

# the celtic connection

ISSUE 27 VOLUME 2

*Proudly Serving Celts in North America Since 1991*

FEBRUARY 2018



AS BREXIT 'cliff-edge' fears grow, a forecast prepared for the British Government and leaked by news website BuzzFeed reportedly says the economy will be worse off after the country leaves the European Union, regardless of what trade deal is struck with the bloc. It is scheduled to depart at 11 PM UK time on Friday, March, 29, 2019. [Read more inside on page 8]



March 1 is St. David's Day, the national day of Wales, and celebrated by Welsh around the world. [Read more page 6]



ST. PATRICK (aka Tom Keefe) lands in Seattle, WA at 5:30 PM on Friday, March 16 to participate in Irish Week 2018. He is pictured above practising how to handle the Seafair Pirates (goodwill ambassadors for the city of Seattle) when he comes ashore at south Lake Union, near the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). [Details inside on page 17]

## Brigid Guides our Way Through the Light and Darkness of our Time

By CYNTHIA WALLENTINE

**W**HETHER we are ready or not, no season arrives without change of some kind. The real question is whether the change is welcomed as growth or blunt requirement.

With the passage of the Festival of Imbolg in early February, we are now in the season of light, the territory of the great Celtic goddess Brigid.

With a legacy that stretches from the prehistoric tribes of Europe to refined Christian cathedrals centuries later, the goddess withstands time.

In his work, *The Festival of Brigit*, Irish author Seamus O' Cathain writes "that Brigit, whose very name embodies the concept of growth, should have remained such a constant icon of veneration for heathen and Christian Celt alike."

At Imbolg, the load of winter lightens. Life is "in the belly," food is not far off and the cold may be survived after all.

Just as winter marches upon us without fail, so too spring follows with lighter step, and with greater hope for visible renewal when greenery breaks through the underground.

To live is to change. Survival belongs to those with the ability to adapt, but adaptation does not necessarily mean to acquiesce.

In the United States, the president encourages discord, hatred, and polarization.

While some try to live and look the other



IMAGE: Brigid by tattereddreams on DeviantArt.

way, others turn to the vague leanings of resistance.

The spectre of fascism, and the ignorance that supports it, is real. The ugly underbelly of the United States is in full global view.

Brigid is a patroness of poet and smithy, of heart and industry. She is of the air and the deep earth, she sees all.

A gentle midwife, Brigid also forges vessels and tools from minerals scraped from the ground.

She shares symbolism with Roman Minerva and Greek Athena. Achievement, growth, valor, and creativity surround her.

The spring brings renewed breath and

new energy. Whether your tool is a pen, computer, the work you do in your community, or the industry that supports your city take up your implements, blessed by Brigid, to help yourself and your family adapt, even grow, in these times.

At the same time, never acquiesce to wrongdoers who discriminate, bully, lie, and abuse. No goddess or god protects that kind.

This is the season of spring festivals, of Imbolg in February, of St. Patrick's Day and the Vernal Equinox on March 20, 2018.

Use the growing light to better guide your path, improve your vision, and help you navigate the season to come.

## HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**2018 MARKS CENTENNARY OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE IN UK BUT HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED?**

READ MORE ON PAGE 11

**BURNS AND WOMEN: THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S BURNS SEASON IN SCOTLAND ~ BY HARRY McGRATH**

READ MORE ON PAGE 10

**WOMEN IN IRELAND: REFERENDUM VOTE ON ABORTION IN MAY 2018 ~ PAGE 13**

### WIN FREE GIFTS

You could win an 'Irish Fry Up' from Black Pudding Imports in Langley. Includes: Irish sausage, Irish bacon, black & white pudding, eggs & a large Paddy pie. Check out their weekly sales on Facebook (see page 4 For more info). Mark your entry **Black Pudding** and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by February 28. Entries by e-mail only. (*Only one entry per person*) Send to: cbutler@telus.net



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# Don't miss the 2018 deadline for the Western Canada Rose

EDMONTON – The Edmonton Irish Sports and Social Society will host the annual Rose of Tralee banquet to select a representative for western Canada on Saturday, May 26.

The winner will go on to represent western Canada at the main Rose of Tralee Festival in Ireland which now marks 59 years.

The heart of the festival is the selection of the Rose of Tralee which brings young women of Irish descent from around the world to County Kerry, Ireland for a global celebration of Irish culture.

Entries for the Western Canada Rose 2018 are welcome from anywhere in western Canada.

There are 65 'Rose' centres worldwide with three in Canada – Toronto, Ottawa and Edmonton.

Eligibility requirements include: must be 18 years of age by January 1, 2017 and will not have reached your 28<sup>th</sup> birthday on or prior to September 1, 2018.

Entrants must be unmarried or never married; be female, born in Ireland or of Irish origin by virtue of one of your ancestors having been born in Ireland.

The recognition that comes with being involved in the “Rose” is very rewarding, and raises the international profile for our Canadian cities.

The Rose of Tralee is something that the people of Kerry are very proud of, and it has turned into one of the biggest television events in Europe.

Having a western Canadian connection to the festival is a bonus for everyone, and those of us with an Irish connection, should be equally proud.

For more information, email:  
westerncanadarose@gmail.com.



THE Irish Heritage Society of Canada hosted the Irish Seniors Christmas luncheon at the Hilton Metrotown in Burnaby, B.C. on Wednesday, December 13. This is the final in the series presented by the IHS but there is word the luncheons might continue hosted by another local Irish organization. Pictured above: (L-R) Tony and Gwen McCamley (IHS), Teresa McDonnell, Marie Morris and Maura De Freitas (Irish Benevolent Society of B.C.) and George McDonnell (IHS). A great big thank you goes out to George for all his work these past three years hosting the luncheons. Stay tuned for more updates.

## THE CELTIC CONNECTION

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# Rose of Tralee

## Selection Night Saturday, May 26

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- Be unmarried or never been married.
- Be female, born in Ireland or an Irish citizen or of Irish origin by virtue of one of your ancestors having been born in Ireland.

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# CELTIC FEST VANCOUVER

## FEBRUARY 25 — MARCH 17 2018



### ALTAN

FEB 25 ~ St. James Hall ~ \$35



### CELTIC FEST CEILIDH

Mar 16 ~ Scottish Cultural Centre ~ \$25



### WELSH MEN'S CHOIR

Mar 16-17 ~ Arts Centre Maple Ridge / Christ Church Cathedral  
~ \$15-\$40

### IRISH SEISIUN AT BILLY BISHOP

Mar 15 ~ 1407 Laburnum St ~ FREE

### ALTAN

(Presented by Rogue Folk Club)

St James Hall  
3214 W 10th Ave  
Vancouver, BC V6K 2L2

February 25th - Doors open at  
7:00pm show at 8:00pm

Tickets - \$35  
(\$31 RFC & PBHS members)  
Highlife, Tapestry or  
[www.roguefolk.com](http://www.roguefolk.com)

### IRISH SEISIUN

at Billy Bishop

1407 Laburnum St  
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March 15th - 7:00 pm

Tickets - Free Admission  
All Musicians Welcome

### CELTIC FEST CEILIDH

Scottish Cultural Centre  
8886 Hudson St  
Vancouver, BC V6P 4N2

March 16th - 7:00 pm

Tickets - \$25 at  
[www.eventbrite.ca](http://www.eventbrite.ca)

### WELSH MEN'S CHOIR

(2 concerts)

Arts Centre Maple Ridge  
11944 Haney Pl  
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 6G1

March 16th - 7:30 pm

Tickets  
\$34 Adults  
\$32 Senior  
\$15 Students

[www.theactmapleridge.org/buy-tickets/](http://www.theactmapleridge.org/buy-tickets/)

Christ Church Cathedral  
690 Burrard St  
Vancouver, BC V6C 2L1

March 17th - 7:30 pm

Tickets  
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## Rogue Folk Club

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<p><b>Friday, FEBRUARY 23</b> Powerful Canadian songwriter <b>Stephen Fearing</b></p>	<p><b>Sat-Sun, MARCH 3 &amp; 4</b> Boss Irish-American songwriter <b>Tom Russell</b></p>
<p><b>Sunday, FEBRUARY 25</b></p>  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">Altan</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Donegal favourites return with a new CD - this time at the newly-renovated St. James Hall.</p>	<p><b>Sunday, MARCH 11</b> Scottish fiddle / cello duo par excellence. Groove is not trivial! <b>Alasdair Fraser &amp; Natalie Haas</b></p> <p><b>Friday, MARCH 16</b> Yukon songwriter with new CD <b>Annie Lou</b></p> <p><b>Sunday, MARCH 18</b> World/Jazz/Blues harmonica wiz <b>Carlos del Junco</b> <i>and many more to come in 2018!</i></p>

**St. James Hall (3214 West 10th Ave.)**  
**Tickets & Info (604) 736-3022**

# Another series of great Celtic tunes on tap at the Rogue

**H**APPY New Year, he said, belatedly! It's been a while since the last time I wrote this column. What a great time we've been having at The Rogue since then!

There were two full houses at the end of 2017 – the hugely successful fundraiser, and Van Django's Cool Yule – and then the venue was closed down for a few weeks while the dance floor was completely rebuilt.

It looks fabulous, with its oak floorboards shining like gold under the new lights. Even better it is now a sprung dance floor, so it gives back a little bit with every step.

We kicked off 2018 with three more sell-outs – **Connie Kaldor**, and two nights with **Jim Byrnes** leading an 11-piece band. So good! Watch for a DVD later this year.

We had another sell-out last Sunday with PEI's **Ten Strings & A Goatskin** and Cape Breton's **Ben & Anita** filling the hall with exhilarating Celtic music.

The **Beppe Gambetta / Liz Stringer** and **Paul Pigat / Lynn Miles** concerts were fabulous, too. Not quite sold out but a good turnout for both – and such great music.

We are about to embark on the February long weekend with **The Driven Bow**, a festival of B.C. fiddle music. Six bands, three concerts, and six workshops. Huge thanks to Creative B.C. (the provincial music fund) for making this event possible.

Right after that I'm off to Kansas City for the **Folk Alliance Conference** where I expect to find a heap of bands from the British Isles, across Europe and North America – and beyond – who would love to play at The Rogue. Then I'll try to shoehorn some of them into our series!

After a couple of days off The Rogue resumes with **Roguelele Night** on the 20th, and then two more enticing shows the next weekend: **Stephen Fearing** on Friday 23rd and Donegal's **Altan** on Sunday 25th – all shows at St. James Hall (3214 West 10th Avenue).

Now back in his native B.C., and one of the country's finest songwriters, **Stephen Fearing** is a founding member of the Rogue with ten solo CDs, nine with **Blackie & The Rodeo Kings**, two more with Irish singer **Andy White**, and countless awards.

He usually performs solo, but this time he brings a new trio to enhance his lyrically stunning and rhythmically powerful songs.

Plus we have a bonus set from an exciting young acoustic duo from Seattle – **Riley Calgagno** and **Vivian Leva** – whose unique blend of old-time songs and newer compositions is sure to win them some new friends on this side of the 49th parallel.

With founding member **Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh** at the helm for over 30 years, **Altan** continues to be one of the most important live acts to play traditional Irish music in Ireland and on the world stage.

They are set to release their 14th CD



By  
**STEVE  
EDGE**

## THE ROGUE FOLK CLUB



**ALTAN** has been one of Ireland's most acclaimed trad music group for the past 30 years.



**ONE** of the country's finest songwriters, **Stephen Fearing** is a founding member of the Rogue.

since 1989 – *The Gap Of Dreams* on Compass Records. The official release date is March 1, but I'm pretty sure they will have copies available at the concert.

It was recorded in their native Donegal, and revisits the spirit of the crossroads dances and late night music and storytelling sessions in the pre-digital – and even pre-television age.

On this show they will perform as a quartet, with **Mairead** on fiddle and vocals, **Daithi Sproule** on guitar and vocals, **Ciaran Curran** on bouzouki, and **Martin Tourish** on accordion. This show will definitely sell out, and there are not many tickets left so get yours now.

Singer-songwriter, painter, and essayist **Tom Russell** has released 40 highly-acclaimed albums and published six books, including a book on his art and a book of his songs.

His latest CD, *Folk Hotel*, features 13 new Tom Russell songs and the CD-only bonus track duet with Joe Ely on Bob Dylan's *Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues*.

*Folk Hotel* follows the 2017 release of Russell's tribute to **Ian & Sylvia** on True North Records, *Play One More: The Songs of Ian & Sylvia*, which was the June 2017 #1 Folk Radio recording

in the world – based on the Folk DJ Chart of 150 DJ's around the globe. We expect this concert (Saturday, March 3) will sell out soon as well, so we have been able to add a second show the following night.

On Sunday, March 11, Scottish fiddler **Alasdair Fraser** returns with cellist **Natalie Haas** for an afternoon workshop and an evening concert at St. James Hall.

Last year they held a brilliant workshop with well over 50 participants so we have invited them back to do it again.

Since that show they have released another glorious CD, *Ports Of Call*, with music from many Celtic countries – all infused with that irrepressible Scots groove.

We might even show the documentary, *The Groove Is Not Trivial*, again. This is a very moving account of Alasdair's career and his continuing efforts to celebrate the characteristic, yet unheralded, groove in Scottish traditional music – where the cello provides the funky basis for the fiddle to soar and for the dancers to move and groove.

There are also concerts with American songwriter **Chris Smither** (Saturday, March 10 at St. James. New CD. Tickets only available from Capilano University box office (604) 990-7810. Not many left!).

Yukon bluegrass / folk / country songwriter **Annie Lou** with her fine band (Friday, March 16).

World Music / Jazz harmonica wizard **Carlos del Junco** and his band from Toronto (Sunday, March 18), and two nights with the remarkable Canadian musical comedy trio **The Arrogant Worms** (March 22 and 23 – the latter selling very fast!).

Full details of all Rogue shows can be found on [www.roguefolk.com](http://www.roguefolk.com).

March also sees two fabulous celebrations of traditional music and culture in Vancouver: **The Vancouver Celtic Festival** (February 25 - March 17) and Coquitlam / Maillardville's **Festival du Bois** (which occurs later in the month this year: March 23-25).

Details of CelticFest have yet to be finalized, but they have graciously included the **Altan** concert in their program of events. You can find out more (soon, I hope) on [www.celticfestvancouver.com](http://www.celticfestvancouver.com).

Highlights of Festival du Bois include the return of Quebec's powerhouse trad band **Le Vent Du Nord** – now a quintet, with the recent addition of ace fiddler **Andre Brunet**; another superb Quebec trad trio **Bon Debarras**; and **Les Chauffeurs a Pieds** – more Quebec trad – this time from a young quartet.

Local stalwarts like **Blackthorn** and **Gabriel Dubreuil** will keep the groove (what's French for groove, I wonder?) happening all weekend long. Details on [www.festivaldubois.ca](http://www.festivaldubois.ca).

You can hear music by all these performers and many more on *The Saturday Edge On Folk*, every Saturday from 8am to noon on CiTR fm 101.9 and [www.citr.ca](http://www.citr.ca) with yours truly in the chair, spinning the tunes. I hope you can join me!

See you at The Rogue House!  
*Slainte, Steve*



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## Two brilliant performers featured at Blue Frog Studios next month

WHITE ROCK – Blue Frog Studios will host two of the most popular local musicians next month as they each celebrate the release of their albums.

Fiddle sensation **Kiérá** returns for another stellar show on Saturday, March 10.

Her fourth album is entitled *Strong Bow*, a follow up to the highly acclaimed *Stonemason's Daughter*, winner of a 2013 Canadian Folk Music award.

On *Strong Bow* however she raises the bar as both musician and composer, with a collection that delves into her past where inspiration lies, and to the future as she showcases 15 original tunes.

There are guests aplenty on the album led by **Adrian Dolan** on piano and **Michael McGoldrick** on flute.

The youngest of seven children, Kiérá grew up in an environment where family and friends were always playing music.

One of her favourite memories was waking up every morning to Celtic music from Ireland and Cape Breton blaring through the house, courtesy of her mom.

Add to this a strong Irish/Scottish background and it was inevitable that music would become her passion, with traditional fiddle her instrument of choice.

Joining Kiérá on stage at the Blue Frog Studios will be **Adam Dobres** on guitar, **Robin Layne** on percussion, and **Adrian Dolan** on piano, mandola and accordion.

On March 17, the **Pat Chessell Band** – one of western Canada's top Celtic acts – will perform their sixth annual St. Patrick's show at Blue Frog Studios.

The evening will also be the release party for Chessell's new album *I Confess*.

The seven track CD contains five origi-



FIDDLE sensation Kiérá has just released her fourth album entitled *Strong Bow*. She performs on Saturday, March 10.



LOCAL favourites and one of western Canada's top Celtic acts, the Pat Chessell Band, play their annual St. Patrick's Day show on Saturday, March 17. They have also just released their new album *I Confess*.

nal songs and two traditional covers.

Chessell is joined on the album by an array of guest artists and talented friends.

These include noted musicians as **Steve Dawson** (Zubot and Dawson, Jim Byrnes); **Geoffrey Kelly** of Spirit of the West; **Gerry O'Connor** (current member of the Irish Rovers); **Bruce Coughlan** of Tiller's Folly; **Damaris Woods** of Derek Warfield and the Young Wolfe Tones and local musicians **Nate Powell**, **Brendan Mooney**,

**Mike Michalkow**, **Michael Viens**, and **Tim Renaud**.

Chessell began his career as a teenager, performing around Vancouver as a guest with the **Danny Burns Ballad Band**.

*I Confess* is his third release and his first two albums received airplay in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Tickets for both shows are available online at: bluefrogstudios.ca, or phone (604) 542-3055.

## Shocked friends and fans pay tribute to Dolores O'Riordan

LONDON – News of the death of Dolores O'Riordan at the age of 46 shocked friends, fans, and colleagues of The Cranberries singer.

The singer was in London for a short recording session at the time of her death on Monday, January 15.

A statement from her representative said, "Irish and international singer Dolores O'Riordan has died suddenly in London today.

"She was 46 years old. The lead singer with the Irish band The Cranberries was in London for a short recording session. No further details are available at this time.

"Family members are devastated to hear the breaking news and have requested privacy at this very difficult time."

The band's official Twitter account said they were 'devastated'.

"We are devastated on the passing of our friend Dolores. She was an extraordinary talent and we feel very privileged to have been part of her life from 1989



IRISH SINGER, songwriter, and musician Dolores O'Riordan died suddenly in London on January 15.

when we started The Cranberries. The world has lost a true artist today. Noel, Mike and Fergal."

Fans, friends, politicians and industry peers took to the airwaves and social media to pay tribute to the star.

An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, issued a statement, "Dolores O'Riordan was the voice of a generation.

"For anyone who grew up in Ireland in the 1990s, The Cranberries were an iconic band, who captured all of the

angst that came with your teenager years.

"The Cranberries were hugely successful not just at home, but also overseas, particularly in the United States where they received critical acclaim.

"Dolores' unique voice ensured that the band's biggest hits sound as good today as when they were released more than 20 years ago.

"As the female lead singer of an international rock band, Dolores blazed a trail and was arguably Limerick's greatest ever rock star. Her voice and her contribution to music will be remembered far beyond her native county for many years to come.

"I would like to offer my sincere condolences to Dolores O'Riordan's family at this incredibly difficult time."

While O'Riordan's death has been ruled unsuspicious, her autopsy and toxicology report remains confidential. The coroner has put the investigation into her cause of death on hold until April 3 "as they await the results of further tests."



### Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with Tiller's Folly

Saturday - March 17, 2018 at 7:30pm

Critically acclaimed Tiller's Folly makes music that is both distinctly Canadian and firmly rooted in acoustic tradition. Modern day storytellers of old tales, the group is at the forefront of a bold new movement in the global Celtic influenced folk/roots music scene.

They will be joined by the **Haran Irish Dancers** to celebrate St. Patrick's Day!

Tickets: \$35 Adult / \$29 Senior & Student / \$21 Child under 12

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### Hot Celtic



SAT MARCH 10 • 8PM

KIERAH RAYMOND



SAT MARCH 17 • 8PM

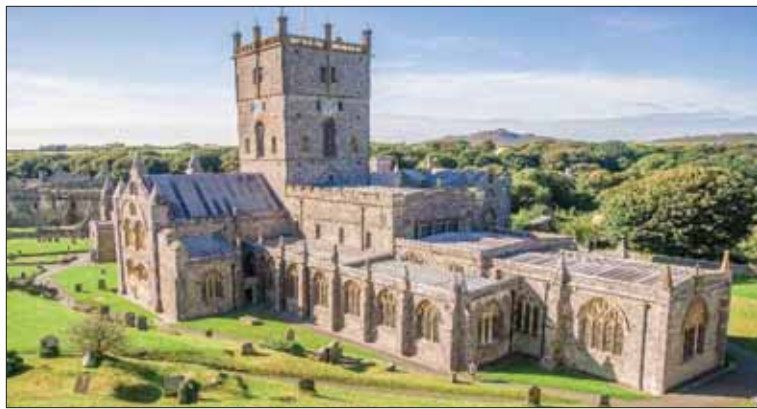
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SET on a spectacular Pembrokeshire peninsula jutting out into the Atlantic upon the site of an earlier 6th Century monastery built by St. David, St. Davids Cathedral has been a site of pilgrimage and worship for more than 800 years.

## St. David's Day: National Day of Wales

March 1 is St. David's Day, the national day of Wales, and has been celebrated as such since the 12th Century.

He was the greatest figure in the Welsh Age of Saints, founder of scores of religious communities, and the only native-born patron saint of the countries of Britain and Ireland.

Today the celebrations usually involve the singing of traditional songs followed by a *te bach*, a tea with *bara brith* (famous Welsh fruited bread) and *teisen bach* (Welsh cake).

A Welsh stew, named Cawl and containing lamb and leeks, is also traditionally consumed on St. David's Day.

St. David's symbol is the leek and he is typically depicted holding a dove, often standing on a hillock.

There is much speculation as to the origin of the leek as a Welsh emblem.

The most common explanation is that it began with an event in the 6th Century when the Welsh were engaged in a battle with the invading Saxons.

The Welsh were apparently on the losing end of the battle, mainly because it was difficult to tell friend from foe.

A local monk, said by some later chroniclers to be St. David himself, suggested that the Welsh identify themselves by wearing a leek in their helmets.

Needless to say, the Welsh were victorious and the Saxon invasion was repulsed.

So who was St. David? Actually, not too much is known about the man except from a biography written around 1090 by Rhygyfarch, son of the Bishop of St. David's.

Known in Wales as Dewi Sant, he founded a Celtic monastic community at Glyn Rhosyn (The Vale of Roses) on the western headland of Pembrokeshire (Sir Benfro), at the spot where St. Davids Cathedral stands today.

St. David and his monks followed a simple, austere life. They ploughed the fields by hand, rather than using oxen, and refrained from eating meat or drinking beer. St. David himself was reputed to have consumed only leeks and water.

David was reputedly born around the year 489 on a cliff top near Capel Non (Non's chapel) on the South-West Wales coast during a fierce storm.

He is said to have lived to be 100 and died in 589. He was both born and died on March 1.

Both his parents were descended from Welsh royalty. He was the son of



ST. DAVID is said to have lived to be 100 and died in 589. He was both born and died on March 1.

Sandde, Prince of Powys, and Non, daughter of a chieftain of Menevia (now the little cathedral town of St. David's).

The site of David's birth is marked by the ruins of a tiny ancient chapel close to a holy well and the more recent 18th Century chapel dedicated to his mother Non can still be seen near St. Davids Cathedral.

In the course of centuries, the site of David's monastery became an important centre of pilgrimage. A shrine to the saint can still be seen in the cathedral.

The highlight of the interior is the oak roof featuring beautifully intricate wood carvings by 15th Century craftsmen.

Saint David was foretold of his death in a dream, where an angel counselled him to prepare himself for March 1 as that would be the day that the Lord Jesus Christ would come with his angels to call him out of this world.

He preached his last sermon on the last Sunday in February, at a Mass that was attended by a great crowd of people.

During the sermon Saint David exhorted his disciples such: "Lords, brothers, and sisters, be joyful, and keep the faith and the creed, and also do the little things that you heard and saw me do."

"*Arglwyddi, vrodyr, a chwiorydd, byddwch lawen, a chedwch ych fyd a'ch cret, a gnewch y pethau bychein a glywassach ac a welasawch y genyfi.*"

It is perhaps for these words that he is best remembered.

## A wonderful blend of Celtic music and French Canadian culture

COQUITLAM, BC – Coquitlam's Mackin Park transforms into a bustling hive of music and fun on the weekend of March 23-25, when Festival du Bois returns to celebrate its 29th year.

Think the lilting sounds of fiddle and accordion, the galvanizing rhythms of foot percussion, the enticing smell of hot poutine and tourtière, and a lot of happy people wearing plaid – a homage to the area's lumberjack origins.

Western Canada's largest festival of francophone and French Canadian culture welcomes folks of all ages, cultures and languages to experience Maillardville/Coquitlam's warm hospitality and heritage.

And for fans of traditional Celtic music, this is the place to come and fill your ears with the kind of acoustic music you love at an affordable price. Bring your friends and family, too.

Starting Friday evening, March 23, and running all day Saturday and Sunday March 24 and 25, the festival features outstanding traditional and contemporary folk, roots and world music and dance with a francophone flair, reflecting Maillardville's French Canadian roots.

And while toasting tradition is a key part of the festival, it's also a celebration of the community's current diverse and modern life.

The 2018 list of performers includes three powerhouse groups at the forefront of Québec's tradition-based music scene – **Le Vent du Nord**, **Bon Débarras** and **Les Chauffeurs à pieds**.

This is your rare opportunity to see three popular bands deliver virtuoso musicianship and a vast repertoire from varied eras of Québécois music, playing jigs, reels, French songs and stepdances along with original and world-influenced tunes all weekend long.

They share the stage of the massive heated Grand Chapiteau (Big Tent) with a roster of stellar performers including fiddling sensation **Gabriel Debreuil**, Vancouver favourites **Blackthorn**, locals **Alooust**, the dynamic African music and dance of **Jacky Essombe**, the sizzling Latin beats of **Mazacote** and the delightful sights and sounds of **Podorythmie**.

Come enjoy the music in bountiful seating, or get up and dance on the big dance floor right in front of the stage.

And speaking of dance, the festival's opening night (Friday, March 23) is a special contra dance soirée in the Grand Chapiteau, with music from Vancouver's **Sybaritic String Band**.

You don't have to have any experience or a partner to participate, and everyone from youngsters to elders are invited to come learn some fancy steps and have a laugh.

Over the weekend, in addition to the Grand Chapiteau concerts, there are special workshops that both illuminate and entertain in nearby Mackin House.

You won't want to miss these fascinating sessions and demonstrations about the music, dance and culture featuring a number of festival artists.



PHOTO: Stephane-Najman  
**LE VENT DU NORD** is one of three powerhouse groups headlining the 2018 Festival Du Bois.

The Children's Tent (Tente des Enfants) offers shows for kids of all ages. The lineup features worldly multi-instrumentalist **Boris Sichon**, the spirited **Alphonse et Lola**, comedian/musician **André Thériault**, **Podorythmie's** "Crankie" (moving panorama) show, and others.

A visit to Festival du Bois is a full-on sensory experience!

While there, you can feast on traditional French Canadian delicacies, both savory and sweet, including maple taffy

on snow from Cabane à Sucre André Beauregard Sugar Shack.

Enjoy the antics of roving performers like **Frenchie the Clown**, **Danielle and Michèle**, and the amazing **Habitats** show with musician-acrobat **Isabelle Kirouac**.

Participate in a wide range of on-site activities, visit exhibits, try a spot of axe throwing (new this year), and shop till you drop in the artisan market.

Leading up to the festival, why not get in the plaid-wearing spirit early with the fourth annual **Dîner en Plaid**, an evening of traditional French Canadian food, craft beer, games and music with **Bon Débarras**.

The event happens on Wednesday, March 21 in the John B Pub.

Festival du Bois is a great way to spend part of spring break with the kids. Adult festival tickets are \$18 per day, and there are special rates for children, students and seniors, families and weekenders. Children five and under are free. Full festival info and tickets are at [festivaldubois.ca](http://festivaldubois.ca).

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## TOP 10 CELTIC HITS FOR FEBRUARY

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

[www.worldbeatcanada.com](http://www.worldbeatcanada.com)

The following is the *Celt In A Twist* Contemporary Celtic Top 10:

1. <i>Drums of Chelsea</i> by The Go Set - <i>One Fine Day</i> on ABC Music.	6. <i>First Class Loser</i> by Dropkick Murphys - <i>11 Short Stories of Pain and Glory</i> on Born & Bred.
2. <i>Sabine Turnaround</i> by Lost Bayou Ramblers - <i>Kalenda</i> on Lost Bayou Records.	7. <i>Seileach</i> by Cassie & Maggie - <i>The Willow Collection</i> on Independent.
3. <i>Welcome to Adamstown</i> by Flogging Molly - <i>Life is Good</i> on Vanguard Records.	8. <i>Don't Let It Bring You Down</i> by Bela Fleck & Abigail Washburn - <i>Echo In The Valley</i> on Rounder/Concord.
4. <i>Blackleg Miner</i> by Offa Rex - <i>Queen of Hearts</i> on Nonesuch.	9. <i>Isumagivappinnga</i> by The Jerry Cans - <i>Inuusiq</i> on Aakuluk Music.
5. <i>The Rocca Set</i> by Pete's Posse - <i>The Conversation</i> on Epact Music.	10. <i>Dreamcatcher</i> by Clan of the Celts - single on Independent.

**Celt In A Twist Pick Of The Month:**  
**LOST BAYOU RAMBLERS - Kalenda**  
(Lost Bayou Records)



# St. Dwynwen's celebration at the Cambrian Hall

By EIFION WILLIAMS

VANCOUVER – It has become a tradition in recent years for the Vancouver Welsh Society to host a St. Dwynwen's Day event.

St. Dwynwen's Day actually falls on January 25 but this year's celebration was held on Saturday afternoon, January 26, at the Cambrian Hall.

Dwynwen was a beautiful Celtic princess who lived in the Fifth Century.

Thwarted in a passionate love affair, she eventually became a nun and moved to a small island now called Llanddwyn, off the coast of Anglesey.

There she established a church and a nunnery where she was joined by other heart-broken girls.

The ruins of Llanddwyn chapel, built later on the site of the convent, can still be seen and a nearby well has over the centuries attracted young lovers seeking assurance of their everlasting love.

Unfortunately, according to David Llewelyn Williams, who visited the site last year, the well has now dried up.

Today St. Dwynwen is regarded as the patron saint of friendship and love, rivaling the popularity of St. Valentine in Wales.



THE RUINS of Llanddwyn chapel, built later on the site of the convent established by St. Dwynwen can still be seen.

Welsh schoolchildren are now encouraged to celebrate the saint and St. Dwynwen's Day cards are popular.

The love theme dominated the afternoon event in the Cambrian Hall. Sharon McIntee-Birrell sang some of her favourite love songs, accompanied by Ruben Federizon.

Welsh Society members Jackie Chapman and Alwyn Rogers sang one of the most popular Welsh love songs, *Ar Lan y Mor*, while Ray Batten accompanied the audience in more Welsh love songs.

David Llewelyn Williams, who organizes and presides over the annual event at the Cambrian Hall, gave a fascinating account of the events in Dwynwen's

life, together with a showing of a video, *Ynys Llanddwyn Island*, with commentary by Huw Davies.

He also presented Welsh language St. Dwynwen's cards to audience members.

David read out the winners of the annual limerick competition which were greatly enjoyed by the audience.

Participants also enjoyed a table quiz on the theme of popular love songs while enjoying a delightful variety of desserts.

The final item on the programme was Sharon's beautiful rendition of the popular song *The Rose*, completing the evening's theme of love.

Welsh Society members are grateful to David Llewelyn for presenting another enjoyable St. Dwynwen's celebration.

The event was well attended and has become a popular annual event in the Welsh Society's calendar.

Members are now looking forward to the St. David's Day Open House on March 1 and the St. David's Day Dinner on Saturday, March 3.

Further information and dinner tickets can be obtained from Gaynor Evans via the society's website [www.welshsociety.com](http://www.welshsociety.com).

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# IRISH OWNED & OPERATED



# New anti-Brexit party hopes to capture UK politics centre ground

LONDON – Leaders of a new political party aiming to stop Brexit are preparing to launch their campaign with a ‘Listen to Britain’ tour of towns and universities across the country.

The Renew party has recruited some 220 candidates to stand in local and national elections – with the first test coming in London and English councils in May – and many of them are expected to gather in early February for their first mass training session.

Representatives of Emmanuel Macron’s En Marche attended the London event to give advice on tactics for catapulting a new party into the political mainstream.

But leaders of the party played down suggestions that Renew was an attempt to replicate the French president’s political agenda in the UK.

“The EU referendum was a wake-up call that the UK is a nation divided, with mass discontent at inequality, national identity and regional, social and generational differences,” said Sandra Khadhouri, a former UN worker who is one of Renew’s three “principals”, alongside accountant James Torrance and start-up strategy consultant James Clarke.

Renew aims to provide a rallying point for millions of people, particularly in the younger generation, who feel “politically homeless” in the wake of the EU referendum and regard the traditional par-



THE Renew Party aims to provide a rallying point for millions of people who the party claims feel “politically homeless” in the wake of the EU referendum.

ties as “weak, divided and out of touch”, Khadhouri said.

Torrance stood as an anti-Brexit independent in last year’s snap election and took just 393 votes in Kensington, though his tally was larger than the margin of defeat for Leave-backing Tory Victoria Borwick.

The new party’s operations and small staff are currently funded by a single donor and it is not expected to unveil any celebrity backers or defectors from the mainstream parties at its launch.

It is using the slogan “People from outside politics to renew Britain’s hope,” though its leaders made clear they are open to discussions with sympathetic members of existing parties.

Khadhouri said Renew would call on

voters to “reconsider” the decision made in 2016, now that the consequences of EU withdrawal are becoming clearer.

“Polls show many are changing their minds and the Conservative Government is forcing through a damaging hard Brexit without a clear mandate.

“Renew proposes that social change and progress can only be delivered without the cost, complications and distraction of an unnecessary Brexit.”

The ‘Listen to Britain’ tour is intended to help develop a broad policy platform beyond the single issue of Brexit, encompassing urban revitalisation, job opportunities, infrastructure investment and support for public services, technological innovation and cutting-edge environmental policies.

# U.K. economy will be worse off after Brexit, leaked government report says

LONDON – A forecast prepared for the British Government reportedly says the economy will be worse off after the country leaves the European Union whatever trade deal is struck with the bloc.

The leaked assessment published on Monday, January 29 by news website BuzzFeed says if Britain reaches a free trade deal with the EU, growth over 15 years will be five percent lower than current forecasts.

The document says if there is no deal and Britain resorts to World Trade Organization terms, growth will fall eight percent. If Britain remains in the EU single market but as a non-bloc member, the decline will be two percent.

The government did not challenge the authenticity of the document, but the country’s junior Brexit minister told Parliament that it is a selective interpretation of early research and does not include Britain’s desired outcome from the divorce.

“The article is a selective interpretation of a preliminary analysis; it is an attempt to undermine our exit from the European Union,” Steve Baker said of the report.

“It has not been led by my department, it is not yet anywhere near being approved by ministers – even the ministerial team in my department has only just been consulted on this paper, and

we’ve made it clear that it requires significant further work.”

Meanwhile, Britain’s key piece of Brexit legislation is starting a new battle in Parliament.

The House of Lords began scrutinizing the EU Withdrawal Bill which is designed to convert thousands of EU laws into British statutes when the U.K. leaves the bloc in March 2019.

Without it, Britain could face a legal black hole after Brexit. A majority of members of Parliament’s unelected upper house oppose Brexit and will try to amend the legislation.

The government maintains that Britain will be able to strike new trade deals around the world after Brexit to replace any decline with the EU.

The leaked analysis says new trade deals with the U.S., China, India and other countries would boost growth, but not enough to make up for the lost revenue from the EU, currently Britain’s biggest trading partner.

The report is the latest in a string of economists’ predictions that leaving the EU will harm the U.K. economy.

Supporters of Brexit point out that many such forecasts have so far not come to pass.

The document is likely to further inflame feuding within Britain’s Conservative Government, between those who back a clean break with the bloc and those who want to keep Britain’s economy as closely aligned with the EU’s as possible after Brexit in March 2019.

# Secret government report reveals expected damage from Brexit

CARDIFF – Wales would suffer a 9.5 percent hit to GDP if the UK leaves the European Union without an exit deal, according to leaked figures from a UK Government analysis of the consequences of Brexit.

The nation would see a five-and-a-half percent reduction in GDP even if the UK leaves with a free trade deal under this assessment – and there would still be a one-and-a-half percent blow if the country stayed in the single market.

The predicted losses are understood to cover a 15-year period.

The effect on jobs, businesses, livelihoods and property values of a nine-and-a-half percent drop in GDP – as compared to the size of the economy if the UK didn’t leave the EU – would be immense.

The leak comes as Theresa May and senior cabinet ministers meet to hammer out an agreed end-goal for the Brexit negotiations.

The areas of the UK which would take the worst hit from a no-deal Brexit would be the Northeast of England (-16 percent) and the West Midlands (-13 percent).

According to this analysis, there is no part of the UK that would not see a reduction in GDP under any of the three scenarios.

Overall, UK GDP is expected to go down by two percent if the UK stays in the single market, by five percent if a free trade agreement is secured, and by eight percent if there is no deal.

The analysis suggests London would suffer the least. The UK capital would only see its GDP go down by one percent if the country stayed in the single market; by two percent if there is a free trade deal; and by three-and-a-half percent if there is no deal.

Vaughan Gething, the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, said, “This is not remoaners or enemies of the people – this is the UK Government’s own view of the damage done by a hard Brexit. Damage done to my communities that I represent.

“My duty to my constituents must be to stand up against the disaster of a hard Brexit.”

Cardiff South and Penarth Labour MP Stephen Doughty MP said on Twitter, “People in every corner of the United Kingdom will be shocked to see the government’s own assessment of the damage Brexit will do to their communities.

“It is utterly shameful that people all across this country are having to rely on leaks to find out how much damage a hard, destructive Brexit will do to their local economies and the country as a whole.”

Doughty, who is a leading supporter of Open Britain campaign which favours close links with the EU, called for the full publication of the UK Government’s

research, saying, “The government cannot continue to try and hide taxpayer funded analysis from the public, just because they’re afraid of the political consequences.

“The full Brexit impact assessments, along with any other economic analysis of Brexit outcomes, must be published in full, now.

“And as people learn new facts about the costs of Brexit for their communities and their industries, everyone is entitled to keep an open mind about whether or not it’s the right path for the country.”

A Welsh Government spokesperson said, “Our Brexit trade paper, supported by a Cardiff Business School impact study, shows the Welsh economy is best protected by retaining full and unfettered access to the European Single Market and membership of a customs union.

“This report suggests UK Government research confirms our analysis that a hard Brexit would have a catastrophic impact on Welsh jobs and the economy; reducing the economy by 8-10 percent, which is the equivalent of between £1,500 and £2,000 per person in Wales.

“We have tried wherever possible to base our Brexit policies on evidence and to publish the evidence we have. We call on the UK Government to do likewise.

“We do not believe the UK Government has any sound economic evidence to support its policy choices as to the sort of Brexit it is pursuing.”

# Northern Ireland police chief warns of post-Brexit problems

BELFAST – Northern Ireland’s chief constable George Hamilton said the clock was ticking in the race to find new structures to ensure cross-border co-operation.

He warned no visible progress has been made on replacing critical EU policing frameworks that enable close cross-border co-operation between officers in Ireland.

George Hamilton said there would be “very real operational consequences” if options like the European Arrest Warrant and protocols that enable evidence and information sharing between the Garda and PSNI were not mirrored post-Brexit.

Hamilton was giving evidence to the Lords EU committee.

The region’s senior officer said he had been raising the issues for 18 months but had not seen any evidence of progress.

He suggested the PSNI may have been too “timid” in emphasising its concerns, for fear of stepping into the political sphere.

“I guess our concerns, without moving to a panic stage, is the clock is ticking and we are getting not that far away

now from when we are going to need these instruments and pieces of legislation in place.”

The chief constable added, “There are very real operational consequences if there are no alternative arrangements in place around exchange of material and exchange of people, by way of European Arrest Warrant.”

Senior figures from Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionists also gave evidence during a day-long committee hearing in Parliament Buildings.

Sinn Féin’s John O’Dowd and DUP MP Sammy Wilson were both asked for their assessment of the Irish border dimension of December’s agreed UK/EU paper that enabled Brexit talks to move to future trading relations.

A first draft of the document was torpedoed when the DUP, the government’s Westminster kingmakers, intervened and warned Prime Minister Theresa May that language around regulatory alignment between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic was unacceptable.

The DUP ultimately reluctantly approved an amended version of the text that made clear Northern Ireland’s place in the UK’s internal market would not be impacted post-Brexit.



# Delta Police Pipe Band 2018 Burns' Dinners

By COLIN ABEL

DELTA, BC – The Delta Police Pipe Band held two very successful 44th annual Robbie Burns' dinners on January 19 and 20 with 870 guests over two nights.

On Friday night, Delta Mayor Lois Jackson was honoured by the band for her many years of unwavering support and friendship.

Accompanied by Delta Police Chief Neil Dubord, she was presented a band plaque signifying this honour.

On Saturday night, gifts were exchanged with the Seattle Police Pipe Band members with whom the Delta Police Pipe Band share a great relationship and camaraderie.

The band performed three sets under the direction of new Pipe Major Steve Ramsden and Drum Majors Bill O'Donnell and Jim Wishlove.

The crowd was also entertained by the band singing group The Deltones, the band's own Regimental dancers, and the Thistlebrook Academy of Scottish dancers.

The band will travel to Basel, Switzerland this upcoming July for an International Tattoo and the support of the many guests to these events certainly help to defray the costs of such a trip.

The band would like to thank the following for their great support throughout the year: Chief Neil Dubord and the Delta Police Department, Mayor Lois Jackson and the City of Delta, the Ladner and Tsawwassen Legions, the Steveston Army and Navy, Ladner and Tsawwassen Save-On Foods, Four



THE Delta Police Pipe Band performing at their 44th annual Robbie Burns' dinner.



DELTA MAYOR Lois Jackson was honoured by the band for her many years of unwavering support and friendship.

Winds brewery, Barry Marshall and Sacred Heart Church and the Delta Optimist newspaper.

For more highlights and information about the band, visit [www.deltapolicepipeband.com](http://www.deltapolicepipeband.com).

## Piano, fiddle and accordion concert by two very fine Scottish musicians

VANCOUVER – The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society-Vancouver is pleased to present Muriel Johnstone and Ian Robertson in concert on March 18.

This will be a delightful afternoon of traditional and original compositions celebrating Scotland's rich musical history, and other musical styles of universal appeal.

Muriel Johnstone is a master of the tradition. Born in Ardrossan, Scotland, she has played piano since the age of seven, inspired and taught by her mother.

She is a prolific composer of music for dancing and for listening, and has accompanied many a fine fiddler and band in many countries around the world.

Her astonishing output includes 23 CDs for dancing and four for listening, eight music books and 13 dance books with her musical arrangements.

She is a vital part of the RSCDS as a dancer, arranger of music, and former music director.

She was awarded the Scroll of Honour in 2002, recognizing her immense contributions to the society. She is an accomplished professional with a variety of styles at her fingertips, literally!

Ian Robertson is a stellar fiddler and accordionist in the Scottish tradition.

He has his own dance band in Scotland, and also plays for ceilidhs, wed-



IAN ROBERTSON (L) and Muriel Johnstone (R) bring their unique talents to Vancouver on Sunday, March 18 for an afternoon of traditional and original compositions celebrating Scotland's rich music history.

dings, Burns nights, and parties as a soloist.

He has performed for concerts and dances in many venues in Europe and North America.

Ian's sparkling music is much in demand and with Muriel on piano, they are an exciting combination of training, experience and musicianship.

Enjoy watching their fingers fly over

their instruments; treat yourself to an exhilarating afternoon of music that will stay with you long after the concert is over.

You can hear these superb musicians in concert at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 1440 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, March 18, 2018 at 3 PM.

Tickets \$20 from [www.rscds-vancouver.org](http://www.rscds-vancouver.org), or at the door while they last.

### About the RSCDS - Vancouver Branch

The Vancouver Branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society was formed in 1964, although Scottish country dance clubs had been active in Vancouver since the 1930s.

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society was formed in Edinburgh in 1923. From its earliest days, the society has sought to promote, preserve, and to maintain the standards set by its founders. RSCDS has also always emphasized the social character of Scottish country dancing, offering plenty of opportunity for fun, friendship and fitness. More information: [rscdsvancouver.org](http://rscdsvancouver.org).

The RSCDS Vancouver Branch proudly presents

**Muriel Johnstone & Ian Robertson in Concert**



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Enjoy two world-class Scottish musicians on piano, fiddle and accordion in a variety of styles.

[rscdsvancouver.org](http://rscdsvancouver.org) Events Calendar – or at the door while available

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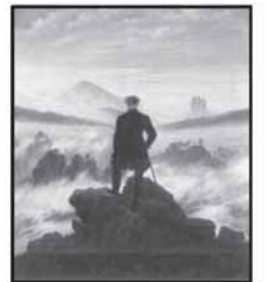
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THE FEROCIOUS beast in question turned out to be just a stuffed tiger.

## An unusual police stand-off in Scotland

PETERHEAD – It's not every day Scottish police get a report of a tiger on the loose so authorities were a little red-faced to report that officers had an armed standoff with a stuffed tiger on the night of Saturday, February 3.

"It's true – our officers had a roaring shift on Saturday night," the North East Police Division wrote in a Facebook post.

The incident began when Bruce Grubb (24) thought he saw the large cat lurking on his farm in the village of Hatton, Scotland, and he quickly made a frantic call to police.

Officers arrived at the scene but remained in their vehicles to figure out the best strategy, the *Scottish Sun* reported.

"I had absolutely no doubt it was real," Grubb told the newspaper. "I got the fright of my life. I was worried it was going to eat all my cows before police managed to shoot it."

Nervous radio updates start coming in stating that it was unclear if the tiger has eaten any cattle but it appeared well fed and its ears were seen to twitch but other than that it was very settled.

After nearly an hour-long stare down with the alleged beast, Grubb decided to inch closer in his truck, only to discover the animal was a life-size stuffed toy.

Police said armed officers were sent to the scene "as a contingency," but were not deployed. "Until you know exactly what you are dealing with, every option has to be considered," Peterhead Inspector George Cordiner said.

Grubb, who was hosting a small party at the time, denied that alcohol impaired his judgment and said he hadn't drank because the 200 pregnant cows on his farm "could drop at any time."

Despite the false alarm, police praised Grubb's decision to make the call when he thought he was in danger. "We appreciate that it was a false call made with genuine good intent," Cordiner said.

They even asked an embarrassed Grubb if they could keep the stuffed tiger as a mascot.

It's unclear how the stuffed toy got in the shed. Thinking the toy was placed on his property as a joke, Grubb said he doesn't know who put it there.

## Petition protesting second Trump course in Scotland signed by 31,000 people

A petition has been signed by 31,000 people objecting to the Trump Organisation's plan to build a second golf course in Aberdeenshire.

Campaigners handed the petition to councillors after proposals were submitted by the Trump Organisation for a second 18-hole course at Balmedie in 2015, three years after the first one opened.

Members of campaign organisation 38 Degrees presented the petition to Isobel Davidson, chair of Aberdeenshire's Formartine Area Committee in Ellon on February 6.

Campaigners said a recent 38 Degrees/Survation poll found that of those who expressed an opinion, 68 percent said the course's planning application should be rejected by Aberdeenshire Council.

When "don't knows" are included in the figures, 53 percent said they are opposed to the course, 25 percent supported it and 22 percent don't know.

Stewart Kirkpatrick, head of Scotland for 38 Degrees, said, "Today's hand-in, the huge petition and our crowd-funded opinion polling are clear evidence of strong public opposition to the Trump Organisation's plans for a new course.

"After the first course failed to deliver the promised investment and jobs bonanza, Scots now feel the new plan just won't bring economic benefits to the area. They don't think the first course should have gone ahead and they certainly don't feel this one should.

"Does Aberdeenshire Council really want to give a vote of confidence to this man?"

The online poll of 1,029 people in Scotland was undertaken by Survation on behalf of 38 Degrees in January.

## Burns and Women: The theme of this year's Burns season in Scotland

**E**DINBURGH – Robert Burns has long been all things to all people. In the words of Scottish poet Edwin Muir, Burns was "to the respectable, a decent man; to the Rabelaisian, bawdy; to the sentimentalist, sentimental; to the socialist, a revolutionary; to the nationalist, a patriot; to the religious, pious."

Muir may even have underestimated the degree to which Burns's life and work has been co-opted by folk with predetermined positions.

During the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, for instance, Burns was the man for both sides.

Yes supporters cited *Scots Wha Hae* as proof of his support for Scottish independence while the Nos highlighted his employment as an excise man in the service of the British state.

From there, a puerile "debate" ensued as to which way Burns would vote if he was alive. The fact that he lived in a pre-democratic age and never cast a vote was just one more reason to suppose that he was more likely to be turning in his Dumfries grave.

Many of these takes on Burns have been well rehearsed over the years to the point where there is nothing much left to say about them. However, one issue that has lots of life left in it is Burns and women.

All-male Burns suppers, with some notable exceptions, tend to celebrate him as a romantic lover while folk outside of those fraternal circles point to the deleterious effects his amorous activities had on some of the women that were associated with him.

In light of the Twitter hashtag #MeToo, it's not really surprising that the subject of Burns and women was front and centre during this year's Burns season in Scotland.

The person with the courage to put it there was Liz Lochhead, former national poet for Scotland and erstwhile guest of the Vancouver International Writers Festival.

Lochhead took "Burns and Women" as the theme of a talk she was to deliver, news of which leaked beforehand. She intended to address letters written by Burns to his "jack-the-lad young pal" Robert Ainslie.

Among other things, Burns describes a sexual encounter with his already-pregnant girlfriend Jean Armour in terms that don't really belong in a family newspaper. Suffice to say that it prompted Lochhead to describe Burns as a sex pest and "Weinsteinian."

The reaction was as predictable as it was nasty, particularly on social media. Lochhead took to the newspapers to defend herself even though she had only second hand knowledge of the social media furor.

As she explained it, "Don't do" social meejia, havenae read it any of it, but, apparently, I'm persona-non-grata on the Facebook and the Twattersphere, both, in my book, the latterday refuge of the blatherskite. My supposed sin? Dissing the Bard, slagging off Saint Rabbie (I don't, I didn't).



By  
HARRY  
McGRATH



THE HEADSTONE over the grave of Jean Lorimer who is known as "Chloris" in the Robert Burns poem.

Lochhead's stout defence of her position (essentially distinguish the art from the man) wasn't enough to calm the waters and she announced that she would be retiring from giving talks on Robert Burns.

This is a pity for all concerned, not least Burns himself who is badly in need of her brand of honest assessment.

Unlike Lochhead, I do check the "Twattersphere" and some of what I saw there made me feel great sympathy for her.

The only way to escape the cacophony (other than switch off the phone) was to climb out the window and visit the grave of Jean Lorimer who is buried in a graveyard beside my house in Edinburgh.

Lorimer, or "Chloris," didn't feature anywhere in the Burns and women debate.

Her grave doesn't get much attention either. In fact, I have yet to see anyone else visit it.

Jean's neglect is difficult to explain. She was the inspiration for the songs *Lassie wi the lint white locks*, *Whistle and I'll come tae ye*, and 24 others.

But even the online Burns encyclopaedia is rather dismissive of Chloris and the songs written to her. "Whatever the state of her charms," it says, "none [of the songs] is among Burns' finest."

Burns' early songs to Chloris were written on behalf of an Excise colleague



LIZ LOCHHEAD, former national poet for Scotland, was castigated on social media for comparing Robert Burns to Harvey Weinstein over his treatment of women, despite recognizing his genius.

called John Gillespie, but the later ones were offered on his own account.

She was the daughter of a rich merchant who moved the members of his family from Moffat to just outside Dumfries where Burns' excise duties brought him into contact with them.

Jean Lorimer died in 1831 aged 56 and in reduced circumstances. She was the subject of a book called *Chloris* by James Adams which was published in 1895.

Adams was the son of Lorimer's doctor and was sent on an errand to her when he was a boy.

One source says that the book "vindicates her character, which seems to have been carelessly depreciated in some of the biographies of Burns."

This early attention to Chloris, however, was not sustained and these days she is commonly described as the least known of Burns' heroines.

Her grave is easy to find as it is in a cruciform which, as far as I can see, makes it unique in the graveyard.

In keeping with her treatment elsewhere, it has acquired a film of green algae over the years. The inscription is still legible, though only just.

It reads: "The 'Chloris' and 'Lassie wi' the lint white locks' of the poet Burns. Born 1773 Died 1831, Erected under the auspices of the Ninety Burns Club. Edinburgh 1901."

The Lorimer stone is set back from the line of the others and slightly raised on bricks which may have been laid over the site of her previously unmarked grave.

Standing alone in this silent place, it's hard to say whether it's a good or bad thing that the Burns industry seems to have passed her by.

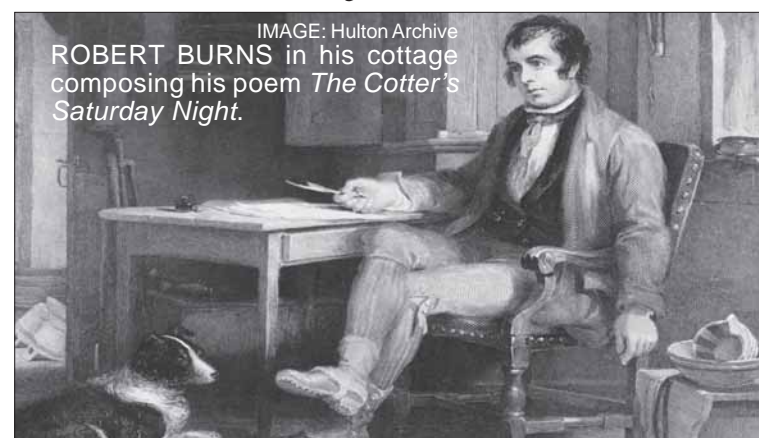


IMAGE: Hulton Archive  
ROBERT BURNS in his cottage composing his poem *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.



# Women's suffrage: Marking 100 years since millions of women of Britain granted right to vote

**W**OMEN'S suffrage – the right of women to vote – has been achieved at various times in countries throughout the world. In many nations, women's suffrage was granted before universal suffrage, so women and men from certain classes or races were still unable to vote.

## WOMEN OF PRIVILEGE ONLY

Amid a groundswell in sexual harassment claims across Hollywood, Westminster, the City of London and elsewhere, it is with bitter-sweet sentiment that this year the centenary of the Representation of the People Act is marked on February 6, 1918.

The legislation granted some women in the UK the right to vote, but while its anniversary serves as a reminder of how far women have come, it should also underscore how much work still lies ahead.

The Act and what it achieved should also not be over-celebrated. While it marked an important beginning of a process, it was in many ways a feeble start.

It gave females the right to vote, but only if they were over the age of 30, owned property, were a member or married to a member of the local government register, or a graduate in a university constituency.

It was restrictive and overly selective. But it did change the face of the electorate dramatically. According to the electoral register of the time, the female proportion shot up to 43 percent despite those limitations.

And, perhaps most significantly, it paved the way for the Equal Franchise Act a decade later: an extension of the Act from 1918, which gave all women over the age of 21 the right to vote – property owners or not.

Despite the political reform of 1918 and 1928 that came as a result of the Suffragette movement led by Emmeline Pankhurst, it took several other pieces of legislation for real social reform to be achieved in the UK, theoretically granting women rights on par with those enjoyed by men.

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 stipulated that nobody could be disqualified from performing a public function, or from holding a civil or judicial office or post, because of their gender.

But it wasn't until the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937 that women were given the same rights to divorce their husbands as the rights men had to divorce their wives.

And women in the UK had to wait until 1970 for the government to introduce the Equal Pay Act, making it illegal for employers to treat men and women doing an equivalent role differently in terms of pay.

Despite this, pay discrimination is still a widespread concern that institutions such as the BBC have in recent months shone an unflattering light on by publishing the salaries of their highest paid actors and presenters.

## WOMEN IN CANADA: 'NON-PERSONS'

In Canada, women scored an historic victory on October 18, 1929, when they were finally declared "persons."

The landmark decision by the British

Privy Council, the highest level for legal appeals in Canada at the time, was a milestone victory for the rights of women in Canada.

The five Alberta women responsible for the Persons Case victory are now known as "the Famous Five." They were Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby.

The British North America Act of 1867 created the Dominion of Canada and provided many of its governing principles. The BNA Act used the word "persons" to refer to more than one person and "he" to refer to one person.

A ruling in British common law in 1876 emphasized the problem for Canadian women by saying, "Women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges."

When Alberta social activist Emily Murphy was appointed in 1916 as the first woman police magistrate in Alberta, her appointment was challenged on the grounds that women were not persons under the BNA Act.

In 1917, the Alberta Supreme Court ruled that women were persons.

That ruling only applied within the province of Alberta however, so Murphy allowed her name to be put forward as a candidate for the Senate, at the federal level of government.

Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden turned her down, once again because she was not considered a person under the BNA Act.

For years women's groups in Canada signed petitions and appealed to the federal government to open the Senate to women.

By 1927, Murphy decided to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada for clarification. She and four other prominent Alberta women's rights activists, now known as the Famous Five, signed a petition to the Senate.

They asked, "Does the word 'persons' in Section 24, of The British North America Act, 1867, include female persons?"

On April 24, 1928, the Supreme Court of Canada answered, "No."

The court decision said that in 1867 when the BNA Act was written, women did not vote, run for office, nor serve as elected officials; only male nouns and pronouns were used in the BNA Act; and since the British House of Lords did not have a woman member, Canada should not change the tradition of its Senate.

With the help of Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, the Famous Five appealed the Supreme Court of Canada decision to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England, at the time the highest court of appeal for Canada.

On October 18, 1929, Lord Sankey, Lord Chancellor of the Privy Council, announced the British Privy Council decision that "yes, women are



THE MEMORIAL PROCESSION for the suffragette Emily Davison (1872-1913), London. Davison was a suffragette who fought for votes for women in the UK in the early 20th Century. She was a member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and a militant fighter for her cause. She was arrested on nine occasions, went on hunger strike seven times and was force fed on 49 occasions. She died after being hit by King George V's horse Anmer at the 1913 Epsom Derby when she walked onto the track during the race.

persons...and eligible to be summoned and may become Members of the Senate of Canada."

The Privy Council decision also said that "the exclusion of women from all public offices is a relic of days more barbarous than ours. And to those who would ask why the word 'persons' should include females, the obvious answer is, why should it not?"

In 1930, just a few months after the Persons Case, Prime Minister Mackenzie King appointed Cairine Wilson to the Canadian Senate.

Many expected Murphy, a Conservative, to become the first woman appointed to the Canadian Senate because of her leadership role in the Persons Case, but Wilson's work in Liberal party political organization took precedence with the Liberal prime minister.



WOMEN ARE PERSONS Monument on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Ontario. Women were denied recognition as 'persons' in Canada until a landmark ruling by the British Privy Council on October 18, 1929.

## Proclamation presented to St. Andrews and Caledonian Society

VANCOUVER – The St. Andrews and Caledonian Society of the City of Vancouver has announced that the Queen's representative, Judith Guichon, the lieutenant governor of B.C. and the attorney general, David Eby issued a proclamation naming November 30, 2017 as "St. Andrews Day."

The proclamation was presented to the society in November 2017 at the St. Andrews Ball held in downtown Vancouver.

The St. Andrews and Caledonian Society of the City of Vancouver is the oldest society in Vancouver being founded in May 1885 and is dedicated to the assistance and promotion of the Scots in Canada.

The objectives of the society include the preservation of Scottish traditions and culture through furthering of interest in Scottish country dancing, Highland dancing, Highland games and Scottish pipe bands.

The society continues to be involved in the community through its active involvement in the United Scottish Cultural Centre in Vancouver and the sponsorship of a lecture series in conjunction with the Centre for Scottish Studies at Simon Fraser University.



PICTURED at the presentation ceremony: (L-R) Phil Beatty, vice president; Bill Murray, vice president; Cilla Black, president; and Rex Davidson, secretary of the St. Andrews and Caledonian Society of the City of Vancouver.





UP THE DUBS! Marie Morris, Deirdre O'Ruairc, Eilis Courtney, Mary Monks Hatch and Patricia Jarvis at the annual IWN Nollaig na mBan luncheon held at Mahony & Sons Stamps Landing in Vancouver.

### IRISH WOMEN'S NETWORK OF BC

## Nollaig na mBan kicks off 20th anniversary celebrations

By EILIS COURTNEY

*President, Irish Women's Network*  
VANCOUVER – On Sunday January 7, the Irish Women's Network of BC (IWN) held their annual Nollaig na mBan luncheon, bringing together Irish women from across the Lower Mainland to celebrate the Irish tradition.

There was a great buzz in the bar with 46 women reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones. Mahony & Sons kindly provided a complimentary glass of bubbly to help the group raise a toast to each other at this special time of year.

The gathering was especially important this year with the group celebrating its 20th anniversary.

In attendance at the lunch were the

founders of the Network: Mary Monks Hatch, Marie Morris and Deirdre O'Ruairc, as well as members who were at the first meeting 20 years ago.

A number of door prizes were awarded, including a lovely gift basket (generously donated by the Irish Club of White Rock), Barry's Tea and some delicious homemade brown bread. There was also a 50/50 draw, which raised \$160 for the IWN to continue to support future events.

Watch upcoming issues of *The Celtic Connection* and IWN social media for more information on other anniversary events throughout 2018.

Ideas for events or offers to volunteer are welcomed. Get in touch by e-mail at [irishwomensnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:irishwomensnetwork@gmail.com).



## Irish abortion referendum to be held in May

DUBLIN – The Irish Government has agreed to hold a referendum at the end of May on whether to reform the country's near-total ban on abortion.

The vote will decide whether to repeal a constitutional amendment that effectively bans terminations.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said that he will campaign for reform. "I know this will be a difficult decision for the Irish people to make," said Varadkar.

"I know it is a very personal and private issue and for most of us it is not a black-and-white issue, it is one that is grey – the balance between the rights of a pregnant woman and the fetus or unborn."

Varadkar, the country's former health minister who trained as a doctor, acknowledged that thousands of women in the country travelled every year for terminations or took illegal pills ordered online at home.

He said the current law meant that abortions in Ireland were "unsafe, unregulated and illegal. These journeys do not have to happen, and that can change, and that's now in our hands," he said.

The ballot will not be on specific terms of any new law, but on whether to retain or repeal article 40.3.3 of the con-

stitution, known as the Eighth Amendment.

The amendment, which was approved by a 1983 referendum, "acknowledges the right to life of the unborn" – meaning the life of the woman and her unborn child are seen as equal.

Terminations are currently not permitted in cases of rape or incest, or when there is a fetal abnormality.

A campaign to liberalise abortion gathered momentum in 2012, after Indian woman Savita Halappanavar died in a Galway hospital after she was refused an abortion during a miscarriage.

Irish Health Minister Simon Harris has been working with officials in his department and the attorney general on the wording of the referendum, which is expected to be formally published at the beginning of March.

Citizens living overseas are being encouraged to have their say on whether to change the restrictive laws on termination of pregnancy.

An estimated 40,000 Irish people living abroad are eligible to vote in a planned referendum on abortion.

Campaigners are urging emigrants to return home to cast their ballot and have their say on whether to change the laws.

## Plans to establish historical archive of the Irish diaspora in Vancouver

By SHARON GREER

VANCOUVER – During the fall of 2017, I was privileged to audit an Oral History: Theories and Practices course at Simon Fraser University (SFU), Burnaby mountain campus.

This marvellous opportunity came about through my friend, Maura de Freitas, who had been approached by Professor Willeen Keough of the Department of History at SFU.

Professor Keough was looking for two or three people from the Irish community to participate as auditors in a 13 week oral history class with the understanding that we undertake the arrangement of meetings with interview subjects.

We were required to record and transcribe these interviews as well as interpret the collected information.

In the words of our instructor, "learn how to design and implement a creative oral history project" – no pressure.

I was apprehensive to say the least about engaging in a university course since I had not attended college or university in many years.

I decided I needed to overcome my anxiety about going 'back to school' and took the plunge. The experience turned out to be an exceptional one.



Our class was divided into five small groups all working on different communities within the Lower Mainland.

Our group consisted of one student, a second auditor and myself who undertook interviewing six people from within the Irish community.

We explored a number of options with people in the community and ended up with a diverse group of six interviewees inside a wide range of age groups.

But arranging interviews was only a small part of a much larger venture.

The reading material for this course was extensive and I found myself looking forward to not just reading the literature but participating in the discussions of the writings that followed in the classroom every week. However, it didn't end there.

Each group was required to create documentation pertaining to a proposal, an ethics application package and formulate interview questions.

The most important aspect in the ethics package was probably understand-

ing the significance of the informed consent form.

There is tremendous detail essential in completing the documents within this fundamental collection of data. It was a big undertaking that was well worthwhile.

The final component of the course and the most demanding was learning the digital audio editor and computer software application called 'Audacity'.

Thank goodness for Ryan, the student in our group who did the editing on the program.

Finally, we made our compilation presentation of the interviewees and presented it to our classmates.

Professor Keough is a wonderfully warm and encouraging individual who offered substantial support during this class.

It was an intense and challenging learning curve for me but one of the most satisfying endeavours I have undertaken.

We are aspiring in the future to collect more interviews from within the Irish community to establish an historical archive of the experiences of the Irish and Irish diaspora in the Lower Mainland.

We are hopeful that these archives will be preserved with the Irish Women's Network.

## Irish Club of White Rock looking forward to another great year

By DEIRDRE O'RUAIRC

The Irish Club of White Rock is off to a great start after a wonderful year in 2017 with many exciting events.

The St. Patrick's Day dinner dance at Hazelmore Golf and Tennis Club in Surrey was a sell out event, the pub quiz, Pat Chessell and band fundraiser event was also a sell out with over \$3,000 raised for a Rotary sponsored orphanage in Cambodia.

The annual summer picnic at Redwood Park was another sell out event and a brilliant day. The Irish concert, children's Halloween party and Christmas get-togethers were also well attended.

Many of our ladies also attended the Nollaig na mBan celebrations in Vancouver. Our club supports many events hosted by other Irish clubs in Vancouver.

Last summer, members of the Irish Club of White Rock met with Jim Kelly, Irish Ambassador to Canada, on his visit to Vancouver last summer.

The Irish Club of White Rock also support the Fraser Valley Gaels GAA club and would like to wish president Denis Ryan and his new executive the very best for 2018.

The club continues to look for new players and you can follow them on their Facebook page Fraser Valley Gaels.

The Irish Club of White Rock is in the planning stages for events for 2018. The first one is the annual St. Patrick's Day dinner dance to be held once again at the Hazelmore Golf and Tennis Club – music by Brian Nichols and Friends, and the De Dannan School of Irish Dance.

The Irish Club of White Rock was formed as a support and social group for the Irish community and to promote Irish culture and create a structure to

coordinate activities such as Irish language, Irish dancing classes, Irish music concerts and entertainment.

There is a large Irish community in the area and while the club was officially formed in 2003, members were meeting much earlier.

A founding principle was that the club would provide a non-sectarian and non-political base for social networking and Irish entertainment.

For all upcoming events make sure you are on the club's e-mail list or follow on Facebook. If you are new to White Rock/Surrey, you will find contact numbers below to meet with other members. A very warm welcome is extended to all newcomers and to arrivals from Ireland – a *céad míle fáilte* to all.

For more information, call president Sharon Woods at (604) 338-3553, or secretary Deirdre O'Ruairc at (604) 803-0773.



IRISH CLUB of White Rock president Sharon Woods with secretary Deirdre O'Ruairc.



## Former tanaiste appointed chancellor of University of Limerick

LIMERICK – Former tanaiste Mary Harney has been appointed chancellor of the University of Limerick. She will take up the University of Limerick role immediately and hold the position until 2022.

A former cabinet minister who held a number of portfolios including health, environment and enterprise, Harney also led the defunct Progressive Democrats for more than a decade.

She quit politics in 2011 after the collapse of the Fianna Fail-led coalition government and the country was forced into an international bailout.

Born in Galway, Harney studied economics at Trinity College and was the first woman auditor of the Hist debating society.

In 1977 she was appointed to the Seanad, becoming the youngest ever member, and she went on to serve 17 years in government, including nine years as tanaiste, and was the first woman to lead a political party when she took over the Progressive Democrats in the mid-1990s.





THE sale of land by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity in Dublin in 1993 triggered a public scandal related to treatment of the women in the Magdalene laundries. When the remains of the nameless women who had worked there were exhumed and cremated, media reports put the spotlight firmly on these institutions.

## Ireland's ombudsman warns over treatment of Magdalene survivors

DUBLIN – More than 100 survivors of Magdalene laundries have been refused payments because officials found they were not put in one of 12 specific institutions.

Ombudsman Peter Tyndall said less than half the 54 million euro originally estimated for redress for the incarceration in Catholic-run workhouses has been paid out.

Some 106 women have been excluded from the Magdalene Restorative Justice scheme because officials found they were not put in one of 12 specific institutions.

Tyndall gave a scathing review of the government's attitude to women who he said were entitled to compensation for being incarcerated in associated or linked facilities, such as An Grianan, in the grounds of High Park laundry in Drumcondra, Dublin.

He told the Oireachtas Justice Committee the eligibility criteria for the compensation scheme, set up in 2013 after women got a state apology, was too narrow.

He warned that he has still not got a formal commitment from the government that all recommendations from last year's report on the administration of the redress scheme will be implemented.

"We are talking about women who went down the stairs, the same stairs, as women who had access to the scheme and who worked in the laundries that were part of the scheme," he said.

"Women continue to die without access to the redress to which they are undeniably entitled. There is no doubt about that."

Tyndall said that in his 10 years as an ombudsman he has never experienced a similar attitude from a government department and a refusal to engage on his findings.

The Department of Justice said it had received 830 applications from women who were incarcerated in 12 specific Magdalene laundries.

It said 686 women have been paid 25.7 million euro in lump sum payments and 258,000 euro in legal costs. The figure does not include pension payments and medical card costs.

There are another 17 women, mostly still in the care of the religious orders who once housed them in Magdalene laundries, who do not have the capacity to apply to the scheme themselves.

Tyndall called for them to be made wards of court and for the Department of Justice to make proactive approaches to identify them all and include them in the compensation scheme.

The ombudsman's office said it was aware of at least 32 women who have been wrongly refused payouts, pension rights and free healthcare.

A public scandal over the Magdalene laundries in Ireland was triggered in 1993 when the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity in Dublin sold part of the land in their convent to a property developer.

This led to the discovery of 133 corpses in a mass grave. The Sisters arranged to have the remains cremated and reburied in another mass grave at Glasnevin Cemetery, splitting the cost of the reburial with the developer who had bought the land.

It later transpired that there were 22 more corpses than the sisters had applied for permission to exhume. In all, 155 corpses were exhumed and cremated, many with no death certificate.

Though not initially reported, this eventually brought unprecedented attention to the secretive institutions.

It is now understood that Dublin City Council intends to develop a memorial garden on Sean McDermott Street, the site of the last workhouse to close.

## Stories of Magdalene Laundry survivors told in new online archives

DUBLIN – The stories of the survivors of the Magdalene laundries have been illustrated in a new collection of never before seen online archives.

The Justice for Magdalenes Research group and Waterford Institute of Technology collaborated to capture and examine the oral histories of those who lived and worked within the Magdalene Laundries and Industrial Schools located in the South-East of Ireland.

The Magdalene laundries were institutions run by the Catholic Church and operated from the 18th to the late 20th Centuries.

In recent years, a number of revelations have exposed the horrific conditions of these homes, in particular, a discovery in 1993 of an unmarked mass grave containing 155 corpses underneath a laundry in Dublin.

Dr. Jennifer O' Mahoney and Kieran Cronin have both been working on the project over the last few years, and believe the material establishes that the state was complicit in the operation of the laundries.

According to the *Irish Examiner*, some of the material may even suggest that girls may have been sent directly from the criminal justice system into the laundries as a form of interment.

A list of the recordings is available on the Waterford Memories Project website at: [www.waterfordmemories.com](http://www.waterfordmemories.com).

The recordings include the story of Maureen, who is the youngest Magdalene laundry survivor on record, having been brought to a Magdalene laundry at the age of 12, and Elizabeth who was just two years old when she was institutionalized in Cork.

Dr. O' Mahoney, a psychologist based at Waterford Institute of Technology, said "This project is about more than research and educational pursuits; there is a genuine responsibility to recognise the trauma these women suffered in silence, and respond to their needs and desire to disseminate their stories according to their wishes.

"As principal investigator for this project, I am both honoured and humbled by these women and their bravery to publicly tell their stories.

"This project is not about giving the Magdalene survivors a voice – it is about providing the platform for their voice to be heard, coupled with professional analysis."

The original archives are stored at WIT, while the digitised archive will also be made available to the public at UCD archives.



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## Irish novelist Edna O'Brien wins PEN/Nabokov lifetime award

NEW YORK – The Irish novelist Edna O'Brien has been named as the winner of the PEN/Nabokov award for achievement in international literature, for "the absolute perfection of her prose" and her "powerful voice."

In announcing the award, the news release by PEN praised the author for her work, including the celebrated *Country Girls* trilogy, saying O'Brien has broken down "social and sexual barriers for women in Ireland and beyond" with her writing.

The \$50,000 Nabokov prize was created in partnership with the Vladimir Nabokov literary foundation, and awarded for the first time last year, to the Syrian poet Adonis.





# Political brinksmanship at its best

The stuff of politics is compromise and deal-making. Ironically, the way to get that stuff can often be through pursuing the opposite methods: ripping up pacts, jeopardising relationships and holding political partners up against a wall.

There has been a lot of those heavy tactics in Dublin, in London and in Brussels over the past few months, concluding in a political victory for Ireland.

Let's start with Ireland's former tánaiste (second in command of the Government of Ireland) Frances Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald resigned her position on November 28 after a week of intense pressure on the Fine Gael minority government to oust her.

The call for Fitzgerald's head was based on a particularly nasty character assassination of Garda Maurice McCabe which occurred during her time as Minister for Justice.

McCabe broke ranks with his colleagues over patterns of corruption in the Gardaí and he was victimised for doing so. This was made known to people at the highest levels of policing and the Department of Justice by email.

In reality nobody was particularly animated to destroy Fitzgerald. The agenda advanced by Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil was designed to destabilise the government and the authority of the new taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, and the strategy temporarily seemed to work.

Over the weekend of November 25 and November 26 Varadkar and leader of the opposition Micheál Martin met several times in private to hammer out deal terms for Martin's continued support of the government.

Martin was forcing Varadkar's hand over Fitzgerald, and it was within Martin's gift to push through a motion of no confidence, thereby bringing down the government.

Irish people would have been casting votes for a new government a few days before pulling our Christmas crackers.

Before that motion of no confidence was tabled, still more emails related to Maurice McCabe sent to the Department of Justice emerged.

The opposition steeled itself and the heat came on Fitzgerald to resign. She did so for the 'national interest', averting an election.

While the resignation came from Fitzgerald, it was seen as a climbdown for the taoiseach who had been steadfast in supporting his colleague.

Martin's mission of tarnishing Varadkar's party, and shoring up his own, very nearly succeeded – until negotiations with Britain seized everyone's focus.

At the beginning of December, the prime minister of Britain, Theresa May, was not so much in a double bind as a treble bind.

She was bound to placate the DUP on any matter relating to Ireland, given that she is beholden to them to sustain her government.

She had to maintain her stance against remaining in the customs union with the EU – because she had declared so publicly – she wished Britain to be “an associate member of the customs union in some way.”

She also had to negotiate with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar over the Irish border, even though Varadkar had made it clear that a hard border was not up for negotiation.

## THE VIEW FROM IRELAND



By  
**MAURICE  
FITZPATRICK**

To pull off such a feat of statecraft and negotiation would require a truly outstanding politician. Instead of such a figure, Britain has Theresa May.

After much wrangling over the difference between alignment and lack of divergence, a Joint Report based on an agreement between UK and the EU was published.

The report provides the basis for the UK to proceed to the next phase of negotiations, during which the EU will hold all the cards.

The following is a vivisection of Britain's negotiating position now.

In an interview that Brexit Secretary David Davis gave on December 10, he said that the Report is “more a statement of intent than it was a legally enforceable thing.”

A few days later, he said, “I said this was a statement of intent, which was much more than just legally enforceable....of course it's legally enforceable.”

Davis' blunder provided the European Council sufficient warning that, from a British point of view, the Joint Report would go the way of many historical British obligations in relation to Ireland.

The difference now is that Britain's obligation is to Ireland plus the EU.

So, the European Parliament's coordinator, Guy Verhofstadt, promptly

made an amendment demanding that the Joint Report be translated into legal agreement immediately. Well played Davis.

Attempting to wriggle out of this deal is quite human and May's antagonists in Westminster are quite right to fault the deal she has negotiated.

That the UK will effectively stay in the EU's customs union and yet have no say in how it is run are humiliating terms to accept.

What May's critics cannot admit is that it is largely because of them that this is the only deal she could secure.

Britain's politics today is more shot through with schism than at any time in living memory.

Within the government, there are gung-ho Brexiters and there are those who advocate negotiating some form of soft landing when Britain leaves the EU.

On the Opposition benches, there is more of the same.

Consequently neither the government led by Theresa May nor the Opposition led by Jeremy Corbyn can be unambiguous in their support for any particular course of action.

Over-enthusiasm about Brexit alienates the Remainers, just as any hint of reluctance to exit the EU provokes the Leavers. Therefore when red-line motions emerge – and can no longer be procrastinated – the chaos of the past few months prevails in Britain.

For all the instability of a minority government in Dublin, for all that that government was threatened with a point-less election a few weeks ago, all the Irish party leaders were nevertheless able to convene a meeting and give cross-party assent to Ireland's position in the EU-Britain negotiations on the Irish border.

That degree of unity is something that the British could only dream of just now. Could there be a lesson in all of that for London about how to do politics?

# Strong signs of a breakthrough on Stormont talks

**BELFAST** – Hopes of a deal to restore power-sharing rose as well-placed Stormont sources said there were strong signs of a talks breakthrough.

Northern Ireland has been without a functioning administration for over a year after the last DUP/Sinn Féin-led coalition imploded in a row over a botched green energy scheme.

That rift subsequently widened to take in long-running disputes over culture, social issues and legacy.

Civil servants have been running Stormont's public services during the impasse, however they are hamstrung by their inability to make major policy decisions.

The Northern Ireland Office under the direction of Secretary of State Karen Bradley said progress had been made but “difficult issues remain.”

Insiders revealed on February 8 that significant progress has been made in bilateral negotiations between the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin.

It is understood that progress has been made on the issue of the Irish language, which has been the major stumbling block to an agreement.

The deal would involve Arlene Foster, leader of the DUP, becoming first minister despite Sinn Féin's previous demands that she step down over the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scandal.

Sources predicted that the issue of equal marriage might not be addressed

directly, but it was acknowledged by all sides that a change in the law was likely as the DUP no longer possessed the numbers for a petition of concern following last year's election.

A mechanism that would ensure the Assembly wouldn't collapse again is under consideration.

Stormont sources described Sinn Féin's attitude to these negotiations as “markedly different” to that in last autumn's talks.

“Gerry Adams and Mary Lou McDonald have both been involved and the Sinn Féin MLA negotiators have clearly been given direction to get back into government,” the source said.

“There has been an impetus to Sinn Féin's involvement which was missing last time round. There has been serious engagement from the DUP as well.

“It is obvious that Arlene Foster wants to make things work. Both sides genuinely want to see the Executive up and running again.”

The Secretary of State told the House of Commons that a deal to save power-sharing was possible within days.

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney also struck an optimistic note. “There remain challenges for the parties, but I remain convinced that an agreement can and will be reached,” he said.

Gerry Adams is due to step down as Sinn Féin president on Saturday, February 10 and the party is keen to have a deal either in place, or imminent, as he leaves the stage with Mary Lou McDonald taking over the reins of power.

## Karen Bradley named as new NI secretary of state

**BELFAST** – Conservative MP Karen Bradley (47) was named as the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following the resignation of James Brokenshire who announced he was stepping down from the role citing health reasons.

Bradley inherits a difficult situation in Northern Ireland with Tuesday, January 8, marking one year since the collapse of the devolved government at Stormont.

Last January, Sinn Féin's late deputy first minister Martin McGuinness resigned from the governing coalition in protest against the Democratic Unionist Party's handling of a botched green energy scheme.

Several rounds of negotiations between the two main parties have already failed to reach agreement.

Bradley was named as a replacement by British Prime Minister Theresa May as part of her cabinet reshuffle.

Brokenshire had been in the position since July 2016, having taken over from Theresa Villiers in the wake of the UK's Brexit vote.

Bradley, the MP for Staffordshire Moorlands, was formerly in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.



Conservative MP Karen Bradley (47) has inherited a difficult role as the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. It has been over a year since the collapse of the power-sharing government at Stormont in January 2017.

## Bombardier wins trade war dispute

**BELFAST** – There was jubilation on January 26 after a U.S. industrial court unanimously backed Canadian aircraft manufacturer Bombardier against U.S. rivals Boeing in a long running trade dispute.

Bombardier won its case against United States proposals to impose tariffs of 292 percent on its imports to America – a result which could safeguard thousands of jobs in Belfast.

Montreal-based Bombardier needed to win support from three of four commissioners to put a stop to the punitive tariffs but the decision was unanimous.

The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) ruled that rival manufacturer Boeing did not suffer injury from Atlanta-based Delta Airlines' order of Bombardier's C Series passenger jets.

Boeing launched the trade case last April, arguing that governments in Canada and Britain subsidized the plane's development and allowed Bombardier to sell it at unfairly low prices.

Boeing has not yet indicated whether it will lodge an appeal against the ruling.

Decisions made by the USITC (and by the Department of Commerce) under this law can be appealed to the Court of International Trade in New York City; that decision can be further ap-



**BOMBARDIER'S C Series passenger jet.**

pealed to the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

The C Series wings are produced in Belfast, and workers reacted with jubilation to the news.

Bombardier said in a statement, “Today's decision is a victory for innovation, competition, and the rule of law.

“It is also a victory for U.S. airlines and the U.S. travelling public. The C Series is the most innovative and efficient new aircraft in a generation.

“Its development and production represent thousands of jobs in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.”

It added, “With this matter behind us, we are moving full speed ahead with finalising our partnership with Airbus.”

Politicians from across the spectrum welcomed the ruling.



# Mary Lou McDonald succeeds Gerry Adams as leader of Sinn Fein

BELFAST – Mary Lou McDonald will succeed Gerry Adams as Sinn Fein leader, the party has confirmed, completing a generational shift for the Irish nationalist party as it bids to enter government on both sides of the Irish border.

Adams, a pivotal figure in the political life of Ireland for almost 50 years, announced in November he would step down as leader of the party after more than three decades in charge.

McDonald, an English literature graduate from Trinity College Dublin who has been at the forefront of a new breed of Sinn Fein politicians softening the party's image, was the only Sinn Fein lawmaker to put her name forward for the leadership ahead of a special convention on February 10.

"For us in Sinn Fein in the time ahead, we have to grow our party, not just our mandate but also our capacities. We have to modernize, we have to be fit for purpose, fit for our task," McDonald said in a speech to party members in Belfast.



MARY LOU McDonald has now been confirmed as president of Sinn Fein with Michelle O'Neill as deputy leader.

Adams, still reviled by some skeptical voters as the face of the IRA during its campaign against British rule in Northern Ireland, hands over to a successor with no direct involvement in the three decades of conflict that came to an end in 1998.

It also means the left-wing party will be led on both sides of the border by women in their forties after Michelle

O'Neill succeeded Martin McGuinness as leader in Northern Ireland shortly before his death in March.

Sinn Fein has shared power in Northern Ireland since 2007 and is in negotiations to try to restore the devolved executive there, but it has never governed in the south where it has grown to establish itself as the third largest party.

## Hemochromatosis: My life was on the line

By RICK LASWICK

Move over Robert Downey Jr, I am the real Iron Man!

It all started back in 2002 after repeated trips to my family doctor asking "Why am I so tired? Why is my skin grey? Why do my two fingers and knuckles hurt so much if I touch them?"

After getting the regular rolling-the-eyes routine and "What are you here for this time, Rick?" questions, I decided enough was enough and asked to see someone else.

After a few months of waiting and being put on iron pills, I met with a doctor who took one look at me and said, "I'm pretty sure I know what's wrong with you, Rick."

After a bunch of blood work and a DNA test, I was called back in about a week or so later.

The doctor's hunch was dead on: I have hereditary hemochromatosis.

He informed me that my ferritin levels were off the charts at 20,000 ng/mL!

He said he had never seen such high levels and told me I was lucky I wasn't dead. If I had been a drinker, I probably wouldn't be around to write this.

The specialist informed me hemochromatosis mimics other diseases, so it is hard for family doctors to diagnose it.

When your skin turns grey, you lose your hair and have severe liver pain, you know something isn't right with yourself. That's why I persisted on going back to the doctor on a regular basis.

For my treatment, I was put on an extreme regiment of going to the hospital every week for about five years to give a pint of blood to get my iron levels down. At the same time, I was having liver biopsies and other tests.

After finding out about my inherited disorder, my brothers decided to get checked as well, resulting in one of them also being diagnosed with hemochromatosis but with a lower serum ferritin level.



RICK LASWICK now enjoys spending time with his granddaughter.

After doing some research they found out my deceased father had hemochromatosis which may have contributed to his cancer and early death.

It's now 16 years later, and I've had two knee replacements and one ankle replacement, and another ankle surgery to come.

I have my ferritin levels down to an acceptable 34! I go every two months to Canadian Blood Services to donate, as they accept blood from hemochromatosis patients.

It's great, keeping my levels in check and giving someone help with a donation.

Doing warehouse work all my life, I've had to retire early and go on Canada pension disability due to all my joint replacements and ones to come.

I now experience pain in my wrists, feet and other joints as the iron overload has destroyed all the cartilage in most of my body joints, making it hard to find work in any capacity.

The excess iron has also damaged my spine to the point where it is pinching nerves and causing very bad itching in both my arms.

I now get checked two times a year to

monitor all my levels and keep the ferritin at respectable levels.

Lucky for me I have a caring loving wife who has been by my side from the beginning, helping me watch the type of food I eat and seeing me through all the surgeries.

Lately I've found out I have significant scarring of the liver from the past iron overload.

What I'm trying to educate people on is if you feel like you have something wrong with your own body, persist with your doctor as I did and do not stop until you have answers.

Hemochromatosis is nothing to joke about, and many people die if not diagnosed in time.

I'm one of the lucky ones; I now get to spend time with my two beautiful grandchildren and loving family.

I sometimes feel depressed not being able to work and being in constant pain, but I always look at the bright side... I'm still here!

If you have symptoms like always feeling tired, an odd skin color, painful arthritis or loss of hair, don't let your doctor put you on iron pills before getting you to do a proper iron saturation test. It could be your life on the line!

*One in 300 Canadians mainly of northern European descent are at risk for hemochromatosis. Most are unaware of the condition.*

*The Canadian Hemochromatosis Society's mission is to promote the early diagnosis, screening and testing of hereditary hemochromatosis through its awareness-raising programs in medical communities and with those at risk, to see an end to suffering and premature death related to the disorder.*

*You can support this mission with a donation to the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society, 285 – 7000 Minoru Boulevard, Richmond, B.C. V6Y 3Z5.*

*More information can be found at [www.toomuchiron.ca/celtic](http://www.toomuchiron.ca/celtic).*

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PAT BREEN TD, Irish Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, met at city hall with Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan while in Seattle on January 12. The mayor told him about her grandfather who was born in Co. Mayo and about her year studying in Dublin at UCD, as well about her Irish studies while attending the University of Notre Dame.



IRISH NETWORK SEATTLE event on January 11 – (L-R) Conor Sheehy (VP/Western U.S., Irish Development Authority - IDA), Páraic Hayes (President, IDA West Coast), John Keane (Honorary Irish Consul, Seattle), Robert O'Driscoll (Irish Consul General, San Francisco), Pat Breen TD (Irish Government Minister for Trade, Data Protection, etc.), Aly Gardner-Shelby (President, Irish Network Seattle), and Noreen McCormack (Past-President, Irish Network Seattle).



IRISH HERITAGE CLUB members busy working on organizing Irish Week 2018 in Seattle, including the St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 17 and the Irish Festival on March 17 and 18. Clockwise from left are: Ralph Kosche, Jane Sepede, Frank Gill, Mary Dunne, Ari Hausler, Candace Dunne, Mary Shriane, Brendan Shriane, David Jacobsen, Caron McMahon, Betty Egan, Jean Roth, Nanci Spieker, and Heather Murphy.



THE SEATTLE Nollaig na mBan (Irish Women's Christmas) dinner was held at J J Mahony's Pub on January 6. At the end of the table at left is Mary Shriane while Sharon Gillen is at right.

## SEATTLE IRISH NEWS

### PASSINGS

• EAMON MORAN (62), a native of Co. Roscommon and brother of Seattle's Mike Moran, died suddenly in Seattle January 28.

• MICHAEL BYRNE (74), father of Seattle's Dave Byrne, died in Wexford January 21 following a long battle with Parkinsons.

• BRENDAN GALLAGHER (89), husband of Diane, a native of Achill Island, Co. Mayo, and a Seattle-area resident since 1952, died in Tacoma January 13.

• DAN FLANAGAN (90), husband of Joan and a former St. Patrick's Day Parade Honorary Grand Marshal, died January 6 in Seattle.

• PAT BOYLE (72), a Seattle resident for over 30 years and brother to the Seattle area's Kay McKenna, Maura Barnes, Liam Boyle and Chris Boyle, died December 30 in Ballycastle, north of Belfast.

• TOM WOOD (91), husband of Patricia and brother-in-law of Heather Murphy, died in Seattle December 16.

• MARTHA ROWLAND (60), wife of the Irish community's Joe Martin, died December 6 in Seattle following a long illness.

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílse –  
May their faithful souls rest  
at God's right hand*

**SODA BREAD CLASS** – On Saturday, February 17 from 1- 5 PM at St. Patrick Parish Hall, 2702 Broadway E (north end of Capitol Hill at Roanoke), a cooking class for adults interested in the art of making traditional Irish soda bread will be held.

The fee of \$10 per person will cover the cost of flour, soda, salt and buttermilk to make a sample cake that you can bring home with you. For details and reservations, visit IrishWeek.org or e-mail SodaBread@irishclub.org.

**PIPERS' TIONÓL** – The annual Seattle Irish Pipers Tionól, a weekend of classes, workshops, and concerts focusing on the Irish uilleann pipes and fiddle, will be held in Seattle the weekend of February 16-18 at the Doric Lodge, 619 N 36th Street in the Fremont District.

Guest performers and teachers include Piper Kieran O'Hare and Fiddler Liz Knowles.

Kickoff party and session 7 PM on Friday February 18. Contact Tom Quinn at tom.quinn@gmail.com for directions.

Saturday workshops in piping, reed-making, adjusting, tuning, and pipe maintenance start at 10 AM and run until 4 PM. Sunday's workshops run from 11 AM to 4 PM.

On both days there will be a concert and céilí. See IrishPipersClub.org/tionol for details.

**FRIENDS OF ST. PATRICK / IN-SEATTLE BANQUET** – On Saturday, March 3, a dinner and dance will be held at the Knights of Columbus Banquet Hall, 722 E Union, Seattle.

The 78th annual dinner of the Soci-



By  
JOHN  
KEANE



DAIDÍ NA NOLLAG (aka Owen Cullen) poses with Irish Consul General Robert O'Driscoll and his wife Caoimhe Ní Chonchoille at the Irish seniors' Christmas luncheon in Seattle on December 9.



DAIDÍ NA NOLLAG (aka Owen Cullen) poses with Leona Hollis and Jack Wishart at the Irish seniors' Christmas luncheon on December 9. Jack is from Larne, Co. Antrim and recently celebrated his 90th birthday.

ety of the Friends of St. Patrick is co-hosted by Irish Network Seattle.

This is the official March kick-off to the 2018 celebration of St. Patrick's Day in Seattle. Tickets (\$75) at Friends@irishclub.org.

**SODA BREAD CONTEST** – Saturday, March 10 from 2-3 PM at T S McHugh's Restaurant, 1st and Mercer, Seattle.

Contest admission is free and judging starts at 2 PM. During the judging, enjoy Irish music and Irish stepdancing.

For all the details, visit IrishWeek.org or e-mail SodaBread@irishclub.org.

**DÀIMH CONCERT** – Scotland's own Gaelic supergroup Dàimh perform Sunday, February 18 at the Phinney Ridge Center, 6532 Phinney Avenue.

Formed around the turn of the century and taking the name from the Gaelic word for "kinship," Dàimh (pronounced "dive") have taken their contemporary take of Highland and Gaelic music to over 20 countries.

There's also a ceilidh dance on Wednesday, February 20 at the Ea-

gles Club, 8201 Lake City Way. For more information, contact Slighe nan Gaidheal at sligheinfo@wavecable.com or call (206) 903-9452.

**POULSBO SESSIONS** – There are open music sessions in Poulsbo on the Kitsap Peninsula that play a lot of Irish and Cape Breton sets and tunes.

The group meets monthly on every third Sunday 2-5 PM at Tizley's Europub on Front Street, Poulsbo. Enjoy strings, small pipes, vocalist, concertina, whistle, guitar, etc. Contact Jane at c\_capers@yahoo.com for details.

**CAHILL CONCERT** – Emmet Cahill, award-winning Irish tenor and a lead singer with the popular Irish music show Celtic Thunder, performs at University Christian Church in Seattle on Friday, February 23 at 7:30 PM.

Emmet Cahill has performed in Seattle several times as a member of Celtic Thunder and as a solo artist. Emmet has set up a 10 percent discount code for groups of eight or more who purchase tickets – just use IRELAND2018 (all caps) at EmmetCahill.com/tour-dates/.

**I'M AN IMMIGRANT** – Seattle's Irish community is supporting a project (started by Helen Lafferty, a Co. Wicklow native who now lives in Seattle) to have people wear Immigrant Awareness Buttons.

The buttons are relatively small, just over one and a half inches wide, black print on a white background.

They just say "I AM AN IMMIGRANT," "I AM THE CHILD OF AN IMMIGRANT," "I AM MARRIED TO AN IMMIGRANT," "I AM THE GRANDCHILD OF AN IMMIGRANT," or "I AM THE FRIEND OF AN IMMIGRANT."

The buttons don't directly advocate for or against anything, and are not tied to any individual cause, etc., but simply are an effort to make people aware of the impact of immigrants in our midst. Search Facebook for Immigrant Awareness Buttons.

**IRISH MUSIC WEEK** – Registration is now open for Cascadia Irish Music Week 2018 which runs August 5-11, 2018 at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA.

If you're interested in Irish traditional music, Cascadia is the place to be this summer. There is a full week of sessions, classes, intimate evening concerts, and afternoon talks.

All this happens, as well as lots of fun with great people on the beautiful Evergreen State College campus in Olympia. Full details at CascadiaIrish.org.

**KOVAR LOANED** – Sounders FC has agreed to an intra-league loan with Los Angeles FC, sending midfielder Aaron Kovar to Southern California for the 2018 campaign and granting LAFC the option to buy the player's rights at the conclusion of the season.

The Seattle native, whose mother is from Dublin and who carries an Irish

(Continued next page)



(Continued from page 16)



passport, has 32 career MLS regular-season appearances.

Established in 2014, Los Angeles FC will begin play in Major League Soccer starting in 2018, as a member of the Western Conference.

**SPELLMAN PASSING** – John Spellman, Washington's last Republican governor and the first King County executive, died January 15, and his wife Lois died January 24. Both were aged 91.

Regularly described as an "affable Irishman" with a lovely tenor voice who loved to sing Irish songs, John Spellman helped start Seattle's St. Patrick's Day parade while he was the King County executive in 1972.

As governor he hosted St. Patrick's Day parties at the governor's mansion in Olympia.

He was grand marshal of Seattle's St. Patrick's Day parade in 1974 and the last Irish Week luncheon he attended was in 2016 when he was 89.

Spellman was a true statesman and a good Irishman.

**PORT TOWNSEND** – The Young Dubliners – Celtic rock's hardest working band – perform in concert in the Joseph F Wheeler Theatre at Fort Worden State Park, Port Townsend, on Sunday, February 25 at 7:30 PM. Tickets at <https://youngdubs.brownpapertickets.com>.

## IRISH WEEK 2018 in Seattle Details at [www.IrishWeek.org](http://www.IrishWeek.org)

- SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17 – Irish Soda bread cooking class;
- SATURDAY, MARCH 3 – Friends of St. Patrick / Irish Network banquet;
- SATURDAY, MARCH 10 – Irish soda bread contest;
- SUNDAY, MARCH 11 – Matt Talbot Dinner;
- FRIDAY, MARCH 16 – St. Patrick's Day Mass for Peace; Mayor's Irish Week Proclamation Luncheon; Landing of St. Patrick; and Green Stripe Laying on 4th Avenue;
- SATURDAY, MARCH 17 - St. Patrick's Day Dash; Irish Flag-Raising; St. Patrick's Day parade; and Irish Festival Seattle;
- SUNDAY, MARCH 18 - Irish Genealogy Workshop; and Irish Festival Seattle.

### HONORARY GRAND MARSHAL

The Honorary Grand Marshal of Seattle's 2018 St. Patrick's Day parade on Saturday, March 17 is Bruce Cosacchi, a long-time supporter of Irish activities in the Seattle area.

Bruce's mother was born in Bawnboy, Co. Cavan, and she and her husband are buried at Bawnboy, which Bruce and Birgit visit frequently. Bruce spent 25 years as an FBI Special Agent in Washington, DC, Virginia, and California, before coming to Seattle.

A graduate of the University of Notre Dame, he is a past president of the local ND Club and former drum major of the "Band of the Fighting Irish."

Active in the Irish Heritage Club for many years, Bruce previously has served as a board member and as editor of the *Seanachai* newsletter.

He has participated in Seattle's St. Patrick's Day parade annually since 1974 and for the past 20 years has played the Irish and U.S. national anthems on trumpet before the start of the parade.

Proud of his Irish heritage, in recent years he has been joined by his grandson Conor for a trumpet duo. Congratulations to a wonderful Irishman.



## Generosity of Choctaw Nation to the Irish recalled with sculpture

MIDLETON, Co. Cork – The generosity of a Native American tribe towards the people of Ireland at the height of the Great Famine is commemorated with 'Kindred Spirits' a large stainless steel outdoor sculpture in Bailick Park in Midleton, Co. Cork in Ireland.

The Choctaw Nation were so moved by the plight of the Irish people during the period known as *an Gorta Mór* that in 1847 they raised \$170 – worth tens of thousands of dollars today – from their meagre resources to aid those starving in Ireland.

The generosity of the Choctaw people came after they suffered great hardship when thousands perished on the forced migration that was the Trail of Tears.

Originally indigenous to the American south-east – particularly Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida – most of the tribe were relocated on a forced march to Oklahoma in the 1800s, where their descendants still live.

Despite still struggling with their own adversity, the Choctaw people somehow heard of the plight of the Irish and sent the donation in 1847.

The sculpture was commissioned in 2013 by the former Midleton Town Council in recognition of the Choctaw people's extraordinary generosity towards the people of Ireland.

It comprises of nine majestic 20-foot eagle feathers, arranged in a circular



HUNDREDS of people gathered at Bailick Park in Midleton, Co. Cork to attend the dedication of the monument to the Choctaw Nation on Sunday, June 18, 2017.

shape and reaching towards the sky – a metaphorical representation of a bowl filled with food to be presented to the hungry.

The monument was officially unveiled and dedicated in June 2017 by Chief Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., who were accompanied by a 20-strong delegation from the Choctaw Nation.

Cork County Council East Cork municipal officer Joe McCarthy said, "The Choctaw people were still recovering from their own injustice, and they put their hands in their pockets and they helped strangers by contributing a sum of \$170 to send food aid to Ireland. It's rare to see such generosity and it had to be acknowledged.



"They bestowed a blessing not only on the starving Irish men, women and children, but also on humanity.

"The gift from the Choctaw people was a demonstration of love and this monument acknowledges that and hopefully will encourage the Irish people to act as the Choctaw people did."



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FORMER Irish president Mary McAleese with son Justin.

## Cardinal's bid to ban Mary McAleese from conference

DUBLIN – An Irish cardinal has forced a major international conference on women's rights to move from the Vatican as he objected to former president Mary McAleese who is the keynote speaker at the event.

The 2018 'Voices of Faith' conference will take place on International Women's Day on March 8.

Dublin-born Cardinal Kevin Farrell, who is overseeing the Vatican's preparations for the World Meeting of Families in Ireland in August, which will be attended by Pope Francis, attempted to block McAleese from addressing the conference.

McAleese, who has a gay son, has criticized the church's position on LGBT issues. She has previously spoken about how her son Justin, as a devout young Catholic, was bullied because he was gay.

She said that Justin went through "torture" when he discovered what his church taught about homosexuality.

Another conference speaker Ssenfuka Joanita Warry is a Catholic who campaigns for LGBT rights in Uganda and is herself gay.

This is the first year the Vatican has withheld approval of any speakers for the annual gathering, which brings together high-profile international speakers to address issues of concern to women around the world.

For the past four years, the conference has taken place within the Vatican. But this year's event ran into trouble with

Cardinal Farrell, who heads up the Congregation for Laity, Family and Life and has taken up oversight of the conference.

Chantal Götz, who is executive director of the Catholic philanthropic Fidel Götz Foundation and is the main organiser of the conference, took the decision to move the venue of 'Why Women Matter' from the Vatican to the Jesuit Aula in Rome rather than cave in to the Irish prelate's demands.

"The list of speakers required approval from Cardinal Farrell," said Götz. "He sent the list of names back to me with those names to which he gave permission. Mary McAleese and two others were not on it."

She described the cardinal's failure to respond to her efforts to compromise and "barring" women's voices as "unacceptable."

Rather than exclude the three high-profile speakers from the conference, the organisers decided to move the conference to a venue outside the Vatican.

"We realised it is crucial for us to bring voices that represent perspectives often not heard at the Vatican," Götz said. She added that, as a non-Vatican entity, "ultimately, we did not see a reason why these women should have to go through an 'approval process' by anyone."

She also highlighted that on his recent visit to Chile, Pope Francis told young people that "opinions often arrive to Rome filtered" and she said the women's event "aims to change that."

## Project underway to reconstruct Ireland's public records lost archive

DUBLIN – Archivists are attempting to recover centuries of lost history by digitally recreating the Public Records Office of Ireland which was burnt down in 1922.

The office, which was based in the Four Courts in central Dublin, was destroyed by fire in the Irish Civil War, along with countless precious records.

Among the lost documents were several sets of famine-era census papers.

The joint project involves Trinity College Dublin and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

Their staff will work with several other archival partners in a bid to bring back lost records which "touched almost every aspect of life in Ireland."

The former Public Records Office of Ireland was a six-storey Victorian building which stored important state and church papers, some dating back as far as the 13th Century.

During the Civil War, it was used to store mines and ammunition and on June 30, 1922, mines exploded in the basement and the building was destroyed by fire.

More than 100,000 square feet of shelving, housing records dating back 700 years, went up in flames in the blaze – all of which were considered to be lost forever.

However, Trinity and PRONI are now working together on the 'Beyond 2022: Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury' project.

Its aim is to make a 3D digital reconstruction of the original building and digitally refill its shelves in time to mark the 100th anniversary of the blaze.

While a variety of archival bodies are collaborating in the project, PRONI has a unique connection to the former archive.

Established in 1923, PRONI was originally headed by Dr. David A. Chart.

Dr. Chart had previously worked in the Dublin Records Office and was aware of the damage that had been done, and volume of records that had been lost in 1922.

In his new role, he set about actively compiling substitutions for some of the destroyed manuscripts by approaching solicitors, business people, politicians, churches and landed aristocracy.

His successors continued his tradition, and the current PRONI director, Dr. Michael Willis, says the office is now delighted to be collaborating in the new digital scheme.

"The destruction of the Public Records Office of Ireland led to a catastrophic loss of records," said Dr. Willis.

"However, we have been fortunate that previous directors of PRONI were successful in identifying and collecting surrogate records.

"The Beyond 2022 resource highlights many of these surrogates and is a testimony to what has survived."

The National Archives of Ireland, The National Archives (UK), and The Irish Manuscripts Commission are also taking part in the project which is being led by the School of Histories and Humanities, and the School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity College, Dublin.

Once complete, users will be able to access all "surviving or substitute ma-



PHOTO: National Archives of Ireland

THE PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE of Ireland was destroyed at the start of the Irish Civil War. Records dating back to the 13th Century were destroyed in the fire.



PHOTO: Irish Architectural Archive

THE PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE prior to the blaze.



PHOTO: National Archives of Ireland

A PICTURE OF LIFE inside the Public Records Office of Ireland in 1914.

terials" relating to births, marriages, deaths and crimes from the 13th Century onwards.

Dr. Peter Crooks is the principal investigator of the project.

"Because the archival collections date from such an early period of history, the reconstruction effort will allow anyone with an interest in researching their families or localities to engage in deep history," he said.

He added that people would be able to reach back "almost half a millennium earlier than most readily available ge-

nealogical resources."

Dr. Seamus Lawless, from the School of Computer Science, said the project was exciting in terms of science and technology.

"The development of a fully immersive recreation of the archive allows us to blend the physical with the digital, and study how people search for information when using the archive," he said.

"Beyond 2022 has the potential to have significant impact on how people search for, interact with and consume information in virtual reality experiences."

## First ferry link between Ireland and Spain

CORK – Brittany Ferries has announced a new route between Ireland and Spain to be launched in April 2019.

The company will operate two return sailings a week from Cork to Santander in northern Spain.

This will be the first direct ferry link between Ireland and Spain and the sailings will enable firms to bypass the UK when transporting freight between the two countries, which could be particularly useful after Brexit.

There are fears that the UK's ports could suffer from severe customs queues after it withdraws from the European Union in March next year.

Brittany Ferries will charter a ship

named *Connemara* which has capacity for 500 passengers and 195 cars.

The vessel will also deliver an additional weekly return service from Cork to Roscoff in France.

Chief executive Christophe Mathieu said, "Green Spain promises visitors a wealth of opportunities, whether they travel with us from the UK or Ireland.

"However, this new route will also present more options to freight companies operating throughout Ireland, Spain, Portugal and southern France."

New figures show that the ferry industry is investing more than £1 billion in improvements in the next four years.

Trade body Discover Ferries says the money is being spent on new ships and modernising ports and facilities.





THE FRASER VALLEY GAELS, the new USGAA Intermediate Football Champions at the GAA Treasure Island Field in San Francisco on Sunday, September 3, 2017.

## Fraser Valley Gaels to host the 2018 Western Canada GAA championships

VANCOUVER – Now in its fourth year, Fraser Valley Gaels have gone from strength-to-strength while maintaining the vision and values of its original founding members.

Last year was the club's most successful year to date.

Not only did the club field its first ever ladies team, but also the men's intermediate team travelled to San Francisco and won the North American championship.

Now 2018 is a particularly exciting year for Fraser Valley Gaels as the club is hosting the Western Canadian Championships for the first time – a competi-

tion their men's football team won in 2016.

The club held its annual social in Moose's Down Under on Friday, February 2 to welcome the new crop of players who have already signed up for the forthcoming season.

On the night there was a raffle with many fantastic prizes courtesy of BC Bia and Donnellan's Irish Pub.

Fraser Valley Gaels are now recruiting for both the men's and women's football teams for what is expected to be another prosperous season.

Anyone wishing to play in the 2018 season should see the contact information

below, visit the club's website (fraservalleygaels.com) or Facebook page (Fraser Valley Gaels Gaelic Football).

Fraser Valley Gaels is more than a football club, it is at the heart of the Irish and international community in Vancouver.

The club also features as many events off the pitch as on and is always happy to have new members to become part of our growing family and community.

For more information, e-mail Connall Halferty, club secretary, at: fraservalleygaels@gmail.com, or call (778) 870-0511.

## New committee, new club and new vision for GAA in Vancouver

By AISLINN RICE

PRO – ISSC Vancouver

VANCOUVER – Irish Sporting and Social Club activity has been building steadily on all fronts since a brand-new committee was elected at the club AGM in September 2017.

Most of the work granted has been behind the scenes but will hopefully lead to a full and fun-filled calendar of club activities throughout 2018.

Here is a quick run though of Gaelic games activities in Vancouver over the past number of months.

A very successful and well-received ISSC dinner dance was organized and held in early December.

Huge thanks to the club members who put a lot of time and effort into making this such an enjoyable evening for all who attended.

William Donnellan was instrumental in enticing well-known Irish GAA stars to attend and in general spearheaded the event from the beginning.

New club PRO has been leading the charge of improving club communication and has been working on revamping the club website so that it becomes a useful resource for all club members whether social, adult beginner, veteran or youth. Keep an ear and eye out for news of this site being re-launched.

A new club, Éire Óg, has been established by some visionary and now ex-members of the ISSC.

The club will start off with a men's football team and hopefully will expand out to include women's football, hurling and camogie over the coming years. It is great to see some not-so-new kids on the block.



### Irish Sporting & Social Club

Following on from the establishment of another club, members from the ISSC, Fraser Valley Gaels and Éire Óg men's football teams have been working hard with each of the clubs' committees to develop and set up a series of league and championship games that will be scheduled throughout the summer.

This work is ongoing but it bodes well for the development of a league and championship format that will cater for all codes (Gaelic football & camogie/hurling) in the years to come.

The ISSC and JP Ryans Hurling will be working with the other clubs to develop the 2018 dates into games day involving all codes and where possible getting the youth of the clubs involved.

On February 10, a GAA coach, provided in-part by Ulster Council GAA, will arrive in Vancouver to run a three week skills development program in Vancouver schools.

While here they will also facilitate a short skills academy for beginner adults who want to learn the basics of Gaelic football and/or camogie and hurling.

A massive thanks to club stalwarts Jim and Maureen Speiran who once again

have stepped up to help the club out and show their support by hosting the coach while he is here for the three weeks, thank you!

Work is also underway, led by youth development lead, Ronan Deane, and a number of our ISSC parents to get a summer camp organized for interested youth. We will be promoting these activities as details become available.

Additionally, Ronan and Tara Reid (youth development coach) have already hosted coaching and demonstration sessions in two secondary schools on multiple days, spreading the Gaelic gospel to Vancouver and Surrey students.

If you would like to get involved in these kinds of activities, please reach out and contact youthvancouverissc@gmail.com. We are always looking for more enthusiastic people to get involved.

The ISSC has set up a team to run in the annual Sun Run, which is scheduled for April 2018. If you are interested in signing up and participating as a group from the ISSC, please contact info@isscvancouver.com for more details.

The schools programs and adult beginner academies will be held throughout the month of February and plans are afoot to organize a blitz style competition on our annual St. Patrick's Day get together.

Keep an eye out on our Facebook page, revamped website and check your emails for upcoming events and activities.

All new members are welcome, please contact the club on: info@issc vancouver.com.

## Famine film Black 47 to have world premiere at Berlin Film Festival

*Black 47*, the Irish revenge story which is set during the Famine, is to receive its world premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival.

The festival runs from February 15 to 25 and *Black 47* follows in the footsteps of Irish films *The Guard*, *The Butcher Boy* and *The Boxer* in having its premiere at the festival.

Directed by Lance Daly (*Life's a Breeze, Kisses*), *Black 47* stars *Animal Kingdom* actor James Frecheville as Feeney, an Irish Ranger who has been fighting abroad

for the British Army but becomes a deserter and returns home.

When he discovers what has happened to his family, Feeney swears vengeance. His old British Army comrade Hannah (*The Matrix* and *Lord of the Rings* star Hugo Weaving) is then dispatched to put an end to Feeney's uprising.

The cast of *Black 47* also includes Irish actors Stephen Rea (*Michael Collins*, *The Crying Game*), and Barry Keoghan (*Dunkirk*, *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*).

## 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. – PMKJ, MJK, ED, CC, CB, CLKLKS, LF, HM

### 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. – SVS

### NOVENA TO ST. JOSEPH

Oh glorious St. Joseph, thou hast power to render possible even things which are considered impossible, come to our aid in our present trouble and distress. Take this important and difficult affair under thy particular protection, that it may end happily. (Name your request). O dear St. Joseph, all our confidence is in thee, let it not be said that we would invoke thee in vain and since thou art so powerful with Jesus and Mary, show that thy goodness equals thy power. Amen. St. Joseph, friend of the sacred heart, pray for us. (For favour received)

Publication of a novena is \$25 monthly



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# Visit the Isle of Wight and step back by 35 years



**A**FTER a very wet January, a ridge of high pressure now sits over southern England which is producing chilly winds but beautiful, sunny winter skies.

As I look out my kitchen window, the sky is so clear I feel I could just reach out and touch the Isle of Wight which is eight miles away across the sea.

The Isle of Wight has been a popular holiday destination since Queen Victoria and Prince Albert built a holiday home on the island (Osborne House) in 1851, but they were not the first to do so as the Romans built villas on the island in the 2nd Century.

The Vikings settled on the Island and it became the last part of Britain to accept Christianity, but its place of importance in British History is owing to its proximity to Southampton and Portsmouth, two of Britain's largest ports.

Henry VIII built four forts on the island as he feared a French invasion, but perhaps the island's most dramatic role was in 1588 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

A Spanish Armada under the command of Duke Medina-Sidona sailed round the Isle of Wight with the intention of sheltering in Portsmouth harbour before sailing to the Netherlands to rendezvous with the Duke of Parma.

Sidona had 120 ships, 8,350 sailors and 19,290 soldiers under his command.

Parma would be waiting with a further 19,000 troops. Sidona's reports stated that he intended to capture the Isle of Wight and use it as a base to invade England.

On July 24-25, 1588 the English force attacked the Spanish Armada in what became known as the Battle of the Isle of Wight with the result that the Armada was forced to sail towards Calais.

With the treacherous waters around the Isle of Wight claiming several of the Spanish ships and no safe harbour to await Parma's troops, the plan for invasion was abandoned.

Three hundred years later three more forts were built as the threat of a Napoleonic invasion increased and during the Second World War the island's proximity to Portsmouth and Southampton meant it was heavily bombed.

There is also an unconfirmed story that German soldiers crossed from the Channel Islands and landed on the Isle of Wight, but were wiped out by a British commando force.

Happily, today the noises heard on the island are not from gunfire but electric guitars at the annual Isle of Wight Rock Festival which attracts 60,000 visitors.

At the narrowest point only two miles separate the island from the mainland and there are no plans to build a bridge.

The islanders enjoy a way of life which conjures up a bygone era, and the joke is that when arriving on the island you should turn your watch back by 35 years.

It truly is a lovely place to visit, but the downside is since you cannot drive there the cost per mile of the ferry is the most expensive in the world.

## POSTCARD FROM LILLE

By  
**ELFAN JONES**

In a climate of Brexit gloom and doom two news stories have raised our spirits.

The first is that scientists have identified a mummified body found in a Swiss graveyard.

The body was discovered decades ago during renovations of a church in Basel. It was that of a wealthy woman but, as there was no gravestone, her identity remained a mystery.

Experts from Basel's Natural History Museum announced last week that by extracting DNA from the mummy's toe with a living descendant, they have identified the woman as Anna Catharina Bischoff, a member of a prominent Basel family.

She died in 1787 at the age of 68. Cause of death was that she was poisoned by taking mercury which was then a common treatment for syphilis.

It transpires that Anna Catharina Bischoff is the ancestor of our ex-mayor of London, current foreign secretary, and future prime minister wannabe Boris Johnson.

It was probable that the lady contracted the disease while helping her husband, Doctor Bischoff, administer to patients with a sexually transmitted disease, but at the moment the thought that Boris's great-great-great-great-great-great-great granny might have been a bit of a tart just lightens the mood.

Best wishes,  
*Elfan*



THE TRANQUIL setting of Freshwater Bay on the Isle of Wight is a popular tourist destination. Visible just behind the beach in the photograph above are the famous chalk cliffs of Tennyson Down.



SCIENTISTS have identified a mummified body found in a Swiss churchyard as the ancestor of British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.



## 'Cheddar Man,' Britain's oldest skeleton, had Dark Skin and blue eyes, DNA shows

LONDON – A recent facial reconstruction of a 10,000 year-old skeleton called the "Cheddar Man" has revealed a man with bright blue eyes, slightly curly hair, and dark skin.

He is Britain's oldest complete skeleton, which was discovered in 1903 in Gough's Cave near the village of Cheddar in Somerset, in southwest England.

He lived about 10,000 years ago in the Mesolithic period, the middle part of the Stone Age.

Scientists have now reconstructed his features, demonstrating that he was part of a population of ancient Western Europeans that, scientists have shown in recent years, had dark skin.

Research has shown that fair skin pigmentation – long con-

sidered a defining feature of Europe – only goes back less than 6,000 years.

For decades Britons have debated over where they came from and what defines the nature of their genetic heritage. As scientists are retrieving more DNA from ancient Britons, they are discovering how the isles received wave after wave of immigrants over tens of thousands of years.

This growing knowledge of ancient British genetics is allowing researchers to reconstruct the biology of early Britons – including their skin colour.

Humans first arrived in Europe from Africa about 45,000 years ago. Western hunter-gatherers migrated from the Near East much later, mostly replacing the Europeans already there.



JON VENABLES was 10-years-old when he and Robert Thompson killed James Bulger.

## 'Collusion' claim as Jon Venables jailed for possessing over 1,000 abuse images

LONDON – Jon Venables, one of the killers of toddler James Bulger, has been jailed for possessing child abuse images for the second time.

He admitted charges of making indecent images of children and one of having a "sickening" paedophile manual.

Sentencing him to three years and four months Justice Edis said Venables was "manipulative and dishonest."

The court heard that the latest images were of children mainly aged between six and 13, although some were younger.

In sentencing Venables, Edis told him the images he downloaded were "heart-breaking for any ordinary person to see this kind of material."

He described the manual as a "vile document" and told Venables that, as a consumer of these "products of barbarous evil," he in turn caused it to happen.

As well as his prison sentence, Venables was also made the subject of a sexual harm prevention order and Justice Edis ordered that his laptop be taken away.

Denise Fergus and James's father Ralph Bulger were at the Old Bailey to hear the latest guilty pleas.

Chris Johnson, a spokesman for the family, said James's mother faced a "horrendous ordeal" hearing the killer's "vile behaviour" in court.

He branded the sentence a "farce" and said Venables would feel like he had "got away with it."

He accused the authorities of colluding to cover up Venables' behaviour and called for a public inquiry into the case.

Johnson said the disclosure in court that Venables was issued with a caution in 2015 when he gained access to the internet was "part of a pattern of collusion between Venables and the authorities."

Venables and his classmate Robert Thompson abducted, tortured and killed two-year-old James Bulger in Bootle, Merseyside, in 1993.

They were both aged 10 when they committed a crime that shocked the country with its barbarity.

Both Venables and Thompson were given lifelong anonymity with new identities when they were released on licence in 2001 after serving eight years for the murder.

Since then Venables has breached the terms of his licence numerous times.

As well as being caught with abuse images in 2015, he was given a formal warning after being arrested following a drunken brawl in 2008 and cautioned for possession of cocaine that same year.

A Ministry of Justice spokesman told Sky News, "Venables has received a caution by the police for breaching his Sexual Offences Prevention Order in 2015, but there was no evidence at that time of an increased risk to the public that would have justified recall."

"Police arrested Venables very quickly after they discovered his most recent offences, and the conviction he received today is as a direct result of stringent monitoring by the police and probation service."

"He has constantly been subject to stricter licence conditions and more scrutiny than most lifers would be at the same stage of their sentence."