

the celtic connection

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MARCH 2015



PHOTO: Catholine Butler

GERRY O'NEIL and his magnificent team of shire horses all dressed in green will lead the St. Patrick's Day parade in downtown Vancouver on Sunday, March 15.

[For more about CelticFest Vancouver 2015, see page 6]

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



HOLLYWOOD actor Michael Sheen delivered a fiery anti-austerity speech on St. David's Day in Tredegar, South Wales, the birthplace of Aneurin Bevan. He quotes the Welsh Labour Party politician who established the British National Health Service in 1946 and who was a lifelong champion of social justice and the rights of working people.

[For more, see page 30]



The Return of Spring at St. Patrick's Day



At the surface, Saint Patrick's Day is an Irish festival. Another look reveals the deeper reason for its enduring popularity – resilience.

By CYNTHIA WALLENTINE

St. Patrick's Day is a celebration of things quaint, historic, cultural and noble. It is a day that captures the imagination, and holds it fast.

Ostensibly the feast day of a Catholic saint, St. Patrick's Day floats atop an occasion far older than mankind – the vernal equinox.

Observed since prehistory, this balance of day and night was a portent of better weather, longer days and the retreat of starvation.

This year, the vernal equinox occurs on Friday, March 20 at 3:45 PM PDT.

From its celestial height, the balance of days seems magic.

When grounded in the story of a mortal man made saint, the magic is brought to life in wonder tales. Magic becomes miracle.

More intimate still are the struggles of the mortal man himself, Patricius Magonus Sucatus. A slave in his teens, Patricius later turned missionary in a foreign land where he later died, after years of work and struggle.

This man could live today and earn our respect for his passion in the service of others.

Halfway between mortal and myth reside the symbols of the season. The wearin' of the green is an Irish tradition, but speaks to the mystery and fertility associated with the greening of the world at spring.

The trickery and charms of the wee folk narrate the elusive shifting of boundaries and moments in human life when we flirt with destiny or settle for fate.

It is these tales and traditions that the Irish Diaspora carried upon their exodus from Ireland. A hard life lay in wait for those who survived the ships from Ireland to the United States and Canada.

Wave after wave of Irish immigrants lived the hard life. Some prospered, some did not.

In common with immigrants of today, these people personify resilience, the concerted determination to live and make a better life for themselves and descendants – to persevere.

It is the nature of the season of spring, to push on, ever forward, to find an opportunity for life and live it. One thousand years, one hundred years or one day ago, Irish or not, we look to the skies, we look to the road ahead – and we press on.



BITTER memories endure 30 years after the end of Welsh coal miners' strike on March 3, 1985. [Read more on page 30]



[Artwork: Hamish Burgess]

AFTER an amazing 50 years of touring and entertaining with their irrepressible Irish charm, The Irish Rovers will soon be a rovin' no more. The band is now on their final western Canada tour. Pictured above is the cover of their new triple disc CD *The Irish Rovers - 50 Years*.

[For more, see page 20]

2015 SEATTLE IRISH FESTIVAL
March 12-15
[Full details, Pages 28 & 29]

WIN FREE TICKETS

Win free tickets to see **Spirit of The West** at the Commodore Ballroom Vancouver, on March 14 (see page 4 for details). Entry by: March 12. Mark your entry: Spirit of the West.

Win free tickets to Vancouver CelticFest to see: **April Verch (Ottawa Valley step-dancer) w/guests Elsay** at the Annex (825 Seymour Street, 2nd floor), March 16, doors open 7 PM. Show 8 PM (see page 8 for details). Entry by: March 13. Mark your entry: Verch.

Win free tickets to see **Zakir Hussain's Celtic Connections** at the Chan Centre at UBC, on March 21 (see page 7 for details). Entry by: March 18. Mark your entry: Zakir.

Win a free CD by **Derek Warfield & The Young Wolfe Tones**, *Let Ye All Be Irish Tonight*. Entry by March 18. Mark your entry CD.

Entries by e-mail only. Mark the name of the event on your entry, including your name and daytime telephone number. (Only one entry per person.) Send to: cbutler@telus.net.

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THE COMMITMENTS

DOORS 6:30PM
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MARCH 17TH

U2 RATTLE AND HUM

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Solar eclipse will plunge UK into twilight

LONDON – The most spectacular eclipse of the sun for 15 years will plunge Britain into twilight for two hours this month.

In a rare astronomical alignment the moon will pass directly between the sun and the earth, blocking out most of the light from around 8:40 AM GMT on March 20.

Northern Scotland will have the best view of the partial eclipse, where more than 98 percent of the sun will be covered. For London and the South East it will be around 85 percent.

Dr. Edward Bloomer, an astronomer at the Royal Observatory Greenwich, said the eclipse would be spectacular because the moon was closer to the earth than it had been for 18 and a half years.

"This March there is an exact alignment so nearly all of the light will be blocked out."

The place in Britain that will see the best eclipse is the west coast of the Isle of Lewis, close to Aird Uig. There 98 percent of the sun will be obscured at mid-eclipse at around 9:36 AM.

Viewers on Skye and Orkney could see around 97 percent of the sun covered. But anyone wishing to see a total solar eclipse will have to visit the Faroes or Northern Scandinavia, where the sun will be totally covered for around two minutes.

Dr. Steve Bell, of the HM Nautical Almanac Office, said, "The path of totality lies well to the northwest of the UK, making landfall over the Faroe Islands and Svalbard as totality moves towards the North Pole.



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st. patrick's day party



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Friday, March 20

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Sunday, March 22

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Saturday, March 28

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Tickets & Info (604) 736-3022

Across the Universe to Planet Folk and Back!

VANCOUVER – Star-date: 20150221. Planet Folk. Somewhere a long way from here. A darkened room full of expectant explorers, all a little groggy from traveling in space and time – and with their ears brim full of music, music, music.

The lights come up, our intrepid Canadian leader – one **Aengus Finnan** - reaches the podium and introduces his fellow country man, **Colonel Chris Hadfield**, NASA astronaut, engineer, and musician.

Chris takes the assembled “chosen” on a remarkable journey, from launching pad at Cape Kennedy, through the stratosphere and out into space.....floating in a tin can, as the David Bowie song goes.

Chris recorded that song – *Space Oddity* – inside the International Space Station.

Bowie told him later that it had him in tears, and that it was the most moving rendition of the song he'd ever heard.

(Chris had been taught the chords by PEI singer **Lennie Gallant** a few weeks earlier, according to Lennie's nephew, Rowen, who mentioned this during the official showcase of his band **Ten Strings & A Goatskin** the night before Chris' keynote address. You can catch this fine young trad trio at **The Rogue** on May 30, by the way.)

Chris repeatedly emphasized the importance of music as a communication medium across time, space and language.

“Give me a guitar and within 10 minutes I could have any people anywhere on the planet smiling and joining in with a song,” he quipped.

With his faithful hinged-neck Larrivee travel guitar velcroed to his space “bunk,” he would compose songs, sing and share music with Russian cosmonauts aboard the I.S.S.

Back on earth he frequently teams up with **Col. Kady Coleman** on flute in his acoustic quartet, which showcased later that day.

Kady plays on **The Chieftains'** 50th anniversary CD / DVD *Voice Of Ages*, playing a slow air on flute while floating around that tin can, before **Paddy Moloney** joins in and the band takes over.

It was a magical, inspirational keynote address, illustrated with slides and movies and anecdotes – and a little music too.

It made our 1,500 mile journey thoroughly worthwhile – even if we hadn't heard any great music!

But of course, Margaret and I heard heaps of great music that weekend, from Quebec, Wales, Tennessee, PEI, Teesside, Vancouver, New Zealand, and even Estonia (oh, those Estonian bagpipes!!)

Crash-landing back on earth was – thankfully – a lot less traumatic than Chris' customary descent into the desert



By
**STEVE
EDGE**

THE ROGUE FOLK CLUB



DONEGAL'S magnificent Altan make a welcome return to these parts – at North Vancouver's Centennial Theatre on March 19.

of Kazakstan (a soft landing in Seattle and a drive up I-5 is much easier to bear!).

Like Chris, we brought home musical memories and new friendships from **Folk Alliance 2015** (subtitled, Planet Folk).

But we were soon thrust back into the maelstrom of life on The Edge, with stellar concerts featuring some of the finest musicians on planet earth at The Rogue – and stages beyond – a radio Fundrive and festivals of Quebecois and Celtic music – enough to fill a space flight journal or two!

Within 36 hours of “splashdown” we were hosting the marvellous soul singer **Karen Savoca** and B.C.'s **Shari Ulrich** at The Rogue.

The next night **Lunasa** introduced their new fiddler, **Colin Farrell** (not *that* one! This guy is from Manchester, and he's brilliant!) at the **Blueshore Stage** at Capilano University.

Next came two extraordinary nights with Canadian songwriter **Fred Eaglesmith** and his travelling roadshow – with my **CiTR Fundrive** edition “live” on the morning between.

The next day we set out for **Festival du Bois** in Maillardville, with great sets by the aforementioned **Lennie Gallant**, by B.C. fiddle prodigy **Jocelyn Pettit**, and Quebec's wonderful “gold diggers” **Les Chercheurs d'Or**, and more.

There was also a lovely rolling session involving – amongst others – **Michael Viens** and **Rosie Carver** from **Blackthorn** with local accordionista **John Krieger**, fiddler **Deborah Jackson**, two visiting Breton musicians from Seattle, and the wonderful young fiddler **Michael Burnyeat**.

Now I'm writing this column in the lobby at Cap, listening to Welsh troubadour **Martyn Joseph** through the in-

house speakers.

Tomorrow it's **Craig Cardiff's** sold out show at CBC Studio 700, then another four hour radio show on Saturday on www.citr.ca, a contra dance that evening, and the unlikely yet wondrous blend of Brazilian and Appalachian music concocted by **Matuto** from NYC at The Rogue the next night!

A “diet” of (**Arrogant**) **Worms** on **March 13** at St. James Hall (3214 West 10th Avenue) heralds the arrival of the heart of **CelticFest Vancouver**.

This includes, a Ceilidh at The Imperial on Main Street on the 14th featuring **The Paperboys** and **Mark Sullivan** and co., and the St. Patrick's Day parade on the 15th.

Roguelele (shillelagh?) night is next, on the 17th, with 150 ukulele players jamming and singing along.

On **March 19** Donegal's magnificent **Altan** make a welcome return to these parts – at North Vancouver's Centennial Theatre, where they last played here in 1999!

Their brand new CD, *The Widening Gyre*, is named after a line from a Yeats poem – sung on the new record by guest vocalist **Mary Chapin Carpenter**.

Altan have played at The Rogue seven times, dating back to 1989 at the Wise Hall.

Mairead ni Mhaonaigh stills sounds impeccable on fiddle and her gorgeously delicate voice has lost none of its resonance and beauty to these 26 years.

Ciaran Tourish adds fiddle and **Martin Tourish** is the new accordion player in the band. The rhythm section is **Ciaran Curran** on bouzouki and **Daithi Sproule** on guitar (and vocals).

The new CD may have been recorded in Nashville with such luminaries as **Tim O'Brien**, **Alison Brown**, **Darol Anger** and **Jerry Douglas** joining them to explore the common musical ground between Ireland and Appalachia, but it still sounds quintessentially **Altan** – honed in the hills and loch shores of Co. Donegal.

Come and feel the Emerald Isle filling the sonic landscape of the Centennial Theatre on **March 19!**

Tickets are available from the Centennial Theatre box office (604) 984-4484, as well as at Prussin Music on Broadway & Dunbar and at all Rogue events.

Old Time music with deliciously beautiful harmonies will fill St. James Hall on **March 20** with Victoria's **The Sweet Lowdown** – three lovely young women who were a big hit at The **Mission Folk Festival** last summer and who have become the darlings of the BBC since then.

On **Sunday, March 22** come and hear the new sound of Irish trad. with the Limerick quintet **Goitse** at The Rogue at St. James Hall.

Kevin Crawford of Lunasa assures me that it's pronounced “g'witchá” (it means “come here” in Gaelic, apparently).

This superb young band recently won Trad Group of the Year in the Live Ireland Awards, and was voted Group of the Year by the Chicago Irish American News.

Based on the powerful rhythms of All-

[Continued next page]

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LIMERICK quintet Goitse play The Rogue at St. James Hall on Sunday, March 22. This young trad band recently won Trad Group of the Year in the Live Ireland Awards.

[Continued from page 4]

Ireland Champion bodhran player **Colm Phelan** and the driving guitar of **Colm O'Kane**, the band features **Aine McGeeney** on vocals and fiddle, accordionist **Tadhg O'Meachair** and mandolin / banjo virtuoso **James Harvey**.

Their 2012 CD *Transformed* was produced by Irish legend **Donal Lunny** and met with worldwide acclaim.

Their follow up, *Tall Tales & Misadventures*, has just been released. I'm really looking forward to seeing them on their first Canadian tour.

It's certainly going to be a wild ride this

month! Fasten your seat-belts and come orbit the musical globe at The Rogue – and the CelticFest – in the green month of March in this green and pleasant land on the left coast of Canada!

Big thanks to NASA Cols. Hadfield and Coleman for casting planet earth in such a fascinating new light, and for underlining the incredible power and universality of music.

In these often troubled times music has the power to heal and unite and inspire us.

I'm listening now to the audience singing along with **Martyn Joseph**: "there's still a lot of love around here." There sure is!

Slainte
Steve

A Play, a pie & a pint for lunch

N. VANCOUVER – Inspired by the wildly popular Scottish theatre series that originated at the Oran Mor Theatre in Glasgow, Centennial Theatre is delighted to continue with the successful, new Lunchtime Theatre series, 'a Play, a Pie & a Pint' at 12 noon on Wednesday, March 18.

The performers are the well-known local North Shore Celtic Ensemble (NSCE). The Ensemble has been extremely well received in Aberdeen, Scotland, Washington State, Quebec and the Festival du Bois in B.C.

What started as a Celtic repertoire is now a spirited and dynamic mix of musical influences, including Celtic, classical, jazz and folk.

Through innovative music programs, artistic collaborations and community events such as this, the NSCE inspires kids to push themselves artistically and to explore who they are as musicians.

The energy, talent and charm of these young performers will have you tapping your feet and smiling widely long after the performance is over.

The performance will be followed by a meat or veggie pie for lunch provided by the Aussie Guy Pie and a beverage of choice in the theatre lobby.

Centennial Theatre is located at 2300 Lonsdale Avenue in North Vancouver, B.C. Tickets are \$20 and includes a play, a pie and a pint! Tickets available at the Centennial Theatre box office. Call (604) 984-4484 or online at: tickets.centennialtheatre.com.



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St. Patrick's Day Parade: Vancouver CelticFest



CELTICFEST'S jewel and most popular event, the 11th annual St. Patrick's Day parade livens up downtown Vancouver on Sunday, March 15, starting at 11 AM.

The parade route flows along Howe from Davie to Georgia Street drawing thousands of spectators, many decked out in their own take on this grand Irish tradition.

They cheer on a couple thousand lively parade participants: marching bands, Celtic music groups, acrobats, drill teams, Irish and Scottish youth dance

groups, and many others.

Vancouver's St. Patrick's Day parade welcomes people of all backgrounds and cultures to share in this special and fun event honouring Ireland's patron saint.

THE PARADE ROUTE

The St. Patrick's Day parade begins at Howe and Davie Streets at 11 AM, and proceeds north on Howe to Georgia

Street, ending at Georgia and Granville Streets.

CELTIC VILLAGE

The good times continue throughout the day on Sunday, March 15.

After the parade, the Celtic Village is the place to go.

On the weekend of March 14-15, the Celtic Village fills Granville Street between Robson and Nelson with music, dance, fun and frolic, food – and shopping, too!

This free weekend-long street fair features music from some of the hottest



PHOTO: Catholine Butler

DON'T MISS *The Celtic Connection* entry at this year's St. Patrick's Day parade with our wonderful leprechaun who dispenses sweets to children and does the occasional dance with the crowd. We also have St. Patrick who offers greetings and blessings to all and a team of little fairies who distribute free copies of the March issue of *The Celtic Connection*.

Celtic music groups around on Doolin's Music Stage on Granville.

Folks can hear fiery folk quartet, Elsay, ballads from Victoria's Knacker's Yard, the traditional Irish sounds of Crikey Mor, Cape Breton's Troy MacGillivray and Kimberly Fraser, the West Coast Fiddlers, Sarah Anne Chisholm, and the Jocelyn Pettit Band.

Look for the captivating antics of street performer The Green Man as he delights passersby in the Village.

Academie Duello returns to showcase their amazing brand of sword fighting, and the Society for Creative Anachronism entertains in medieval costume: playing musical instruments, singing, spinning, and playing ancient board games.

Village visitors can shop at the Street Market for a vast array of Celtic treasures and the works of gifted artisans, and sample from a wide selection of food and fare. Friends and families can gather and wander, soaking in that special Celtic spirit all weekend long.

Throughout the March 14-15 weekend, Tom Lee Music Hall on Granville Street hosts a series of fascinating (and, again, free) CelticFest performances and workshops.

The Demonstration Team from the Vancouver Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society performs, along with the O'Connor-O'Brien School of Irish Dance.

**VANCOUVER
CELTICFEST
St. Pat's Parade
Sunday, March 15**

The Dylan Thomas Circle of Vancouver presents the one-man play *Dylan Thomas 100* (1914-2014).

Workshops include: Kalissa Landa's Fiddle Workshop and Fiachra O'Regan's Uilleann Pipes and Whistle Workshop.

The festival presents twelve jam-packed days with dozens of free and ticketed concerts and events.

In addition to the St. Patrick's Day parade and Celtic Village, other highlights include: Delhi 2 Dublin (March 15, Imperial); award-winning Irish play *The Weir* (March 14, Billy Bishop Legion); CelticFest Ceilidh with The Paperboys, Mark Sullivan and Andy Hillhouse, and Fásta (Imperial, March 14); and April Verch (March 16, Annex).

CelticFest program guides are available at selected Starbucks Coffee locations throughout the Lower Mainland and at festival venues.

For more parade information along with full festival & event ticket details, visit the festival's website at www.celticfestvancouver.com.

CELTICFEST VANCOUVER MARCH 6-17

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The Paperboys • Fásta
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Saturday, March 14 • Imperial



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with guests
De Danaan Irish Dancers
Friday, March 13 • Christ Church Cathedral



DELHI 2 DUBLIN

with guests Troy MacGillivray and Mairi Rankin
Sunday, March 15 • Imperial



APRIL VERCH

with guests Elsay
Monday, March 16 • Annex



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Zakir Hussain brings his Celtic Connections to the Chan

VANCOUVER – Legendary tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain is revered around the world for his masterful talent on percussion and esteemed inter-cultural collaborations.

This March, he brings his acclaimed *Celtic Connections: The Pulse of the World* project to Vancouver's Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC for its Canadian debut.

Hussain's *Celtic Connections* project was initially created out of a commission he received for the opening of Glasgow's annual music festival in 2011.

Hussain assembled a group of brilliant Celtic artists, as well as Indian musicians **Rakesh Chaurasia** (bansuri player) and **Ganesh Rajagopalan** (Carnatic-style violinist), to develop a 90-minute program that was so well-received it was chosen by the UK Council of the Arts to play at the London 2012 pre-Olympic performances.

As the BBC reported, "It was a victorious opening concert for Celtic Connections 2011 – a storming beginning to the festival demonstrating that Indian and Celtic traditions have plenty of common ground." The group has since performed throughout the United States and India.

Now embarking on a North American

tour, the performance in Vancouver will feature a wonderfully talented group of Celtic musicians in addition to Hussain, Chaurasia and Rajagopalan.

Gracing the Chan Centre stage for the first time ever will be Ireland's famed **John Joe Kelly** on bodhrán; fiddle player **Charlie McKerron** of Scotland's Capercaillie; Scottish piper **Fraser Fiffeld**; Dublin based guitarist **Tony Byrne**; Scottish fiddle player **Patsy Reid** (formerly of the band Breabach); and French flautist **Jean-Michel Veillon**.

Hussain has said of the ensemble: "Musicians are the same the world over. There's no meter that hasn't been played, no rhythm that hasn't been composed."

"It's the musicians' own qualities that allow them to make music different – that's what's exciting about this project for me. It's fresh music sparked by the humanity of those involved."

The performance will highlight the distinctive percussive sounds of regions worlds apart, a mesmerizing collaboration between lively tabla beats and ethereal Celtic tunes.

"Celtic music has a beautiful spirituality to it that resonates very strongly with audiences," says Chan Centre co-managing director Joyce Hinton.

"Hussain has an impressive ability to seamlessly blend together Indian sounds conveyed through the tabla's deep and methodical beats with many different styles."

Zakir Hussain is hailed a national treasure in his home country of India and his contribution to world music is nothing short of staggering.

With a career that began at the age of 12, Hussain has collected countless honours and accolades, among them multiple Grammy Awards and the prestigious honour of the U.S. National Heritage Fellowship.

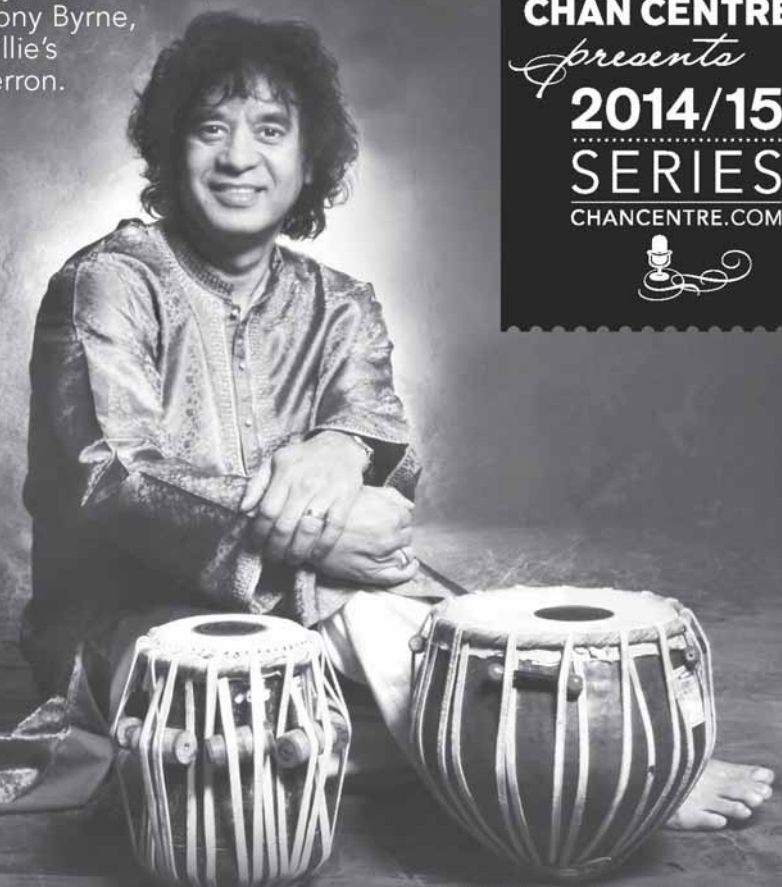
Considered one the greatest living musicians of our time, Hussain has collaborated with world-class artists such as George Harrison, Yo Yo Ma, Béla Fleck and The Grateful Dead.

While Hussain has graced the Chan Centre stage several times over the past decade and performed to sold out crowds with his Masters of Percussion ensemble, this new and innovative project is certain to amaze both lifelong fans and new audiences alike.

Zakir Hussain's Celtic Connections plays the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC (6265 Crescent Road) on Saturday, March 21 at 8 PM. Tickets start at \$36 and are available at chancentre.com.

Featuring Celtic musicians
John Joe Kelly, Fraser Fiffeld,
Patsy Reid, Tony Byrne,
and Capercaillie's
Charlie McKerron.

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A BRILLIANT fiddle wunderkind, exuberant step-dancer and silver-voiced singer, April Verch was immersed in folk music and dance practically from birth.

April Verch: Direct from the Ottawa Valley to Vancouver CelticFest

VANCOUVER – If you don't know fiddler, singer, and step dancer April Verch, not only are you about to be introduced to this extraordinary artist here – but you have a chance to see her live in concert at CelticFest Vancouver on March 16.

For lovers of traditional music played with passion, respect, and that special Verch quality – It's a concert you don't want to miss.

The story of how Verch came to be a brilliant interpreter of tradition is just as striking as the results.

She's of a generation far more likely to have spent its formative years taking in MTV than taking part in any sort of traditional music scene, and yet practically from birth she was immersed in folk music and dance from her native Ottawa Valley.

The area is a melting pot of Franco-Celtic flavors brought by the hard-working loggers who settled the area.

Ferried to dance-filled old-time gatherings and country and western jamborees by her music-loving parents, she followed her older sister into step-dancing at age three, and picked up the fiddle at age six.

Moving from exuberant step-dancer to fiddle wunderkind and silver-voiced singer, Verch started recording at 13.

By the time she graduated high school, she had won the Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle Championship and released a pair of albums.

This was followed by a year at Boston's prestigious Berklee College of Music and a win at the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition, which made her the first woman ever to take both of her country's two top contests.

Now on her milestone tenth album *The Newpart* (release: April 7, 2015), Verch digs deep into songs and tunes from the era before the mid-century heyday of bluegrass and folk.

Harkening back to vaudeville and beyond, Verch and her trio pare down their arrangements, highlighting the simple pleasures of upright bass, guitar, clawhammer banjo, mandolin, voices, fiddle.

At the heart lies Verch's delicate voice, energetic footwork, and stunning playing – a trifecta of talents.

She keeps the community-fired celebratory side of her music at the forefront, honing a keen awareness of how to engage contemporary listeners.

"It's all about touching people, about bringing them together in a community to celebrate music.

"I've understood that better and better as time has passed: how to take this music that is at the center of my life, and make it live and breathe for other people."

April Verch plays Annex (825 Seymour St., 2nd Floor) on Monday, March 16 as part of CelticFest Vancouver. Tickets at celticfestvancouver.com.

The Dubliners' singer Jim McCann has died aged 70

DUBLIN – The folk singer Jim McCann has died at the age of 70.

A member of The Dubliners from 1974 to 1979 he returned to the group for their 2002 re-union tour, but has been ill with throat cancer since then.

"He had a beautiful voice," said John Sheehan, the last remaining member of the original Dubliners today. "We travelled the world together and we always had great times together."

He had a big hit with the song *Grace* and as a member of the Dubliners he sang slow ballads like *Carrickfergus* and *Four Green Fields*.

As a young man, McCann attended University College Dublin as a student of medicine, but became interested in folk music during a summer holiday in Birmingham in 1964.

He began to perform in folk clubs in the area, and, upon his return to Dublin, he joined a group called the Ludlow Trio in 1965.

In the following year, the Ludlow Trio had a hit with their recording of Dominic Behan's *The Sea Around Us*, which reached number one in the Irish charts.

Following the Ludlow Trio's breakup, McCann released a second album, *McCanned*, made a television special called *Reflections of Jim McCann*, and then hosted a series called *The McCann Man*.

It was on *The McCann Man* that he



JIM McCANN

met fellow folk artist, Luke Kelly of The Dubliners. During this appearance, Kelly did his only televised performance of the Phil Coulter song *Scorn Not His Simplicity*, a song that he chose to perform sparingly out of respect to the subject matter (Coulter's intellectually disabled son).

McCann subsequently performed alongside Kelly in the original cast of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 1973, in the role of Peter.

In April 1974 Kelly asked McCann to join The Dubliners temporarily, to replace Ciaran Bourke during a period of illness.

However, he became a permanent member soon afterwards, when Ronnie Drew left the group to pursue a solo career.

McCann remained with The Dubliners until the end of 1979, during which he toured incessantly, also recording several albums with the group.

He did rejoin The Dubliners in 2002 for their 40th anniversary tour and later at Vicar Street in 2012 for their 50th.

MUSIC REVIEW



By CATHOLINE BUTLER

KILLARNEY About Time

The legendary Killarney have finally released their much anticipated CD, *About Time*. The recording had been in the works for over a year....and yes, it was about time.

Band member Michael Cronin said, "The title for the CD came about from our fans who had been waiting for a long time for its release.

"We bounced around a bunch of different titles but it always came back to *About Time*, mainly because whenever we told people we had an album in the works, they always said, 'it's about time'. The song list is a compilation from their vintage Celtic repertoire.

Anyone fortunate enough to attend the 'Hooley for The Connection' fundraiser for *The Celtic Connection* on February 15 at the Vancouver Fan Club would have had an opportunity to hear Killarney perform every track from this new release.

There is no doubt about it....they are a hard act to follow.

Recently I've been playing *About Time* in my car as I drive and the one song that stays in my head and keeps me humming for days is *The Galway Girl*.

Other tracks include: *The Kesh*; *Muirsheen Durkin*; *Fiddlers Green*; *Heave Away*; *Rambles In Spring*; *Lock Lomond*; *The Irish Rover*; *Fairytale of New York*; *The Bold O'Donoghue*; *Sally MacLennane*; *Denis Murphy and John Ryan's Polka*, and *Dear Old Donegal*.

Since 1985 and up until a year ago Killarney was the resident house band at the Blarney Stone in Gastown.

Their legions of fans will be delighted to know Killarney will be back at the Blarney Stone for St. Patrick's to continue the tradition.

There can be no doubt that over St. Patrick's celebrations, Killarney will be playing the reels and tunes from *About Time*.

REBECCA BLAIR



Harpist uses Irish dance to teach music workshop

VANCOUVER – Dance and music will come together at a Celtic harp workshop.

This retreat which runs from April 17 to 19 in the beautiful Silver Hills Retreat Centre, one hour east of Vernon.

Established 16 years ago by harpist Caroline McKay, this weekend class attracts harp students from all over the province.

This year she has invited notable local harpist, Rebecca Blair to be the instructor.

During the three days, Rebecca will focus on dance which lies at the heart of Celtic music.

She taps into her 15 years of Irish dancing experience to help demystify the dances' different rhythms so that harp students can breathe life into the melodies and add 'lilt' into their playing.

"So many students have learned the notes of a tune, but don't know how to express the rhythms," Rebecca says.

"I'll show them how to visualize the dance and translate it into their fingers."

Other topics covered at the workshop will include tips on practicing, arranging and improvisation.

Rebecca brings over 25 years of teaching and performing experience to this workshop.

Since moving to Vancouver in 1999, she has established a studio of harp students whose numbers have grown along with her reputation.

In addition to her teaching, Rebecca keeps a busy schedule of performing and recording.

Recently she joined the group Triskellion, a trio featuring well-known local musicians Rosie Carver and Michelle Carlisle.

Whether playing or teaching, Rebecca sees music as movement. "To me, playing and dancing are the same, so I love to share that magical experience with students and audiences."

To find out more about the upcoming workshop or Rebecca's upcoming performances go to her website at www.dancingharp.com.



TOP 10 CELTIC HITS FOR MARCH

Celt In A Twist is local contemporary Celtic radio heard weekly on AM 1470, CJVB in Vancouver.

www.worldbeatcanada.com.

The following is the *Celt In A Twist* Contemporary Celtic Top Ten:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Length of Space</i> by Kila - <i>Suas Sios</i> on Kila Records. | Chasse Galerie on Independent. |
| 2. <i>The Hunger & The Fight</i> by The Mahones - <i>The Hunger & The Fight</i> (Part 1) on Whiskey Devil Records. | 6. <i>The Ferryman</i> by Basco & DR Big Bad - <i>Live at DR Byen</i> on Go! Danish. |
| 3. <i>Nunca Jamas</i> by The Paperboys - <i>At Peace With One's Ghosts</i> on Independent. | 7. <i>The Tin Key</i> by Altan - <i>The Widening Gyre</i> on Compass. |
| 4. <i>Leaving of Liverpool</i> by Homeland - <i>That Show</i> on Independent. | 8. <i>Ta Se na La</i> by Firkin - <i>Finger in the Pie</i> on Pump Jump Records. |
| 5. <i>Chasse-Galerie</i> by MAZ - | 9. <i>Loch Lomond</i> by Firkin - <i>Finger in the Pie</i> on Pump Jump Records. |
| | 10. <i>Liliwiau</i> by 9Bach - <i>Tincian</i> - on Real World. |

Celt In A Twist Pick Of The Month:
The Paperboys - At Peace With One's Ghosts - (Independent)

Hozier unveils new video for *Someone New*

DUBLIN – Hozier has said he never imagined his Grammy-nominated track *Take Me to Church* would be played much on the radio and its success has surprised him.

The Bray-born singer-songwriter said, "I didn't think it would be played on radio. Just because it's not a radio pop song and it doesn't sound like the other stuff that radios [stations] play."

"I was very, very surprised by the success of this stuff because I made a conscious decision not to write music just to impress people. It's certainly encouraged me to trust myself more and trust my instincts a bit more and to go with my gut."

Take Me to Church was nominated for the Song of the Year award at the 2015 Grammys.

Hozier recently unveiled the new video for his new single *Someone New* which stars *Game of Thrones* and *The Tudors* star Natalie Dormer.

Dormer's appearance in the video is bound to draw a lot of attention from *Game of Thrones* fans as they eagerly await the next series, due to start back in April.

The promo was directed by Dormer's



HOZIER AND NATALIE DORMER on the set of his new music video *Someone New*.

fiancé, Irish director Anthony Byrne, and the treatment was written by Hozier's brother Jon Hozier Byrne and David Reilly at Stoneface Films.

Speaking about her involvement in the video, Dormer said, "I find Hozier's music always deals in the most visceral way with the contradictions that make us human."

"He is an incredibly talented lyricist and the most wonderful musician and vocalist."

"It was a joy to be a part of the *Someone New* video, which for me explores the struggle in all our heads between

the real and imaginary.

"It plays with ideas of how loneliness and isolation are two different things and the weight or lightness we can attach to loving another person."

Hozier's self-titled debut album released in October 2014 is nominated in the Meteor Choice Music Prize and his single *From Eden* is also nominated for the Meteor Choice Song of the Year. The awards ceremony takes place on March 5.

Hozier will support Foo Fighters at Slane Castle on May 30 and will also co-headline Longitude Festival this July in Marlay Park.

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Scottish Football looks better from a distance

EDINBURGH – It has been another trying month for Scottish sport and Scottish football in particular.

With Celtic exiting the UEFA Europa League (itself a kind of compensation for an earlier defeat in the Champions League) there are no Scottish teams left in any European competition. In fact, the others disappeared many months ago and at the earliest possible opportunity.

South of the border, massive amounts of cash are about to be pumped into the English Premier League, a result of a record-breaking television deal that was signed in early February. Scottish football will receive a pittance by comparison.

In the meantime Scotland's other club with a large following – Celtic's traditional rivals Rangers – is making headlines for its boardroom shenanigans rather than its performance on the pitch.

In short, the current state of Scottish club football is best summed up by the national poet Robert Burns: But, oh I backward cast my eye / On prospects drear / And forward, though I cannot see / I guess and fear.

Fortunately, palliation arrived in the form of a series I have been writing on Scottish fans abroad. In general, they seem to be a buoyant lot who are less inclined to see football in their homeland as an extended exercise in managed decline.

Take, for instance, Angus Campbell and Billy Kelly who are the only two members of the Celtic Supporters Club in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

They watch games in the Blackhorse Pub, sometimes setting out from home at 5 AM in temperatures of -40 degrees. Billy told me that they rent a phone kiosk for their annual general meeting but don't change anything because they never vote the same way.

With some assistance from Angus, I soon found myself interviewing Celtic



By
**HARRY
McGRATH**

supporters in Rio de Janeiro, New York, Philadelphia, Montreal and a number of other places far from Fort McMurray.

Next up was Edinburgh-based Hibernian Football Club and this time the centre of the fan web turned out to be located right in Vancouver.

Local Scot Darren Hutchison not only played for Hibs as a schoolboy but later wrote a dissertation on the rebranding of the club's corporate identity.

With Darren's help, I found Hibs supporters from San Francisco to Saudi Arabia.

Partick Thistle, sometimes known as Glasgow's 'other team', has its universal fan headquarters in Telford, England, where a man called Hugh Cooper organizes its global supporters club.

'The Nomads', as the Thistle diaspora is known, has a 500 member Facebook account.

Hugh used it to connect me to fans in Onchan, Goslar, Al Khobar, Pahoa, Baku and other places, some of which I had never heard of.

There is even a team called 'Partick Thistle Las Vegas' which was set up by Billy Smith from Glasgow when he moved to the self-styled 'Entertainment Capital of the World'.

PTLV now has two adult teams, both top of their leagues, and they have won 40 trophies since 1999.

Talking to Scottish football fans all over the world turned out to be a quick way



SCOTLAND NOW – Angus Campbell and Billy Kelly who are the only two members of the Celtic Supporters Club in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

to restore faith in the game. For one thing, it is not all about football.

Perhaps nostalgia isn't what it used to be, but don't tell that to the global followers of Scottish football teams.

Many of their stories revolve around places they used to live in Scotland and childhood memories of attending games with fathers or school friends.

And fans of a certain age left Scotland when it had a number of good, even great, teams and players.

Older Celtic fans remember winning the European Cup in 1967, a feat that seems impossible today; Hibs followers have their great teams of the '70s to rejoice in; and even Partick Thistle, not renowned for trophy hoarding, won the Scottish League Cup when it defeated Celtic 4-1 in 1971.

In an age when you can live-stream football games on the computer, it's heartening to find Scottish football fans around the world still taking the trouble to forgather and watch games for the sake of community and friendship.

And best of all, the activity isn't always restricted to watching football. Angus and Billy in Fort McMurray, for instance, organize darts tournaments to

fundraise for the local food bank.

The prize for the most affecting story, however, goes to Bill Garriock who lives in Malta but meets Hibs fans everywhere he goes by the simple expedient of wearing his team's shirt.

He told me, "One guy stopped me in West Edmonton Mall and begged me to accompany him to the hospital to visit his father who was dying of cancer.

"His father was a Hibs fan and he thought this would be a real pick up for him. I gave him my baseball cap as a memento."

As I write, requests have just arrived for articles on the global fans of the two teams in Scotland's top division that begin with the word 'Saint' – St. Johnstone and St. Mirren.

'When the Saints go marching out' is a headline for their scattered fans that writes itself.



BILL GARRIOCK, who lives in Malta, is pictured at the Space Needle in Seattle. He wears his team's shirt everywhere he goes and constantly meets up with other Hibs fans.

And experience has taught me where to find them: start at the ends of the earth and work backwards.

North Sea oil industry shake-up calls

ABERDEEN, Scotland – The new North Sea regulator has issued an urgent call to action in a report setting out the immediate risks ahead for UK oil and gas industry.

Last month Andy Samuel was appointed chief executive-designate of the new Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) to be set up in Aberdeen.

The establishment of the OGA was an integral part of the recommendations made by Sir Ian Wood as part of the review into maximising the UK's offshore oil and gas resources.

The government fast tracked the recommendations of the Wood Review to maximise the potential of the North Sea and make sure the whole of the UK benefits.

Samuel's appointment is a major milestone in establishing the OGA. He has already been fully involved in some of the decisions vital to the establishment of the OGA.

The future of the oil and gas sector depends on collective leadership from the industry, the government and the authority, he said.

The report comes a day after the UK industry reported its worst annual performance in 40 years. Industry body Oil & Gas UK reported a negative cash flow of £5.3 billion in 2014 – the worst figure since the 1970s.

UK energy secretary Ed Davey announced that an urgent commission was being set up to consider the impact of plunging global oil prices on the North Sea.

The price of oil fell to below \$50 a barrel over the past six months, and is now hovering around \$60 a barrel, raising doubts about the future of the offshore industry.

Samuel published his initial findings saying that while the UK remains a substantial producer of oil and gas, and "significant" potential remains in parts of the North Sea, profit margins are on a steep downward trend, leading many firms to reduce new exploration, infrastructure investment and staffing over the past six months.

The report identifies the two most im-



OGA CHIEF Andy Samuel said a more competitive and efficient operating environment must be created to sustain the North Sea oil and gas industry.

mediate risks facing companies operating in the area. The first is the danger that the profitability of current oil and gas fields will be insufficient to attract continued investment.

According to the report, this could lead to the premature decommissioning of North Sea infrastructure and lead to valuable oil and gas resources being left in the ground.

The resulting "domino effect" could have a negative impact on all areas of the industry, including employment and technological innovation.

The second identified risk is that a loss of confidence in the future potential of the UK Continental Shelf could result in the UK failing to secure the long-term investment needed to maximise economic recovery of North Sea oil and gas resources.

Samuel said, "Significant hydrocarbon resources and economic value are yet to be delivered from the UK North Sea, but to unlock this potential we must create a more competitive and efficient operating environment, where costs are effectively managed and companies have the confidence to invest."

He said "The future of our oil and gas industry depends on it."

Five architects shortlisted to restore Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art

GLASGOW – The Glasgow School of Art has named five architects in the running to lead the restoration of the Mackintosh Building, which was devastated by fire last May.

Avanti Architects, John McAslan & Partners, LDN Architects, Page\Park Architects and Purcell have all made the shortlist of firms in the frame for the restoration of the iconic building, which suffered serious damage after the accidental fire.

The blaze broke out in the basement of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Arts and Crafts building around noon on May 23.

The main damage was sustained by the west wing, built between 1907 and 1909, and includes the unique Mackintosh library and the studio above it which were destroyed.

The library housed rare and archival materials, including periodicals from the early Nineteenth Century and publications about Mackintosh.

In a statement the Royal Institute of



FORENSIC archaeologists begin sifting through the ashes of the damaged historic Mackintosh Library following a fire on May 23, 2014.

British Architects said, "Damage to a building of such immense significance and uniqueness is an international tragedy. It is irreplaceable."

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service was able to save most of the structure and around 70 percent of the contents, including archives and collections which

needed immediate conservation.

Working with heritage body Historic Scotland, the GSA's Digital Design Studio laser scanned the building's Western Gable to create a 3D plan of what survived the fire, while specialist stonemasons have been working to repair sections of the fire-damaged stonework.

SFU Pipe Band's 'Pipe Up for Cancer' dedicated to long-term band member

VANCOUVER – As part of the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band's Pipe Up for Cancer fundraising concert dedicated to long-term band member Andrew Bonar, a group of players (and one wife!) from the band have pledged to shave their heads to raise funds for this great cause.

Band members will be "Balding for Boney" as part of the concert event on March 28.

Confirmed shaves so far include such well known-names as Andrew Lee, Alastair Lee, Steve Foley, Graeme Mack, Kevin McLean, Derek Milloy, Tano Martone, Grant Maxwell, Duncan Millar, Blair Cooper, Kyle Wallis, Andrew Hayes, and Rachel Parkinson.

Lead Drummer Reid Maxwell has publicly stated that if the fundraising total reaches \$7,000, he too will have his head shaved.

Those who know Reid will know that he prides himself on his thick head of hair (albeit rather grey these days).

He's not at all keen to be bald, and is pretty confident the band can't raise \$7,000, so they need your help to make this happen!

Jack and Terry Lee have also stated



[PHOTO: File]

JACK and Terry Lee promise to shave their heads in support of the fundraising campaign if the campaign reaches \$10,000.

they will shave their heads if our campaign reaches \$10,000!

The fund is currently at about \$2,645 so they have quite a bit of ground to make up to make this happen!

Please get behind "Boney's balding bunch" by donating at the band's Pipe

Up for Cancer donation site: <http://donate.bccancerfoundation.com/goto/pipeupforcancer>

Every dollar helps in the search for more effective cancer treatment, and support of those affected by cancer. Plus.....they really want to see Reid, Jack and Terry have their heads shaved!

Clutha Vaults Bar in Glasgow 'to reopen in May'

GLASGOW – The owner of the Clutha Vaults bar in Glasgow, where a helicopter crashed onto it 15 months ago, hopes to reopen it by May.

The aircraft was operated by Bond Air Services for Police Scotland and was being crewed by a civilian pilot and two police officers.

Since the disaster on the night of November 29, 2013, the bar has been shut and left largely untouched. But building work is now under way.

The adjoining Victoria Bar is to be refurbished, while the beer garden at the back of the Clutha will be covered over.

Owner Alan Crossan has not yet decided what to do with the area of the building where the helicopter crashed.

He said, "It's difficult. It's taken me a year and a bit to even get to this stage. Maybe in six months, maybe in a year, I'll know better what to do with this. Obviously, when we get people back in and the music starts again, we'll get a better idea of what we can do."

"The name will stay. The Clutha, before the accident, was pretty famous, so the name will always stay. The Clutha means the Clyde and we're right next door to the Clyde."

The bar area of The Clutha took the main impact of the crash, while people in the area where a band was playing were initially unaware that a helicopter had crashed into the building.

Ten people died in the accident: all three who were on board the helicopter and six on the ground, with another person dying two weeks later from injuries received in the pub.

Inside The Clutha today, the scene looks largely as it did on the night of the disaster, when customers fled the building in panic.



EMERGENCY workers seal off the area around the Clutha Vaults by the River Clyde in Glasgow on the night of November 29, 2013 after a police helicopter crashed through the roof of the pub.



OWNER Alan Crossan has not yet decided what to do with the area of the building where the crash occurred.

A glass stands on the bar counter with change next to it, while an unfinished drink is on a crate on the stage. Scattered flyers lie on the floor near the stage, while thick dust covers surfaces.

An initial report said the aircraft had suffered engine failure. The final conclusions of the Air Accidents Investigation Branch are expected to be released later this year.

Dougie Naismith told how he was in the bar when the helicopter crashed. He had been drinking with a friend, Eddie Waltham, in another pub but left in search of live music.

Naismith, who was a firefighter before he retired, had experience of being in unsafe buildings, but on that night he was scared. He broke his shoulder and suffered injuries to his neck in The Clutha as well as suffering psychological trauma.

But he said, "I'm one of the very, very lucky ones – no-one has got to tell me that."





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St. Patrick's Day: A unique worldwide celebration



UBLIN – Speaking at the launch of the St. Patrick's Day Festival in Trinity College's dining hall, TD Michael Ring stressed that the national holiday was ultimately a family day out and not a day for drinking.

He advised St. Patrick's Day revellers "destroying the day for others" by staying intent on drinking to excess to avoid ending at home.



THE GRAND MARSHAL at the St. Patrick's Day parade in Dublin on March 17 will be acclaimed actor Brendan O'Carroll best known for his portrayal of Agnes Brown in the BBC television sitcom *Mrs. Brown's Boys*.

"That's not the image we want... I say to the spoilsports if you can't enjoy the day without destroying it for others then you should stay home," he said.

"We want to focus on the culture and talent...this is a family day and a family festival."

The minister went on to say that most countries would "give their right arm and their right leg" to have a national day celebrated on such a global scale.

"There is no other country that New York City stops for," he said. "We should be proud of that."

The organisers of this year's festival are confident the 2015 Grand Marshal will help draw more overseas tourists to Irish shores this year.

Brendan O'Carroll is an award-winning actor/director script-writer, playwright, and stand-up comic who is best known for portraying foul-mouthed matriarch Agnes Brown in the BBC television sitcom *Mrs. Brown's Boys*.

Festival director Susan Kirby predicted over 145,000 tourists will arrive in Ireland over the course of the festival, injecting a predicted EU122 million into the economy.

"We should see a growth in overseas visitors from last year, especially with the popularity of Brendan O'Carroll. I can see lots of people getting out to see him," Kirby said.

The theme of this year's parade is 'Celebrate Now'. For full details on this year's event, see: www.stpatricksfestival.ie.



Irish Quotes

When I came back to Dublin I was court martialed in my absence and sentenced to death in my absence, so I said they could shoot me in my absence.

— Brendan Behan [1923-1964]
(Irish author noted for his earthy satire and powerful political commentary.)

Turning The World Green for St. Patrick's Day 2015

SOME of the world's most iconic buildings and landmarks will take on a green glow this March to help celebrate St. Patrick's Day 2015 in style – with London's Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square leading the charge.

For the first time the 170-foot tall monument will 'Go Green' at 6 PM on parade day, March 15, as the fun of the London St. Patrick's Day Festival draws to a close.

It will be followed by greenings across the capital and the world – as the Irish all over the globe enjoy a host of events marking Ireland's national day.

In years past some of the well-known sites to be lit up on March 17 have included Niagara Falls, the television tower in Berlin's Alexanderplatz, the London Eye and Table Mountain in South Africa.

The theme continues across Europe this year – where the greening tradition will find its place in Italy, where the Colosseum in Rome will turn green for the very first time.

In France the Sacré-Cœur Basilica in the fabled district of Montmartre in Paris will also make its debut in the worldwide greening stakes – also joining the trend for the very first time in 2015.

Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Charlie Flanagan, commended the work of the Irish Embassies across the world and their partners at Tourism Ireland in organising the greenings of buildings and monuments around the globe ahead of St. Patrick's Day.

"I am delighted that the Colosseum in Rome is to be greened for the first time, on the initiative of our embassy in Rome, and that the embassy in Paris has secured the agreement of the mayor



THE SKY TOWER in Auckland, New Zealand turns green on St. Patrick's Day. It is the tallest free-standing structure in the Southern Hemisphere and has become an iconic structure in Auckland's skyline.

of Paris to the first-time greening of the Sacré-Cœur Basilica in the district of Montmartre overlooking the city of Paris," he said.

"The greening of iconic sites is symbolic of the great friendship that exists between Ireland and so many countries around the world.

"It presents us with an invaluable opportunity to deepen existing friendships, strengthen awareness of Ireland and our rich heritage, and forge new ties," he added.

Niall Gibbons, CEO of Tourism Ireland, said, "This is the sixth year of Tourism Ireland's Global Greening initiative and each year I am delighted to see even more well-known attractions and landmark sites wishing to get involved and join our St. Patrick's celebrations."

A PRAYER ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY

One of the most powerful prayers attributed to St. Patrick is *The Deer's Cry*, also known as *The Breastplate of St. Patrick* and *The Lorica*.

The following is an abbreviation of that prayer: Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.



THE WHITE ROCK Irish Festival 2015 kicked off with a huge flash mob gathered at the historic pier on March 1. Brilliant sunshine and mild temperatures brought hundreds down to the iconic boardwalk to launch the celebration. The month-long festival is filled with music, poetry, workshops, contests, dancing, food and beverage tasting at various locations throughout White Rock.

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BEANNACHTAÍ NA FÉILE PADRAIG

The Blessings of St. Patrick on You



Page 1



Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig

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St. Patrick's Day – What's it about?

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY is celebrated worldwide by Irish people and increasingly by many of non-Irish descent.

Celebrations are generally themed around all things green and Irish; both Christians and non-Christians celebrate the secular version of the holiday by wearing green, eating Irish food, imbibing Irish drink, and attending parades.

The St. Patrick's Day parade in Dublin, Ireland is part of a five-day festival, with over 500,000 people attending last year's parade. The largest St. Patrick's Day parade is held in New York City and it is watched by two million spectators.

The St. Patrick's Day parade was first held in Boston in 1737, organized by the Charitable Irish Society. New York City's celebration began on March 17, 1766 when Irish soldiers marched through the city.

Ireland's cities all hold their own parades and festivals. These cities include Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Galway, Derry, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford. Parades also take place in other Irish towns and villages.

Other large parades include those in Cleveland, Manchester, Birmingham, London, Coatbridge, Montreal, Boston, Houston, Chicago, Kansas City, Savannah, Pittsburgh, Denver, Sacramento, Scranton, and Toronto. Large parades also take place throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia, and Asia.

As well as being a celebration of Irish culture, Saint Patrick's Day is a Christian festival celebrated in the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland and some other denominations. The day always falls in the season of Lent.

In many parts of North America, Britain, and Australia expatriate Irish, those of Irish descent, and ever-growing crowds of people with no Irish connections but who may proclaim themselves "Irish for a day" also celebrate St. Patrick's Day, usually by drinking incredible amounts of alcoholic beverages (lager dyed green, Irish beer and stout, such as Murphys, Smithwicks, Harp or Guinness, or Irish whiskey, Irish cider, Irish coffee, or Baileys Irish Cream) and by wearing at least one article of green-coloured clothing.

**Wishing
the Blessings
of St. Patrick
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The Blessings of St. Patrick on You



Page 2



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– *The Green Little Shamrock*
Andrew Cherry (1762-1812)



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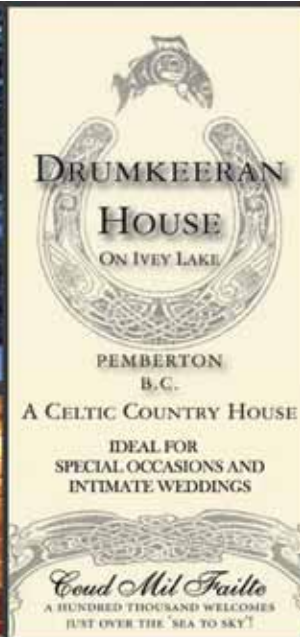
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Dublin: An historic city filled with literary delights

I SPENT a week in balmy Dublin in late September last year. My rain coat stayed in the case while I complained I had all the wrong clothes for the heat wave.

You can imagine I got absolutely no sympathy – I had to indulge in a little shopping to find a few lighter things – shopping in Dublin is always a pleasure

Some places reliably stay the same and yes, Dublin and Ireland have that distinct Irish vibe and Celtic flavour but I noticed on this visit there is a renewed scene of purpose and energy on the streets.

Ireland was hard hit during the recession and most people were affected one way or another.

Yet, the Irish are an inventive race and when one door closes, another opens. They have to set about creating new businesses for themselves and I saw the results of those efforts on my recent visit to Dublin.

Coffee shops, cafes and chocolate shops have sprung up with very tempting offerings.

Dublin pubs were also hard hit during the recession, of course. There were so many of them, some didn't make it and those I visited were offering not just a good pint of Guinness but music, food and general ambiance.

Gone are the dusty brown pubs with hard chairs and depressing atmosphere.

I am always amazed at the youth and energy in Dublin, it transforms itself to the street level and I felt a spring in

By MARIE BRUCE

my own step as I walked around.

Dublin is an old and historic city and Tourism Ireland has opened up and transformed more and more places of interest and made it easy for the traveller to get around, tourist information is readily available.

The friendliest people in the world are always pleased to assist with directions and bits of local information, don't hesitate to ask for help, you will enjoy the encounter.

I checked into the very central Trinity City hotel, just minutes from Grafton Street and all the action. It included a delicious breakfast buffet every morning.

Despite an array of sensible choices, I was unable to resist the full Irish breakfast.

I dug into such calorific delights as bacon, sausage, tomato, beans and eggs, I enjoyed it immensely and then felt guilty so I had no option but to walk the feet off myself around Dublin.

I hoofed up Dame Street to Dublin Castle and visited the gorgeous state apartments, the church on the grounds and the world renowned Chester Beatty library.

At that point I had to stop for a rest and a coffee while I waited for my energy to return.

Then up the steep hill to the glorious

Tenth Century St. Patrick's Cathedral.

St. Patrick's has a long history and will always be associated with Jonathan Swift or Dean Swift as he is referred to in Ireland.

He died in 1745 and his grave and epitaph can be seen at the cathedral. He will also be remembered for his charity to the poor and sick of Dublin. It is worth reading his epitaph:

*"Here lies the body of Jonathan Swift,
Doctor of Divinity and Dean of this Cathedral,
Where savage indignation
can no longer lacerate his heart
Go traveller and imitate if you can,
this dedicated and earnest champion of Liberty."*

The sun continued to shine so I decided to investigate Phoenix Park. The park is huge, said to be the largest walled park in Europe with 700 hectares and the best way to get around the outside of the park is biking.

There is a bike rental conveniently situated at the park gates and soon we were fitted with panniers, our saddles were adjusted and our route marked out for us on the free maps.

The young guy who helped us was cheerful and witty and he sent us on our way to have a big adventure.

Phoenix Park is home to the president of Ireland in Aras an Uachtarain. There is the wonderful Dublin Zoo, gardens and polo grounds, cricket and playing fields.

The park provides miles of tracks for runners and walkers and is much loved by Dubliners. The bike paths are amazing, flat and wide and I loved the open space and the wonderful big old trees mostly broadleaf species such as oak, ash, lime, beech etc.



AN AVID gardener, Marie Bruce enjoyed Dublin's magnificent botanical gardens,



GRAFTON STREET in the heart of Dublin is one of the city's main shopping streets. It is mostly only open to pedestrian traffic.

We spotted a large herd of fallow deer, deer have been in the park for hundreds of years, there is no shortage of grasslands for them.

Every so often we checked our map, we didn't want to get too far off the beaten track, one could get lost in Phoenix Park.

Hunger and a need for a break veered us in the direction of Farmleigh House which is owned by the state and used to house visiting dignitaries.

Farmleigh House is a must see when in Dublin. The house is open to the public when not in official use and we were just in time for one of their free tours. It was one of the highlights of my trip.

Afterwards we had lunch in the tea-room sitting outside on a sunny deck overlooking the pond.

It was perfect and I couldn't help thinking that there is always somewhere to eat and drink in Dublin just when you need a break.

After lunch we strolled around the well laid out gardens before we headed back up the other side of the park.

Another day I rented one of the Dublin bikes – there are racks of them everywhere and cyclists were whizzing around all over the city.

I biked along the canal banks and all over the south side of the city. You can leave the bikes back at any rack in different parts of the city, I loved the self lock so it was possible to stop for coffee and pop into a shop without worrying the bike would be gone when you came out.

Not to be missed for foodies is the Fabulous Food Tasting Trail. I booked ahead and showed up at the appointed meeting on Dawson Street on a Saturday morning – one of 14 other tourists.

We walked through the cobbled streets

around Grafton Street and beyond with our wonderful guide.

Irish food is so good and wholesome it doesn't need much adornment.

We sampled several cheeses, smoked salmon, Powers whiskey in the historic Swan pub, then off for chocolates, raw oysters and wine, somewhat in that order and finished up in that enticing food emporium Fallon and Byrne.

I loved the tour but suffice to say my stomach felt a bit queasy and I didn't need food for the rest of the day.

I am a gardening fanatic and I like to take in a few well known gardens when I visit any city. This time around I managed a return visit to the venerable Botanical Garden in Glasnevin and high on my list was a visit to Helen Dillon's famous garden.

The Dillon garden is on reduced visiting hours in September, it is in Ranelagh very close to the centre of Dublin and easy to reach on a bus. Helen Dillon herself showed me around the garden and pointed out all the changes, a highlight and a must see for any gardener.

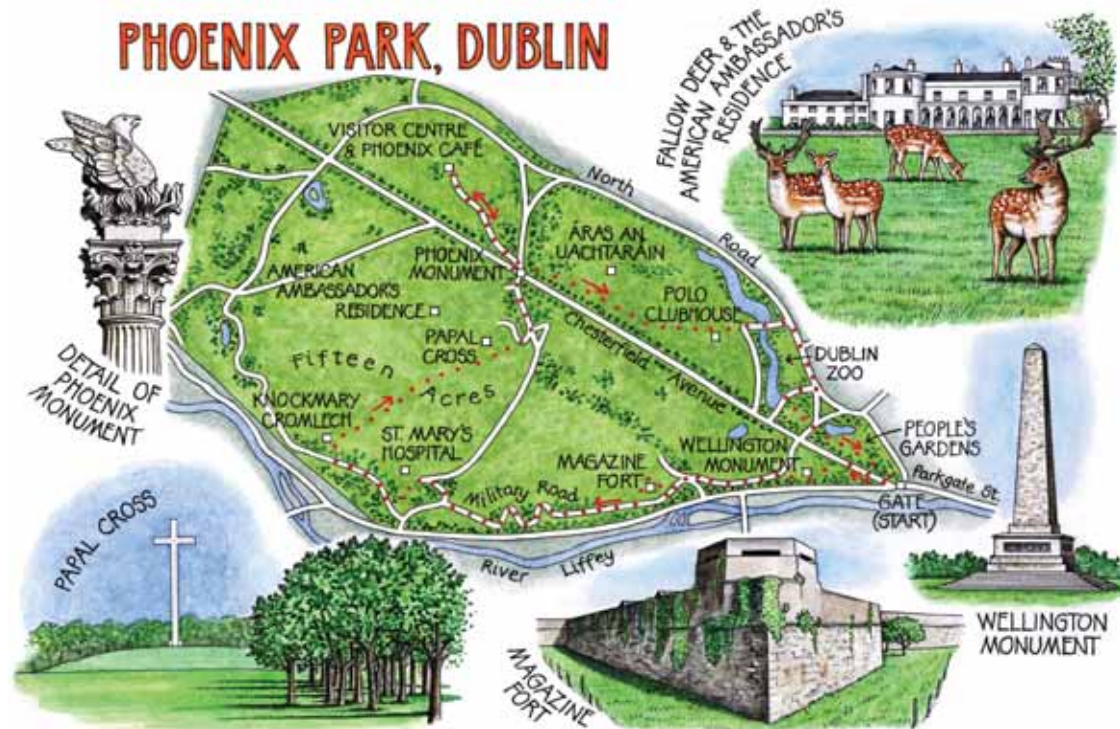
Dublin is proudly the Unesco City of Literature and I recommend the literary pub tour, it is a fun and informative introduction to Irish writers.

The guides are humorous in fact they are downright funny. They mention all the greats from Joyce, Beckett, Shaw and Wilde etc. There are stops at pubs along the way and yes, Guinness tastes delicious in Ireland, every pint is a perfect pint.

The Dublin City Gallery is a personal favourite of mine, it is free to the public and houses some amazing works of art including the foremost collection of Irish painters like Sean Keating and Jack Yeats as well as a Renoir, Pissarro and Francis Bacon's messy studio. There is an excellent coffee shop in the basement.

The hop on and off bus tours is the best way to get one's bearings, the buses are all over Dublin and with over 30 stops on the tour it makes it easy to visit some of the furthestest sites, like Jameson's whiskey and Dublin City Gallery.

Must see's when in Dublin are Guinness Brewery and Kilmainham Jail, however there are more places of interest than time permits so save some treats for the next time you visit because Ireland will call you back again and again and Dublin never disappoints.





A Brief Biography of St. Patrick

*"I arise today
Through a mighty strength,
the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession
of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation."*

— St. Patrick

St. Patrick of Ireland (387 – 461 A.D.) was born in Roman Britain at Bannaven Taburniae, and was the son of Calpornius (a deacon) and his wife Conchessa.

As he says himself he was not a very pious young man growing up, and one day when he was about 16, he was taken captive by pirates with a great number of other people.

He was sold as a slave in Ireland, and worked for his master as a shepherd. There, he began to turn to God in his exile.

As he writes in his Confessions, "The love of God and his fear grew in me more and more, as did the faith, and my soul was roused, so that, in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers and in the night, nearly the same. I prayed in the woods and on the mountain, even before dawn. I felt no hurt from the snow or ice or rain."

He was a slave for about four years when he heard a voice in a dream telling him to make his escape and that "his ship was ready" and that it was 200 miles away.

He found the ship as described in his dream, and after several years, many adventures involving his pagan sail-

ing companions and being captured yet again, he managed to reach home at last.

However, soon afterwards he had a dream in which (as he himself described it), "I saw a man whose name was Victorinus coming as if from Ireland with innumerable letters, and he gave me one of them.

"I read the beginning of the letter: 'The Voice of the Irish', and as I was reading the beginning of the letter I seemed at that moment to hear the voice of those who were beside the forest of Foclut, which is near the western sea.

"They were crying as if with one voice: 'We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us'. And I was stung intensely in my heart so that I could read no more, and thus I awoke."

He studied for the priesthood, was ordained a bishop, and was sent to Ireland, and arrived there on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25th, 433 at Slane.

For the rest of his life he tirelessly preached the Gospel to the Irish, converting and baptizing thousands, founding monasteries and dioceses and churches, and ordaining priests and working many miracles.

He endured countless trials, hazarded his life on numerous occasions, faced the violence of the elements, the envy of the Druids, the hostility of those who hated him and Christianity, chains and imprisonment and a whole host of other ills.

He died at Downpatrick, Ireland on March 17, 461 A.D.

NI political leaders welcomed back to White House for St. Patrick's Day

BELFAST – Northern Ireland's political leaders are set to meet U.S. President Barack Obama in the White House to mark St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

It will be in marked contrast to the more muted reception last year, when the collapse of the Haass talks soured the atmosphere. Now the U.S. administration wants to show its support, particularly for investment in Northern Ireland.

This year's St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Washington DC. will stretch for nearly a week for Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness.

The First and Deputy First Ministers are travelling for a number of appointments arranged by Invest NI. It will be an opportunity for them to take a victory roll after concluding the Stormont House Agreement in December.

It will also be an opportunity for them to market Northern Ireland on the basis that corporation tax is going to be reduced here in two years.

The DUP wants to reduce this tax on business profits to 10 percent but Sinn Féin prefers 12.5 percent – the same rate as the Republic, where it has led to a major influx of investment from American electronic and drug companies.



PRESIDENT OBAMA is flanked by Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness at the White House's St. Patrick's celebrations in 2013.



Aill na Searrach (Leap of the Foals)

LEGEND has it when St. Patrick introduced Christianity to Ireland, some of the old magical rituals of the past were abandoned.

This angered the Tuatha Dé Danann – the pantheon of Celtic deities – who were masters of magic.

In protest they used their magical powers to transform themselves into horses and they galloped to Kilcormán where they hid for centuries in the Kilcormán caves ('the Cavern of the Wild Horses').



The Cliffs of Moher are the crowning glory of the Clare coastline. Like a viewing platform for prehistoric giants who wish to peer over the edge of Europe, the cliffs provide an unrivalled view across the vast boiling wildness of the Atlantic Ocean, a world unchanged since the pre-Celtic masters of magic, the Tuatha Dé Danann ruled Ireland.

Many years passed, until one day seven foals emerged from the caves.

They were startled by the bright sunlight and bolted, galloping all along the edge of the cliff.

Eventually, perhaps still dazzled by the sun, they plunged over the edge into the ocean to their deaths.

The spot where they met their awful fate is now known as Aill na Searrach, or the Leap of the Foals.



Irish Forks are Smiling

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The best St. Patrick's Day Party....**

**2:30 pm to 5:00 pm – SLOE GIN SIDESHOW
6:30 pm to 7:30 pm – O'CONNOR O'BRIEN IRISH
DANCERS**

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Cover Charge – \$10

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Two champion dancers open new Irish dance school in Vancouver

VANCOUVER – RC Kells Academy of Irish Dance was founded in 2014 by two champion Irish dancers.

Bronagh Rogan and Emma Cronin started dancing together at the young age of five and fell in love with dancing immediately.

The two friends always held a dream of one day opening their own school and their strong friendship, along with a lot of hard work, has finally allowed them to bring that to reality.

Both are world-class dancers and during their competitive dancing careers, they performed locally, nationally and internationally.

Following this period, both Bronagh and Emma joined a professional Irish dance show called *Celtic Legends*.

Over the course of a year, they had the opportunity to tour the world performing for audiences in Canada, United States, France and China.

Upon return from the tour, the two decided the time was right to take their passion for Irish dance to the next level, opening RC Kells Academy.

The name represents both of them (Rogan and Cronin), along with the rich history of Ireland (Kells).

The school gives children of all ages the opportunity to discover positive life-changing lessons, experiences, and build friendships, all while learning the art of Irish dancing.

RC Kells Academy has created an environment that meets the needs of each individual dancer, and continuously builds confidence, self-esteem, and instills the excitement, love and passion that Irish dancing has brought to them.



TWO champion Irish dancers Bronagh and Emma have opened the RC Kells Academy in Vancouver.



DANCERS with RC Kells Academy at competition.

RC Kells Academy of Irish Dance is located in Kitsilano (Vancouver), British Columbia and offers beginner classes on Mondays and Wednesday.s

For more information, e-mail Bronagh and Emma at RCKellsIrishDance@gmail.com, or visit www.rckellsirishdance.com.

Ennis secures Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2016

ENNIS, Co. Clare – Clare County Council has warmly welcomed the announcement by the Ardchomhairle of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann of its decision to name Ennis as the host venue for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in 2016.

Having narrowly missed out on winning the right to host the prestigious annual event in the past four years, Ennis has been named ahead of Sligo and Drogheda as the host venue for the event at a ceremony in Dublin earlier this month.

It is anticipated that Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann will attract an estimated 300,000 visitors to the Clare County Capital next year.

“Everybody concerned is thrilled by this decision,” commented Councillor John Crowe, Cathaoirleach of Clare County Council.

The Cathaoirleach said potential economic spin-offs for Ennis and County

Clare as a result of hosting the event are “considerable, hence the substantial time and effort that has been invested by many organisations and individuals across Clare to bring the event here.

“I feel this decision is a tribute to the unrivalled contribution of traditional Irish music artists and groups throughout Clare over the years to preserving and promoting a unique part of Irish culture and heritage,” added the Ennis Mayor, Councillor Johnny Flynn

He said, “Ennis has not hosted the event since 1977 and I firmly believe that the awarding of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann to the town is thoroughly deserved, especially considering the fact that the town has and continues to host a range of culture and arts festivals that are of national and international renown, including the Fleadh Nua and the annual Ennis Trad Festival. I am delighted to have been a member of the Fleadh Working Group here in Clare for the past year.”

The Irish Rovers: Cherished Celtic music icons

VANCOUVER – One thing constant in all our lives is change. Some change we welcome gladly...others not so much. There are some that leave a lifetime of happy memories and we never want to end.

This month the Irish Rovers will return home to celebrate their 50th anniversary and St. Patrick’s Day while filming their final DVD – all in the midst of their final world tour.

After 50 years of recording, touring and crisscrossing Canada, the United States, Europe, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia, the Irish Rovers have announced plans to retire.

The band has entertained generation-after-generation of loyal fans at their rollicking, rousing, and sold out performances, always leaving their audiences wanting more.

The Celtic Connection spoke with George Millar shortly after he and The Rovers arrived back into British Columbia and before their concert at the Massey Theatre in New Westminster, on March 13.

INTERVIEW BY CATHOLINE BUTLER

Q: George with your final tour coming to completion soon is there a feeling of relief or a little tinge of sadness?

A: I think sadness, but you know it’s about aging. As you get older you just can’t tour like you used to in your twenties, your thirties or even into your forties.

But we’re not completely giving it up. We’ll be doing folk festivals, special events and things like that.

We’re really just getting off the daily grind that we’ve been on for the past 50 years and, in my case, since I was 18 years old. So, that’s what’s coming to an end.

There’s a big folk festival in Spain where we have been asked to play, not this summer but next, and that’s the kind of thing we’re looking to do. With folk festivals you can play a half dozen folk festivals in two weeks and I don’t mind doing that.

But we will keep our hands in and still write songs and put out a CD every 18 months or so. [Laughs] You’re not going to get rid of us quite that easy.

[Laughing] You know, we’re awfully lucky we don’t weigh 110 pounds and wear spandex at our age. For Celtic music it’s OK to put on a few pounds with your stomach out over the belt. We certainly picked the right genre when we started all those years ago.

Q: What will you miss most when the tour finally comes to an end?

A: The people. It doesn’t matter how long your day is, or that you were driv-



THE IRISH ROVERS are currently on their final world tour and will be home in B.C. to play the Massey Theatre in New Westminster on March 13.

ing 300 miles just to get to the next town, that you’re tired and your back is hurting, as soon as you get on stage, it’s all forgotten.

That’s your pride at the end of the day, and you’re with the people. It may sound cliché, but we love the people and our fans, that’s what keeps us going.

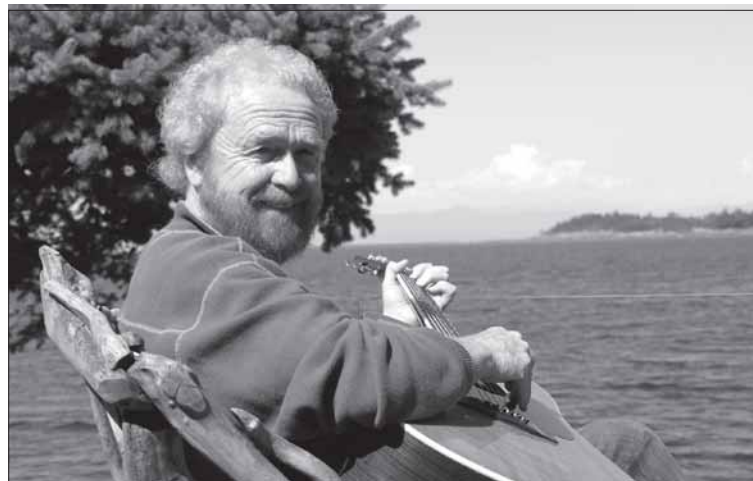
It’s that little jab in the arm when those lights come on – even though it may be *The Black Velvet Band* or *The Unicorn* which we have sung 10 million times – it doesn’t matter. We’re still enjoying what we’re doing and that’s communicating with the people.

Q: When you started your music career, did you ever dream it would still be going 50 years later?

A: I never thought it would last this long. I was finishing school in Toronto and playing on weekends for extra money and making \$15 or \$20 a night, and I thought that was great.

We did it strictly as a lark in those days. Then my brothers Will and Joe decided that since people liked what we were doing, maybe we would try it for a year.

Folk music was very big at the time around 1963 and 1964, although the Eagles were just hitting the scene, folk was still pretty big. All these clubs in the U.S. started booking us, and that’s basically how it all started.



GEORGE MILLAR relaxing at his home on Vancouver Island. He is looking forward to a break from touring, recording and crisscrossing Canada, the United States, Europe, Ireland and New Zealand for over 50 years with The Irish Rovers.

After each year we would decide to give it just one more year and now, after 50 years, I suppose we’re still saying that.

Q: Tell me about the newly released “The Irish Rovers, 50 Years” triple CD set?

A: We did a bit of a cross-section of all the years, I even looked at some of the old albums.

We have included some of the early ones like Jimmy Ferguson singing *My Old Man’s a Dustman*, and that was recorded 40 years ago.

What I really liked was our very first versions of *The Black Velvet Band*, which was on the flip side of the *Unicorn* single.

We brought *The Black Velvet Band* into the studio and, after the second verse, we put in the new band.

First you hear my 17-year-old voice singing and then you hear it...well, let’s say when I’m over 40.

So you hear the two voices, one taking over from the other and we fused both bands together and it sounds a bit creepy, it makes my hair stand up on end. You generally have to be dead to do a solo with yourself. Modern technology is an amazing thing.

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NOVENAS

NOVENA TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary (never known to fail). O most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God. Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me herein you are my Mother, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (three times). Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands (three times). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You gave me the Divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me. This prayer must be said for three days, even after the request is granted and the favour received, it must be published.

—KLSMC, PMKMC, MJF, DF, ADB, CSKB, CC, CKB, LC, SLMKR, CTK

NOVENA TO ST. JUDE

Most holy apostle, St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, the Church honors and invokes you universally, as the patron of hopeless cases, of things almost despaired of. Pray for me, I am so helpless and alone. Make use I implore you, of that particular privilege given to you, to bring visible and speedy help where help is almost despaired of. Come to my assistance in this great need that I may receive the consolation and help of heaven in all my necessities, tribulations, and sufferings, particularly - (Here make your request) and that I may praise God with you and all the elect forever. I promise, O blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favor, to always honor you as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to you. Amen

—PMC, MJF, CB

Publication of this prayer is \$25 monthly
(Canadian residents include 5% GST)

Vancouver's finest Celtic musicians played at our Hooley

By CATHOLINE BUTLER
VANCOUVER – The second annual 'Hooley for the Connection' was held on February 15 at the Vancouver Fan Club.

This was an important fundraiser for *The Celtic Connection* and some of Vancouver's finest Celtic musicians generously volunteered their time and talent to support the paper.

The music was amazing with no less than eight Celtic groups singing, playing reels and jigs, and offering up a day of excellent entertainment. There was no repetition of material and each group offered a new, fresh and exciting show.

It was all topped off with dazzling and intricate footwork by dancers with the Scoil Rince De Danaan, and our ever-gracious master of ceremonies George McDonnell of the Irish Heritage Society of B.C.

From the bottom of our heart, Maura and I want to thank each and every one of the performers – you are all truly champions. Thank you also to all those who came out to support this important fundraiser for the paper. We truly appreciate your presence.

Special thanks also to Waide Luciak, owner of the Fan Club for once again providing the venue.

Among the groups who took part were Raven and Dove featuring Marion and Martin; Braidwater with Ray and Mary Fynes; Sloe Gin Sideshow with Michael Viens and Elegwen O'Maoileoin; Blackthorn; the Pat Chessell Band; Killarney; and Rogues and Tinkers.

Some performers not listed on the bill included George McDonnell who joined Rogues and Tinkers during the last set for a great rendition of *The Fields of Athenry*. Bernard Ward was also persuaded to perform one of his favourite songs *Carrickfergus*.

Newfoundlander, Jimmy Cole of the Rogues and Tinkers finished off the evening with a rousing set of Newfoundland and Maritime favourites, because he said the groups before him all did the music that he planned to do.

Thank you for a wonderful night of music

Dear Editor:

I am writing in regards to the benefit function in the Fan Club on February 15, 2015 for *The Celtic Connection*.

I would like to thank you for the wonderful night of music.

It was great to see so many talented musicians that we have here in the Lower Mainland. However I was saddened to see the poor turnout from the Celtic community.

I was very disappointed in the Celtic community not showing their support for you when you do so much to support our community. Hopefully the next event the Celtic community can come through.

*Bernard Ward
North Vancouver, B.C.*



BLACKTHORN



KILLARNEY



ROGUES AND TINKERS



RAVEN AND DOVE WITH MARTIN & MARION



THE PAT CHESSELL BAND



BRAIDWATER WITH MARY AND RAY FYNES

'I didn't realise how hard it would be to cope with the little things'

DUBLIN – Crosscare Migrant Project is a project of Crosscare, the social support agency of the Dublin Archdiocese. The Migrant Project works with people emigrating and with Irish emigrants returning home.

Recently, the agency launched a new website "Mindhowyougo.ie" to help support others who are planning to leave Ireland.

Included on the website are accounts by recent emigrants who open up about coping with the loneliness and homesickness they have experienced in their new environment. They have told their stories to help support others planning to leave Ireland.

The website was launched earlier this month by Minister for the Diaspora Jimmy Deenihan at Buswell's Hotel in Dublin.

Deenihan said, "It is a pleasure to participate in the launch of Crosscare's new website – Mindhowyougo.ie – which has been part-funded under the Emigrant Support Programme.

"This website seeks to assist future emigrants by providing simple but effective advice and tools to deal with the inevitable challenges.

"This ranges from pre-departure preparations to early days abroad when the initial experience may not match expectations.

"For those that are experiencing particular difficulties very practical advice is provided on coping mechanisms.

"I believe that both current and future emigrants will find it an extremely useful portal to provide the tools necessary

crosscare migrant project

"Homesickness could be dismissed as 'just a natural reaction' but we do urge emigrants to give special attention to their emotional and mental health while abroad...."

to navigate the often challenging experience of emigration."

The site was developed following extensive consultation with 500 recent emigrants to establish how they were coping emotionally with their new lives.

With guarantees of anonymity, the honest responses paint a picture of sadness and longing for home that Skype and social media have not been able to overcome.

Missing family, friends and home was the most commonly cited challenge along with employment related issues and difficulty making friends.

The website charts seven different stages of emigration and gives anyone planning to leave honest, realistic accounts of what to consider before making up your mind, before you go and when you arrive.

On a positive note, many recorded their happiness at meeting many new people, and welcomed the bond shared by emigrants abroad.

From a career perspective, many others spoke of how they were in challenging and rewarding jobs that they could not have found at home.

Being away from Ireland's "binge drinking culture" was noted by one respondent while another observed the benefits of realising "Ireland isn't at the centre of the Universe!"

Among the biggest challenges outlined by emigrants were long hours and low pay, being over qualified for work available and missing special family occasions at home like birthdays and weddings.

Irish Abroad networking officer with Crosscare Migrant Project Joe O'Brien said, "the value that this website brings is the accumulated wisdom of 500 recent Irish emigrants.

"There is really good and practical advice about what to do before you go and after you arrive that every intending emigrant should look at.

"For those already abroad we would recommend looking at the section on homesickness.

"Homesickness could be dismissed as 'just a natural reaction' but we do urge emigrants to give special attention to their emotional and mental health while abroad and take on board some of the advice of their peers."

Global Irish: Ireland's Diaspora Policy launched this month

DUBLIN – The Government of Ireland published the first state commissioned plan for diaspora policy earlier this month – a welcome development for citizens living overseas.

Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Tánaiste Joan Burton, Minister for Foreign Affairs Charlie Flanagan and Minister of State for Diaspora Affairs Jimmy Deenihan spoke at the launch of *Global Irish: Ireland's Diaspora Policy* to acknowledge the importance of the Irish abroad to the economy and the nation.

Kenny also acknowledged economic crisis as a major factor in the large numbers of Irish people moving abroad in recent years, noting that for many it was not considered a matter of choice.

Political discourse in response to mass emigration has often been at odds with public sentiment, framing departure as a lifestyle choice, where trends would suggest it is actually linked to high youth unemployment and austerity cuts.

As outlined in the policy document, the strategy for diaspora engagement over the coming years includes serious commitments to prioritise welfare funding for vulnerable members of the community abroad, create a "Global Irish" online hub to open "better two-way communication with recent emigrants."

The new hub on the Department of Foreign Affairs website will provide pre-departure information for emigrants on the most popular destinations for Irish people, with details of Irish organisations and networks, and tips and advice on settling into a new home abroad.

It will also provide information on returning to Ireland, with details of jobs and training opportunities, housing, education, and how to set up your own business. Emigrants will be able to sign up to an online register to receive regular newsletters by e-mail.

A Global Irish Media Fund will be set up to support media outlets in Ireland and abroad to tell stories about Irish emigration and the diaspora, and the impact of emigration on those left behind.

Cultural projects celebrating Irish sport, music, dance, language and literature will continue to be supported through the ESP, as will business networks connecting Irish professionals and companies worldwide.

A fourth Global Irish Economic Forum will be held in November.

Following a similar model to the economic forum, "ordinary Irish emigrants" and community leaders overseas will be invited to the first ever Global Irish Civic Forum in June, which will meet to discuss the challenges facing the Irish abroad.

The policy document does not include a commitment to extend voting rights to Irish citizens overseas, which Deenihan had been hopeful of introducing when he was appointed as minister last year.

The Constitutional Convention recommended in 2013 that emigrants be given a vote in presidential elections.

Deenihan said that while the issue of voting rights was "of enormous importance to many Irish citizens abroad," it would be "challenging to introduce and to manage."

He said the government had decided it is "necessary to analyse the full range of practical and policy issues that would arise in any significant extension of the franchise, before any decision could be made on the holding of a referendum."

DO YOU OWN A PENSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM?

Recent changes in pension legislation now allows for a smooth and tax-efficient transfer of foreign pension assets to Canada.

The Canadian government has recently updated its policy regarding the transfer of UK-based pensions into the Canadian retirement system.

These changes now provide the most tax-efficient opportunity for individuals to consolidate their assets into the Canadian retirement system if they qualify based on certain tax variables.

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Strong demand expected for 10,000 Canadian working holiday visas

VANCOUVER – With a sluggish economic recovery in Ireland and expanding job opportunities across Canada, the imminent release of 10,700 two-year IEC (International Experience Canada) Working Holiday visas by the Canadian Government is eagerly anticipated by thousands of young Irish men and women.

Last year's quota of 8,000 open visas was allocated over two days with each allocation selling out within 30 minutes.

"We fully expect each allocation for 2015 to sell out within the hour, so preparation is crucial," states Moving2Canada.com founder Ruairi Spillane.

"We've created FAQ articles and online forums to help people be ready to move quickly and get their golden ticket. Using third parties agencies is less common in recent years. Our goal is to empower applicants by providing transparent information for free."

Western Canada has seen a huge increase in Irish immigrants over the past five years with cities such as Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton now boasting tight-knit Irish communities that are working hard to support newcomers.

Spillane points that Irish immigrants are finding their way to every corner of western Canada.

"In September, I spent a month driving around Alberta and Northern British



By **RUAIRI SPILLANE**

Columbia and was amazed to find Irish people settled in more rural locations such as Red Deer, Grand Prairie, Fort St. John, Prince George and Prince Rupert.

"Like the Irish immigrants of the Sixties and Seventies, they are quickly realizing that there are huge opportunities outside of the major cities."

Despite the downturn in Alberta, Spillane predicts that western Canada will remain a sought after location.

"Having spent time in Australia recently, it's evident that there is a clear slowdown in proposed projects meaning lots of Irish people working in construction will be looking at upcoming LNG opportunities in British Columbia.



MANY IEC applicants are skilled tradespersons, construction workers, or engineers looking for a fresh start after experiencing limited opportunities in Ireland.

"2015 looks like it could be a challenging year with low energy prices but western Canada is still a great place to be. It's a case of adapting to a more competitive jobs market."

The IEC visas allow Irish citizens between 18-35 years old to travel to Canada and work for a two-year term.

The application process is online with applicants likely to have their visa in hand within 6-8 weeks.

Participation fees for each successful applicant is EU170 (\$250). The visas have been split into three categories: the standard working Holiday Visa, a small number of internship visas for third-level graduates (International Co-op), and visas for people who have job offers in

their area of qualification (Young Professionals).

"Last year, the take up on the 2500 Young Professionals Visas was extremely low so we expect that it was a case of not being aware that they could come to Canada subject to a job offer.

"At Moving2Canada Recruitment, we helped four Irish construction and engineering professionals find an employer, which meant they could get their two-year visa despite the main allocation being sold out."

Cathy Murphy, executive director of the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre (I/CAN) based in Toronto, says that the IEC program is a wonderful opportunity for both Irish emigrants and Canadians.

"The expanded numbers for the IEC suggest a great privilege for all involved. We are thrilled that the Canadian and Irish Governments have been able to work together on this initiative that ben-

efits both Irish and Canadian youth."

Since 2011, the Moving2Canada team has helped tens of thousands of temporary and permanent migrants to Canada.

Spillane, originally from Kerry, immigrated to Canada in February 2008 and set up Moving2Canada to help other Irish people along the same path.

Moving2Canada.com operates as a 'one-stop shop', sharing free information on everything a migrant needs to know from the application process to major cities, how to adapt to the Canadian job market, how and where to set up home, and how to build a quality social life in a faraway place.

With over 80,000 monthly visitors, the Moving2Canada team is focused on making life easier for would-be immigrants.

The 'Getting Started Success Program' guide, available as a free download on Moving2Canada.com, focuses on helping potential migrants understand what's required to make their Canadian dream a reality.

While Moving2Canada set about building a vast network of international migrants to Canada not only from Ireland but the UK and Australia, Canadian employers quickly saw value in leveraging this network.

Moving2Canada operates a recruitment agency for the engineering and construction industries and has been placing skilled candidates in jobs across western Canada since July 2012.

Many IEC applicants are skilled tradespersons, construction workers, or engineers looking for a fresh start after experiencing limited opportunities in Ireland.

A leading Irish economist recalls 'nasty personal attacks'

DUBLIN – One of Ireland's most high-profile economists was subjected to personal and nasty attacks over his prophetic warnings about an imminent banking crash, he has told an inquiry.

David McWilliams, also a columnist and broadcaster, said he was vilified for predicting and regularly cautioning about a looming crisis in the years running up to the country's spectacular economic collapse in 2008.

The former central banker, who contributes to several Irish newspapers as well as the *Financial Times*, said he was "slapped down" by fellow economists over his gloomy forecasts and accused the media of an "undoubted herd mentality."

McWilliams said people now are "swanning around" with titles like banking expert who "didn't open their beak" while living in Ireland in the run-up to the financial nosedive.

Senior bank bosses cautioned him about "dangerous talk" and he was told "don't frighten the horses."

But he told the Oireachtas (parliament) Banking Inquiry in Dublin that editors never "muzzled" him.

McWilliams said it was "very hurtful" when his motives were publicly questioned and he was upset about his wife and mother reading the attacks on him at the time. "It was very personal and quite nasty."



DAVID McWILLIAMS is one of Ireland's leading economic commentators and was the first economist to identify the Irish boom as nothing more than a credit bubble, warning of its collapse and the consequences for the country.

The banking inquiry is currently holding a module into early warnings, divergent and contrarian views during the run-up to the crisis.

Despite his high profile warnings, McWilliams said he was never contacted by anyone in power until the banking meltdown reached boiling point in September 2008.

"Categorically, not one advisor, not one minister, not one civil servant, not one member of the regulator, nobody," he said, when asked who contacted him.

"In actual fact, I would have been toxic to all of them and they would have avoided me like the plague.

"All this was going on and never once was I asked my opinion about anything, by anybody informally or formally."

But after meeting then Finance Minister Brian Lenihan during a radio interview on September 6 that year, they swapped telephone numbers and Lenihan called to his home in Killiney, south Dublin, 11 days later.

Sponsored holidays for Irish diaspora

DUBLIN – Sponsored holidays for young third-generation Irish adults abroad will begin this year, in a bid to encourage members of the diaspora to settle here with their families.

The scheme comes as the Irish Government also considers special tax cuts to encourage large numbers of working, Irish-born, emigrants to return home.

The Coalition announced measures for the diaspora ahead of the St. Patrick's Day ministerial exodus.

Diaspora Minister Jimmy Deenihan said new 12-day culture trips for young adults of Irish descent would eventually see several hundred travel to Ireland when a pilot project is completed this coming autumn.

Aer Lingus is examining discounted flights for the groups being encouraged to travel, from as far afield as Canada, the United States and Australia, he said.

"They'll be immersed in history, culture and heritage.

"We're bringing the third generation to keep their connections to Ireland. Hopefully they'll return to holiday, for college or with their families."

The scheme will be called Fréamhacha or "Roots" and begin with a pilot project involving 25 young adults travelling here this autumn.

Deenihan added, "We're speaking to Aer Lingus about special rates to keep travel budgets at acceptable levels. In the first year we hope to get 100 participants, but multiples of this afterwards."

The Irish diaspora worldwide is estimated to be around 70 million people, tens of millions of whom are thought to be third generation.

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Minister Charlie Flanagan confirmed the government is considering introducing special tax incentives to encourage emigrants to return home.

It is understood the measures could be announced as early as next month, when the government unveils its spring economic statement.

Flanagan added, "There will be a lot for them to come home to, with full employment by 2018."

New Iron Tracker app will help people with Hemochromatosis

HEREDITARY hemochromatosis, or iron overload, is an iron metabolism disorder prevalent in people of Celtic and northern European descent.

The disorder causes the body to absorb two to four times the normal amount of iron. Left untreated, the excess iron builds up in vital organs, tissues and joints, where it can cause a number of debilitating and potentially fatal complications and diseases.

An estimated 125,000 Canadians have two copies of the mutated gene that puts them at risk for hereditary hemochromatosis.

Over 3.5 million Canadians carry one copy of the mutated gene; these individuals are called "carriers." This number is significant because when two carriers have children, the offspring are at risk of having both genes, and thus at risk for iron overload.

Two Canadian university professors and their students have created a mobile application that will help people with hemochromatosis track their ferritin levels as they continue through their lifelong treatment.



PHOTO: Courtesy of Mt. Allison University.
DR. ANDREW Hamiltio-Wright.

Dr. Gary Grewal, of the University of Guelph, along with Dr. Andrew Hamiltio-Wright, of Mount Allison University, in partnership with the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society, led the development of the Iron Tracker app to fill a need for people to monitor their de-ironing progress and iron levels during their maintenance phase.

Grewal, whose mother is Scottish and

father from northern India, was diagnosed with hereditary hemochromatosis in 2010 after feeling extremely ill for about a year.

His symptoms included chronic fatigue and abdominal pain and swelling. Blood tests revealed a high level of ferritin. He was referred to a liver specialist, who diagnosed him with hemochromatosis.

He underwent treatment that involved regularly scheduled bloodlettings, also known as phlebotomies.

He began to monitor his condition using a spreadsheet but later decided to develop an app that could help others with the condition.

"I felt it would be useful to have a mobile app to keep track of my progress," he says. "I had a sense of my own wellness."

"There's nothing out there like this," says Grewal of the app, which helps patients keep track of their bloodwork, monitor their de-ironing progress using a graph, and predict when their next phlebotomy will be needed."

The app also helps patients keep track of their appointments and which arm



PHOTO: Courtesy of University of Guelph
PROFESSOR Gary Grewal and his student Andrew D'Angelo show the Iron Tracker app they helped develop.

was drawn from during their last phlebotomy.

Bob Rogers, CEO and Executive Director for the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society, is excited about the app.

"There are so many people suffering from this disorder who aren't diagnosed," he says.

"This app is one of the tools we'll use to support those who have hemochromatosis and to propagate

awareness. Gary, Andrew and their team are making a big difference in people's lives."

The Iron Tracker app is free to all users and is available for download through the Google Play™ Store and App Store. More information and instructions on how to use the app can be found at www.irontracker.ca.

For information on hereditary hemochromatosis, visit www.toomuchiron.ca.

Your Irish blood could put you at risk of several genetic disorders

Come March we are all proud of our Irish blood. This St. Patrick's Day *Sláinte* would like you to be a bit wary of it too.

If you are of Celtic heritage, you are at risk of developing several genetic disorders. Both of these "Celtic diseases" are life threatening when not treated but both can be controlled through simple means.

The first disease is Hereditary Hemochromatosis (HH) which is caused by a mutation in the HFE gene. HH causes the body to over-absorb iron.

The human body has no way to excrete excess iron so it stashes it away in the liver, the joints, the heart, the pancreas, the pituitary gland, the skin and the bone marrow.

During the early years the extra iron is used by the body for growth and young women are able to excrete some of the excess iron during menstruation and childbirth.

As a result it is usually middle age before damage from the iron deposits appear as heart failure, cirrhosis or cancer of the liver, or diabetes and other endocrine problems from pancreatic damage.

Other symptoms include aches in joints (especially the first two finger joints), chronic fatigue and weakness, impotence, abdominal pain, leg pain, memory loss and a bronze pigmentation in the skin. These symptoms can lead to a misdiagnosis of fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, and even dementia.

If you are of Celtic descent and have been diagnosed with any of the above disorders or if you have any of these symptoms, you owe it to yourself to be tested for HH. The two blood tests to request are transferrin saturation test and serum ferritin.

Sometimes a liver biopsy or genetic tests are necessary for a definite diag-

SLÁINTE – TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH!



By
MAUREEN KEANE

nosis. Once your doctor has gotten your iron levels down to normal, the treatment for HH is regular blood draws or donation.

Next time you go to an Irish event, take a look at the other four people sitting at your table. Chances are at least one of you is a carrier for HH. When two carriers have children, there is a one in four chance that one child will have HH. Is that child you?

The second Celtic Disease is Celiac Disease aka Celiac Sprue.

This is probably more familiar to most people given the large amount of gluten-free products flooding the market today.

Most people can safely consume gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye and barley and cross breeds of these grains.

It is not found naturally in rice and oats. However, when people with celiac disease eat gluten, it triggers an autoimmune reaction that causes the immune system to destroy the lining of the small intestine.

In effect it strips the intestine of the microvilli necessary for food to be absorbed.

Many doctors think of celiac disease as mainly a malabsorption disorder that causes symptoms related to malabsorption such as diarrhea, nutrient deficiencies and weight loss.

However, a Mayo clinic survey discovered that at least half of the celiac patients they questioned had other symptoms not considered typical.

Half did not have daily diarrhea. Some did not have weight loss, some were overweight, even obese, and many of the latter lost weight once they were on a gluten-free diet.

Other unexpected symptoms were abdominal pain (often after eating), specific food cravings, nausea and vomiting, lactose intolerance, and abdominal bloating.

The treatment for celiac disease is not complicated; gluten must be removed from the diet. Once gluten is gone the lining of the small intestine will regrow.

Your doctor can do a simple blood test to check for gluten antibodies in your blood. Do not start a gluten-free diet until after you have had your blood tested.

There is one other medical problem that can be caused by our Irishness and that is our lovely pale Irish skin. Pale skin burns easier and is more prone to developing skin cancers. As a result, we plaster ourselves with sunscreen without realizing that sunscreen prevents our skin from making vitamin D.

We already live at a geographic location that makes it difficult to get enough winter sun on our skin to produce sufficient vitamin D. The result is a vitamin D deficiency.

Lack of this vitamin is associated with muscle and joint pain, autoimmune disorders, and some cancers.

The staff here at *Sláinte* (one person plus a cat) wish you all a very happy St. Patrick's Day and reminds you to drink responsibly.

Maureen Keane MS CN is the author of 14 books on health and diet and a member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Read her blog at keanenutrition.com.

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Are You of European or Celtic Ancestry?

If so, YOU are at risk for Hereditary Hemochromatosis

If you have two or more of the following symptoms that are otherwise unexplained, contact the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society to inquire about the proper tests for iron overload.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Chronic fatigue | Menstrual irregularities, premature menopause |
| Loss of body hair | Arthritis and joint pain (check knuckles of thumb, first and second finger) |
| Loss of libido & sex drive; impotence | Chondrocalcinosis |
| Abdominal distension and discomfort (bloating) | Diabetes (adult onset type 2) |
| Thyroid problems | Enlarged liver, liver diseases including cirrhosis |
| Sudden weight loss | Bronzing or graying of the skin |
| Elevated liver enzymes, glucose & triglyceride levels | Cancers (metastasized from the liver) |
| Personality changes, mood swings; anger & depression | Heart arrhythmia, cardiomyopathy |
| | Heart disease; congestive heart failure |

Canadian
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SOCIETY
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New European Politics: Left of Centre?



S is often the way....it was all very clear cut when it began. It was easy at the outset to work out what Left and Right wing politics meant.

Nowadays, even when politicians seem to be irreducibly in the clutches of one side or another, circumstances can change – the party whip gets to work on them, or they get elected, and volte-faces are then all the rage.

Occasionally, a whole government is elected that constitutes a definite swing.

The Greek right-wing party, Golden Dawn, whose members visited random attacks on immigrants and rallied to a Nazi flag, scored only 6.3 percent in their recent general election.

The story could have been very different had the outgoing government not instigated a spate of arrests two years ago, taking down Golden Dawn's leadership.

The far right in Greece, because it was too far right, devoured its own children and very few people take it seriously today. Good riddance.

The party that triumphed in the Greek election in January has Europe in a tail-spin nonetheless.

That party, Syriza, has had the temerity to say that Greece's EU315 billion (\$357 billion) national debt is unpayable for an economy seemingly doomed to irreversible deflation, and therefore it will never be paid, so let's discuss an alternative settlement like adults.

They are called (and simultaneously dismissed as) left wing for arriving at that formulation. Hmm.

Could it be that for Greece, as for Ireland, a profiteering cadre of bankers has usurped the workings of parliaments who are controlling national governments through blackmail and other forms of pressure?

Could it be that one gentle, or not so gentle, push to expose the illegitimate role that finance plays in governing Europe now would be enough to cause it to relent?

Watching Irish politicians squirm over the past month has been, if nothing else, amusing.

Initially, as the newly appointed Greek prime minister was rebuked by Eurogroup (a consortium of Eurozone finance ministers), the Irish Government was content to see Greece's new leader as someone who needed to learn the ropes.

You know, a relatively young idealist with cavalier views who needs to be groomed in the ways of the world.

The criticism against the new Greek cabinet became personal of course: what would a cohort of engineers and professors of economics know about running a country in crisis?

The Greek prime minister and his minister for finance kept playing their trump card – we get a new deal or we are out of the Eurozone – European leaders began to reluctantly edge towards the other side of the table. This left Irish politicians in a muddle.

THE VIEW FROM IRELAND



By
**MAURICE
FITZPATRICK**

If the leaders of strong European economies (Holland and Germany) swing towards acceptance of a write-down of Greek debt, do we stand with the Greeks or with their antagonists?

Put it another way, are Irish interests better served by arguing that we are in the same boat as the Greeks or in hoping that if some forbearance is extended to Greece it might filter to Ireland eventually?

The answer is clear, but do not hold your breath to hear it articulated by our elected representatives.

Here is our Minister for Agriculture Simon Coveney, "What we are saying is let's be realistic about what is possible.

"Ireland like other countries will try and be helpful as we can but I think we have to be firm that the same approach and the same standards have to apply to Greece as to every other country that has found themselves in difficulty over the last number of years."

Our current Minister for Finance Michael Noonan had this to say: "Our debt is in a very good position now; it's affordable and it's repayable."

They both have the 2016 general election on their minds, but it is clear from Coveney's gentle bending that he is less convinced of the current arrangements in Europe, and more solicitous of his future political career, than Noonan.

Coveney is the younger man and he wants to have a future in politics.

Yet, come next year, if Greece has secured a substantial reduction in its debt through whatever device (bridging loan, warehousing of debt, federalisation of debt, Eurobonds or gentleman's arrangement), practicing politicians in Ireland today will be confronted with accusations from the electorate that they could have, and should have, secured similar concessions.



THE 2015 Greek election has resounding implications for Ireland. If the Syriza party are successful in securing a write-down of Greek debt, where does this leave Ireland's EU214 billion debt obligations?

Their stances today will, at that stage, retreat to that ever amenable touchstone position in Irish politics, the phrase and mentality "we are where we are."

The pressure that a write-down of Greek debt would exert on Irish political parties is highly desirable.

In that scenario, the probable realignment that next year's election will bring – a coalition of the centrist parties, Fianna Fail and Fianna Gael, in a bid to keep Sinn Féin out of power (with Lucinda Creighton's new party propping up the rear, if it can find a name for itself) – might not be the biggest news of the election.

If Greece advances out of its mire, how will those vying for votes in Ireland ac-

count for their failure to act as the Greeks did?

This issue truly does matter. Ireland's debt stands at EU214 billion (\$242 billion). The ill-effects of that groaning fiscal burden filters down to hospital beds, to places in schools, to opportunities for young people to find a job and make a life in Ireland.

The approach successive Irish Governments have taken over the past seven years has a diplomatic dance: the government played it long, hoped for the best and assured the electorate that there is just one more hurdle to cross. The results have been dismal.

Greece stalled as well, but now it has found a government that is willing to make demands. Can Ireland do the same?

Stormont Agreement brings renewed hope for insight into Dublin/Monaghan bombings

DUBLIN – The Stormont House Agreement signed in December 2014 between the Northern Ireland political parties with the support of the British and Irish Governments brings renewed hope to learn more about those killed during the Troubles.

An Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) will allow perpetrators, or others, with knowledge of killings during the Troubles to give the commission information on the basis of limited immunity from prosecution.

Sean Sherlock, minister of state at the Department of Foreign Affairs, said, "I am optimistic by nature and I hope that we can make some progress on these issues."

Sherlock, who has responsibility for North/South co-operation, addressed parliamentarians at the British/Irish Parliamentary Assembly in Dublin.

"On Dublin/Monaghan we hope that through the Stormont House Agreement, the creation of the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR), we hope that through that process – it will require legislation and we are committed to that – this may provide some sort of an avenue in relation to these matters.

"Also there needs to be a mechanism, I think the ICIR provides some mechanism, where we can try to make



THIRTY-THREE PEOPLE were killed and almost 300 people were injured when the bombs exploded without warning in 1974.

progress on a lot of these outstanding issues."

Thirty-three people, including a full-term pregnant woman, were killed and almost 300 people were injured in the Republic of Ireland during a co-ordinated series of car bomb attacks on the evening of May 17, 1974.

Three bombs were planted in Dublin city centre and one in Monaghan and no warning was given.

The deaths were the biggest loss of life

in one day in the Troubles. Most of the victims were young women, although the ages of the dead ranged from five months to 80 years.

Nobody has ever been charged in connection with the attacks and aspects of the circumstances leading up to the bombing remain controversial.

The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a loyalist paramilitary group from Northern Ireland, claimed responsibility for the bombings in 1993.

Relatives allege that the UVF carried out the attacks with the knowledge and assistance of elements of British security and intelligence services in Northern Ireland.

An Irish Government inquiry led by Justice Henry Barron in 2003 was hindered by the British Government's refusal to release key documents.

The victims' families and others have continued to campaign for the British Government to release these documents.

Passenger planes dodged Russian bombers off the Irish coast

DUBLIN – Passenger jets had to dodge two Russian bombers that had “cloaked” their presence during an incursion into Irish airspace, according to media reports.

An investigation by the *Irish Examiner* found that two Tu-95 bombers flew just 40 kilometres off the coast of Ireland, and crossed through civilian airline traffic lanes February 18.

As a result, planes carrying hundreds of passengers had to be diverted or delayed to avoid a potential collision with the bombers.

At the time, the UK scrambled fighter jets to intercept and escort the two Russian military aircraft flying close to the British coastline.

Royal Air Force Typhoons operating under North Atlantic Treaty Organization command were deployed from an air base at Coningsby in eastern England, the UK Ministry of Defence said.

The Russian planes were escorted until they were out of the UK area of in-

terest, according to the MoD statement.

Now, the *Irish Examiner* has revealed that the Tu-95 bombers entered Irish airspace with their transponders turned off, and disrupted commercial flight traffic before they were escorted back to international airspace.

This was the second incursion into Irish airspace.

The IAA said its air traffic controllers were notified by British counterparts that they needed to take action to ensure the safety of commercial aircraft, because yet again the Russian bombers had entered Irish area of airspace control with their transponders turned off.

The aircraft could have flown into the path of the bombers which were by that time in British-controlled airspace.

The IAA also confirmed that “as a precautionary measure to ensure safety was maintained, the routing of one en route aircraft was changed to ensure that its track was sufficiently separated from the track of the two Russian mili-

tary aircraft.”

The first Russian incursion into Irish-controlled airspace was 88 kilometres off the coast. The second was much closer, just 19 kilometres outside Irish sovereign airspace and the incursion lasted four hours.

In both cases, the bombers travelled toward British airspace, where they were met by RAF Typhoon jets.

Defence Minister Simon Coveney said the government “was clearly not happy” that Ireland was not told that Russian bombers were approaching on Irish airspace with their transponders turned off again.

However, he added, “I’d be surprised if it was a Russian tactic to upset Ireland, and the IAA managed the incident safely and effectively.”

It is believed that the Russians were testing British air defenses and sending a message to London that they did not want any political interference in their internal affairs or in Ukraine.

Cornwall? Can you say Celtic fluffy slippers

LONDON – Greetings! In London the news is dominated by more, sad, seedy shenanigans of our politicians.

On this occasion two ex-government ministers, Sir Malcom Rifkin, the ex-Conservative Foreign Secretary and Jack Straw the ex-Labour Home and Foreign Secretary have been caught dipping their greedy snouts in the trough.

They were secretly filmed offering their services to a private firm for cash.

The familiar protest that they had not broken any parliamentary rules does nothing to diminish the sense of betrayal that the public feels and reignited the debate about whether members of parliament should take on any outside work.

With a general election in May, it is difficult to find anyone to vote for that one feels has any integrity.

Still, no more of this depressing nonsense because today is March the first. Saint David’s Day. Winter is on its way out and daffodils have appeared to herald the arrival of spring.

Apparently daffodils are dangerous.

Supermarkets across Britain have been asked by health officials to keep daffodils away from food areas because they are poisonous and some non-English speaking customers have mistaken them for a kind of spring onion or Chinese vegetable.

If eaten they can make you ill, causing abdominal pain, diarrhoea, eczema and vomiting, but if worn on the lapel on March 1 they can make you happy because it means you are Welsh.

Last week I toured Cornwall, the Celtic part of England.

Cornwall has a majestic, rugged coastline. Its beautiful beaches and fishing coves and wonderful natural light attracts painters from all over the world, and it is reputed to have the mildest climate in Britain.

I don’t think it is the driest part of the

POSTCARD FROM LONDON



By
**ELFAN
JONES**

country, but the rain is definitely warmer. Bob Hope once said that if you do not like the British climate just wait a minute and that was borne out in Cornwall where we enjoyed torrential rain, snow, high winds, and warm sunny spells in the matter of hours.

The Cornish can trace their roots to the ancient Britons dating back before the Roman conquest and shared the Brythonic language with the Welsh, but today one of the main attractions is surfing.

Newquay is the surfing capital of Britain. I am not a surfer and I had no interest in the amusement arcades, betting shops and surfing emporiums that disappointingly seem to make up Newquay’s main street.

I visited the factory shop of a company called Celtic & Co. They manufacture sheepskin boots and slippers and I was fortunate enough to meet the owners Nick and Kath Whitworth and hear their story.

As a teenager Nick had joined the Royal Air Force, and trained to be a fitter. He was sent to a base near Newquay, where he met local girl Kath, at a dance, and they fell in love.

On hearing that he was to be transferred to Germany, Nick made the decision to leave the R.A.F and try to find work in Cornwall.

One evening he saw an advertisement

in the local paper which read “Sheepskin Boot Factory for Sale.”

Despite having no experience in the commercial world, they decided to pool their savings and buy the company for the princely sum of £15,000.

The company was called “The Original Ugg Company” and the vendor gave them four hours tuition on how to make the boots and left them to it.

In the early days Nick worked on his own in the factory manufacturing the boots by day while Kath kept her job as a secretary to help make ends meet.

Most evenings they worked together, but according to Nick they were really struggling to keep the company going.

One day they received a letter from an Australian company offering them a great deal of money for the name UGG.

They accepted the offer and used the money to begin production of sheepskin boots and slippers on a major scale.

Twenty-five years since their adventure began Nick and Kath still work together, but now the company sends out over two million catalogues in the UK, and has a turnover of £10 million per year.

Their range of products has expanded and the catalogues offer Sheepskin coats and beautiful clothing which, wherever possible, is manufactured in the British Isles.

They have sent their products all over the world, but are now looking to expand into export markets.

They told me that they were just back from Japan, where there is great interest in their products, so look out for them because they now have an American website.

Up until now Cornwall has been famous for its beauty, tin mines, clotted cream and pasties, but who knows, in years to come people might think Cornwall? Ah yes, Celtic fluffy slippers.

*All for now,
Kind regards, Elfan.*

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GAY rights campaigners have hailed the announcement of a vote by Irish citizens whether to allow same sex-marriage.

Ireland to vote this May whether to allow same-sex marriage

DUBLIN – Irish voters will decide this May whether to allow same-sex marriage.

The vote comes as Northern Ireland remains the only region in the UK to not allow same-sex marriage.

The wording of the proposed reform was agreed by government ministers at a special cabinet meeting with Justice Minister Frances Fitzgerald saying voters were being given an option of removing impediments to marriage for gay people.

“The issue is one of equality, marriage equality. It is about removing the barriers which deny some couples the chance of marrying and of having relationships that are constitutionally protected,” she said.

“The question is whether or not a new category of couples can have an equal right to marrying and to enjoying the protection of marriage afforded by the Constitution.”

“Ultimately it is for the people of Ireland to decide. I hope we can have a constructive and respectful debate which will help to inform and engage citizens on this important issue.”

If the proposal is passed it will be the 34th amendment to the Constitution.

It says, “Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex.”

Gay people in Ireland can currently only enter into civil partnership rather than a full marriage commitment.

The announcement of the wording for the referendum comes after Health Minister Leo Varadkar became the first openly gay minister in an Irish Government.

In an RTE Radio interview in which he discussed his sexuality, Varadkar said he wanted it to be clear that he had no hidden agendas during the referendum campaign.

Gay rights campaigners hailed the announcement as historic.

Chair of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network Kieran Rose said the referendum was about moving a step closer to full inclusion for gay people in the Constitution.

Ireland decriminalised homosexual acts in 1993 following a campaign spearheaded by Senator David Norris and backed by high profile figures including former presidents Mary McAleese and Mary Robinson.

Civil partnerships – weddings involving same-sex partners in front of a registrar office – have been taking place in Ireland since the start of 2011.

SEATTLE IRISH WEEK FESTIVAL 2015

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2015

MATT TALBOT DINNER, 6 PM, F X McRORY'S, 319 Occidental Ave S. – A fund-raiser for the Matt Talbot Center (www.mtcenter.org), Seattle's downtown program for the homeless. For information and reservations, call (206) 256-9865.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2015

ST. PATRICK'S DAY MASS FOR PEACE, 10 AM, ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, 2702 Broadway E (Roanoke & I-5), Seattle – The celebrant is Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain assisted by priests of the Archdiocese. For details, call (425) 290-7839.

MAYOR'S IRISH WEEK PROCLAMATION / IRISH SENIORS' LUNCHEON, F X McRORY'S, NOON – Proclamations of Irish Week 2015 are issued by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, with special guests including the Mayor of Galway Donal Lyons and the St. Patrick's Day parade Honorary Grand Marshals, Danny and Cathryn Quinn, along with other local dignitaries.

This is also the annual St. Patrick's Day luncheon for Irish seniors and their spouses or significant others. For more information, call (206) 361-1713.

ST. PATRICK'S LANDING at Lake Union, 6 PM – St. Patrick was originally brought to Ireland by pirates around 400 AD. Over 1,600 years later, Seattle's Pirates of the Emerald Isle will bring him back to the Emerald City, dropping him off at South Lake Union (near MOHAI) at 6 PM.

Not exactly trusting the pirates, St. Patrick is bringing along his bodyguard U.S. National Boxing Champion Queen Underwood. All are welcome to join the fun by climbing on board the Ride the Ducks' boat at F X McRory's at 5 pm for the trip to South Lake Union.

The Ducks boat will bring everyone back to McRory's by 6:30 PM for the Green Stripe Laying. No admission fee and kids are welcome. For more information, call (206) 548-9859.

GREEN STRIPE LAYING ON 4TH AVE, 7 PM – This is a mini-parade to mark the route of the St. Patrick's Day parade down the center of 4th Avenue, starting from Jefferson Street at 7 PM.

There is no charge to participate and all are welcome aboard the flat-bed truck at F X McRory's at 6:30 PM! Free and children are welcome. For more information, call (206) 548-9859.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2015

IRISH FLAG-RAISING, 12:20 PM – The parade Grand Marshals and other dignitaries will raise the Irish Tricolor in front of the King-County Administration Building, followed by the playing of the Irish and U.S. national anthems.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE, ON 4TH AVE, 12:30 PM – At 12:30 PM, the St. Patrick's Day parade Grand Marshal and the honorary parade Grand Marshals lead Seattle's 42nd annual St. Patrick's Day parade up 4th Avenue.

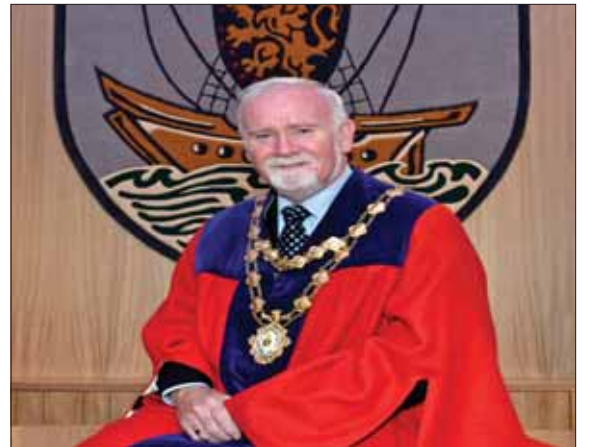
The parade travels north from Jefferson, and after passing the reviewing stand at Westlake, goes via the Monorail to the Seattle Center for closing ceremonies at the Irish Festival in the Armory at 2:30 PM. For more information, call (206) 412-2960.

GRAND MARSHAL – Seattle Mayor Ed Murray will be the Grand Marshal of Seattle's 2015 St. Patrick's Day parade.

Mayor Murray has strong ties to Seattle's Irish community and to Ireland. He is a member of several local Irish organizations and just last September led a Seattle Sister City delegation to Galway.

As a State Senator for 18 years in Olympia before becoming mayor, he opened doors in the state capitol for Irish Government officials and for dignitaries from Galway, made arrangements on numerous occasions for meetings with the Governor, the Attorney General and others.

He has visited Ireland about 15 times and even lived in Ireland for a year in 1974. He has participated in business missions from the Seattle area to Dublin, Belfast, Derry and Galway.



DONAL LYONS, the Mayor of Galway, will be marching in Seattle's St. Patrick's Day parade on March 14 and participating in the various other events that weekend celebrating St. Patrick's Day in Seattle.

With his four grandparents all born in Ireland, Murray is Seattle's most Irish mayor since John Collins, a native of Co. Cavan, served as Seattle mayor in 1873!

IRISH WEEK FESTIVAL, SEATTLE CENTER'S ARMORY, Saturday Noon - 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM - 6 PM (8 hours)

– The weekend festival on Saturday and Sunday at the Seattle Center's Armory (formerly Center House), with booths selling Irish and Celtic products, Irish food and libations, Irish music, singing, dancing, the Irish Reels Film Festival, workshops, lectures, cultural displays, an Irish art exhibit, children's contests and activities, etc.

On Sunday afternoon, there's a drawing for free round-trip tickets to Ireland, courtesy of Tangerine Travel in Redmond. For more detailed information, call (253) 237-2811.

COCKTAIL RECEPTION FOR THE MAYOR OF GALWAY, 5-7 PM – Chandler's Crabhouse, 901 Fairview Ave N, Seattle (South Lake Union). Organized by Irish Network Seattle, the visitors from Seattle's Sister City of Galway are hosted at a reception that is co-sponsored by the Seattle Galway Sister City Association. No admission charge.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2015

ST. PATRICK'S DAY DASH, 8:30 AM, Seattle Center – This four-mile fun run is in its 31st year – a family event with something for everyone. Expect 14,000 runners and there is no race-day registration. For registration and more information, visit: stpatdash.com.

IRISH COMMUNITY HAPPY HOUR, Seattle, 5 PM – The St. Patrick's Day Happy Hour runs from 5-7 PM at the Harbor Club. Join the Friends of St. Patrick, Irish Network Seattle, the Seattle Gaels and the Irish Heritage Club.

Tickets are \$30 per person which includes free parking, two free drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Irish music, stepdancing, bagpipers, silent auction, and more. Business attire please! For details, call (425) 821-3044, or visit fosp.org.

FRIENDS OF ST. PATRICK BANQUET, Seattle, 6:30 PM – Black-tie optional dinner and dance, the 75th annual dinner of the Society of the Friends of St. Patrick, is being held at the Knights of Columbus Banquet Room, 722 E Union, Seattle.

Tickets are \$100 per person, and include parking. The Friends have been an institution in Seattle since 1941. For details, visit fosp.org, or contact (425) 821-3044.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2015

IRISH GENEALOGY WORKSHOP, 13047 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle, 9-5 PM – Luther Memorial Lutheran Church Hall, 13047 Greenwood Ave N, Seattle (#5 Bus line).

A full day of Irish Genealogical Research classes conducted by regional specialists Eva Doherty Gremmert, Ann Moloney Lamb, Steven W. Morrison, and Jean A. Roth. For reservations and more details, call (206) 782-2629.

IRISH WEEK INFORMATION: IRISHWEEK.ORG or 253-237-2811

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SEATTLE IRISH NEWS

PASSINGS

- Kathleen Fahlbeck (72), a native of Co. Leitrim, died in Tacoma on February 21.
- John Sanford Hopper (53), a Seattleite who was general manager at Microsoft Ireland back in the early days, died on February 19 in Croatia.
- Betty Smith (83), the daughter of Irish immigrants and longtime office manager at Bellarmine Prep, died in Tacoma on February 12.

CONGRATULATIONS – Among the people honored in New York recently at the Irish Echo's 40 Under 40 awards dinner were Seattleites Aoife Blake and Matthew O'Toole.

The dinner celebrated Irish and Irish Americans across the U.S. who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields of work before reaching the age of 40, and Aoife and Matthew are the first two honorees from Seattle.

Aoife is a native of Dublin who emigrated to Seattle in 2012 after graduating from UCD with a Masters Degree in Regional and Urban Planning.

She works as an assistant planner with the City of Kirkland while in her spare time is an Irish Network Seattle board member and is a member of the Seattle Gaels.

Matthew is a native of Galway who graduated in 2004 from NUI, Galway with a Masters Degree in Accounting and worked with Price Waterhouse Coopers in Dublin.

In 2008 Matthew joined Microsoft, Ireland and in 2012 transferred to Microsoft in Redmond where he is a senior finance manager. He is also an Irish Network Seattle board member and a member of the Seattle Gaels.

IRELAND CONNECTIONS – According to the Washington Council on International Trade, Ireland is the third largest destination for Washington state services exports, which may reflect its role as a key European hub for Microsoft.

Visitors from Europe, many of whom are from Ireland, account for a third of Washington state's foreign visitors. The top 10 markets receiving Washington manufacturing exports also has Ireland listed at #10.



By
JOHN KEANE



IRISH NETWORK Seattle's Aoife Blake was recently honored in New York at *The Irish Echo's* 40 Under 40 Awards dinner.



IRISH NETWORK Seattle's Matthew O'Toole was recently honored in New York at *The Irish Echo's* 40 Under 40 Awards dinner.

IRISH GAELIC – A class in Simple Irish is being offered at Bellevue College Continuing Education for the first time. The class is most suited for students with no or a little Irish. No exams or worries, only good craic. They will be using Buntús Cainte, part 1 as the text.

Registration is now open and the class begins April 6 for nine Mon-

days. For more information call (425) 564-2263.

IRISH MUSIC WEEK – Registration is open for Cascadia Irish Music Week from July 19-25, at The Evergreen State College, Olympia.

This year's teachers include: Angelina Carberry – tenor banjo, tenor guitar, mandolin; Antoin MacGabhann – fiddle; Josephine Marsh – button accordion; Caitlin Nic Gabhann – anglo concertina; Sean Gavin – flute; Josh Dukes – guitar accompaniment; Miray Campbell – intro whistle and flute; Randy Vic – intro fiddle; and Randal Bays – ear training for trad musicians.

Full details about the week can be found at www.cascadiairish.org.

MISCELLANEOUS

• Seattle's next Irish Book Club meeting is Tuesday, March 24. For details, e-mail: hudit@comcast.net.

• The Emerald City Feis dates announced is again at the Washington State Convention Center at Convention Place on April 18 and 19.

• You're invited to join the Irish choir which will be singing at the St. Patrick's Day Mass and again in October for the Mass in Gaelic. Contact miriamjdoyle@gmail.com.

• Check out the Irish community calendar on the Irish Heritage Club's website at www.irishclub.org.

MULTI ANNIVERSARIES – March 2015 sees the 75th anniversary of the Friends of St. Patrick in Seattle; the 45th anniversary of the St. Patrick's Day parade in Seattle; the 35th anniversary of the Irish Festival at the Seattle Center; the 31st anniversary of the St. Patrick's Day Dash; and the 29th anniversary of the signing of the Seattle Galway Sister City Agreement, an event that is marked by a visit to Seattle by the Mayor of Galway, Donal Lyons.

However and whatever you celebrate during Irish Week 2015, we hope you have a wonderful St. Patrick's Day. *Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig.*



IRISH FIDDLER Antoin MacGabhann, 'The Master Musician of Mullahoran' who will be one of the teachers at the Irish Music Week in Olympia from July 19-25.



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SEATTLE MAYOR Ed Murray will be the Grand Marshal of Seattle's St. Patrick's Day parade on March 14. He will also attend the Proclamation Luncheon, the Irish Festival and the Friends of St. Patrick Banquet.

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Bitter memories 30 years after the end of Welsh coal miners' strike

CARDIFF – Bitter memories endure of a year-long strike which saw Welsh miners return to work on March 3, 1985.

The strike ended following a National Union of Mineworkers' vote to return to work. It was a defining moment in British industrial relations, and its defeat significantly weakened the British trade union movement.

The strike united communities but devastated the coal industry and changed hundreds of Welsh communities forever.

It was also seen as a major political victory for British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party.

Between 1979 and 1981, two million manufacturing jobs were lost which some ascribe to Thatcher's hardline policies. Others see it as the inevitable result of decades of nationalization of unproductive industries in the face of

rising competition from lower cost producers.

Following a narrowly averted strike in 1981, the government announced on March 6, 1984 its intention to close 20 coal mines.

Mass walk-outs and strikes began following this revelation in March, including the widely reported Battle of Orgreave between 5,000 miners and 5,000 police officers.

Last October, Shadow Welsh Secretary Owen Smith said new revelations showed the 'disdain' with which Margaret Thatcher's government treated Wales.

MPs accepted a motion which said Margaret Thatcher's government "misled the public" about pit closure plans during the 1984 miners' strike.

The motion, tabled by the Labour Party for an Opposition Day debate in the Commons, was not opposed by government MPs when Speaker John Bercow called it to a vote.

It meant the Commons accepted the

terms of the motion, which also said the government of the day had sought to "influence police tactics" without a division of MPs.

The claims were made on the basis of Cabinet papers released under the 30-year rule and on which Labour MPs had previously claimed demonstrated untruths.

Cabinet papers from the 1980s released by the National Archives indicated the late Baroness Thatcher's government had secret plans to close 75 pits and considered sending in troops to break the 1984/85 strike.

During the debate, Labour said Parliament must face up to the failures of the miners' strike in the same way as Bloody Sunday and Hillsborough.

Shadow Welsh Secretary Owen Smith said, "The revelations from Cabinet papers that Thatcher's government misled the public about the extent of the pit closure programme and sought to influence police tactics during the miners' strike, did not come as a surprise to people in Wales."



THE GROUP OF SIX enjoying post-dinner in the Red Dragon – (clockwise) Billy Parker (Tramor), Angela Smith (secretary), Matthew Parry, Don Smith (executive members), Kevin King (Tramor), and John Good (Tramor leader).

St. David's Day at the Cambrian Hall

By EIFION WILLIAMS
VANCOUVER – This year's St. David's Day dinner at the Cambrian Hall featured the traditional music of Tramor led by John Good from Phoenix, Arizona, ably assisted by mandolin virtuoso Billy Parker and percussionist Kevin King.

The Celtic trio entertained an enthusiastic audience before and after dinner with a variety of musical numbers, including traditional Welsh folk music, bluegrass and Welsh pipe music.

John Good is well-known in his native Wales and throughout the U.S. west, south and midwest as a multi-instrumentalist, Welsh piper, singer/songwriter, storyteller and poet.

He is a veteran of many Celtic festivals and concerts, including the 2014 North American Festival of Wales in Minneapolis. He is also president of the Arizona Welsh Society.

Tramor was introduced by Welsh Society president David Llewelyn Williams, who acted as master of ceremonies for the evening's program. Following the dinner, David introduced several speakers to present the traditional St. David's Day greetings and toasts.

Welsh Society secretary Angela Smith read out a list of Welsh societies from across the world that had sent greetings to the Vancouver Society this year, including many from Canada, the U.S. and Australia, and also including the Welsh Society of Singapore.

Angela also read out a message from Carwyn Jones, the First Minister of Wales, who highlighted the ways in which Wales had been in the news over the past year. Last September, the largest gathering of heads of government ever to take place on British soil came to Newport for a NATO summit.

Wales was also very much in the news in many parts of the world last year due to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dylan Thomas. And this year there will be many celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Welsh settlers in Patagonia on board the *Mimosa*.

The first minister also mentioned some memorable Welsh achievements in the sporting world, including winning 36 medals in last year's Commonwealth Games. Wales also held some major sporting events such as golf's Ryder Cup, international test cricket and Olympic Games soccer competitions.

Perhaps of greater significance is the fact that visitors to Wales rose by 14 percent in the first nine months of last year and the country boasted its best



PRESIDENT David Llewelyn Williams was presented with greetings from Ottawa by Don Davies MP.



WELSH SOCIETY secretary Angela Smith reading greetings from kindred societies.

inward foreign investment figures in 25 years.

This year's guests of honour were Don Davies, Member of Parliament for Vancouver-Kingsway, and his wife Sheryl Palm. Davies presented the Toast to Canada and spoke of his own Welsh heritage and of the large number of ethnic groups residing in Vancouver-Kingsway.

The Toast to St. David was presented by Antone Minard in Welsh and Nerys Haqq in English, in the form of Prayers to St. David.

The Toast to Wales was given by Eifion Williams who described some of the changes Wales has undergone over the past 50 years.

At the end of the evening, while thanking all the evening's performers and presenters, David Llewelyn Williams also expressed the Society's gratitude to the social committee, to treasurer Gaynor Evans, and to all those members who had worked to make the evening a success.

As usual, a rousing round of applause was given to Tim Jordan of Jordan's International Food Designs for providing the delicious dinner.

'By God...believe in something,' Michael Sheen tells politicians

TREDEGAR, Wales – Michael Sheen made a passionate St. David's Day address in defense of Britain's most treasured institution, the National Health Service.

The actor's electrifying speech about complacency and the impact of austerity measures resonates across political boundaries.

Speaking against the Conservative party's austerity cuts, Sheen said that it was a far cry from the passion that underpinned the NHS under Aneurin "Nye" Bevan.

Bevan was a Welsh Labour Party politician who is best known for overseeing the creation of the National Health Service after the Second World War.

Sheen said, "It was long term, it was far-reaching. Visionary in its scope and revolutionary in its effect. He [Bevan] had cast-iron integrity and a raging passion.

"This was a man who had no fear in standing up for what he believed in, and he made no bones about how he felt.

"This is a man who publicly stated: 'No amount of cajolery, no attempt at ethical or social seduction, can eradicate from my heart a deep, burning hatred for the Tory party.'"

Sheen, who has played Tony Blair on screen twice, also attacked politicians from all parties for being too "careful, tentative, scared of saying what they feel for fear of alienating a part of the electorate."

Many took to Twitter to heap praise on the Welshman, including Labour MP Diane Abbott, who posted a link to his "brilliant speech."

Comedian Wil Anderson wrote, "If only politicians defended the people they represent with this sort of passion," while musician Peter Hooton said Sheen "shows politicians how it's done."

Paul Evans, director of campaign group NHS Support Federation, said it was great to see someone with such a public profile discussing the issue.

The full text of Michael Sheen's speech:

This [Aneurin Bevan] was a man who publicly stated that "no amount of cajolery, and no attempts at ethical or social seduction, can eradicate from my heart a deep burning hatred for the Tory party."

In today's political climate, where politicians are careful, tentative, scared of saying what they feel for fear of alienating a part of the electorate under the excuse of trying to appear electable, all parties drift into a morass of bland neutrality.

The real deals, the real values, we suspect, are kept behind closed doors.

Is it any wonder that people feel there is very little to choose between?

Bevan said, "We know what happens to people who stay in the middle of the road – they get run down."

When people are too scared to say what they really mean, when they're too careful to speak from their hearts, when integrity is too much of risk, it's no surprise that people feel disengaged with politics.

There is never an excuse to not speak up for what you think is right. You must stand up for what you believe. But first of all, by God....believe in something.

There are plenty out there who believe in grabbing as much as they can for themselves, who are constantly sniffing around for markets to exploit, for weakness to expose.

They won't say it of course. They're too smart for that. Nobody says they want to get rid of the NHS.

Everyone praises it across all par-

ties – it's about as powerful a symbol of goodness as we have. It would be dangerous not to.

But for decades now, there has been a systematic undermining of its core values. This is beyond party politics. The Labour government arguably did as much damage to the NHS as any Tory or coalition [government].

This is about who we want to be as a nation and what we believe is worth fighting for.

Too many people have given too much and fought too hard for us to give away what they achieved and to be left with so very little.

To those across the whole party-political spectrum – and to anyone in any position of power or authority – I ask you to search your heart and look at who and what you serve.

To those who have discarded all principles, save that of all profit beyond all else; to those who have turned their back on the very idea of a truly democratic society and aligned themselves to nothing but self-interest; to those who have betrayed the vision of equality and justice and compassion for all, that vision that provided the crucible from which came forth the National Health Service...I say to you, as Aneurin Bevan said in Trafalgar Square in 1956:

"You have besmirched the name of Britain. You have made us ashamed of the things of which formerly we were proud. You have offended against every principle of decency, and there is only one way you can even begin to restore your tarnished reputation: Get out, get out, get out!"

Can Wales stop the incredible Irish winning machine?

OVER one million viewers tuned in for Ireland's brilliant Six Nations win over England at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin on Sunday, March 1.

Joe Schmidt's men romped to a 19-9 victory to secure their third win out of three matches in this year's competition.

The audience for RTE's coverage peaked at 1.2 million while an average of 1.1 tuned in with 756,000 of those watching the full game and 100,780 live streams recorded on RTE Player.

With every passing match, Ireland begin to have the look of genuine World Cup contenders.

The dismantling of England made it 10 wins on the spin for Schmidt's men, leaving Warren Gatland's Wales as the next nation in line to try and halt the green juggernaut.

So, just how good are the Irish? And are Wales capable of stopping their march to the Grand Slam?

The deserved win over England comes on the back of winning last season's Six Nations, doing the double over Argentina in the summer and beating South

Africa and Australia last autumn.

And it will remind pundits of the roll Wales got on under Graham Henry in 1999, when they built momentum following a first win in Paris for 24 years and went on to defeat England, Argentina away and South Africa for the first time in history.

Belief will be important but Wales will also have it, having beaten Ireland in the quarter-finals of the World Cup and on the way to championships in 2008 and 2012.

All eyes will be tuned to the clash in Cardiff on Sunday, March 15.



ROBBIE HENSHAW celebrates the only try of the game against England at Lansdowne Road on March 1.



Probe into sectarian songs on Glasgow-Perth train

GLASGOW – ScotRail passengers were left “disgusted” by football supporters’ sectarian singing as they returned from a match, police said.

British Transport Police received complaints about a group of men singing offensive songs on the 11:36 PM Glasgow to Perth service on February 19.

They have appealed for the public's help to trace the men, thought to have been returning from a Europa League match in Glasgow. Celtic had taken on Inter Milan at Parkhead on the day of the incident.

Constable John McErlane said the behaviour will not be tolerated.

He said, “There really is no need for such unsavoury behaviour on the rail network and the actions of the men disgusted other passengers, prompting complaints, and I am anxious to speak with anyone who witnessed it to get in touch.”



THE SECTARIAN incident happened on February 19 aboard the 11:36 PM Glasgow to Perth rail service.

GAA fund helped bring bodies of 60 young people home

DUBLIN – A fund set up by members of the GAA 19 months ago has repatriated the bodies of 60 young Irish people who died abroad, according to former GAA President Liam Ó Néill.

Ó Néill and director general of the GAA Páirc Duffy were before the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee to talk about the role and interaction of the GAA with the Irish diaspora.

Ó Néill told the committee that in New York 20 months ago Kevin Bell, a young man from Co. Down, lost his life.

He said, “There were funds raised to repatriate his body and there were residual funds left over so the Kevin Bell Repatriation Fund was set up to bring bodies of people home from abroad.

“The fund was set up by members of GAA abroad and so far it has repatriated 60 bodies of Irish young people in 19 months.”

He also said that that is what members of the GAA do, helping out and also that

“people are building communities abroad.”

Ó Néill also told the committee that Gaelic Games is now on the formal school curriculum in Brittany, France, the only place in the world where this is the case.

Duffy offered the committee details of the extent of the reach of the GAA across the globe.

He said that there are 29 clubs in New York and 97 in North America; 83 in the UK; 20 in Canada and 63 in Australia.

He said that the newest GAA County Board was opened last year in the Middle East. Recent development of the organisation includes the establishment of the South Africa Gaels and the Hurling Club of Buenos Aires.

Duffy said that clubs abroad are trying to replicate clubs at home by developing their own clubhouses and he cited the developments including Rockland GAA club in New York; Ruislip in London; Shannon Gaels in New York and Willawong Park in Australia.

He added that the GAA has helped with the funding for these grounds.



Welsh Society welcomes new members

The Vancouver Welsh Society has recently begun a campaign to encourage a number of young people of Welsh background, particularly recent immigrants, to events at the Cambrian Hall. The society wishes to assist these new arrivals.

It will also bring added enthusiastic support for the many activities the Welsh Society sponsors.

On Friday, March 20, there will be an ‘Evening of Welcome’ for new members in the Red Dragon at the Cambrian Hall, starting at 7:30 PM.

This will be an opportunity for members to socialize in a pub atmosphere. Anyone and everyone is welcome, whether or not of Welsh background.

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Mar 29 – **AGM**
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Contact: kimberlydbudd@me.com for details.

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GLASSES UP TO THE SONG AND THE STORM

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