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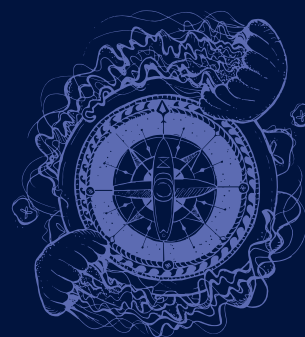
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Fáilte

Artificial Intelligence - Caraid no Nàmhaid?

Artificial Intelligence - or AI as it is commonly referred to - has been woven into our collective imaginations by science fiction authors for decades. Alan Turing, the renowned WWII Code Breaker, was the first to be credited with developing the idea that machines could "think". In fact, the Turing test is still used today to determine a machine's cognitive ability. Turing explored these concepts in the 1950s - almost seventy years ago.

Technology has evolved exponentially since then, and - whether we are aware of it or not - we now employ AI in many of our everyday tasks, from customer service and social media marketing to autonomous vehicles and health care monitoring. The benefits of AI look both plentiful and promising. And yet, that sense of innovative euphoria is quickly becoming overshadowed by concerns surrounding ethical practices.

Google is currently facing a lawsuit for unabashedly scraping data from millions of users without their consent - all with the goal of teaching and enhancing their AI products. In our globally-connected world, is it a realistic goal to protect publicly available content? Perhaps not. At the very least, however, there should be some sort of compensation.

Recently, the Canadian government implemented Bill C-18 (Online News Act) which requires payment be made to big media when their news links are used on big tech platforms. Meta (the parent company of Facebook and Instagram) and Google - goliaths in disseminating information - promptly punished Canadians by removing Canadian content from their sites. For independent publishers, this presents all sorts of challenges - ones that some will not recover from. While large, corporately-controlled media have the resources to survive, independent journalism relies upon a smaller community for support.

There is a lot of rhetoric in the conversations surrounding AI, with some proponents extolling the virtues and others prophesying doomsday. Stephen Hawking, the noted theoretical physicist, may have been the most succinct when he said "Success in creating effective AI could be the biggest event in the history of our civilization. Or the worst. We just don't know. So, we cannot know if we will be infinitely helped by AI, or ignored by it and side-lined, or conceivably destroyed by it." With Hawking's words ringing in our ears, we need to ensure that our acceptance of AI innovation is tempered with some healthy skepticism and understanding of the ethical dilemmas involved.

While it can be argued that AI has a useful role to play, it is crucial to remember that it is sentient beings who are the eyewitnesses to history - they write the magic that draws in and engages their audience. AI, in turn, then scrubs that database for ideas, artwork, music, and original content to produce - at best - a regurgitation, and - at worst - a quagmire of disinformation. Make no mistake, however - much of what is available for consumption today has been generated by AI.

We are real people at Celtic Life International - real people that work diligently on real stories every day. I am extremely proud of our small, dedicated team and everything that they accomplish with each issue, and I am so grateful to you, our loyal readers, for supporting those efforts.

Sláinte!

Siobhán L. Covington, Publisher

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James Acken

“Is andsain dorepedh a mberla asna hilberlaibh, ocus rotaiselbad do aenfir dib, conid a ainm-sen forta a mbelra-sa. Ba he in fer hisin .i. Goedel mac Angein, conid Gaedil de-side ... Is and iaramh doriaghladh in mberla-sa. I mba fearr iarum do cach berla ocus a nba leithiu ocus a mba caemu, is ed darepedh isinn Goedilc...”

“Then was selected their language out of the many languages, and it was attributed to one man of them so that it is his name which is upon the language. That man was Gaedel, son of Angen, so that Gaedil, Gaels, is derived from him...It was there accordingly that this language was regulated. What was best accordingly of every language and what was widest and finest was selected for Gaelic...” ~ Auraicept na nÉces pp. 76-79, ed. George Calder

These lines are taken from George Calder's edition and translation of the medieval text *Auraicept na nÉces* - the “fundamental principles of poetics.” This text formed the foundational learning of the bards in Ireland and Scotland until the 18th century and influenced intellectual activity there until the 19th. The passage notes how Gaelic was formed from the many languages that sprung up at the Tower of Babel. It also emphasizes how important language has been to Celtic culture.

What is a culture? *Ni h-ansae*: a culture is the collected choices a group of people who share a common mentality is about to make. The word itself is derived from the Latin verb *colere* which denotes the action of tending, venerating, and cultivating (a word that also comes from *colere*). Think of a garden or a religious site that must be cared for and consistently administered for it to thrive. The past participle of *colere* is *cultus* and gives us the word “cult,” however, culture is from *culturus*, the future participle.

It denotes those things we are about to tend and venerate, so when we speak of Celtic culture, we are referring to those things that those with a



Celtic mentality are about to tend and venerate: what clothes will they wear, what food will they eat, what songs will they sing, what stories will they tell, and what language will they speak?

These paragraphs are the first in a series of articles reflecting on Celtic culture. Defining this term in our modern context was originally linguistic, but quickly attracted the colonial and romantic sensibilities of the 19th century, compounded as they were by the racism and nationalism that infests so much of our postmodern landscape. Parsing and untangling these is not the purpose here, but simply moving past them to revel in the strange and often bizarre beauty of the traditions that lie just underneath the soil of contemporary life. Tales and poems, like *Fionn Mac Cumhaill* in his *Cave of Gold*, have lain dormant for generations.

For Celts, though, there is another cultural aspect that sometimes goes unrecognized: a connection to the land. During the medieval period, this shows up repeatedly as stories that explain how a given group of Celts, the tuath of a given area, were connected to the land by one or more ancestors. The *sídh*, a term that famously gives us “banshee”, describes not only the resident faeries, but ancestors, recent and distant who dwelt in the burial mounds - the word's original meaning.

My own first awakening to Celtic culture happened when I was 13 years old, travelling from London to Fort William in the hills between Loch Long and Loch Lomond. I had never felt so strong an emotional connection looking out over a landscape. Making sense of this intense experience would take three decades, seven years of which were spent working toward a doctoral degree in Medieval Studies, specifically researching the language and traditions of the Gael.

The challenge for us in North America is that this connection to the land is challenged by five centuries of colonization - for we are both now the colonizer and the colonized.

We silence others as we have been silenced. To engage again with the culture of our stories and our language is to potentially find both an authentic voice - as we look to the past - and one that is inclusive as we look to the future, not unlike the story of the Tower of Babel and how the subsequent formation of Gaelic from the other languages is inclusive.

How we connect to the land again is an ongoing question and one that is still to be answered; tangled as it is in the matrix of modern economics and politics that drove the very colonization that proved so disastrous for our Celtic forebears. There is no easy answer to this question, but finding our stories again is the first step, easily taken when you know where to look.

In the coming months, we will look at oral traditions from Nova Scotia and Appalachia, medieval myths from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, archaeology from the classical world, and how our modern ideas of the Celts took shape in the imagination of those who wrote about them.

James Acken is a philosopher, professor, and the Creative Director at Acken Studios. He lives in British Columbia.

www.ackenstudios.com



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one

Galician-Based Film

Rodrigo Sorogoyen's recent film, *As Bestas* (The Beasts), won several accolades at the Goya Awards in February. The movie tells the story of a French couple who clash with locals upon settling in rural Galicia. What may not be evident, however, is that the plot line is based on a murder that actually took place in Galicia's Santoalla village in 2010. The true story involves a Dutch couple - Martin and Margo Verfondern - who faced ongoing threats and harassment from the Rodríguez family. Martin was killed and, eventually, Juan Carlos Rodríguez was charged with the crime. The adaptation of the tragic tale has captivated audiences across the globe.

two

Celtic Language Map

A new map by the British organization Slow Ways highlights locations with Welsh and Gaelic names across Great Britain. Since the spring of 2020, Slow Ways has worked to create a network of walking routes around England, Scotland, and Wales. Its Journey Planner helps people map out long walking or cycling routes, and now features an updated version that includes native Scottish, Gaelic, and Welsh place names. Avid explorers are hopeful that future maps will also eventually include the Scots language, as well as the Cornish language.

three

Lobster Fishery Tartan

A museum employee on the south shore of Nova Scotia has designed a tartan to honour the lobster fishing industry in Atlantic Canada and the New England region of the United States. Since the Nova Scotia tartan and Barrington Municipality tartan already exist, Linda Symonds of the Barrington Woolen Mill Museum wanted to create something with more widespread significance. Her design includes red (to represent the lobster), as well as three shades of blue to represent the varying colours of the ocean. The lobster fishery tartan was recently launched by the Cape Sable Historical Society in Barrington.

four

Haggis Champion

A Scottish butcher recently achieved culinary distinction using a family recipe that won the Haggis World Championship. Laura Black, who owns Cooper Quality Butcher in North Lanarkshire, finished first among almost 70 other entrants with her perfected 40-year-old family recipe. Scottish Craft Butchers hosted the event in Perth and, despite fierce competition, judges were duly impressed by Black's haggis. Even as she took the top prize home, Black was mum on the details of her recipe, divulging only that her success is derived from fresh ingredients and a special spice combo.

five

Non-Alcoholic Guinness

Diageo, the parent company of the Guinness brand, is investing in a non-alcoholic version of its beer. Guinness 0.0 made its debut in Ireland in 2021 and has become a popular choice for people who want to enjoy the social and cultural aspects of an Irish pub without the booze. In order to satisfy Guinness-loving teetotalers, Diageo has spent €25 million on new tanks as well as a new building in order to increase production. The updated equipment at the St. James's Gate Brewery is expected to ramp up the Guinness 0.0 output by 300 percent to keep up with consumer demand.

six

Cornish Paradise

One Cornish island boasts a huge population despite having only two human residents. How is that possible? Consider that most of its numerous inhabitants are birds, sheep, and seals; as well as a plethora of flora and fauna, and the statistic makes sense. Sisters Babs and Evelyn Atkins purchased Looe Island in 1965 and eventually left the land to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. Today, Claire Lewis and her partner, Jon Ross - residents of Looe Island for almost two decades - serve as trusted caretakers, monitoring species and hosting a small number of visitors. Tourists can visit via an official boat during certain times of the year only, however, Lewis and Ross remain primarily dedicated to protecting wildlife and minimizing any impact on the environment.

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

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Judy Backus

Fifteen years ago, Judy Backus created the charity Hidden Help aimed at assisting those in need of a fresh start at transitional points in their lives. Based out of a small community in Cornwall, Backus began her initiative managing mostly on her own by delivering furniture to shelters and transition houses from the back of her van. In those early days, she was able to provide help to only one or two people a month. Today, Hidden Help is a registered charity with a storage warehouse in Bissos and a small but steady number of volunteers that allow Backus to keep her organization, and the disadvantaged, afloat. With donations received primarily from the local community, items are cleaned and upcycled for those who could not otherwise afford them. "All of the stories of people I have helped have stayed with me," she told Cornwall Live recently. "But I'd say the one that stuck with me the most was recently, when we went down to a flat in Palmouth where a disabled man had nothing. He'd been put in that flat the night before and was lying on a solid concrete floor. It was terrible, so we got some carpet tiles to lay down and helped him get food and other furniture." Backus and her team get to work once they've received referrals from social services representing a wide range of individuals and families in need. Whether elderly, disabled, fleeing domestic violence, or recently released from prison, all are eligible for assistance from Hidden Help which currently receives an estimated 50 referrals per week.



Project Cossack

An Irish horse breeder, along with a group of volunteers, is helping horses in Ukraine. Many horses have become displaced, injured, or have died of starvation during the war. A lack of veterinary services and medical equipment has also severely impacted equine welfare. To combat the problem, John O'Connor of County Tipperary recently launched Project Cossack. The group has been raising money via a GoFundMe page and as of August, has reached more than €5,000 of its €20,000 goal. "In addition to delivering these much-needed veterinary medicines to Kyiv, we will make the most of our journey by traveling to the front lines to help with the evacuation of people," reads the fundraiser description. "To escape the worst-hit areas of the war, the most vulnerable Ukrainians are reliant on volunteers using any vehicles they can find to ferry people to safety." The Project Cossack team initially arrived in Kyiv in February, via two four-by-four vehicles with medicine, first aid materials, and food supplements in tow. They made it to the Kyiv Hippodrome, where 250 horses were housed. The volunteers also brought non-perishable food items for the horses' caretakers. "Some of those things I can't do anything about but the things that I can – which is keeping the horses minded – that's what I'm trying to do," O'Connor told Tiff FM earlier this year. "To try and give people one less thing to worry about."



Mo Alamgir

The Muslim Council of Wales (MCW) is a Cardiff-based non-profit which aims to improve the lives of Muslim people across the country. As a volunteer for the MCW, 41-year-old Mo Alamgir has led multiple community projects including a program called iLEAD, which helps young adults develop skills, as well as enhance their understanding of Islam. He also volunteers with the Dar Ul Isra Mosque, having organized events that welcome the non-Muslim community, encouraging people to embrace their differences. Additionally, last year, Alamgir helped put together the first career fair in Wales specifically developed to assist Black and Minority Ethnic job seekers. This past spring, Alamgir's volunteer efforts were recognized by Their Majesties The King and The Queen Consort through the Coronation Champions Awards. "I am very humbled to become a Coronation Champion and very grateful to have been nominated. As a Muslim, volunteering is something that is deeply ingrained in us – we serve our God by serving our community," Alamgir said at the time. "It is so important to me that Black and Minority Ethnic communities have the same access as their white counterparts, and I want to see a Wales that is representative across all sectors. To do this we need impactful social change. That can only be achieved by volunteers like me and countless others at a grassroots level who truly understand the community and its needs." Alamgir was among 500 volunteers invited to attend a Coronation Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

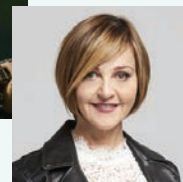
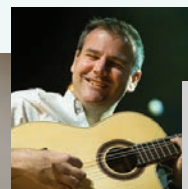
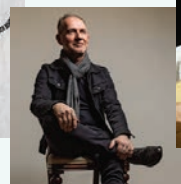
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Celtic Colours International Festival

October 6 - 14, 2023, Cape Breton, NS

www.celticcolours.ca

The 27th annual Celtic Colours International Festival, presented by TD Bank, opens on Friday, October 6 at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre in Cape Breton, before concluding on Saturday, October 14 with Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy and friends taking the stage at Centre 200 in Sydney. In addition to the festival's 49 concerts, there are more than 200 community cultural experiences happening in every corner of beautiful Cape Breton Island, providing many opportunities to explore the region's unique culture. This year's performers include Blazin' Fiddles, Le Vent du Nord, John Doyle, Béla Fleck, Allan MacDonald, Maggie MacInnes, Màiri Chaimbeul, Cathy Ann MacPhee, and Tim Edey. Artists playing at Celtic Colours for the first time in 2023 include Iarla Ó Lionáird, Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, Diane Cannon, VRi, and Ruth Keggin and Rachel Hair. Plenty of Cape Bretoners will also be on hand to celebrate the Island's roots including J.P. Cormier, Mary Jane Lamond, Howie MacDonald, Heather Rankin, Dwayne Côté, Brenda Stubbert, Béalach, and more.



ReJigged Festival

October 19 - 22, 2023 - Halifax, NS

www.rejiggedfestival.com

This fall, ReJigged Festival returns for its 14th annual celebration of Celtic music and dance, captivating audiences from October 19-22 at the historic St. Andrew's Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This year's lineup showcases artists who are reshaping the landscape of traditional arts and promises an unforgettable experience, both in-person and online. Rooted in the rich Celtic musical heritage, ReJigged embraces contemporary expressions, making it a unique cultural event. Attendees from all over the world can participate no matter where they are, thanks to our mix of in-person and online concerts and workshops. Renowned performers lead workshops that encourage creative exploration while preserving the essence of Celtic music and dance. From percussive dance virtuoso Nic Gareiss and his collaborator Jake Blount - an award-winning interpreter of Black folk music - to dancer/musician Caitlín Nic Gabhann and fiddle master Ciarán Ó Maonaigh, ReJigged offers something for everyone. Audiences will also enjoy captivating performances by Tim Edey, 6 Hearts (featuring Jake Charron, Tim Chiasson, Emmanuelle LeBlanc, and Pascal Miousse) and many more.



Stone Mountain Highland Games

October 21 & 22, 2023 - Atlanta, GA

www.smhg.org

The Stone Mountain Highland Games are thrilled to welcome guests and fellow clansmen back to this year's 51st anniversary gathering and festival. Visitors will enjoy a unique and authentic Scottish experience throughout the course of the weekend, which will include the opening ceremonies, live musical concerts, Highland games athletics, Highland dance competitions, as well as pipe and fiddle competitions. Also on tap are lectures on history and heritage, Clan tents, a dance gala, a massed band performance, a Parade of Tartans, a Kirk in the Woods, and much more. In addition, attendees are invited to explore an array of wares and fares from a variety of vendors. The wee ones will be sure to keep engaged and entertained with on-site games and activities. A fun, family-friendly event that showcases Southern hospitality, the annual gathering is open to folks of all ages and backgrounds. All are encouraged to wear tartan!



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Salado Scottish Gathering & Highland Games

November 10 - 12, 2023 - Salado, TX

www.saladoscottishfestival.com

On November 12, 1961, people from across the USA with a shared Scottish ancestry came together in Salado, Texas, for the First Gathering of All Scottish Clans. More than a thousand people attended those first festivities, waving tartan banners bearing the names of each clan. Since then, Scots have gathered here each November to celebrate their heritage and to honor the history and traditions of Scotland. Sponsored by Salado Museum and College Park, the 3-day event is the oldest Scottish festival in Texas and a major annual fundraiser for the museum. This year, the Gathering kicks off with a Calling of the Clans on Friday night by the banks of Salado Creek - a solemn, torchlit ceremony recreating the coming together of the ancient Scottish clans in 1314 at Bannockburn. On Saturday, attendees can take in the Clans 'n Bands Parade through the streets of Salado and, on Sunday, the festival hosts a traditional Kirkin' o' the Tartan on the festival grounds. Other weekend events include pipes and drums, Highland dance and Scottish athletics competitions, educational history lectures with fiddle and song, a Clan Village - featuring more than 40 clan tents - a Tartan Dinner, live Celtic music, a Bonniest Knees contest, Pet Costume and Shortbread contests, a Celtic marketplace. And, of course, men in kilts everywhere!

FESTIVAL FOCUS



Panama City Beach Scottish Festival

March 2, 2024 - Panama City Beach, FL

www.pcbsscottishfestival.org

The popular Panama City Beach Scottish Festival invites Celtic families and visitors from across North America and around the world to celebrate its 30th Anniversary Presentation on March 2nd in 2024! Organized by the Celtic Heritage Alliance, the annual gathering is the largest and longest running Scottish Festival in northwest Florida, blending the southern USA sunshine, beach, golf and sport fishing, as well as the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of Scotland! Highlights for the 2024 festival include award-winning music from the bands Celtica Nova and Celtic Conundrum, four of the region's best Pipes and Drums bands, Highland dancers, Axe throwing competition, Border Collie demonstrations herding sheep and ducks, children's activities and participation in Highland games, and of course, the ever-popular adult Highland Games Athletic competitions. Visitors are invited to check out one of the many vendor booths for Celtic-inspired wares, food and fares, the Clan's Village, and Whisky Tastings, where attendees can sample 5 Premium Single Malt Scotch drams, learn about the fine art of distilling whisky, and exploring the history of Scotland's "Water of the Gods!"



St. Augustine Celtic Music & Heritage Festival

March 9 & 10, 2024 - St. Augustine, FL

www.celticstaugustine.com

Each year, the St. Augustine Celtic Music & Heritage Festival celebrates America's oldest Celtic city, founded in 1565 by Celts from the Celtic Nation of northern Spain. The city boasts America's first Irish priest, Father Ricardo Artur, who - in 1601 - led the world's first St. Patrick procession, shooting off cannons and marching in the streets. Fittingly, over 400 years later, the 2024 festival kicks off with the rousing St. Patrick parade in the downtown's historic core. After the parade, the gathering moves to the city's events field, with two full days of live musical performances from several national and international Celtic bands and other entertainment. Guests will also enjoy the St. Augustine Highland Games - featuring both professional and amateur athletes - a whiskey tasting, workshops, lectures, artisan wares and fares, and much more - all in America's oldest Celtic city!



Australian Celtic Festival

May 2 - 5, 2024 - Glen Innes, NSW, Australia

www.australiancelticfestival.com

Those seeking a unique and exciting experience need only visit Glen Innes Highlands, Down Under, next May. Celebrating its 32nd year, the Australian Celtic Festival will be highlighting the Celtic Nations of Ireland and the Isle of Man in 2024 at the Australian Standing Stones, National Celtic monument, in picturesque Glen Innes, New South Wales - a unique part of the country that celebrates a rich Celtic heritage and four distinct seasons. The gathering will showcase local, national, and international performers, along with honoured guests, with an action-packed program of activities and entertainment including pipe bands, the colour and costume of re-enactors, the beauty of Celtic Dance, and loads of live music, including an array of instrumental groups at a variety of venues across the area. In addition, the four-day agenda features Highland Games, a gathering of the Clans, official ceremonies, a Celtic Symposium, the Australian Celtic Cultural Awards, Celtic kids' activities, artisans, food vendors, food and drink stalls and much more!

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John Kennedy

One Irish American man gets animated



Cartoonist John Kennedy had artistic ambitions ever since he was “knee-high.”

He first indulged these aspirations by copying his childhood comic books, and later entering every art contest he could find. He also sent his work to local media outlets with the hope that it might be published. His persistence finally paid off when he received a Blue Peter badge - an award courtesy of the BBC children’s show Blue Peter. Later, Strabane Lifford Notes published his first cartoon strip. And that was only the beginning.

After graduating from art school at the University of Ulster in 1990, Kennedy launched his career as a freelance cartoonist.

“I spent a lot of time knocking on doors and advertising my existence in local newspapers and magazines. Thanks to the internet, I can now reach a worldwide audience.”

The Irish Herald, The Daily Mirror, The Sunday Journal, Channel 4 Magazine, and The Independent, are only a sampling of some of the outlets that publish his work. In addition, he has held 22 art exhibitions across Ireland, the United States, and Canada. His recent art exhibition, Fame in a Frame, showcased his drawings of famous musicians. A lifelong music fan, bands and singers feature prominently in much of his current work.

“This is my dream job. Every time I sit at my desk, I am consumed by the creative energy that surrounds me. I have no idea where it comes from, but hey, let the magic continue.”

Kennedy currently resides in Canada, but he was born in the town of Omagh, Northern Ireland. He spent his youth in Strabane and much of his adulthood in Belfast. Having lived most of his life in Northern Ireland, he is familiar with “The Troubles” that impacted the region for over three decades. “Thankfully, we survived with only mental scars. My art is now my greatest therapy.”

Kennedy sells his original art prints online. Additionally, he receives commissions from clients via his website and social media.

“Being commissioned is the biggest compliment,” he explains. “I never get tired of seeing my work published or hanging on someone’s wall. Not only does it help bolster my portfolio, but it is gratifying to think that my hard work is appreciated.”

Having developed and refined his artistic style over the last 30 years, he prides himself on applying a unique approach to

his work. “I have never missed a deadline,” he adds. And while, like most of his trade, Kennedy has his particular style, he creates art to meet the needs of each specific client.

In the last year, he has expanded his online store inventory to include t-shirts, hoodies, and mugs. While sales were initially slow, they have since picked up with the introduction of his line “Irish Stuff” which has steadily gained popularity.

“Cartooning will always be my focus, but I also like the idea of developing and expanding my Irish Stuff clothing label. You never know; maybe a marketing company will help me take Irish Stuff to the next level.”

In the meantime, he is happy to keep drawing.

“There is a lot of competition in my field, so the key is to stay relevant. Also, when the workload is down, I simply continue developing new ideas. One must continuously promote oneself to keep the work fresh in the minds of current and potential clients.”

Although much of his networking happens online, Kennedy remains passionate about exhibiting his work. “It is the perfect opportunity to have that personal connection with current clients and introduce myself to new ones,” he says.

His next show, A Full Irish, is scheduled for New York next year.

www.johnkennedycartoons.com

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The Ship Hector

One organization is working to restore a piece of Nova Scotia's history



A replica of the Hector - a vessel known for bringing some of the first Scottish settlers to Canada - was originally launched in 2000 by the Town of Pictou in northern Nova Scotia. The ship and surrounding site have since attracted history buffs and those looking to trace their Scottish heritage. In 2010, the Hector Quay Society took on ownership of the replica as well as the Heritage Quay buildings, including the Interpretive Centre. The Hector Quay Society later merged with the Ship Hector Foundation and together became the Ship Hector Society.

In 2020, the non-profit initiated the Charting Our Course campaign to restore the Hector replica. The campaign is also raising money for improvements to the Interpretive Centre, including the addition of digital exhibits. Every year, the Hector Heritage Quay welcomes tourists from across Canada, the United States and Europe.

"Even though it is located in Pictou, 85 per cent of our visitation comes from outside of the province," says Darlene MacDonald, a member of the Ship Hector Board of Directors. "It was quite eye-opening, I think, for a lot of different funders to see the impact of the site."

On Sept. 15, 1773, a Scottish ship with 189 passengers made landfall in Pictou, N.S.

Although there were already a few existing small settlements in Nova Scotia, the Hector was the first ship to sail directly to the province from Scotland. "These were Scottish people who made that choice and paid their fare to come and develop a new community in Nova Scotia," says MacDonald. "They came for a new life and a new land."

Not everyone who boarded the ship in Ullapool made it to Pictou, however. The voyage, originally intended to be six weeks long, took 11 weeks due to stormy weather. Food ran out and conditions were gruelling. Eighteen passengers - mostly children - died due to illnesses such as smallpox and dysentery.

"We can't even begin to understand how hard that must have been," shares MacDonald, noting that the Hector was originally a cargo vessel. It was already worse for wear by the time it left Scotland. "It would have been horrendous," she adds.

Those who did survive the brutal journey would go on to have a lasting impact on the land and its culture, which is exactly what the Ship Hector Society wishes to honour.

The Society also acknowledges the connection between the Scottish settlers and the Indigenous people of the area.

MacDonald points out that, due to a lack of written history, little can be definitively concluded about the relationship between the Mi'kmaq and the Hector settlers. However, the Society has been working with Pictou Landing First Nations to put together a realistic version of what it might have looked like.

"The Mi'kmaq community did help the Hector settlers," notes MacDonald. "I mean, they arrived here in mid-September, so they

did help them through the first winter. They probably helped feed them because they would have been in dire straits. They wouldn't have had time to put in any crop or anything, coming as late as they did."

Today, Pictou is known as "the birthplace of New Scotland." This September marks the 250th anniversary of the Ship Hector's arrival, and, as such, the Ship Hector Society has put together a weekend of events from Sept. 15-17.

Both Gaelic and Indigenous cultures will be prominently featured. The event is also slated to include a sailing regatta, an original play, a Cèilidh, and more.

The Ship Hector Society had hoped to have the Hector replica fully restored in time for the celebration, but "due to all the roadblocks we've hit along the way," MacDonald says the vessel won't be prepared to sail until next year. That said, the ship will still be available for visitors to board and tour - it just won't be fully operational yet. It is believed that once the Hector is complete, it will be one of the only tall ships in Canada run by solar power.

"We knew we needed to make the site as sustainable as possible," says MacDonald.

"Once our project manager started looking into it, he realized that it was a distinct possibility to rely on solar panels."

The Charting Our Course fundraiser is ongoing with the Hector to officially relaunch once the outfitting components and underwater systems are in place. Visitors may then tour the harbour aboard the historic replica on a temporal journey through both past and present.

www.shiphector.ca

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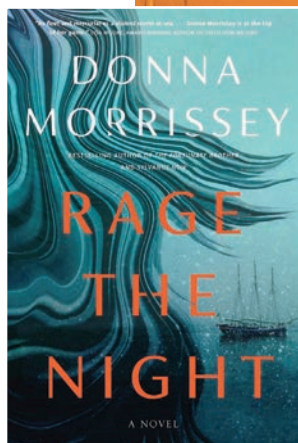
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Donna Morrissey

Donna Morrissey's new book haunted her for years



It has been a little over two years since Celtic Life International last spoke with Canadian author Donna Morrissey. During that time, the award-winning scribe has kept her pedal to the metal as a driving force in Canadian literature.

"Oh, I've been busy," she laughs over the phone from her home in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Busy might be an understatement. Hot on the heels of her very successful memoir, *Pluck* (2021), Morrissey wasted no time getting back to work. Her latest effort - a novel titled *Rage By Night* - is one of the most significant creative undertakings that she has taken on to date.

Unlike some of her previous works of fiction which were influenced by her own family history, *Rage By Night* tells the tale of the 1914 Newfoundland Sealing Disaster when two separate but concurrent tragedies took place at sea during a fierce spring blizzard. Men aboard the SS Southern Cross and the SS Newfoundland were left stranded on ice, with many never making it home.

Morrissey explains that finding a point of entry into this momentous moment in Newfoundland/Labrador's history was no easy task.

"It was a book I wanted to write when I first started writing - before I even knew what writing was really - but I didn't have a clue. I had no idea what I was doing, and it felt so daunting. I simply put it on the back burner for a long time. Now, seven books later, it felt like the time was right."

She notes that piecing together the new

narrative felt like walking on sacred ground.

"It is a story that has never been fictionalized, and it is still a story that is very sensitive. It was such a cruel, cruel tragedy. I was a little unsure of going into it as fiction, but these stories find you. It wanted to be brought out into the world."

Morrissey was pushed into action after reading Gary Collins' non-fiction account of the SS Newfoundland, *Left to Die*. In that book's prologue, Collins describes a conversation with one of the tragedy's last survivors.

"He said, 'Write our stories, don't let our story die,'" Morrissey recites. "That gave me permission to go ahead and write this story."

Around the same time, two other stories, recounted by her father, piqued her interest.

"These stories were circling in my mind and were equally haunting."

The first story took place out on the ice, late at night; with the sudden appearance of a "weather light" - an atmospheric phenomenon where lights seem to stretch from soil to sky. The second story involves her uncle who, after losing his mother, was placed into an orphanage; something, says Morrissey, that you simply didn't do in the area at that time.

"For some reason, these three stories just circled around - like spinning plates in my head..."

"And then one day, I was in a graveyard, and I saw a headstone of a woman and child under the one headstone, but there wasn't a name. I came home with that image in the back of my mind, and the story unfolded soon after."

Bringing the three pieces of inspiration together took time. As the author kept writing, however, the story revealed its main character: Rowan, a 20-year-old man who believes himself an orphan and is eager to uncover the truths from his past.

The hard work paid off. The new novel is by turns, both intimate and haunting and is a beautiful reflection on the journey we are invited to take in order to truly understand ourselves.

"The story is about Rowan and his search for identity, and that even in these dire moments of hell, there is a light that burns in all of us - and that light is waiting to shine, waiting to be kindled."

Although it is still early days, the response from first readers has been overwhelmingly positive.

Never one to sit still for too long, however, Morrissey is already working on her next project - a return, of sorts, to her roots.

"It is a memoir of my father, my brothers, and my sisters and their stories. I am not quite sure yet what that will shape itself to be, but it will be a different kettle of fish for sure."

www.donnamorrissey.org

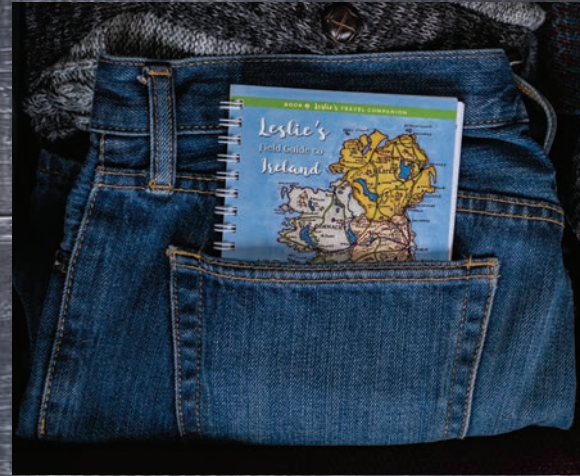
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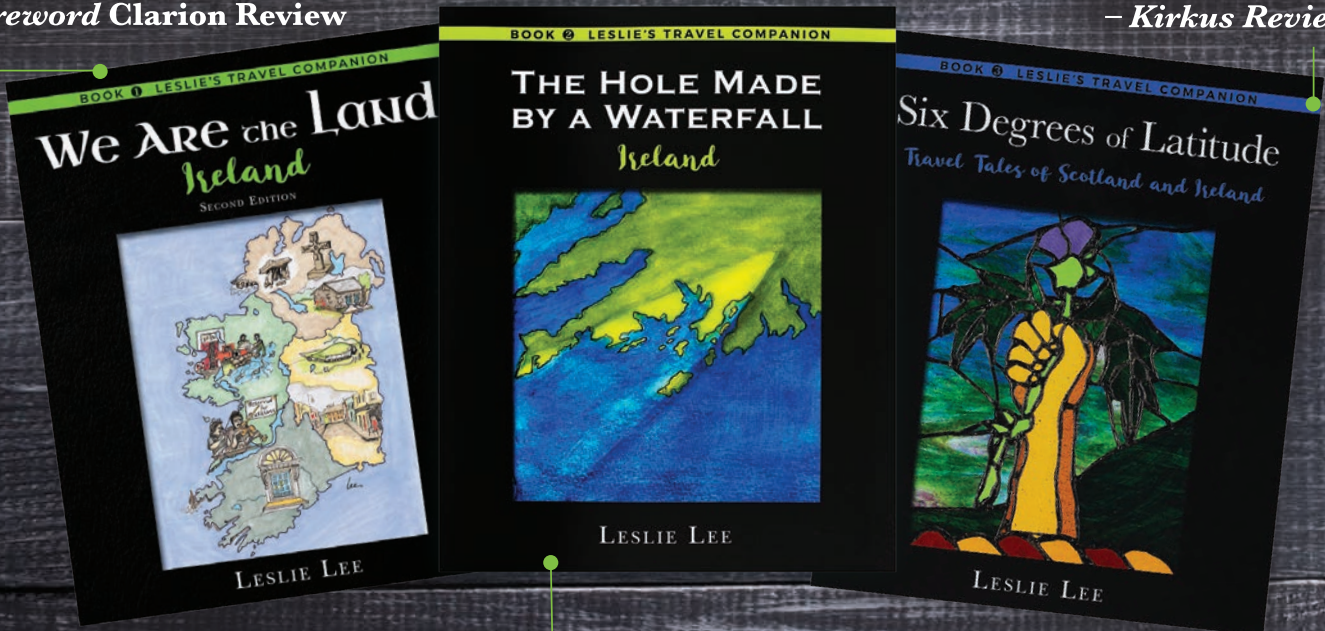
CELTIC TRAVEL TRILOGY

"We Are the Land is a unique and evocative Irish travelogue. It's an inspiring guide for making the most of any trip."

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– Kirkus Reviews



"Abundant sketches are used to depict both large and small details of the trips, from maps of visited locations to crumbling castles, pub musicians, and regional dishes. These illustrations are whimsical complements to Lee's enchanting descriptions of dramatic landscapes, simple and extravagant meals, and spontaneous interactions with local people." *– Foreword Clarion Review*

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A close-up portrait of Emma Donoghue, a woman with light brown hair and blue eyes, smiling slightly. She is wearing a mustard yellow jacket. The background is a grey, textured wall.

*Award-winning Irish-Canadian author Emma Donoghue is one of Canada's most significant contemporary writers. Recently she spoke with Celtic Life International Managing Editor Caitlyn Elizabeth Mearns about her love of storytelling and her new book, *Learned By Heart*.*

Emma Donoghue

The last time we checked in with you would have been when *The Wonder* was first published. How have things been since then?

Oh, superb! With *The Wonder* there was a very satisfying trajectory of having the book come out, and then working on the film, and then having the film released. When you are in the book world, you tend to think the “book world” is everything. But whenever you have a film, you realize that there are so many people who don’t even look at the book and that it is all about the film. You get to reach an entirely new group of people, but with the same story.

Impressively, Netflix and Florence Pugh are behind your recent productions. How has the experience played out for you?

Films are not easy to make - so many of them don’t even make it to an actual screen. Most of my projects have never made it to the big screen. So, when one finally does, it improves prospects for all one’s books as well. It gets one’s name out there. The films help the books and vice versa.

Your writing is widely admired and recognized for its variety. Titles range from *The Wonder* and *Room*, to *Kissing the Witch*. Can you explain the delightfully wide spectrum of characters and storylines?

Ha! I know what you mean. I am not sure that if you put all my friends together in a convention center that they would necessarily have that much in common. I like really plunging into a different world every time, one that smells different and has a different flavor.

What was it that first got you interested in writing, or plunging into these different worlds?

I was a big reader as a child. My dad was a literary critic, and my mom was an English teacher, so they just revered books. I also had a very helpful babysitter. I was really young, maybe three or four, and this babysitter born in Ireland who we call a ‘spoiled’



priest, because he had dropped out of the seminary, read me the entire Narnia cycle. Everyone read the Narnia books, but there was something about having someone read me the full set of books consecutively, making it this very long form narrative.

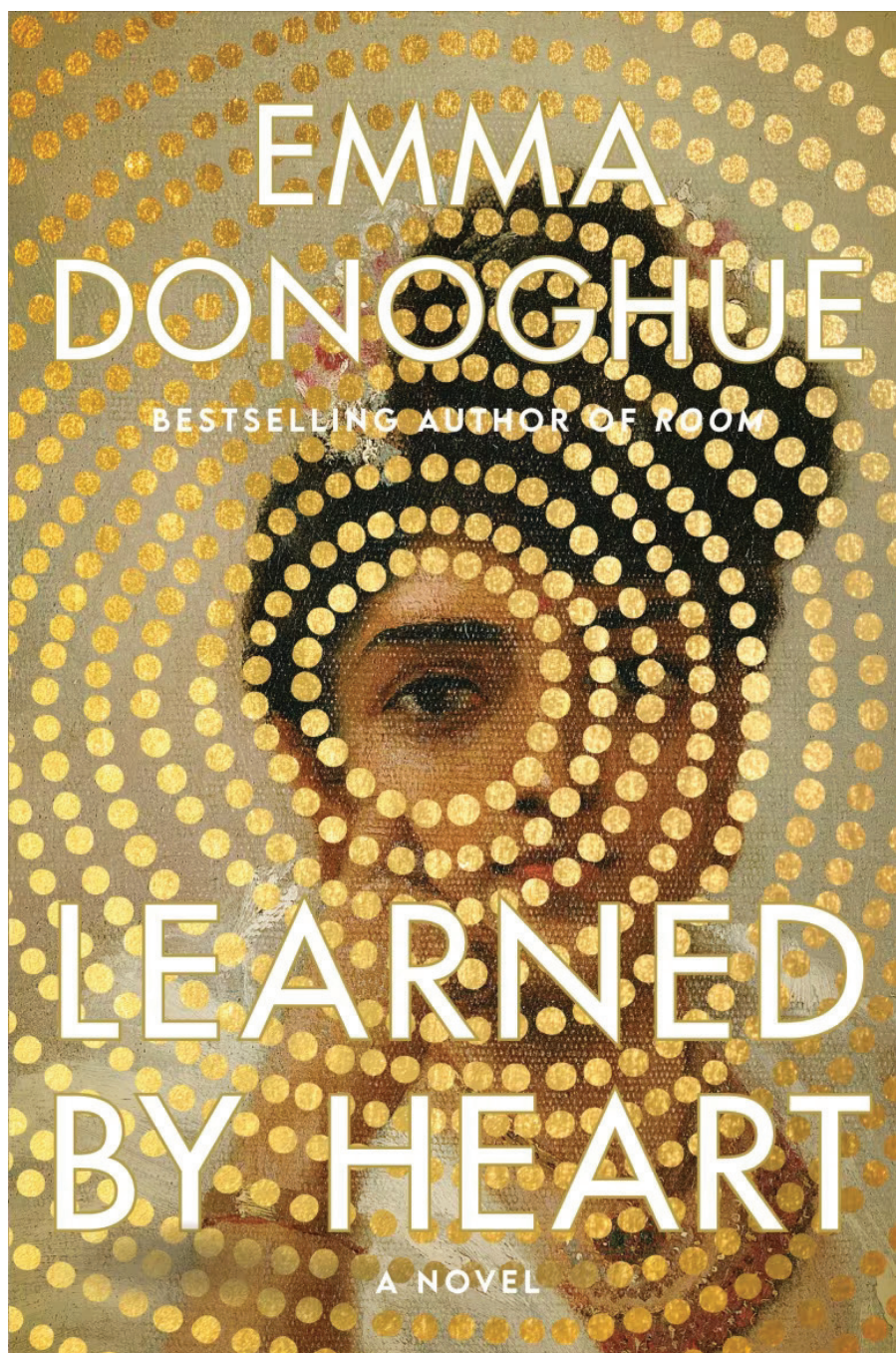
Do you still enjoy storytelling for those same reasons?

Same reasons, I would say. Like many authors, I began with material I knew from experience. In my case, however, I ran out of that very quickly. But I realized these don’t have to be my own stories - they can

be universal stories. With my first historical novel I realized that I particularly enjoy the thrill of immersing myself in a new time and place.

You do such an interesting job of finding and conveying elements that could be a footnote in history, and bringing them back to life for readers. What is your process for choosing these historical characters?

I come across scores of them. People write



What was the most interesting thing you learned during the process of writing *Learned by Heart*?

One interesting thing is Eliza's social life. You can tell by the letters, or when people mention her, or even just by having enrolled at this boarding school, that she comes across as high-status. She's got fortune in the bank. She may be an orphan, but so are plenty of other girls. And nobody's saying a word about the color of her skin. She referred to herself once as a "young lady of colour" - that's not a modern phrase; that is her phrase. But that is only once in the entire record. And then there is a moment when she gets in a quarrel, and suddenly, you get this little rash of letters vilifying her in the most racist language. I thought, "Did everyone have all this racist hostility that they were just keeping under the surface and being polite about until the moment when Eliza first put a foot wrong?" It made me think about what we now call micro-aggressions. I kept thinking about Eliza walking the streets of New York beautifully dressed, but hers is the only brown face.

Was there a lot of research involved?

There was. It had to be very communal. There was only a handful of people working on each aspect. The code breaking group alone decoded over 100 letters. I literally couldn't have done this project without them.

What has the response been like from some of the early readers?

It seems to be touching people very strongly. People are responding to the love story, for which I am glad. I don't want it to be read as just a biographical novel. What I really want is for people to care about the characters.

What is next on your creative agenda?

I am currently at work on a few ongoing theater projects, and - of course - writing the next novel!

www.emmadonoghue.com

to me and say, "Oh, my aunt was in the workhouse, and she was interesting." Nine out of 10 of these people I come across aren't right for me. Their stories may be too clear already, or maybe a biography has handled the matter perfectly. Perhaps it is just all too one-note. I need there to be some kind of twist.

Your new book, *Learned by Heart*, is another example of your compelling characters with Anne Lister and Eliza Raine. What compelled you to write

this story now?

I began by doing a play about Anne Lister 30 years ago now - when she was in her 20s and jumping in with all these different girlfriends. I was always intrigued by how she began. I knew she fell in love with this one girl at boarding school. I was always deeply intrigued by this love affair at school. They totally lit up each other's lives when they met and when they fell in love. I always thought that people would rush to write about this, so I waited. Eventually I thought that I would have a go myself, and this is my particular version of their story.

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Ireland's foremost trad band *The High Kings*, emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic with a new attitude, a new album, and a new tour. Recently, *Celtic Life International* Managing Editor Chris Muise chatted with the band's frontman, Darren Holden.

Tell our readers a bit about your upbringing, your Celtic background, and how you got into music.

I was born and raised in a little village in the southeast of Ireland called Mooncoin, in County Kilkenny. I started performing music in public at around the age of 11, playing the church organ in our local village every Sunday for various weddings and funerals. Then I joined the local céilidh band after that. I also started performing rockabilly music all over Ireland, at the age of 15, with a band called Breakaway. We were kind of styled on The Stray Cats - Elvis, Buddy Holly, and all that kind of stuff from the '50s. I was touring for a while and then started my own band in the early 1990s, entering the Eurosong competitions a couple of times. I was managed by a guy named Louis Walsh then, who managed bands like Boyzone and Westlife. I was put out there as a bit of a teen idol - a sort of Donny Osmond-type artist in the mid-90s; and I had various top ten hits around Europe, Ireland, Southeast Asia, and Australia. I wasn't 100 per cent comfortable with that. Let's say, the music was second to the image. I took a bit of a breather from the industry in the late 1990s and fell in love with my roots and the Irish music of my upbringing that I had inherited from my parents. I entered back into the

business through a show called Rhythm of the Dance in 1999, which was one of the first spinoff shows from Riverdance. I was featured as lead vocalist, and I did that for about ten months all over Europe and

Scandinavia. I took another break in 2007. I was living in Florida when I got a call from my old buddy Brian Dunphy, who is a fellow High King. He said, "Your name has come up in regard to a new ballad group that has



been put together by EMI. Expect a phone call.” That phone call came, and I have been a High King for the last 15 years, traveling all over the world and loving every minute of it. That’s it, in a nutshell.

Skiping ahead a bit, your new album is your eighth, correct?

Yeah, it’s the sixth studio album and the first all-original album. Most of them were all covers. There was one album we released about ten years ago, called Friends for Life, where I wrote maybe four songs on that. We wanted to do something different and daring with this one. We were out there performing all these older Irish classics that we do in our own style, obviously - but we wanted to put something out there that was a lot different than what we had done before. As bad as the lockdown and the pandemic were for the music industry, it gave us time to think and to reach out to people in our position who were also off the road at the time. The two guys, Danny and Glen from The Script - who are an enormously successful Irish band - were just chit-chatting with us one day, and Glen, the drummer, said to me, ‘We’ve written a song for you guys. We didn’t know whether to send it or not.’ So I told them to send it along and I would give it a listen. And I just couldn’t speak. I had to listen four or five times before I could respond to him. I thought it was phenomenal. The song is called “Chasing Rainbows,” and for us, we saw that this could be a real reinvention and re-energizing of the band. So, we recorded it and we loved it. Our management was really excited by it. Then we had bands like Kodaline come along with another song, which became the title track, “The Road Not Taken.” I reached out to Sharon Corr from The Corrs, who is a very good friend of mine. We put together this really cool instrumental piece that came together so fast, called, “Go with the Flow.” We had all these songs coming in, and then I started to write in the vein of what was happening in the world, as well. I have about five co-writes and solo writes on the album, which is a first for me. The finished product felt very strong.

There is quite a range to the recording.

There is a little bit of everything on there. The album opens with “Connemara Bay,” which is upbeat and fun, and then you have some of the other stuff like “Son of

THE highkings

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



Ireland,” that’s in there as a big dramatic number, and “The Big Fella,” is in the same vein. Meanwhile, “A Song for Kelly,” is more personal.

It’s clearly very personal. What’s the story behind it?

Last summer, my father got rather sick very suddenly. He went into hospital and unfortunately, he stayed there until we lost him in October. I’m very close to my dad, and I was in a very bad emotional way. A good friend of mine was in touch with me a lot during that time and he told me a story about his daughter who was born 17 years previously, but she didn’t survive. She was very young, and he never got the chance to hold her or get to know her. It was quite heartbreaking. Every single year, he goes to her grave and leaves a teddy bear on her headstone. That stayed in my head and I never let go of it. About a week later, I woke up and that song just literally flowed out of the pen as I sat by my piano and wrote the melody and the lyrics. I felt there was something special about it. The band loved it.

Everybody involved with the project loved it. It had to go on the album.

How do you feel now that the album is out?

I can’t tell you how proud I am of this. It was a definite risk that we took that could have backfired. We didn’t know what was going to happen. But I think the music speaks for itself. The material is stronger than we would have even anticipated before we got to the studio. We had some great production on it and great insights into how far we should push it without pushing too far. I love it. It’s my favourite Kings album. The buzz within the industry is that we need to do more of this now and expand on that. We’ve had some cool reviews and received correspondence from some international artists asking if we’re open to working with them. So that may be the next thing we will do. We’ll just have to see when we get back to the studio again. That’s the road we are on now.

www.thehighkings.com

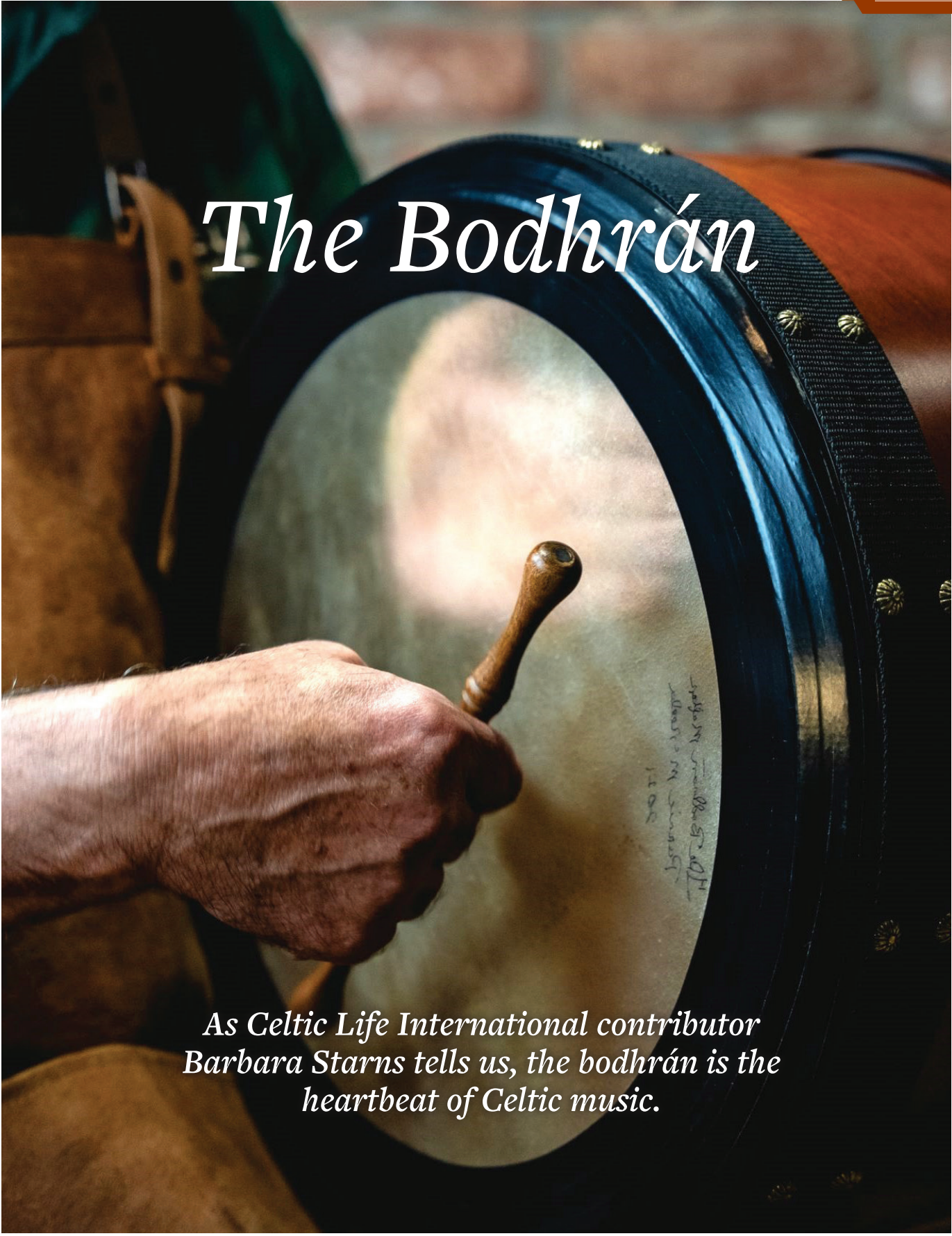


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The Bodhrán

*As Celtic Life International contributor
Barbara Starns tells us, the bodhrán is the
heartbeat of Celtic music.*



Peadar Mercier of The Chieftains once said of famed Irish composer Sean O' Riada playing the bodhrán:

'I think he liked the rhythm of it, he liked the compelling attraction of it, and he played it with great skill.... he led the group with the bodhrán and that is the one and only time the bodhrán took pride of place over the total ensemble.'

O' Riada was classically trained and formed the folk group Ceoltoiri Chualann. He retrieved the bodhrán from history and restored its presence in Irish music during

the 1960s, placing it as a rhythm tool underneath melody to keep time and signal the end of a phrase or a transition in play.

For the uninitiated, the bodhrán is a frame drum with a skin head that is played with the hand or a cipin (tipper/beater). The other hand is placed at the back of the skin for tonal change. Today, the bodhrán continues to hold attraction for those who wish to participate in Irish music or simply connect to their Irish heritage.

The bodhrán's place within Irish culture

goes beyond written or verbal history to one of the most ancient forms of communication – sound.

In his article 'Different Drums, Same Groove' (2015), Tyler Stark highlights the transition of the bodhrán from ensemble timekeeper, building on pulse and tonal sounds, to the establishment of the instrument as an independent voice that adds another dimension to ensemble playing. This evolution makes it possible for percussionists to place themselves in moments of Irish tradition in sight of standing on the shoulders of giants.

O' Riada recognized the mesmeric qualities of the bodhrán; this much is evident in Mercier's comments. He will have noted the context of the bodhrán, whose lineage is that of the ancient practice of drums in festivals and battles. Noted for its ability to connect those around them to a common purpose, it brings a single point of focus to the mind. Herein lies the secret of the bodhrán- its ability to induce a quiet meditative state, to foster rapport between drum, player, and listener, and to entrain the mind to a state of peaceful awareness creating the experience of making and playing Irish music. 'The drum can 'connect us with the quiet intelligence beneath the mind.'

This is the point at which intuition and improvisation, qualities that dwell at the centre of Irish music, can emerge.

Both features characterize Irish musical tradition in its continuing story within the framework of simple repetitive rhythm. As the rhythm of the drum creates deeper levels of absorption, repetitive beats develop a particular quality of listening that exists in free improvisation. A transition takes place that enables the player to move into a flow state in which tension dissolves and the lens of perception broadens to encompass both the detail of play simultaneously with the music as a whole.

The sound and rhythm of the bodhrán, like other drums, results in the alignment of internal bodily processes, such as heart rate and breathing. 'It is this synchronicity that creates unity with the bodhrán enabling a player to be at 'one with the rhythm.' Alpha and theta become the predominant brainwaves, leading to a relaxed wakeful state in which deep listening occurs - circumstances that generate the capacity for intelligent use of intuition and improvisation. Moments become elongated as clock time moves to



Kavological time, (Greek for 'right moment to decide'), the percussionist shifts into the language of sound and music.

This begets an awareness of both the sound of the bodhrán, and also the spaces between the beats - the silence from which the sound arises and returns.

The music is not in the notes but in the silence between (Mozart 1756-1792).

Many artists have paid homage to Mozart's view, using the space between to create, improvise, and heighten communication in music. Jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal is famous for his use of silence between notes to raise tension and build anticipation for the audience[5]. This place is not simply an empty gap for music, but a place where rhythm can be used to draw the listener in further, for a more intimate experience, and one that touches the Celtic soul and releases the 'pan within.'

The bodhrán has travelled its own evolutionary journey since O' Riada pressed the light switch that illuminated its powers. The introduction of drum set patterns, clicks, fills, and rim shots have made it worthy of collaboration with a range of unexpected instruments.

The bodhrán landscape has evolved over time as influences from other countries and cultures bring forth unique and unusual time signatures.

And it continues to assert its presence in current Irish music as players such as Joe Kelly of Flook demonstrate its versatility and relevance.

But whilst O'Riada rescued the Bodhrán from historical obscurity, its survival into the new age of Irish traditional music may depend on the ability of new and established percussionists to use the meditative qualities of the drum to bring silence to sound. They are called to reject the boundary of 'bam bam' and unlock the quiet space that the drum provides for deep listening, connection with quiet intelligence, intuition, and improvisation. The gift lies within the bodhrán itself; it merely requires the player to look up from the 'bam bam' to bring intentional awareness to the beat of the drum and the silence it offers. By honouring the ordinary magic that is the mesmeric power of the bodhrán, musicians can play a part

in its journey, since all that is new and improvised today, becomes authentic heritage with the passage of time.

Barbara Starns BA (hons) MA is a researcher, writer and meditation teacher who participates in Bodhrán classes with Folklinks UK.



Barbara Starns





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Kirsty Mack & Mount Everest

Story by Tom Langlands





A few weeks ago, I opened up Facebook, and to my astonishment, I found a newly posted photograph of my niece, Kirsty Mack, on the top of Mt. Everest! I knew she enjoyed climbing and traveling, but I never expected to find her atop the world's highest peak, smiling at me from my phone screen. There she stood on the snow-capped summit, bundled up in a blue down suit, sporting bright, red-framed sunglasses, with an oxygen mask hanging from her chin. She held a photo of her dad along with a small handwritten sign that read, 'For my mum and my big sister Lynzie.'

Three weeks later we met at her home in Menstrie. Sitting in her quiet, unassuming manner and stroking her beloved Miniature Australian Shepherd dog Morar, she opened up to me about her Everest expedition and, more poignantly, what drives her to climb mountains.

"Mountains are my happy place," she announced quietly, "There is nothing else that fills me with such a sense of peace and that invokes such a spiritual connection with my late dad."

At 39 years of age, she conquered Everest but notes that her penchant for mountaineering was molded much earlier in life. Throughout her school years she was active in the Cubs and Scouts alongside her father - also a keen mountaineer - who was Group Scout Leader of the Menstrie Scout Group. It was during this time that she learned the basic skills of outdoor adventure, including camping, hiking, kayaking, skiing, and climbing, setting the stage for her future expedi-

tions. Posters of mountaineering icons Chris Bonington and Doug Scott adorned her bedroom walls as a teenager. After completing university with Bachelor of Science degrees in Medical Biochemistry and Pharmacology, she began volunteer work in Tanzania helping young people afflicted with HIV and other conditions. It was only a matter of time until she set her sights on Mt. Kilimanjaro and was determined to climb it. An elderly man with local knowledge of the tricky terrain offered to guide her to the top which he claimed was a six-day return journey. She completed the trek in only four days and on the third day - her father's birthday - she stood on the summit of the mountain and watched the sun slowly rise over the illustrious African landscape. Undoubtedly, the experience whet her appetite for mountain climbing.

Once back in the U.K., she continued climbing, but also resurrected her passion for skiing. Having sampled the slopes in many countries across Europe, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, and the USA, she became a qualified Alpine and Adaptive Skiing Instructor, allowing her to teach people with a range of physical and mental challenges. Although she never completely stopped scaling summits, her innate yearning for mountaineering emerged once again in 2019 with a decision to tackle Mount Elbrus in Russia's Caucasus mountains. Her father had climbed it previously and she felt a level of comfort and reassurance in discussing her plans with him before she set off. Tragically, the week before she was scheduled to go, he suffered

a stroke and was admitted to hospital, falling into a life-threatening coma. Despite being traumatized, she was persuaded to continue with the expedition knowing with certainty that her father would urge her to go ahead as planned. Armed with his photograph given to her by her mother and instructions to take it to the top of Elbrus 'for dad', she set forth, secretly worried whether she would see him alive again. She climbed Elbrus for her father and raised money for Chest, Heart & Stroke, Scotland. When she returned home, he was no longer in critical care but still very ill. Covid then swept the globe, and all travel plans were put on hold as the world shut down. By the end of April 2021, restrictions were lifted and freshly fallen blankets of snow prompted her to once again don her skis and head for the Cairngorms. Then, tragedy struck. In a remote location, she had a bad fall and was airlifted to hospital with a serious shoulder injury to her dominant left arm. Following a series of surgical operations, she was left with only 65% use of her arm. Undaunted, she climbed Breithorn in the Pennine Alps only two weeks after her second surgery - an endeavour she acknowledges may not have been prudent, but that she nonetheless felt compelled to attempt. A week later she climbed Mont Blanc in the French Alps with success. Sadly, her father passed away in November 2021 never having fully recovered. Showing me his photograph, she adds,

"I carry this next to my heart on every climb I make. I know he is with me and is looking after me."

Despite persistent shoulder pain, Kirsty Mack plans to summit all 82 peaks above 13,000 ft in the Alps. She has managed to scale and conquer a staggering 25 so far. She also aims to qualify for the Seven Summits challenge and acquire the prestigious accolade of having climbed the highest peak in all seven continents. Although there is debate over continental boundaries, it is generally accepted that the peaks are:

Kilimanjaro (Africa) - 19,341 ft
Mount Vinson (Antarctica) - 16,050 ft
Mount Everest (Asia) - 29,035 ft
Carstensz Pyramid (Australasia) - 16,024 ft
Mount Elbrus (Europe) - 18,510 ft
Denali (North America) - 20,310 ft
Aconcagua (South America) - 22,837 ft



To date, Mack has summited all of these except Mount Vinson and Carstensz Pyramid.

Everest was her latest endeavour and she admits to having had reservations about tackling it, "I was well acclimatized, generally fit, and mentally prepared, but the restricted movement in my shoulder and the persistent pain concerned me."

Everest is 29,035 ft above sea level. At 26,000 feet, climbers enter the ominous 'death zone'. At this altitude the cells of the human body start dying, blood thickens, cognitive function is impaired, and there is a significantly increased risk of physical maladies including heart attack and stroke. Over 300 climbers have died on Everest - most of them while descending through the death zone. Some 200 bodies remain unrecovered.

Kirsty Mack tackled the mountain using the South Col route. Flying into Lukla, Nepal - the world's most dangerous airfield - she managed an eight-day trek through the beautiful, undulating terrain of Khumbu Valley to the 17,598 ft base camp. Extending over a mile, the base camp accommodates the brightly coloured tents and communal facilities used by expedition groups. Once settled there she spent five weeks acclimatizing and undertaking 'rotations' which involved climbing higher but returning to the camp after a day or two. This exercise increases the body's red blood cell count which is essential before attempting to reach the summit. The final push from the base camp to the summit took Mack four days

and involved a treacherous passage through the towering glacial walls of the Khumbu Icefall. Stunningly beautiful, this frozen landscape can shift as much as 3 ft each day, giving rise to sudden overhead ice collapses or large crevasses opening underfoot. During her time on Everest, three Sherpas from the rope-fixing team were tragically killed in an avalanche. Her ascent with climbing partner Lhakpa Wongchu Sherpa involved a one-day climb to Camp 2 (21,000 ft), an overnight stop, and the same routine the following day to Camp 3 (24,300 ft). The third day was a climb to the final Camp 4 (26,000 ft) with a rest there before setting off for the last stage at 10 p.m. The sun rose simultaneously during the final phase of the trek as she stood



atop the highest mountain in the world at 8.10 a.m. the following morning.

She describes being overcome with a sense of wonderment, "It was a deeply moving experience to stand below a clear blue sky, looking out over the snow-capped Himalayas, and being surrounded by colourful prayer flags waving in the breeze. For thirty minutes I stood on the highest point of the planet."

However, the dangerous descent came all too soon. She recalls, "It was tough. We were hit by a storm with stinging ice-cold hail. The pain in my shoulder was agony, I had no feeling in my feet and the crampons were failing to grip the impenetrable blue ice. We had several scary slips and we still had to pass back through the treacherous Khumbu Icefall." Her descent to base camp took 24 hours including an overnight stay in the safety of Camp 2.

Only five Scottish women before her are known to have climbed Everest and only two have achieved the Seven Summits.

While nursing her shoulder and grappling with frostbite on her toes, I ask if she will now take a break for a while. She smiles, "Only until I have enough money for the next trip. Mount Vinson is now top of my list. My dad will be going there too."

www.tomlanglandsphotography.com
 Photographs courtesy of Kirsty Mack

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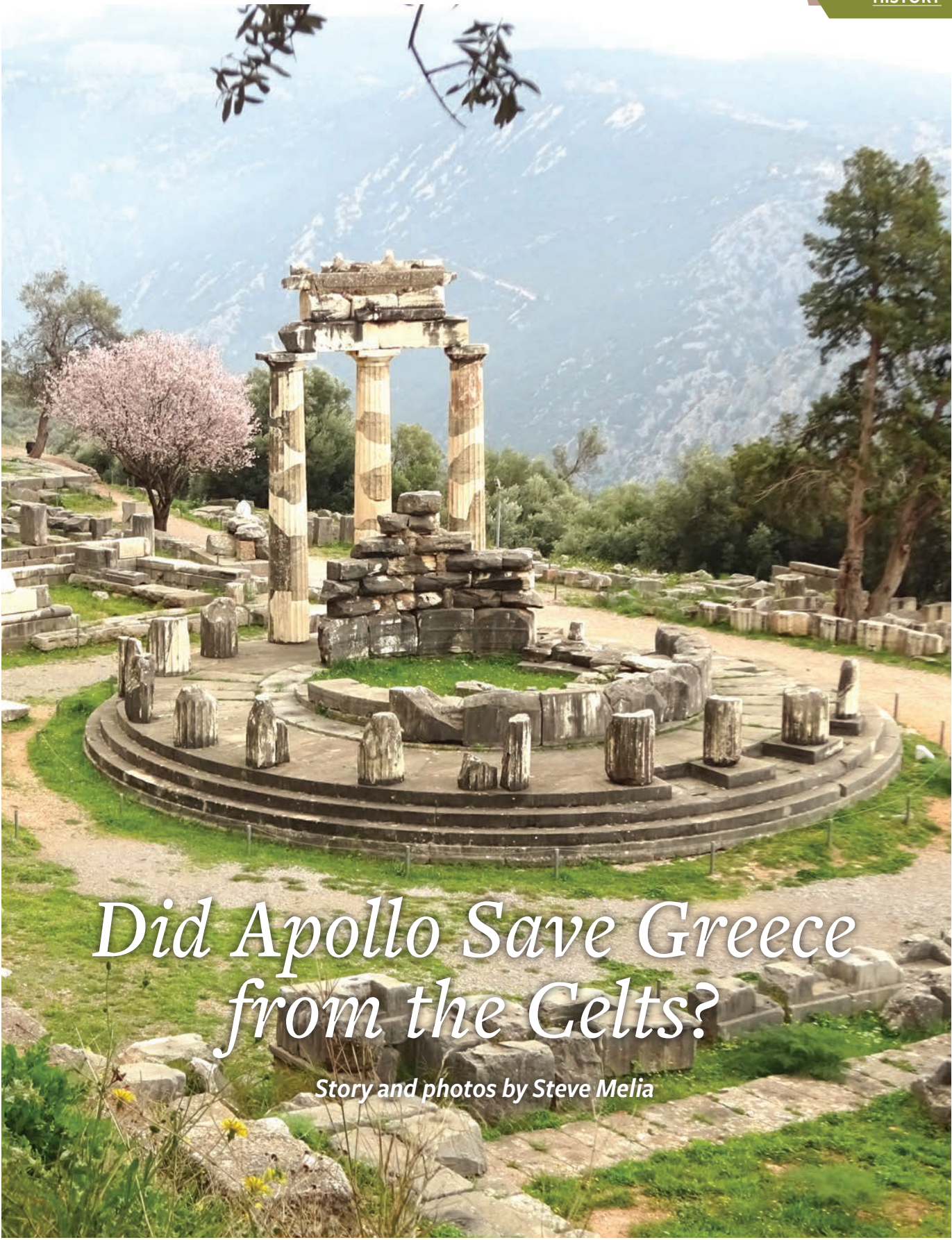


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Did Apollo Save Greece from the Celts?

Story and photos by Steve Melia



Monastiraki waterfront

Everything we know, or think we know, about the ancient European Celts comes from the writings of Romans or Greeks, who were often deeply prejudiced against the Celts. In my last article, I explained why the Romans felt that way, after a Celtic army, led by a leader called Brennus, forced the city to surrender. Early Greek writers were often more sympathetic. A century later, however, another Celtic leader, also called Brennus, took a fateful decision, which - I was about to discover - would poison the views of many Greeks and leave a legacy of mystery around those events.

From Ancona, on the east coast of central Italy, I sailed to Greece and took a train south to the port of Brindisi, on the Heel of Italy. The crossing takes 17 hours overnight. I watched the sun rise over the mountains the following morning as we sailed between the Ionian islands and the Greek mainland. At the port of Patras, I met my Greek friend, Athena. Over the next couple of weeks, we would travel to mountains, museums, and ancient sites, including the one at the centre of this story: the Temple of Delphi.

Although versions differ, we know from Greek and Roman writings that Celtic armies invaded Greece around 280 BC. Modern historians have struggled to separate histori-



**Athena with Athena
- Patras Archaeological Museum**

cal facts from legend and propaganda. The name of Brennus is part of that conundrum. Was it a personal name or a title, meaning something like 'King'? If so, that would explain the coincidence between the two Brennuses who led the attacks against Rome and

Greece a century apart.

Where Brennus and his army came from is unknown, but they entered Greece from the north, through Macedonia. By the 3rd century, Macedonia was in turmoil. 43 years after the death of Alexander the Great, his empire, which included Greece, was fragmenting, as his successors fought amongst themselves. During an earlier attack, a Celtic army defeated the Macedonians and killed their King Keraunos. After much infighting, a general by the name of Sosthenes took control of the army and the kingdom but refused an offer of the crown. Macedonia still dominated the Greek city-states further south, but its instability was increasing their independence.

According to the ancient Greek historian and travel writer Pausanias, Brennus persuaded the Celtic peoples to raise a larger army to attack Greece "pointing out the weakness of the Greeks at that time, their great public wealth, and the even greater wealth in the sanctuaries in dedications and in coined silver and gold."

After marching through Macedonia, they



Apollo on a dish 5th Century BC - Delphi Museum

met an advance force of the Greek army on the opposite side of the River Spercheios. Undaunted, they rafted across the river and put the Greeks to flight. You can find the next part of the story described online as historical fact, but it may be a legend, or as one Ph.D. thesis puts it: “a fabrication” constructed “to imitate” an earlier event. Pausanias says that a small Greek army stopped the Celts at the Pass of Thermopylae - the same place where a tiny Greek force had resisted the might of the Persian army two centuries earlier. The two accounts do sound suspiciously similar.

After this setback, Brennus decided to create a diversionary attack on an undefended town further west. At this point, Pausanias’ account begins to sound like propaganda: “They butchered every human male of that entire race, the old men and the children at the breast...they drank the blood and ate the flesh of those of the slaughtered babies that were fattest with milk.”

Some of the Greek leaders then made a cynical decision to guide the Celts through the mountains, and away from their own territories, towards the Greeks’ most sacred temple at Delphi.

In the impressive new archaeological museum in Patras, I read that Patras was the only city on the Peloponnese peninsula that sent troops to resist the Celtic invasion. The others noted that the Celts had no ships, so they hoped to keep them out by blocking the narrow Isthmus which joins the Peloponnese to the mainland.

Today a suspension bridge crosses the Gulf of Corinth, linking Patras to the mainland and offering a more direct route to Delphi. There is a coach service, which I would have taken if I had been on my own,

but Athena had other business on the way to Athens, so she offered to drive the outward journey. The two shores of the Gulf are very different. The road we followed, on the southern shore of the mainland, was quiet and sparsely populated. Euphorbia and poppies were flowering on the deserted hill-sides to our left, whilst across the water, on the north shore of the Peloponnese, snow-capped mountains rose behind a strip of continuous development.

Athena had convinced me that there was no point in going to Thermopylae. Centuries of coastal silting have removed the famous pass; all that remains today is a monument beside a main road. Instead, I decided to walk part of the route that Brennus’s army might have taken through the mountains north of Delphi. European Walking Trail E4 runs for 17km through Parnassos National Park from Eptalofos to Delphi. As we don’t know what route they took, that seemed a good option.



Naxian Sphinx - Delphi Museum

Spring is a good time to visit Greece before the heat and the tourists arrive. I did a lot of walking in the mountains around Patras wearing shorts and T-shirts and had not considered that higher up, snow might still be a problem. As we climbed towards Eptalofos we passed it piled beside the road.

The village, at 800 metres, was free from snow but the air was noticeably cooler up here. I stopped a group of hikers and asked their leader if he knew what condition the trail to Delphi was in. He shrugged his shoulders. He had walked it last year but hadn't heard of anyone walking it so early this year. There was likely to be snow, and possibly ice.

I was caught in a dilemma. I didn't want to give up, but I wasn't equipped for winter mountaineering. If my frozen body was discovered by future archaeologists, I would

never finish this article. Athena had no intention of coming with me, so I decided to set out, stay in contact with her, for as long as I had a signal, and turn back if necessary.

The trail leaves Eptalofos on a dirt track bordered by houses that would not have looked out of place in the Austrian Alps. Above 1000 metres the snow appeared, then thickened, but the track remained clear. I discovered the reason when I reached a turning with a snow plough parked beside the track. I followed the trail onto a narrower path covered with snow and some ice. Then I noticed footprints, so someone must have walked there recently. There were some tricky sections, but nothing needed an ice pick. Higher up, I reached a plateau, where the snow was melting, turning to mud: messy but passable. I messaged Athena; I was going to push on.

*As I climbed over
a second mountain,
the coast came into view and
everything changed.*

The snow disappeared and the pine forest gave way to a Mediterranean landscape, dotted with bushes and flowers I didn't recognize. I met two Polish hikers - the only people I saw for over eight hours.

The view over Delphi arrived suddenly. I looked down over a steep drop and saw the town directly below me, with the track zig-zagging down the face of the mountain. Brennus's army would never have taken this route. Below me were two other options, roughly following the modern road, both involving long climbs. The Greeks chose a great site to defend their temple.

Delphi is a beautiful town, but even at quieter times, the signs of mass tourism are everywhere. There is the Pan Hotel, the Artemis Hotel, and the Apollonia Hotel. When the Christian emperor Theodosius destroyed the temple in 390 AD the pantheon was evicted, so it seems they moved down the hill and went into the hotel business.



Bronze helmets - Delphi Museum

The archaeological site and museum are a short walk from the town. A single ticket gives entry to both. I went to the museum first. Considering the damage inflicted on the temple over the centuries, it is amazing how much has survived - statues of gods and sphinxes, golden offerings, and weapons used by Greek soldiers - but there was no mention of Brennus or his army and none of the staff I spoke to had heard of them, though they knew of Pausanias. I gave one of them a reference to find the story online.

The entrance to the archaeological site is a few hundred yards down the same road. As soon as you enter, you begin to climb. The site, with the remains of many buildings, is built on different levels into the side of the mountain. Shortly after the entrance you come to the Omphalos stone, the navel of the world, thrown there by Zeus. It stood at the heart of the Temple of Apollo, where a priestess would deliver oracles, valued throughout the ancient world. When the Greeks heard that a Celtic army was approaching, they consulted the priestess, who advised them not to remove the treasure from the temple. Speaking with the voice of Apollo she said: "I will defend what is mine."

Most of the buildings on the site were erected as offerings from the Greek city-states for victories over enemies. Just above the Omphalos, stands a small temple, the Treasury of the Athenians, built after their victory over the Persians. In Brennus's time, it would have been full of captured treasure. Further up the slope, I climbed past an athletic stadium and an amphitheatre. Looking down towards the valley the scale of the challenge facing the Celtic army became clearer.

There are several differing accounts of the battle and its aftermath. Pausanias' is the most evocative:

"Brennus and his army were faced by the Greeks at Delphi and by the hostile portents of the god...All the ground where the Gaulish army was, quaked violently nearly all day, with continuous thundering and lightning. The Celts were dumbfounded by this lightning, and unable to hear when orders were given; flashes from heaven would not only strike a man down but set fire to other men and their shields all round him...cliff-faces broke away and came crashing down. Not by ones and twos now, but in twenties and thirties or more, on guard and where they slept, they perished together under storms of rock."

The Celtic army retreated in confusion - "going out of their minds" - fighting amongst themselves as they mistook their own soldiers for Greek attackers. Wounded and



Omphalos stone - Delphi Museum

despondent, Brennus took his own life "by drinking unmixed wine" - they must have made it pretty strong back then.

Other versions suggest the Celts succeeded in sacking the temple, taking its treasure back to Toulouse in modern France.

*How much truth is there
in any of these stories?
The archaeological evidence
doesn't help very much.*

Some historians believe the Temple authorities needed a PR boost, after wrongly prophesising a Persian victory in a previous war. A new story with an accurate prophecy and divine retribution helped them to do

that.

The next day we continued to Athens, where I visited the National Archaeological Museum and the Acropolis. I learned a lot more about the ancient Greeks, but little more about the Celtic attack. Traditional history says after the battle they headed east towards modern Bulgaria, and Turkey where they founded the kingdom of Galatia mentioned in the Bible, but more recent writings have questioned that too.

Travelling back to Patras on the coach I began to realise that there would be no clear conclusion to this story. There was an attack; that much is clear, but what really happened at Delphi and what became of those Celtic attackers remains shrouded in mystery.

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A couple is seen from behind, embracing on a grassy hill. The man is wearing a black quilted vest over a red long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The woman is wearing a green raincoat and a grey beanie. They are looking out over a vast landscape that includes a large body of water, distant hills, and a small town. A vibrant rainbow is visible in the sky on the left side of the frame. The sky is filled with large, white clouds, and the overall lighting suggests a late afternoon or early morning setting.

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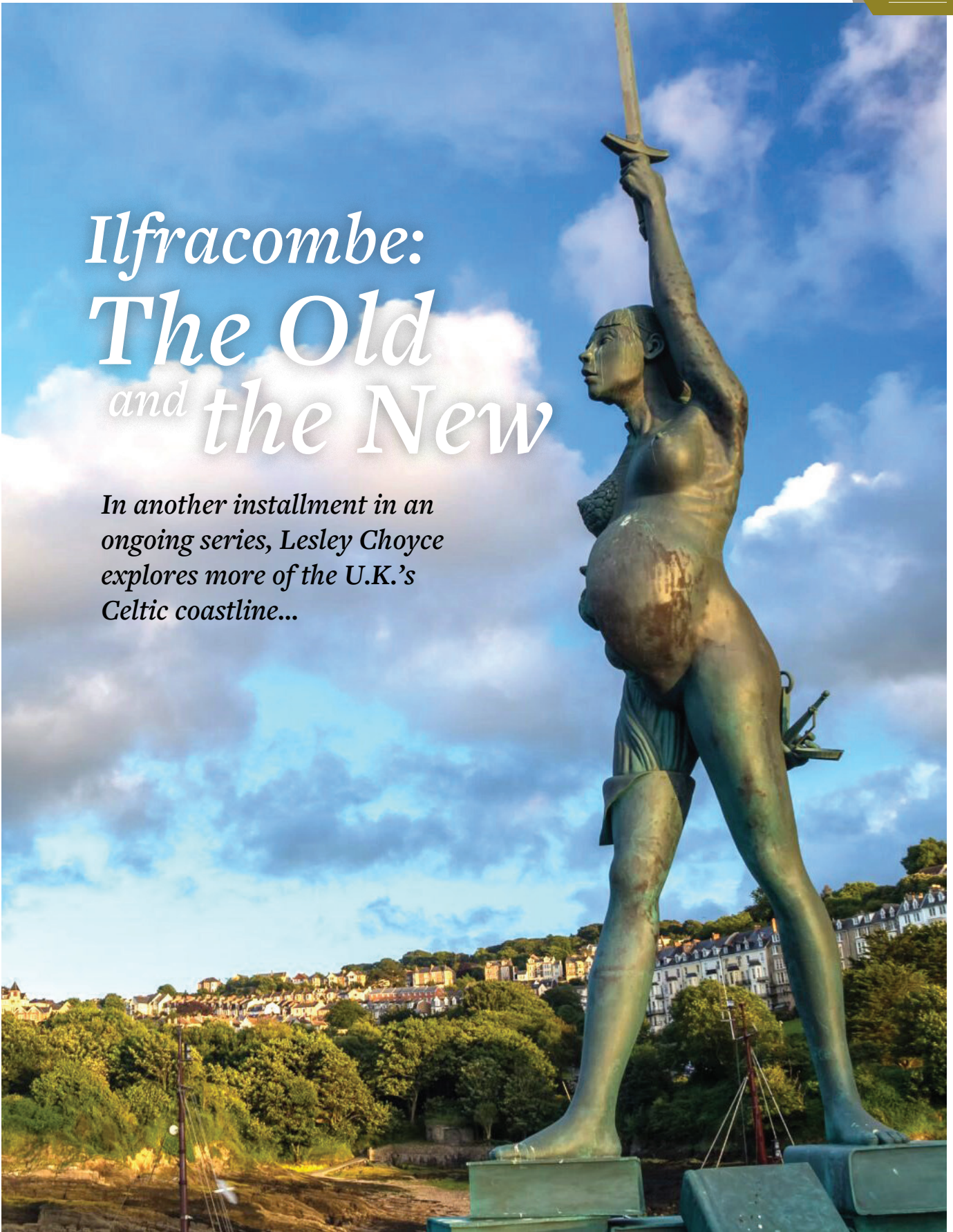
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Ilfracombe: The Old *and* the New

In another installment in an ongoing series, Lesley Choyce explores more of the U.K.'s Celtic coastline...





“Travel brings a special wisdom if one is open to it,” writes Phil Cousineau in *The Art of Pilgrimage*. I hope that statement is true, but it rarely feels that way when I am travelling. However, I do like to believe that when my wife Linda and I are on the road, there is an air of pilgrimage about us. We are usually on a quest for something, even if we are unsure about what that something is.

So, for this particular journey along a stretch of British coast we had never explored before, I had proposed to seek out a truly unusual and striking statue in the coastal town of Ilfracombe. When I first saw an image of the controversial sculpture on the internet, I

believed it to be a digital joke of some sort. But then I learned that Verity (as it is called), was for real. I decided it was important for us to see it and its unlikely host town of Ilfracombe, for ourselves.

The weather was moderately good for the off-season, and we congratulated ourselves for cleverly avoiding the tourists. As Canadian travelers, already soaked from several days of hiking in the rain, we were sure that we could easily handle anything the mild southwest coast of the U.K. could throw at us.

Arriving at Ilfracombe from the south on the A361, the first impressions were not so promising. I wondered out loud to Linda whether or not it was a good idea to watch those YouTube travel videos before visiting





any destination. You know the ones I mean; the videos with generic New Age music soundtracks and walking hand-held camera shots of the town showing all the predictable landmarks.

Nonetheless, the drone footage of this town with the ragged hills and cliffs surrounding it was enticing. And yet, if I lost my patience here, the whole Victorian seaside resort promotions might send me running for those hills, I mused.

*Such long-winded rants
on my part eventually wind
down as my travelling companion
advises me to forget about
the hype and just see and enjoy
what the place has to offer.*

So, I silenced my voice and opened my eyes to what we might find.

Soon enough, we saw the welcoming sign and were driving, more or less, towards the harbour on High Street. I had read that along here was the notorious Bongs and Biscuits shop that sold cannabis smoking equipment along with “retro snacks”, as well as fish and chips. It was raided by the cops in 2019 after

local complaints to the town council. This part of town was labelled by the media as “seriously deprived,” but it was not stated clearly what it was deprived of. Still, this bit of background revealed to this traveler that Ilfracombe would be a mixed bag of the old and the new, and if we looked in the right place, there would most certainly be surprises in this civil parish of 11,000 souls.

Like so many town names, the origins were not exactly clear, but I was willing to buy into the Norse/Anglo-Saxon/Celtic theory that suggested it meant “the valley with the bad ford” (not the car, of course, but a place to cross over a watercourse.) And, like everywhere else in the Celtic world we had ever travelled, there was a long and convoluted history to this small enclave etched into the coast of England.

It seems to have been a conveniently located port to set off for various invasions beginning with an incursion into Ireland deemed appropriate by King John in 1208. In 1247, another convoy of ships charged off to capture the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. Later it provided a staging place for a siege of Calais, France, and yet another military attack on Ireland.

My gut instinct is to get to the sea as quickly as possible when entering any coastal

town and, if it is overly developed and thick with tourists, head further along the coast. Fortunately for us, it seemed that all the big apartment blocks were high above town in the hills, where I am sure they had magnificent views. And, as it was raining again, most tourists were either in the pubs or had already fled.

I wasn't sure at first that we could find what we were looking for - a twenty-meter-tall statue called Verity that was about the oddest piece of sculpture in any town I had ever visited. But it was said to be right on the harbour as well, so our pilgrimage was coming together nicely.

On the way, we were able to take in some of the more notable features of Ilfracombe. I was duly impressed by a place aptly named “The Tunnels.” According to their official website, “In 1823 a team of hundreds of Welsh miners hand carved through the cliffs to allow easy access to Crewkhorne Cove and, subsequently, three tidal bathing pools - two allocated for the ladies and one for the gentlemen. The beaches were then renamed ‘Tunnels Beaches.’”

Today, as in Victorian times, you can walk through these nifty man-made caves to get to some very attractive tidal pools for swimming, lounging about on the sand, or poking around



the rocks for crabs and whelks. It was here I caught up on the lore of Victorian sea bathing in all its odd glory and was introduced to the story of an 1800s inventor - named simply Dr. Nichols - who was involved in the promotion of "decency, comfort, and especially the safety of the invigorating exercises of bathing and swimming." To that end, he had invented the "buoyant bathing dress," the "pocket swimming life preserver" (only 3 ounces), and the "Aquatic Velocipede."

Ilfracombe clearly became a veritable magnet for hydrotherapists, sea lovers, bath-

ing enthusiasts, and most anyone hoping to cash in on the fashionable Victorian fascination with all things sea-related. And that included the famous Prof. H. Parker ("winner of 159 prizes") who came to town more than once in the 1890s "to impart instructions in swimming to ladies and gentlemen." Somehow, he had cobbled together a career of fame involving both swimming instruction and escape artistry. Perhaps Victorian times around Ilfracombe were much more interesting than I ever imagined.

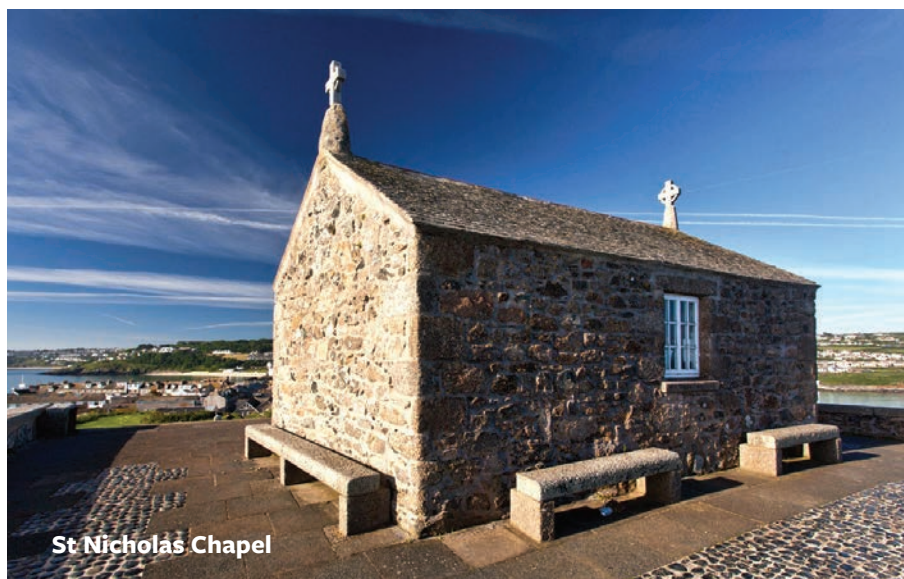
Of course, back in the day, there was an

elaborate etiquette guide provided at the Tunnels for all ages that included everything anyone needed to know about being proper in public. For boys, the author of this guide instructed to, "lower your voice sometimes; not everyone is deaf" and for girls, "when you talk, keep your hands still."

Well, if I wasn't convinced yet that Ilfracombe was an odd but interesting place, I became curious as to the nature of two tall, somewhat conical, white protruding structures plunked down between the road we were on and the water. When I stopped and got out of the car, I asked a rather bored-looking gent in a flat cap sitting on a bench what I was looking at. "That there is known as Madonna's Bra," he said and then studied the strange look on my face. "It's actually the Landmark Theatre," he added, "but you can see how the other name stuck." Indeed.

It turns out that the towers were built with 300,000 white Belgian bricks and were constructed as an entertainment venue that is quite popular with those touring British cover bands.

Nearby was the Ilfracombe Museum, which was not on my wish list but might have served as a backup if the Devonian rain proved relentless. Fortunately, the sea wind dropped slightly, and the pelting rain let up. But if it had not, I would have taken Linda in to study the many collections inside that included the following: domestic social items(!), agricultural items - mainly hand





The Carleton Hotel

tools, clocks, watches, coins, tokens, medals, “edged weapons,” butterflies, and their famous “collection of British Bats preserved in fluid.” Alas, it was decided to save that for an even rainier day.

Parking was a bit iffy near our destination, but we ended up on the very wharf at the foot of Lantern Hill, with its fourteenth-century St. Nicholas’s Chapel, “the oldest working lighthouse in the U.K.” at the top.

We first took a vigorous hike to the top of the hill to get a good look at the overall town and take our first bird’s eye view of the curious and controversial monument below that we had come to see.

We hastily climbed up the slippery path to snap a few photos and then retreated down to get up close and personal with a woman named Verity.

Art critic Jonathan McAloon states, “A controversial eyesore, Damien Hirst’s sculpture in Ilfracombe, Devon, embodies the false promise of gentrification, the capricious back and forth of public opinion, and an ugly post-Brexit future.”

I can’t say that I agree with his overly critical view of the work, but I would more likely defend this downright weird creation as

something intriguing to anyone who is generally bored by public works of art. The Carlton Hotel, high on the hill above Verity, describes her in more generous terms: “Verity is 25 tons of pregnant woman. Her skin is partially flayed with internal anatomy displayed, foetus clearly visible. She is holding a sword aloft, hiding the scales of justice behind her back while standing on a pile of books.” Say what?

Yes, that’s just what she is. The statue is positioned strategically at the mouth of the harbour, staring out towards Wales far, far away. Once the tallest statue in the U.K., it was erected here in 2012 and is on a twenty-year loan from her creator, Daniel Hirst who reminds us that her name means “truth” and that she is a “modern allegory of truth and justice.” Like her critics, I can’t quite piece

together how that allegory works or what it means. But this is one crazy work of art. And I am glad that I came to pay my respects.

According to the Sunday Times, Hirst, who lives in the area, is one of the world’s richest artists, sitting on a stash of \$384 million (US), so he may not care if everyone loves his rendition of truth (and justice) in bronze and stainless steel. He appears to be a controversial figure and has been challenged in court a number of times over his work, including plagiarism involving a creation based on a child’s toy. He also reports a funny story about his youth involving a mother who cut up his “bondage trousers” and melted one of his Sex Pistol albums on the stove to turn it into a fruit bowl. Somehow, to this novice art critic, knowing these several curious details about the creator of Verity makes the art all that more intriguing.

When many locals voiced their outrage over the creation, the town council stood by its decision to install the controversial metal pregnant woman and were more than pleased when her presence increased tourist traffic dramatically for a seaside resort that had seen better days. And I guess it was Verity who had lured us here after all, in my modest never-ending search for truth in whatever form it may take. So, hats off to the visionary councillors, to the wealthy Mr. Hirst, and to Verity herself.

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Damien Hirst



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Bill Baber Knitwear

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Helen Baber

I was brought up in Nigeria and Bill, in East Africa. We both came to the U.K. for schooling and met at college in Edinburgh. We have since married and raised a family. Our children grew up alongside our business, and we were delighted when our son Jack chose to join us in our endeavour 13 years ago.

We were both quite crafty by nature and used to make jewellery and paper flowers for the house. Bill studied carpentry at school, and I would watch my father make beautiful party dresses for his 5 daughters. Both Bill and I made clothes as teenagers; adapting fashions, and designing our own things to save money, so we were both already familiar with the sewing machine. I had studied and worked in textiles and

realized that I wanted to design my own garments. Eventually, we began designing and making knitwear together. We've never looked back.

Once we started making clothes for a living, we realized that we had found our true vocation. The love of creating new shapes, colours, and styles simply continued to grow.

Today, we are an artisan craft business and produce our entire collection under our own roof. From yarn selection to knitting and hand finishing, we take great care with each garment we produce. We put an enormous amount of attention to detail into every piece that we send out into the world.

Designing is a part of our daily lives - we can be anywhere and become inspired by an idea. Things can get quite interesting once we bring that idea back to the workshop.

We love using merino wool and have had great fun creating a range of jumpers, shawls, jackets, and accessories in a wonderful selection of colours. Oversize jumpers are the current trend, which, of course, we have seen before in our 45-year history!

We continue to develop new ideas and extend the collection, creating fresh garments never seen before. Along with that, there is always the pleasure of meeting someone who loves what we have made and brings it into their life to enjoy.

Scotland is still living the dream of having a home-grown knitwear industry. It may not be as large as it was, but it remains as skilled and unique as ever. The Scottish knitwear industry still has the natural organic features which made it so famous in the first place. We are proud to be a part of it.





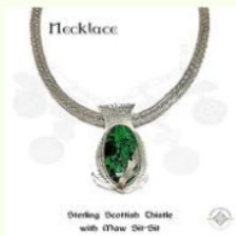
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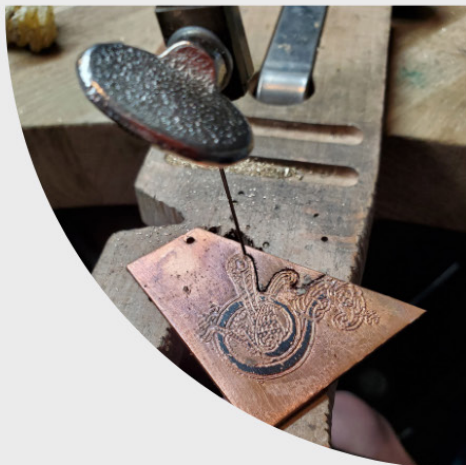
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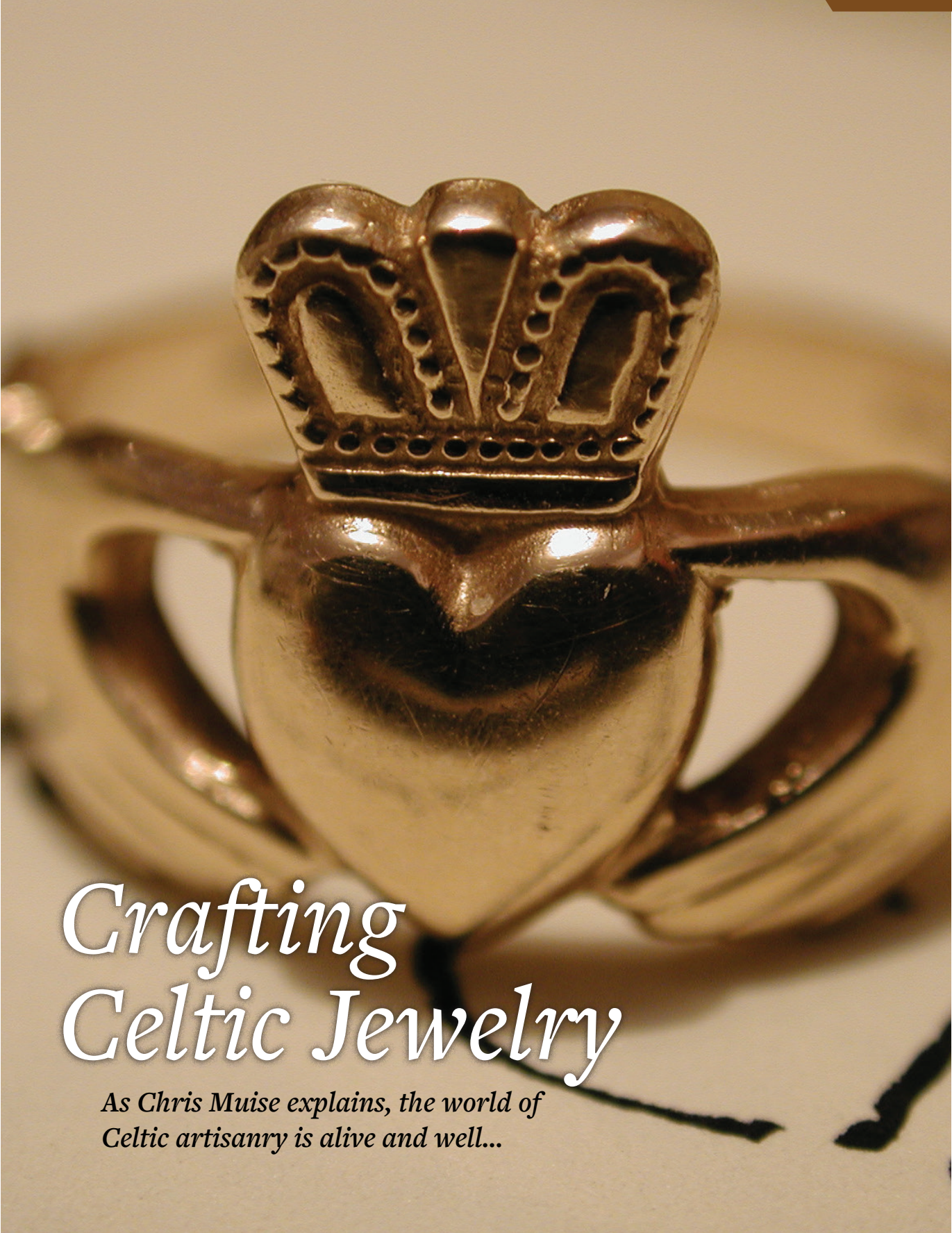
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Crafting Celtic Jewelry

*As Chris Muise explains, the world of
Celtic artisanry is alive and well...*



The regalia worn by those proud of their Celtic heritage - the type often worn at Highland games and Scottish or Irish festivals - incorporate many widely known and instantly recognizable pieces. These include - but aren't limited to - the tartan kilt, the sash, the Balmoral bonnet, and the fur sporran.

Other parts of the apparel are perhaps less noticeable from afar but are no less important to the history and the tradition heralded by this formal dress. They quite literally bring the outfit together.

Sterling silver jewelry like the kilt pin isn't worn only to keep a kilt from flapping in the breeze; each one is unique to its clan and

often reflects the position of the wearer. It takes a skilled artisan to craft with that level of specificity.

Don Kimble is one such artisan. Currently residing in St. Marys, Georgia, Kimble has been making kilt pins since he opened his first shop in Atlanta back in the 1970s.

"That was my first little business I started," Kimble shares with Celtic Life International via Zoom. "A gentleman named George Carr came to me; he had the nice kilt, he had the sporran, the sgian-dubh, he had the Balmoral. And he says, 'Look, man, all I got to wear on my cap is this crappy pop metal badge.' He wanted something nice, something made from solid sterling silver.

"We made our first badge for George, and he started wearing it around and taking it to the games. Before I know it, he had people coming to me wanting a badge like his. We actually formed a little business, Carr & Kimble LMT."

As the proprietor of celticbadges.com, Kimble is still making custom kilt pins today. In fact, he is practically a one-man foundry, making each and every badge himself.

"I don't have a way to mass produce these things. They are made with what is called lost wax casting. That's where you make a model



Don Kimble

in wax, surround it in a cylinder with plaster, put it in the kiln, and melt out the wax. There is a cavity inside there that you sling molten silver into, using a centrifuge. There are more modern ways to do it, but that's basically what it comes down to.

"I understand there may be as many as 400 clans," Kimble expounds. "We have done about 200 in the past 40 years that I have been doing this, and I still add new clans all the time when somebody brings it to me."

Most of these kilt pins share a similar design template with an outer circlet crafted to resemble a strap and buckle and the tongue of the belt hanging from the bottom. A clan motto is etched into the strap, and a unique crest design is set in the middle of the circle.

Kimble also has kilt pins for those who might be part of unrecognized clans.

"Many people come to me with their own personal crests, which is a different thing altogether..."

"There are standard crests for the clans that are sometimes accepted, and then you've got people coming with their own personal crests that they have applied to the Lord Lyon in Scotland to have as a registered crest.

"I am always making crests; mostly for guys that are armigers or chiefs or chieftains. We do a little different format for them instead of the strap and buckle. It's a plain circlet, and we would add one, two, or three feathers to it, to make it for an armiger, a chief, or a chieftain. They would put their personal crest in the middle, and then their motto, similar to what we do with the others."

Mark McAlpin is one of Kimble's customers and hails from one such armigerous clan, the MacAlpines.

"The name McAlpin (MacAlpine) has been around since the dawn of Scotland," writes McAlpin from his home in Alpharetta, Georgia. "There is a saying: 'Hills, streams, and MacAlpines,' basically implying that the family was around since dirt."

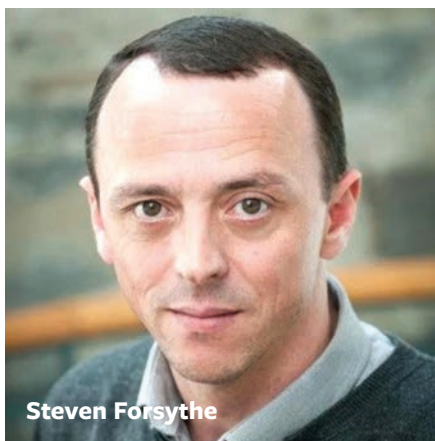
McAlpin is the vice president of the House of MacAlpine Society and has been working to get a chief recognized by the Lord Lyon. Part of that journey included working with Kimble to design a crest for the clan.

"I have purchased a custom kilt pin and a custom brooch for a fly plate from Don. Now, when I say custom, it is truly custom. I can't go online and buy a MacAlpine\MacAlpine cap badge, kilt pin, or anything that is actually legitimate because nothing really exists. Mass production pieces get sold as such, but because our Clan currently has no chief, none of them are legitimate. Thus, the need for working with someone like Don, where I can inter-

act and show him my coat of arms and talk about where we are headed as a clan."

Kimble comes from mostly an English background, and admits that, at first, he was unaware of the many occasions when these kilt pins and cap badges were worn.

"It took me a while to figure out what exactly people were doing with them," he chuckles. "They would wear it to occasions



where they dress in Scottish attire, and at any number of Scottish affairs, Scottish games, Scottish ceremonies, and dinners. I have had many people ask for them to be made for weddings, for their best men at weddings, that sort of thing."

Celtic wedding designs are Steven Forsythe's bread and butter, having launched celtic-weddings.com 21 years ago.

"Originally, I wasn't that interested in jewelry," Forsythe tells Celtic Life International via Zoom from his home in Dublin. "It never really crossed my mind. But I was into Celtic history and Celtic mythology, which I studied quite intensely. In 2002, I was looking to set up my own business and I saw a niche market for Celtic jewelry. Obviously, jewelry was very big in the States - even back in 2002 - but there were very few websites specializing in Celtic jewelry and doing it well. So, I set up my own company."

Forsythe isn't a ring-smith himself, but instead curates designs from the best hand-made designers across Ireland and acts as a portal for those seeking Celtic-themed wedding bands. He explains that many of the classic Celtic jewelry designs come with a story attached to them and he gets to put his interest in Celtic mythology to good use. After all, the legends behind the lavaliers are the draw for most customers.

"I think one of our most popular things at the moment is - because we specialize in wedding rings and wedding bands - the Celtic Warrior Range and the Celtic Shield range. They are made by two different manufacturers, but the style is the same, and the are based on the designs of the Ardagh Chalice. The Celtic designs and the knot work on it





were used to inspire all these ranges of wedding bands which have become hugely popular.”

Forsythe’s styles reflect several cherished Celtic myths and folklore; the Celtic Cross, the Trinity Knot, and the Claddagh wedding ring are just a few of his more popular items.

“The Claddagh was designed by this jeweller who happened to be a slave who escaped and came back to find the love of his life. The hands represent friendship, the heart represents love, and the crown denotes loyalty - which makes the perfect promise ring, right?

“I suppose that the Claddagh became popular as people could attach their own meaning to it.”

While the designs and the legends they represent can run back centuries or even millennia, the techniques used to etch them



into metal have certainly changed with the times. Kimble’s methods have evolved a lot since he started smithing himself - all to create a better product and end-user experience.

“When you cast that outer part, the strap and buckle are common to all the clans, so we decided early on that we were going to engrave the motto onto the strap and buckle. That was the part that I had the biggest problem with. There was no way to cast that and get a high-quality surface that could be polished. With casting, there is always a little bit of porosity. There is a lot of sanding. It doesn’t come out ready and it is a lot of work. It was crazy because the cost of a badge would have been astronomical if you got it to the point where we really had a shiny surface.

“We decided that what we needed was to have this outer strap and buckle struck from a solid sheet of sterling. That way, we have a pristine piece that was ready to polish, and we would bypass all these problems. We went to the expense of having a die cut by a special die company up in Massachusetts, and then we started having the outer part struck.

“There was still some casting involved, and we still had molds that we could cast all the crests from. We’re still doing lost wax casting, but it’s a lot easier to manage because just casting the centre part, which didn’t matter so much; you could still have some highly polished finish on the crest. But it wasn’t as important as having a glossy, shiny, sparkly finish on the strap and buckle.”

This process isn’t necessarily easier, Kimble adds; instead of a one-and-done casting, each pin badge is made in different stages and soldered together at the end. But he feels that it is worth the extra effort.

“It wasn’t so much the efficiency of it, as it was the quality of the final product.”

His clientele agrees - many of them aren’t commissioning a piece only to be worn a handful of times, but rather something that can be handed down for generations.

“The pieces that Don crafts are heirloom pieces, that I will either will to my family or be buried with,” says McAlpin. “If you want a true heirloom piece and a work of art, then you want a traditionally made piece.”

Other advancements in technology have changed the face of the Celtic jewelry business. Forsythe and Kimble both owe their reach to the advent of the Internet. In fact, aside from McAlpin and a few others, Kimble has few area clients.

“It is pretty much all over the world now. I would say predominantly Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and across the USA. I could probably count on one hand the number I have sold in Georgia.”

Kimble sells his designs on his own website, as well as via crafts portals like Etsy - which, he admits, is not without its pitfalls.

"I have 180 listings on Etsy. They only charge a little bit, like 20 cents per listing. Then they get a piece of the action when you sell the badge. I sell a badge for \$170 and, I might get a check for \$80 by the time they have deducted this, that, and the other thing. And then it cost me almost \$50 to have the damn thing stamped in sterling material. Sometimes I think it is a miracle that I make any money at it."

None of this has been existentially disruptive to the Celtic jewelry market, but Forsythe sees a few advances on the horizon that threaten to be.

"The actual handcraft element of it seems to be slowly fading away," he laments. "A lot of these new manufacturers are using large laser cutting machinery to do the intricate designs, and then they will only do the finer detailing at the end by hand. And 3D printing will have a big part to play - anything that can automate and speed up the process. Right now, if you were to order a Celtic wedding ring from me, between the handcrafting process, the hallmarking process, and the shipping process, you are looking at three weeks for a turnaround time."

"These days, many clients want you to be a brick-and-mortar shop and to have the product in stock as they are looking for a quick turnaround. We get emails from customers saying, 'I'm getting married next week.' I think to myself, 'You're buying your wedding rings now?' To that end, I think that AI and 3D printing will be used much more, especially by the larger manufacturers."

His worries aren't totally unfounded; according to research done by SmarTech Analysis, the 3D-printed jewelry market could hit \$1 billion by the start of the next decade. But whether or not such a shift would mean the end of traditional, hand-crafted Celtic jewelry



is in the hands of the client, Forsythe believes.

"A little part of me would prefer if that didn't happen. I like the idea that it takes time. These are artisans, and they do really great work. You should celebrate the artist as much as the piece. I know that several of the manufacturing companies have downsized in staff, but upscaled in production, and that is due to technology. If it continues on that trajectory, I would be concerned. As soon as you lose that human touch, people will notice. That is where it could fall, especially with jewelry."

"Don't get me wrong, I'll upgrade the website with the latest technologies and so on. Anything that improves the experience. But when it comes to the quality of the product, I don't think that needs to be tampered with in any way, shape, or form, not even to speed up deadlines. It is okay to wait three weeks and plan when you are ordering a wedding band for a lifetime or several."

*"You want to know that
someone has taken the time
and care to create this piece.
It has more meaning."*

"Technology has its place, for sure" continues McAlpin, "and design is one of those places. I have not met Don in person yet, but

technology has allowed us to correspond and share design ideas. And as design tools are so much more advanced now, a good design can speed up and aid in what would still be a handcrafted piece."

However, he stresses, automation and quick turnaround are no replacement for the quality that the product demands.

"As long as the quality remains high, having a machine capable of stamping out 100 of something - with designs that needn't be changed or tweaked in any way so that they can be available to the masses - is not a bad thing."

As far as Kimble's concerned, these sorts of questions don't haunt him.

"I'm pretty sure that when I am dead and gone this line will be gone. I do not have anybody working for me. I do not have any relatives that are interested in taking over the business. I'm 72 now. I might hopefully have another good 10 years. As far as getting into new technology, I'm probably not going to be delving into anything high-tech anytime soon. I'm not in any big hurry to run out and buy new equipment when what I have has been working well for the last 50 years."

"You do it for the love of the work," he adds. "If I can cover all my costs, make some people happy, and maybe make a few bucks to pay for my golf, then I am a happy man."



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Keith Jack

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I am Scottish. I was brought up in a small town called Crieff in Perthshire.

I started my company when I moved to Vancouver from Scotland in 2008. I worked by myself with around 35 of my first designs, which I began supplying to small Irish boutique stores in the USA. The company has since grown to 10 staff, over 1500 unique designs, and we now supply around 300 stores across North America with our jewellery.

We create heirloom quality jewellery - I like to think of it as wearable art - using Sterling Silver, sometimes mixed with either 10k or 18k yellow gold. We also make solid 10k, 14k, and 18k rings, pendants, earrings, etc. I make jewellery for men and women and, these days, a lot of unisex. I make jewellery that I love - bracelets, cuffs, wedding rings, engagements rings, dress rings, signet rings, chains, pendants, and more. I use both natural diamonds and lab-

grown diamonds, as well as sapphires, pearls, rubies, topaz, emeralds, etc.

This is a niche market, and I decided at the very beginning to strive for the best - not necessarily the most expensive - but the coolest designs, and the finest quality; something that I am proud to put my name on. We have won many awards for best Celtic design over the last 15 years.

We travel to trade shows across North America throughout the year, showcasing our products to buyers, including jewellery stores, Scottish and Irish boutiques, gift shops and more. We also have our own flag ship boutique / studio in North Vancouver where we offer our complete collection of jewellery, alongside visual art from local artists. All our items are available via our website also.

There is a strong Celtic movement across the western world these days. As more people

research their roots and heritage, they are discovering that the Celts were all over Europe 2,000 years ago. People who had no idea that Celtic culture was about more than just Ireland and Scotland are discovering that they also have Celtic heritage. As such, we need to collectively promote our Celtic culture at every opportunity while, at the same time, promote the lesser-known countries across central and eastern Europe with strong Celtic backgrounds and history.

I love what I do and can't imagine retiring. Creating jewellery that has connection and special meaning to people all over the world is extremely gratifying. We are planning to open new markets in the U.K., Ireland, Europe, and Japan over the coming years.







*Excludes Frozen Foods



Gary Maclean's Scottish Kitchen



World-renowned culinary craftsman, teacher, TV star, and author Gary Maclean has dished up delicacies for a who's-who of international dignitaries over the years, including celebrities, politicians, business executives, and most notably, the Queen. Here, Scotland's National Chef opens up about his past, present, future, and his new book, *The Scottish Kitchen*.

What are your roots?

My roots are firmly in Scotland, I grew up in a place called Knightswood, in Glasgow, in the best decade ever - the 1980s. I grew up in a very busy house with loads of siblings and great friends; there was never a dull moment. I honestly can't remember being indoors.

When and why did you first become interested in the culinary arts?

My interest in food began in my first year of high school. I was good at home economics, but I wasn't very good or engaged in other

subjects. My teacher at the time suggested that I consider becoming a chef. Growing up in Glasgow at that time, I had never eaten at a restaurant so it didn't even occur to me that I could get paid to cook. From that moment on I, literally, haven't looked back.

Are they the same reasons you do it today?

I am fortunate that I found a career in food - a subject that I love and one that has looked after me and my family since I was a teenager. The older I get the more fascinated I am by the opportunities that it has afforded me. Although I have been a chef for almost four decades, my jobs over the years have been very different; from running some of the biggest hospitality companies in Scotland to working as an educator and managing my own businesses.

How have you grown in that vocation over that time?

I have worked hard, yes, but I have also been extremely lucky as I have been surrounded

by incredible people who have inspired, trained, and supported me through thick and thin. I also could not have done any of this without my wife Sharon, who I met in culinary school. We have six kids, and we just celebrated our 31st wedding anniversary. She has been my rock and has enabled me to focus on my career.

What are the challenges of the gig?

I am sure everyone in hospitality will have the same answer to this - the long hours. For most of my career, I have worked 6 days a week, and 5 of those shifts are 12 to 14 hours per day. Having said that, the hospitality sector has changed, as employers are more focused on developing better environments for work/life balance and mental health. I sometimes joke that I didn't get a weekend off until I was 46 years old.

What are the rewards?

The hospitality industry has given me everything. I've worked in every corner of the

world and met some of the most famous people on the planet - from the Queen to the biggest stars in cinema, music, and sports. I have cooked in some incredible locations, including Buckingham Palace, Number 10 Downing Street, the jungles of Colombia, and the streets of Calcutta. I have also worked in British Consulates in Europe, Cuba, and North America. I have taught in India, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the USA. As if that wasn't enough, I became a TV star and writer and was honoured to be named Scotland's National Chef. I have even received the Mark Twain Award from the Saint Andrew's Society of New York State. Little did I think that when I left school at the age of 15 - without any qualifications whatsoever - that I would have been able to do what I have done.

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

I would say that it is inspirational. I get inspired by ingredients and then go into a development process. Using quality food makes the job easy. However, sometimes I worry that I miss a regional dish that I was unaware of, so I will speak with my friends about the foods that they grew up with.

What inspired the new book?

I have long been fascinated by history and the history of food. Everything we eat has a story. I am also an avid collector of books and noticed that there was no Scottish book written that brings traditional dishes and recipes to the modern kitchen. I also wanted to write a book for the North American market. I have travelled to the USA and Canada over 50 times and have worked with Scottish societies, and have made many friends since then. My first working trip to Chicago was 23 years ago and I fell in love with North America. I also fell in love with Scotland - seeing Scotland through the eyes of the North American Scots made me proud to be from my country.

What was the process like?

This was a lockdown project for me, and I started writing the book before I secured a publishing deal. I felt it was necessary to document the recipes of Scotland - not only from a historical point of view but to also feature food from my childhood. I spent a



lot of time speaking to fellow chefs, butchers, and bakers to make sure that I covered absolutely everything.

What can readers expect?

It is a beautiful book, full of stunning pictures of Scottish food and incredible landscapes. The recipes are very detailed but simple to execute, and there is a little bit of history and background to every dish. I think readers will be surprised at the depth of Scottish cuisine.

What makes a good meal?

As a little experiment, I often ask people what was the best meal that they have ever had in their whole lives, and the answer is almost the same - who they were with, the location, and, lastly, the food. Memorable meals encompass many things, but the most vital ingredient is good company.

What advice might you have for younger people looking to the culinary arts as a career?

My advice to anyone looking for a career in hospitality is to get qualified, and then work in the best places for nice people. Make sure that you pick your jobs wisely and stick with it.

What are your thoughts on Scottish cuisine today?

I have seen a real change in the last 10 years all over the world. People are embracing local produce and getting back to their roots. Scotland is no different in that regard; in restaurants across the country, you will now find an abundance of Scottish dishes celebrating local seasonal foods.

How can it be improved?

From a restaurateur's point of view, we are on the correct path. As a nation, however, we need to better understand the importance of teaching our kids to cook.

What's next on your culinary agenda?

It has been a very busy year so far, and I have already visited North America a number of times - attending Highland games and other festivals and events. The rest of 2023 will be more of the same, which is fine by me as I love sharing my joy of food with new people.

www.garymacchef.com



THE CELTIC CHEF *with Gary Maclean*

Smoked Haddock Mac 'n' Cheese

I have always considered mac 'n' cheese to be a Scottish dish. I know it contains pasta, but growing up and watching my mum make it from a tartan package, what else would I think? Marshalls has been making pasta for over a hundred years, and, what's more, it's made in Glasgow. Macaroni is a staple for most families in Scotland, and we are now five generations in, using Glasgow's own. For years, I have put it on menus in Scottish restaurants I have opened, calling it Scotland's very own pasta dish. Changing it up a little by adding smoked haddock gives it a luscious lift. If you are feeling indulgent, lobster is also a fantastic addition.

Sauce Ingredients

1 small onion
1 bay leaf (optional)
2 cloves (optional)
2 cups (500ml) whole milk
9oz (250g) pale smoked haddock
Butter 2oz (50g)
All-purpose flour 2oz (50g)
Cheddar cheese (grated)
Salt and pepper

Sauce Instructions

Peel your onion. Then, using the cloves, pierce the bay leaf onto the onion. Place the studded onion into a small pot and cover with the milk. Next, remove any additional bones from the haddock and place the fillets into the milk. This process will cook the haddock and flavor the milk, which will, in turn, flavour the whole dish. Slowly bring the milk to a simmer; turn off the heat and allow the studded onion and the haddock to infuse. Melt the butter in another small pan, then add flour and mix to form a thick paste, called a roux. Carefully remove the haddock and set aside. Meanwhile, cook the roux for 3 to 4 minutes; slowly add the warm flavored milk and then the Cheddar cheese. Stir continuously while adding the milk and cheese until you achieve a smooth sauce with the consistency of thick whipping cream. If you add the milk a little at a time, you will avoid making a lumpy sauce. Simmer for 10 minutes over very low heat to prevent burning the sauce, stirring every minute or so. Once cooked, cover with plastic wrap or parchment paper to stop it from skinning.

Pasta & Vegetable Ingredients

1 teaspoon of oil
2 leeks (finely sliced)
9oz (250g) macaroni
3½oz (100g) cheddar cheese (grated)
4 tablespoons white breadcrumbs

Pasta & Vegetable Instructions

Heat the oil in a large, lidded pan over low heat. Add the leeks, cover, and cook for 5 minutes until tender. Meanwhile, cook the macaroni in a large pan of boiling salted water as per the package instructions until al dente. The pasta shouldn't be cooked until completely soft, as it will continue to cook when baked. Drain and set aside. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Add the sauce to the cooked leeks with half of the cheese. Add the cooked pasta while gently folding in the cooked smoked haddock and place into an ovenproof baking dish. Top with the remaining cheese and scatter the breadcrumbs over the top. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until golden and bubbling around the edges. Serve immediately.

Biadh math! Gary • www.garymacchef.com



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The 2010s were a heady time for the Scotch Whisky Industry. With global demand for single malt booming, more new distilleries opened in that decade than any other since the 1890s. On current trend, however, the 2020s might give them a run for their money.

One of the first of these new waves of distilleries to open was Wolfburn, whose stills ran with spirit for the first time on Robbie Burns Day, 2013.

Wolfburn was established in Thurso, the northernmost mainland town in Scotland, which looks across the tempestuous Pentland Firth towards the Orkney Islands. An earlier distillery, also known as Wolfburn, operated a few hundred meters from the site of the current distillery between 1820 and around 1837. Nothing remains of it today, save for a sad pile of stones. Both distilleries took their name from the Wolf Burn, their water source.

Wolves were once common in Scotland, especially in Caithness and the northern Highlands. Even though the last of the creatures were killed off centuries ago, their legacy continued in local culture and place names. Wolfburn's emblem is inspired by a sketch of a wolf from the 1600s, when they were more common. A sighting of the related, mythical sea-wolf was believed to bring good luck to those who saw it.

It is no easy thing to open a new distillery, and it is not for the faint of heart or those with shallow pockets. As I have noted more than a few times over the years in this column, starting a whisky distillery from scratch is a daunting and expensive undertaking. The startup costs to build or repurpose a building and kit it out can be substantial. But the big-

ger challenge is operating the distillery and laying down production for years without income, while waiting for the spirit to mature.

In Scotland, as in most of the world, the spirit must have matured at least 3 years in an oak cask before you can legally call it whisky.

And that is just the bare minimum - few established distilleries bottle anything under 10 years of age. And while there have been exceptions, there are few 3-year-old whiskies worth writing home about. Many new distilleries have released gins or spirit drinks to help pay the bills, while others, including Wolfburn, have sold cask futures to help with their operating costs.



Wolfburn Distillery was financed and built by the Caithness-based Aurora Brewing consortium. In 2011, after locating the old distillery site, they began negotiating the purchase of a flat piece of nearby land with access to the Wolf Burn. The land sale was

finalized in May of 2012, and construction on the site began in August of that year. The fact that they were already laying down spirit by January, 2013 is almost hard to fathom.

Wolfburn is one of Scotland's smallest distilleries, producing just 135,000 liters of spirit per annum. By way of comparison, Glenlivet and Glenfiddich each produce more than 50,000 liters every day. Most of the roughly 30-odd distilleries to open in the last two decades have also been relatively small, catering their production towards the growing demand for single malt Scotch whisky, as opposed to blends. Most of Wolfburn's production is unpeated, but they also distill a lightly peated spirit.

The distillery has an established core range of expressions, including peated and unpeated offerings, all of which are at least 46%, without added colouring or chill filtration. Wolfburn hit a significant milestone in 2023, with the release of their first 10-year-old single malt. Although the 10 Year will be a continuously available expression, the first release will be limited in distribution.

Wolfburn offers tours Monday-Friday, and visitors are encouraged to book ahead. The distillery is rather remote, even by Scottish standards, unless you are driving the North Coast 500 (a route circling the Northern Highlands), or trying to catch a ferry to the Orkneys, it's likely going to be a bit out of your way. This is a part of Scotland few people see, but it is worth the effort. The coastlines are stunning, and the winding roads are invigorating. And who knows, maybe you'll even catch sight of a sea-wolf!

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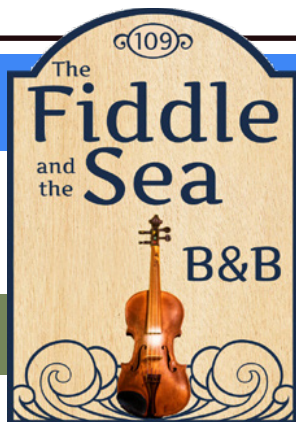
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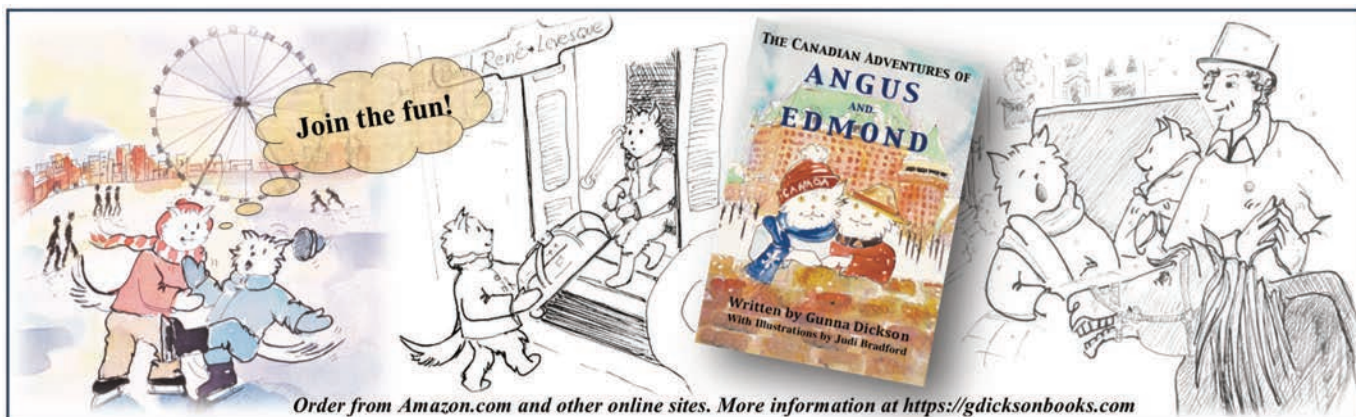
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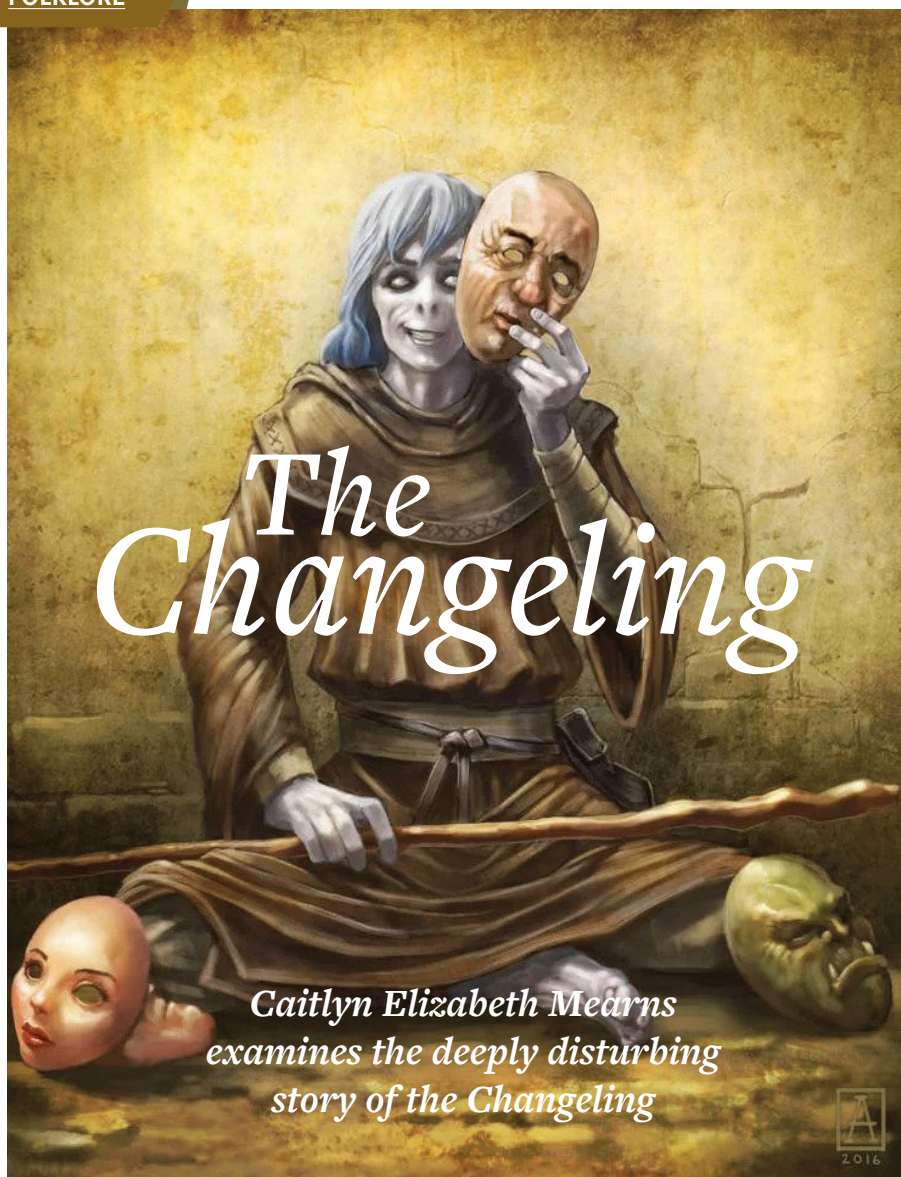
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There is something off about the Doyle girl. The whole town knows it. You can hear them murmuring at the pub, late at night, when they think that no one is listening.

"She ain't right," they say, their voices laced with worry and whiskey. "She just ain't right."

It is something about her eyes, they say. Or about the way she cries too much, or the way she is always sick. Even her family started acting differently, like they were hiding something.

Then, from a dark lit corner of the room, someone says the word - "Changeling" - and the space falls silent.

The chronicle of the Changeling is hundreds of years old but remains popular across the Celtic lands to this day. It is a simple story of exchange - the act of replac-

ing someone for someone else who is both similar and distinctively different at once.

The Changeling is a fairy creature which, in most cases, takes the place of a human child who has been abducted by the fae folk. Often, children become servants to the fae, but they are also taken for their beauty or as an act of revenge. In some cases, they are snatched simply because of the fae's hatred of humans.

There are also adult versions of the Changeling story also, in which the fairies will abduct a young adult or new mother. Taking a young adult is usually done for marriage purposes, while the taking of a new mother supports the nursing of the fairy young. In either case, the aim is to create a stronger bloodline among the fairies. Adult Changelings are often described as an "enchanted log" - created to look exactly like the

human whose place they have taken.

While there are common threads woven throughout all these tales, the fairy creature now living among the humans is discernibly different, either an altered physical appearance or a drastic shift in personality - frightening for both the immediate family and the townsfolk.

Interestingly, and despite its deep mythology, the dark tales and history of Changelings are grounded in truth.

Changelings were often used to explain away unknown illness, particularly in cases of young children and women.

By way of example, we can look to Ireland.

In 1895, a woman by the name of Bridget Cleary - a dressmaker and egg seller from Co. Tipperary - was tortured and murdered by burning by her own husband, Michael Cleary, who believed her to be a Changeling. He was right; in the days leading up to her murder, she took ill (likely from pneumonia) and was also seen leaving an egg offering at a fairy site known as Kilenagranagh. This, and that fact that Bridget was an incredibly intelligent and fashionable woman, led many to believe she had been taken by the fairies and replaced with a Changeling.

Similarly, there is the tale of Michael Leary, a young child who died by drowning in Co. Kerry in 1826 at the hands of his parents. Leary had been quite sick for most of his life, and his family - seeking guidance - turned to a local woman named Ann Roach, who claimed that she had "supernatural abilities." Roach told the Leary family to bathe the young boy in the River Flesk each morning as a way to "put the fairy out of it." On the third morning, the family held him beneath the water for too long. Interestingly, this story was the inspiration for the bestselling 2017 novel *The Good People* by Australian author Hannah Kent.

There are many other narratives in the vast canon of Changeling legend, both known and unknown, from across the seven Celtic nations.

For today's readers, the story of the Changeling has evolved into a much larger conversation - one that touches on misogyny, ableism, and more. We can only hope that the lessons learned from the lives of Bridget Cleary, Michael Leary and the little Doyle girl remind us that, despite our differences, the ties that bind us together are stronger than the things that tear us apart.

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