, and more.

These contents were originally published in fifteen parts as follows: Scots-Irish Links, 1575-1725 (11 parts); Later Scots Irish Links, 1725-1825 (3 parts); and Scots-Irish Links, 1825-1900 (1 part). The 15,000 Ulster Scot subjects of the original volumes were arranged in alphabetical order; however, those books were not indexed. Accordingly, we have now attached a full-name index to the back of each of these consolidated volumes, providing the reader with a straightforward way of identifying the astounding 33,000 kinsmen of the founders of the Ulster Plantation. No other work comes even close to aggregating this many of people of Scots-Irish provenance. It is available as a two-volume set, at a discounted price, or by individual volume.

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Ulster Fry

No trip to Belfast would be complete without tasting a traditional Northern Irish breakfast. Thankfully, they are readily available just about everywhere - from restaurants and pubs to corner stores and gas stations - any time of the day. Many claim it is the perfect cure for a hangover, while others call it “a heart-attack on a plate.” Still, do yourself the flavour favour - just don’t tell your cardiologist.

Ingredients

- 2 thick bacon slices
- 2 sausages
- 1 vegetable roll (sausage meat mixed with scallions)
- 2 small tomatoes
- 4 mushrooms
- 2 large eggs
- 1 soda farl (flat version of soda bread)
- 2 potato farls (Irish potato bread)

Instructions

Slice tomatoes in half, place in low heat frying pan with a little oil. Drop vegetable roll and sausages into frying pan and cook on low heat. Slice mushrooms in half and pop into frying pan. Place bacon under a medium-heat grill. Move tomatoes under grill with bacon. Slice soda farls in half through the middle, exposing the inner bread. Cut potato farls in half, to create triangles. Remove sausage, vegetable roll and mushrooms from frying pan. Keep warm under the grill. Crack eggs into frying pan and cook gently. Remove eggs once cooked. Add more oil to pan and turn heat to high. When hot, but not smoking, add potato and soda farls to pan. Turn constantly to cook evenly. Remove when golden brown. Serve immediately.



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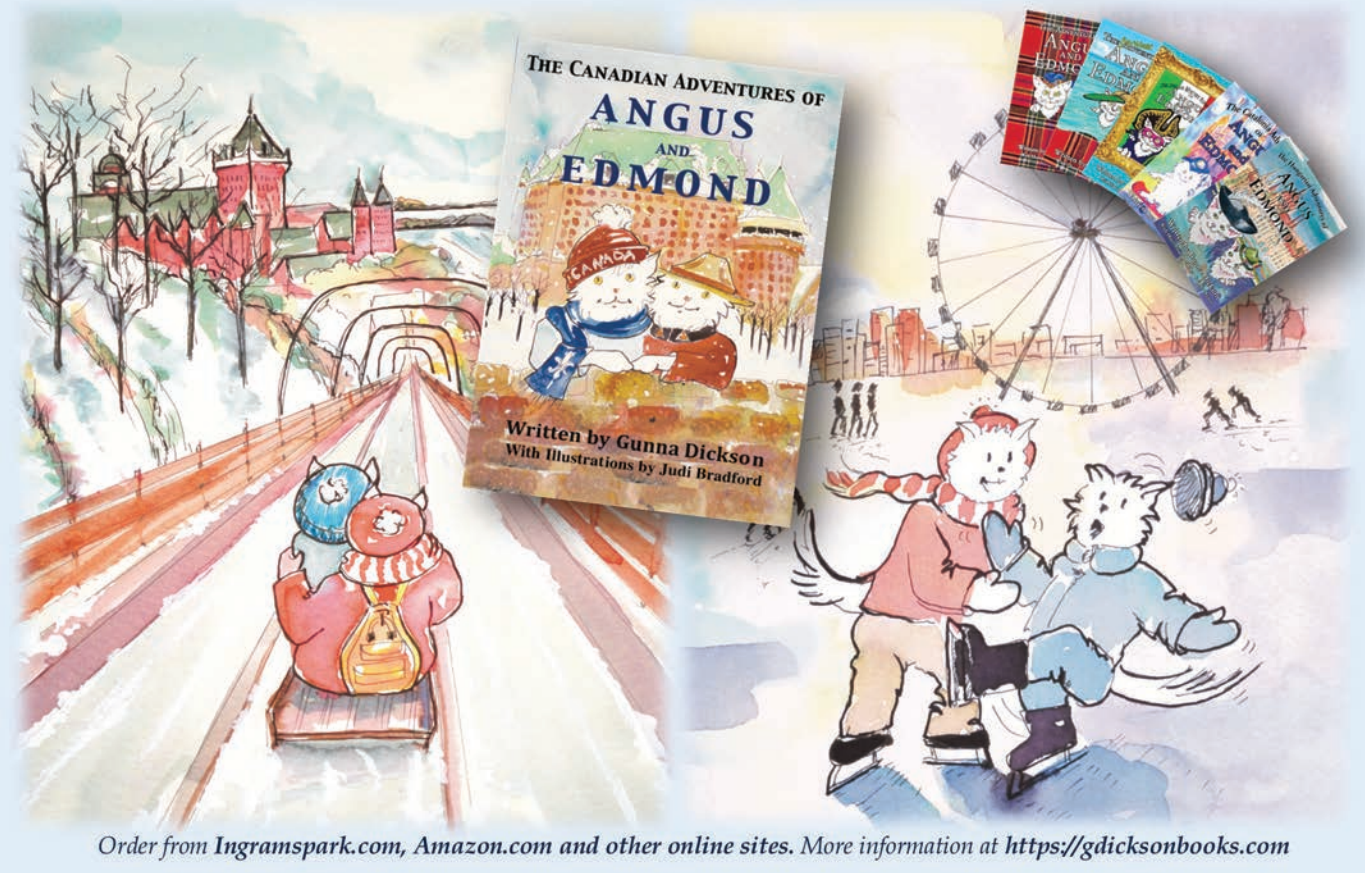
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In *Belfast Hymn*, a joyous evocation of the city's 5,000-year history, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Paul Muldoon celebrates its crowning achievements with an affectionate tour of its most familiar landmarks. It is filled with what the celebrated writer calls "the spirit of hope and the idea of home."

*"A sandbar near a river mouth"
would give Belfast its name.
The river where we've slaked our drouth
and where we staked our claim*

*with those who built the Giant's Ring
five thousand years ago,
with Normans, Essex, the Dutch king,
with Chichester & Co.*

*For even Ptolemy the Greek
set his sights on the Lagan.
He used to come for the Twelfth week
despite warnings of "dragons."*

*Although we're sometimes seen as staid
we've tossed our bowler hats
and cheered on every new parade
across the tidal flats.*

*The Vikings gave us a wide berth
and focused more on Larne.
They'd overrun the Solway Firth
and ransacked Lindisfarne*

*so they had nothing left to prove
about their derring-do.
We'd kept the Picts at some remove
despite their being True Blues.*

*What really put us on the map?
The world viewed through the prism
of eggs and bacon in a bap.
It's a Belfast Baptism!*

*It's seen us through our darkest hours
and salved our troubled souls.
Since we were granted devolved powers
we've all been on a roll.
Although we've so much on our plate,
we take it as a badge of honour
to eat twice our weight
in wheaten farls and fadge.*

*What sets the Ulster Fry apart
is its calorie count.
It's a clear insult to the heart.
The casualties mount*

*from Portavogie to Ardglass
where they've given up erring
on the side of caution, alas,
determined to prove herrings*

*and prawns will happily coexist
if served on beds of dulse.
The reason why they hold your wrist?
To check if you've a pulse!*

*For Belfast's long been a byword
for hospitality –
the slice of barm brack, lemon curd,
the drop scones at high tea.*

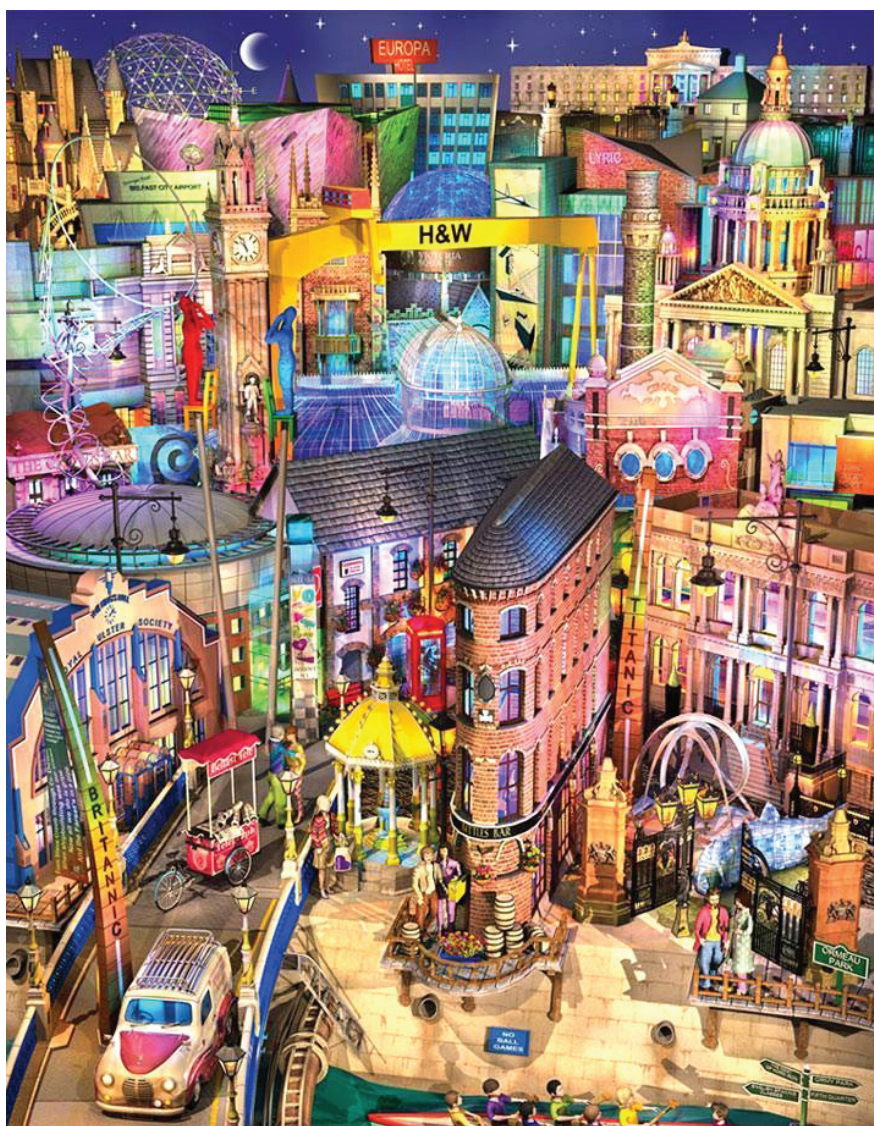
*It's for sponge cakes and Sally Lunn's
we Belfast people yearn.
A spot of bother?
All "wee buns," as far as we're concerned.*

*Most of the things we love to share
are made with Cream of Tartar
though any putting on of airs
is a complete non-starter.*

*It's Adam's Ale straight from the tap
that we still most esteem –
unless it's Châteauneuf-du-Pape o
or Costières de Nîmes.*

*Although it's true we do enjoy
a pint and a wee Bush
restraint's the technique we employ.
We just don't like to push*

*unless it's with a certain tact,
like when we're simply forced
to read someone the riot act
for backing the wrong horse*



or give our caddies an earful
when we've kicked up a divot
or into a Titanic hull
hammer those white-hot rivets...

That great ship waiting to be launched
was set off down the slip
by men like us. Stalwart. And staunch.
And taking no auld lip.

That smell's the smell of retting flax
from County Down flax dams.
Some sheets are sewn from old flour sacks
but some are monogrammed.

For from the cradle to the grave
we wear our linen bleached.
We see it breaking like a wave
on a North Antrim beach

where some diehards still like to surf
and some fish in chest-waders.
We know that artificial turf
is favored by Crusaders

along with polyester mesh.
In times of joy or grief,
of course, there's nothing quite so fresh
as a fresh handkerchief.

Belfast Ropework Company,
the largest in the world,
kept us from being all at sea.
The Queen of the May birdled

her leg and hunkered down to caulk
a seam with hanks of goat hair
even as she scanned the Lough
for Shorts' new flying boat.

It's known Shorts aircraft had a fin
sometimes described as "ventral."
Known, too, the best of days begin
and end at the Grand Central
where we counter the cold and damp
with oatmeal, ancient grains,
entrecôte aux champignons, champ,
a flute of gold Champagne.

The flute on which James Galway soared
was really made of gold.
Some dwell in the House of the Lord
and some on the threshold

of hotels like the Maritime,
Van Morrison and Them
summoning from our glow and grime
melodious mayhem.

When Sam and Dave fell foul of Saul
they took refuge in Naoith.
For us there's no escape at all
from Samson and Goliath

except perhaps to lose ourselves
in big band and bebop
as we go thumbing through the shelves
of a used vinyl shop.

Those two iconic gantry cranes
have held us in their thrall
long after they've thrown off their chains
or we've had any call

for their great feats of strength
or other shows of force.
History holds us at arm's length
until the Dutch King's horse

charges us from a gable-end
and Henry Joy McCracken
expounds on all that might impend
while on Cavehill the bracken

brings us right back to the Bronze age
and a cauldron's dull glow.
It's time to check the pressure gauge
in case the whole thing blows.

And what we cherish, it would seem,
are the rough and the smooth
of Brillo Pads, Brylcreem,
tang, tungsten, tongue and groove,

the Sliced Pan, the Sliced Plain, plain fegs,
jaw-box sinks, wheelie-bins,
the goatskin bodhráns, the Lambegs
made from their kith and kin.

When we bake apple tarts or pies
we keep it in the family.
The apple on which we rely
would be an Armagh Bramley,

resistant as it is to scab.
We ourselves resist blabs, blowhards,
gasbags with the gift of the gab
(unless it's our own bards).



*For though we've lost some afternoons
drinking from a tin can
in the snug Crown Liquor Saloon
beloved of Betjeman*

*we've also found our poets best
sustain us with their words.
Now we're known less for snipers' nests
than nests of singing birds*

*we laud the poetical wing
where Mahon, Longley, Hewitt,
McGuckian, and Carson ring
out the seed-bells, suet,*

*and bacon rind they've set in store
against our winter wants.
We track them still on the foreshore
by their typewriter fonts.*

*Our painters, too, have seen the light
where water meets the sky.
Cadmium Red. Titanium White.
How often have they vied*

*for supremacy in the air?
Andrew Nicholl giving a vague
sense Cavehill might still shelter bears.
Tom Carr, James Humbert Craig,
Dermot Seymour's footrot- and fluke
ridden sheep, William Conor,
Rita Duffy, the great John Luke
whose many selves we honour*

*as we struggle with points of view
and depth real or perceived.
They come at us out of the blue
where sea-heave meets land-heave.*

*Though the green hills lie on all sides
we come back to red brick.
Short, narrow streets run far and wide
as if they were homesick*

*for Manchester or Birmingham
and not Dublin or Cork.
In times gone by we'd run ram-stam
with pikestaffs and pitchforks*

*across those cobble-littered streets
and then put on the kettle.
Long years of beating a retreat
have made us show our mettle*

*and muse at length upon the stuff
we're made of. Granite. Gault.
We jubilate in being gruff
and gracious to a fault.*

*We like to get down to brass tacks,
the no-frills nuts and bolts,
but not before we've had some crack.
We do tend to revolt*

*against whatever powers might be.
We rejoice in high jinks,
gooseberry jam, Nambarrie tea,
Irwin's malt bread, Kerr's Pinks.*

*Some like potatoes "balls of flour"
and some prefer them waxy.
Some hire a limo by the hour
and some hop a black taxi*

*to visit those old trouble spots
on the Shankill and Falls
before taking one last straight shot
back to the City Hall.*

*For years we found it hard to wean
ourselves off giving vent
to something very much like spleen
against those we resent.*

*But now we harbour not a grudge
but something more like hope.
Even the hardest heart will budge
when we throw it a rope*

*unless it fears being pinned down
like that high-profile giant.
That doesn't play in Sailortown.
That makes us more defiant.*

*We revel in the linen mills
and the yarns they still spin.
Though on all sides lie the green hills
we'll never be hemmed in.*

*For if the future's less than clear
that won't leave us nonplussed.
It's not our style to live in fear
of what's in store for us.*

*Our shipyard workers packed their gear
and a "piece" in a box.
But now it's peace we've engineered
and christened in the Docks.*

*The spirit of those men of steel,
their gray-eyed wives and daughters,
will keep us on an even keel
through the uncharted waters.*

*For we steer by the Northern Star.
However far we roam,
that "river mouth near a sandbar"
will signal we've come home.*

*Paul Muldoon is an Irish poet, described as
being 'the most significant English-language
poet born since the Second World War'.
He has won many awards, including the the
Pulitzer Prize for Poetry 2003 and the
Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2017.*

Images by Keith Drury

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THE CELTIC CHEF
with Gary Maclean

Dinner School Coconut Tart

You might be wondering how a Coconut Tart recipe made it into a Celtic publication. Well, this is my fondest memory of the school dinner hall (I was always a big fan of school lunches.) I went to a huge Scottish high school, and lunch times were quite chaotic. I remember being amazed at how quickly all the pupils got through - it was like a military operation! The smell of “Dinner School” remains with me today. I love coconut, and this recipe is a variation on a coconut sponge. I have been using this recipe for over 25 years. It is easy and quick to make, so give it a go...I am sure that the family will ask for it time and again.

Sweet Pastry Ingredients

200g / 7oz plain flour (all-purpose)
125g / 4oz butter, unsalted
50g / 2oz castor sugar
1 egg
Pinch salt



Instructions

Rub the butter, flour and the salt together until you have a bread crumb texture, making sure that you can still see some small lumps of butter at the end of the rubbing in process. Crack the egg into a bowl and then add the sugar and lightly mix. Add the egg and sugar mix to the flour and butter and then, using the palm of your hand, bring this mixture together to form a dough. Make sure you don't over work the dough at this stage. Next, flatten out the pastry to form a disk about 1cm thick. Cling film the pastry and place into the fridge to rest. Once the pastry has had time to rest, remove from the fridge, and line a 20cm pastry ring with it, making sure you push the pastry into all the edges. It is up to you if you trim the edge of the pastry before or after you cook the tart. Once you have lined the case, pop it into the fridge to rest. Resting will help it to avoid shrinking. With this recipe you do not need to precook the case before filling, so you are now ready to fill the case.

Filling Ingredients

270g / 10oz desiccated coconut
2 lemons, juice, and zest
150g / 5oz castor sugar (super fine)
375ml / 13fl oz double cream (or heavy cream)
2 eggs
75g / 3oz raspberry jam or jelly

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 160°C / 325°F. Zest and juice your lemons, mix the eggs with the sugar until they combine and the sugar has melted. Then, add the lemon juice and zest, mix in. Lastly, add the double cream and the coconut. Put your mix to one side. Next, give your jam/jelly a mix until it loosens up and coat the bottom of the lined pastry case. Pour your filling into the pastry case. Pop in the oven and bake for 40 to 45 minutes until the tart is golden brown and set and allow to cool before cutting. And note that this recipe works just as well with non-dairy cream and butter and gluten free flour.

Slàinte! Gary • www.garymacchef.com



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The Beast of Dufftown

with Andrew Ferguson

Rome was famously built on seven hills, whereas the Scottish town of Dufftown was built on seven stills, a reference to the whisky boom in the closing years of the 19th century when the town had seven active distilleries. Today, there are but six surviving distilleries in the area, though a total of nine have existed at various times. Even so, Dufftown still produces more single malt whisky than any other town or city in Scotland, and it can rightly claim the title of the Malt Whisky Capital of Scotland. It doesn't hurt that the lion's share of this comes from two of Scotland's largest and most famous distilleries, Glenfiddich and Balvenie.

Dufftown's first licensed distillery was Mortlach, which opened in 1823. It took its name from the ancient town and historic parish of Mortlach, which was absorbed by the town of Dufftown when it was established in 1817 as a planned settlement. Though the town was new and modern, the village of Mortlach was ancient, tracing its origins to the 7th century and the founding of an Abbey by Saint Moluag.

By the 1820s, illicit distilling was rife in Scotland, with an estimated 14,000 stills confiscated annually. Most rural properties, especially in the Highlands, would have one so that they could use it to convert their agricultural produce into a more easily traded commodity. In an effort to tax the burgeoning whisky trade and make it easier to produce whisky legally, the Excise Act was passed in 1823, which sanctioned whisky production in return for a "a licence fee of £10, and a set payment per gallon of proof spirit." It is not surprising, therefore, that many distilleries like Mortlach opened or decided to go legit at this time.

The distillery had many owners in its first couple of decades, including, for a time, the Grant brothers of Glen Grant Distillery fame (not to be confused with the Grant family who would go on to found Glenfiddich and Balvenie). It was under the ownership of George Cowie, a railway surveyor and later mayor of Dufftown, in the 1950s that the distillery's well-regarded whisky became a sought-after component for blenders.

Cowie's son Alexander joined his father in the business in 1895 and is credited for Mortlach's famous but unusual production technique, which results in a spirit 2.81 times distilled. This involves a small still (famously known as "The Wee Witchie") triple distilling the heaviest portion of the first run, known as "weak feints." Distillation at Mortlach runs unusually quickly, with condensation taking place in cold worm tubs. All of this is done with an eye to reducing copper contact and encouraging a heavy, meaty, and sulphuric profile.

In 1897, during a whisky boom, the distillery expanded from three to six pot stills, an unusually large number for the era. That same year a railway siding was added, linking it to the Dufftown railway station, and a year later electric lighting and a hydraulic lift system for raising casks were added, making it a very modern distillery.

Mortlach's robust style has led to its nickname, "The Beast of Dufftown."

This profile has made it the darling of blenders for over 150 years, who use it to add weight to their blended Scotch whiskies. Un-

derstandable, then, when Alexander Cowie sold the distillery in 1923, it was to John Walker & Sons. A few years later John Walker & Sons became part of Distilleries Company Ltd., which was itself an eventual forebearer of Diageo, the world's largest drinks business.

Even though the vast majority of its production has long been dedicated to Blends, Mortlach has enjoyed a devoted following among single malt enthusiasts. Independent bottlers - in particular Gordon & MacPhail - did much to build its reputation. In the early 2000s, a 16-year-old Mortlach from Diageo's Flora & Fauna range was released, though not widely distributed. Interest in the brand encouraged Diageo to launch a core range of official bottlings in 2014, but they didn't quite hit the mark (mainly due to pricing). A new official range consisting of 12, 16, and 20-year-old Mortlachs was launched in 2018 and has been much better received. The 16-year-old, especially, is a very decent dram, in my humble opinion.

Gordon & MacPhail's relationship with the distillery is worthy of special note, as it goes back at least 85 years, if not longer. Mortlach is one of the whiskies in G&M's Distillery Labels range which originated at a time when few distilleries bottled whisky under their own label. Two Gordon & MacPhail bottlings of Mortlach, a 70-year-old in 2008 and a 75-year-old in 2015, were respectively for a time the oldest whiskies ever bottled. That is, until 2021 when they bottled another whisky from their Distillery Label range, an 80-year-old Glenlivet!

mortlach.com
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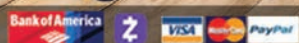


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27TH ANNUAL GLASGOW LANDS SCOTTISH FESTIVAL



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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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16th ANNUAL MALAD VALLEY WELSH FESTIVAL

June 24 – 25, 2022
Malad City, Idaho



- Presentations on Welsh heroes and history of Wales
- Poetry competitions and readings; chairing of the Bard of the Festival
- Fiction competition (must have Welsh or Welsh pioneer theme)
- Family choral and harp concert, youth concert, and piano ensemble concert
- Outdoor music by Celtic performers
- Tours of historic sites in downtown Malad
- Quilt show and bake sale by Oneida Quilters
- Art Walk in downtown Malad and youth art competition and displays
- Malad Valley pioneer family displays of pedigree charts, census data, and artifacts (lots of Evanses, Joneses, Williamses, Prices, and Thomases)
- Photo exhibit of Wales
- Self-guided tours of Samaria, where the Welsh first settled in Oneida County
- Lots of kids' activities (pioneer-era games; color-the-dragon contest; face painting, etc.)
- Food and craft booths, including Country Store with Welsh-themed items

For more information and schedule, see www.welshfestival.com
or call Malad City Office (208-766-4010).



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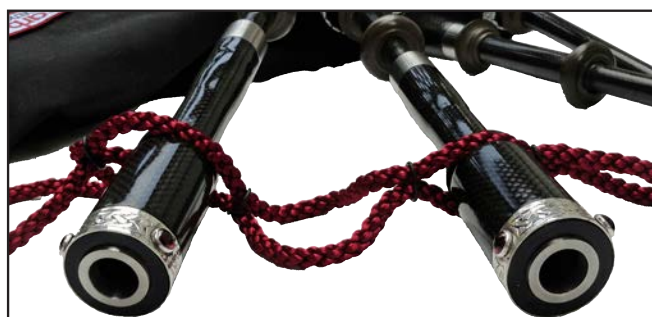
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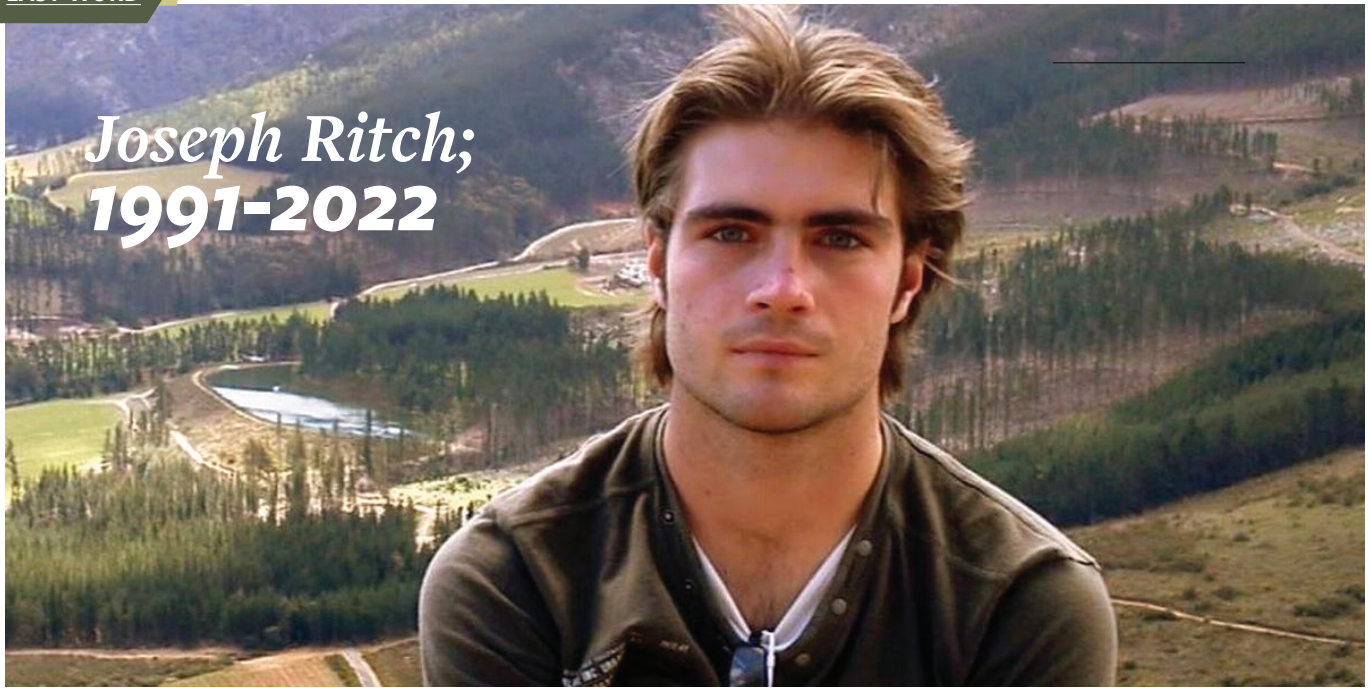
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Joseph Ritch; 1991-2022



The life of a 31-year-old man was tragically cut short in Belfast, Northern Ireland, at the end of March

Joseph Ritch was born in Lerwick on Scotland's Shetland Islands and moved to Northern Ireland with his family in 1996. He had aspirations of being an actor throughout his teens and early adulthood, studying performance art at South Eastern Regional College in Downpatrick. He landed multiple roles for the BBC, as well as a Northern Ireland Screen feature film titled *Cup Cake*. Additionally, Ritch was a stand-in for English actor Harry Treadaway for the film *City of Ember*.

Ritch, who was autistic, was fascinated by other people. At the time of his death, he was studying psychology at Belfast Metropolitan College. In 2012, he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and raised more than £5,000 for Autism NI: Northern Ireland's main autism charity. Ritch reportedly found the experience rewarding and it led to other travels, including trips to Canada, Mexico, and South Africa.

In the early morning hours of March 18, Ritch was taken to hospital following a physical altercation, during which he sustained a serious neck wound. His condition deteriorated and he died on March 23. His funeral took place the following week. A 30-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder but was later released. Following Ritch's death, North Belfast Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly said, "The news that a man has died as a result of a tragic incident

in Ardoyne last week is a shock to the whole community. My thoughts are with his family, friends and neighbours at this sad time. I'd appeal to anyone with any information to come forward as soon as possible."

Ritch's mother, Cindy, soon took to social media to pay tribute to her son.

"It has been the absolute privilege of my life to be his mum because he taught me patience and tolerance and enriched us all with his incredible energy and intelligence. I will love you and miss you forever."

"I don't want to get into details while police are investigating the incident that led to this desperately sad outcome," she continued, "but his name has been released to the press and I don't want people speculating about him."

Cindy also noted that Ritch's organs had been donated to three patients. "We want to make organ donation an acceptable and uplifting practice as this will make us feel something is left behind to honour Joe's life," Cindy told Belfast Live. "He was such a kind person and would be really happy to leave such a legacy."

Ritch's sister, Freya, wrote her own tribute, saying: "Joe was one of a kind. His big smile was so infectious, and he would do anything for anyone. I'll forever miss those

big blue eyes and his big bear hugs. What I would give to have one last night with him or even take his place. It's so comforting to read all the messages from his friends, he was truly so loved. His light just shone too brightly for this world. Wherever you are now Joe, I will never ever forget you and I will love and miss you forever. Until we meet again."

Patrick Duncan, who was Ritch's agent as well as a long-time family friend, remembers Ritch as "extraordinary" and "unique." He told Belfast Live that Ritch's family and friends were all heartbroken by the loss. "I'll always think of his remarkable sociability. He was determined to live in the world, to try and understand it. He didn't see things as difficult. He was so young - he died young and beautiful," said Duncan. "You could always guarantee Joe wouldn't be dull, he would always interest you. You see so much love pour out on Facebook now from people who knew him, and on whom he made a strong impression."

In addition to his mother and sister, Ritch leaves behind a brother and grandparents.

"He tried to overcome the mystery of his own neuro-untypical way of thinking by taking a strong and deep interest in other people," shared Duncan. "These moments are a strange opportunity to reflect on how extraordinary a life he had."

Celtic Festival and Gathering of the Clans

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- ♦ 30 - Gathering of the Clans
- ♦ 9 - Pipe Bands
- ♦ 30 - Scottish Heavy Athletes
- ♦ 30 - Celtic & Craft Vendors
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