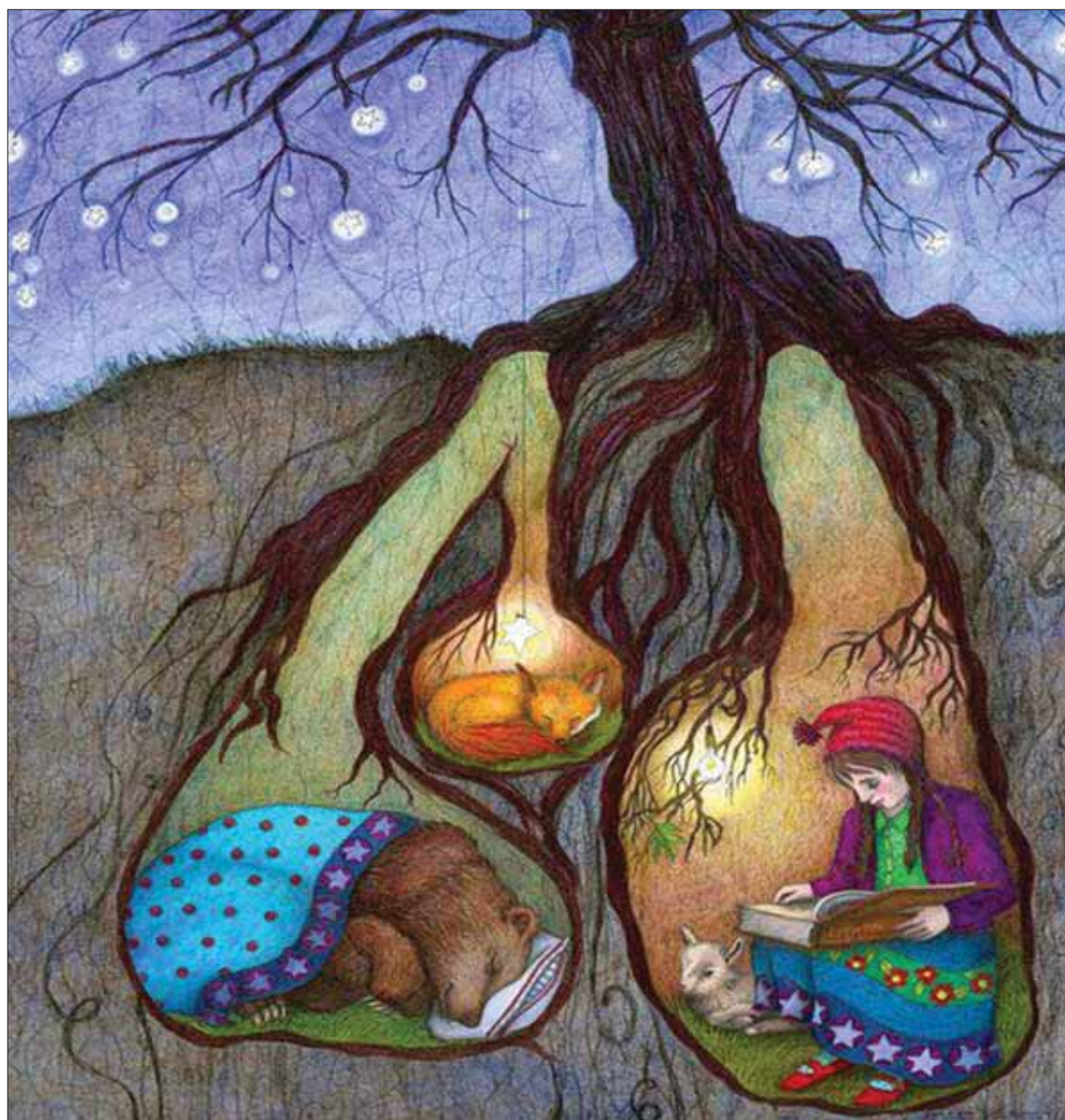


the celtic connection

ISSUE 28 VOLUME 1

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DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019



COVER illustration by artist Jessica Boehman.

Winter: A time of kindness, love, rebirth, peace and unburdening

By BRIGITANNA MCNEILL

We are approaching the threshold of winter.

Life is being drawn into the earth, painlessly descending down into the very heart of herself.

And we as natural human animals are being called to do the same, the pull to descend into our bodies, into sleep, darkness and the depths of our own inner caves continually tugging at our marrow.

But many find the descent into their own body a scary thing indeed, fearing the unmet emotions and past events that they have stored in the dark caves inside themselves, not wanting to face what they have so carefully and unkindly avoided.

This winter solstice time is no longer celebrated as it once was, with the understanding that this period of descent into our own darkness was so necessary in order to find our light.

That true freedom comes from accept-

ing with forgiveness and love what we have been through and vanquishing the hold it has on us, bringing the golden treasure back from the cave of our darker depths.

This is a time of rest and deep reflection, a time to wipe the slate clean as it were and clear out the old so you can walk into spring feeling ready to grow and skip without a dusty mountain on your back and chains around your ankles tied to the caves in your soul.

A time for the medicine of story, of fire, of nourishment and love.

A period of reconnecting, relearning and reclaiming of what this time means brings winter back to a time of kindness, love, rebirth, peace and unburdening instead of a time of dread, fear, depression and avoidance.

This modern culture teaches avoidance at a max at this time: alcohol, lights, shopping, overworking, over-spending, bad food and consumerism.

And yet, the natural tug to go inwards

as nearly all creatures are doing is strong and people are left feeling as if there is something wrong with them, that winter is cruel and leaves them feeling abandoned and afraid.

Whereas, in actual fact winter is so kind. Yes, she points us in her quiet soft way towards our inner self, towards the darkness and potential death of what we were, but this journey if held with care is essential.

She is like a strong teacher that asks you to awaken your inner loving elder or therapist, holding yourself with awareness of forgiveness and allowing yourself to grieve, to cry, rage, laugh, and face what we need to face in order to be freed from the jagged bonds we wrapped around our hearts – in order to reach a place of healing and light without going into overwhelm.

Winter takes away the distractions, the noise and presents us with the perfect time to rest and withdraw into a womb like love, bringing fire and light to our hearth.



BRITISH Prime Minister Theresa May promised to heal her country's Brexit-inflicted rifts. Instead, her deal with the European Union brought them all to life. After a series of crushing defeats, can her government survive a crucial Brexit vote on Tuesday, December 11? [Read more on pages 10 & 11]

Also Inside This Issue

- Celebrating Robert Burns, Scotland's National Bard
- A retrospective on 20 years with the Irish Women's Network of BC by Mary Hatch
- New Irish immigrants making positive contributions to Canada by Meadhbh Monaghan

IRELAND'S 18th Ambassador to the United States, Dan Mulhall, was in Seattle, WA, on December 6-8. His public events included a speech at Seattle University hosted by the University's Institute of Public Service; a talk at a business breakfast hosted by Irish Network Seattle; and he attended an Irish seniors' luncheon where he was greeted by about 180 attendees.

[Read more on pages 28 & 29]



WIN A FREE GIFT BASKET OR A FREE CD

You could win an 'Irish Fry Up' basket with all the fixin's for an Irish Breakfast from Black Pudding Imports in Langley. Check out their weekly sales on Facebook. (See page 7 for more info). Mark your entry Black Pudding and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by January 7.

You could win Lori Pappajohn's newest CD, *Call of the Sea*, (See page 9 for CD review). Mark your entry CD and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by January 7.

Watch our upcoming February issue for a chance to win free tickets to the John Cleese show. See page 3 for details. All entries by E-mail only to: cbutler@telus.net (Only one entry per person).

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CATHOLINE Butler and Colleen Carpenter in December 2017 working on distribution of our combined winter issue last year.

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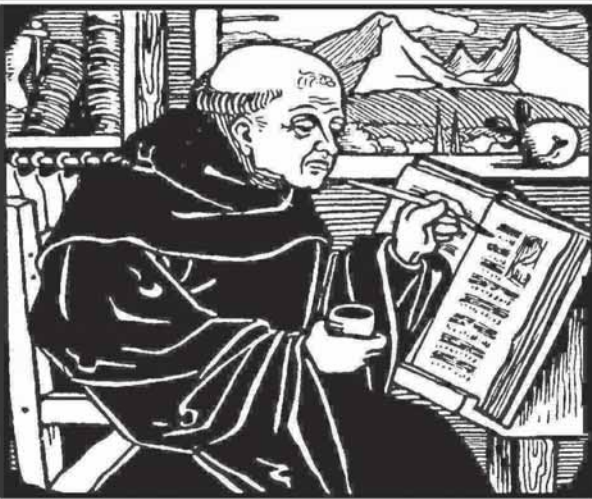
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Why rehab for Christmas? Recovery from addiction is a gift

VANCOUVER – At first, the thought of spending the holidays away from family can be daunting – but for those struggling with drugs or alcohol, it can be the safest place to be.

Many people opt to put off going to treatment until after the holidays, making it a New Year's resolution to quit.

But the holidays can prove challenging for a number of reasons; firstly, the culture of the holiday season includes a lot of indulgence and drinking.

Additionally, the holidays can prove to be tough emotionally for a lot of people. There's an expectation of perfection – that everyone is going to have a picture perfect family holiday.

People suffering from grief and loss or facing any kind of emotional challenges can also find the holidays to be difficult.

"If your coping mechanism is to reach for alcohol or reach for a drug, then that intensifies at this time of year," says Lorinda Strang, Orchard Recovery's executive director. "You can get yourself into even more trouble."

The holiday season can also prove stressful for the families and friends of those struggling with addiction.



"What we have found from the people who actually do come in to treatment is it's such a relief to the other family members," says Strang.

"Addiction is a disease of denial. Often you think you're fooling everybody. You think that everybody else doesn't see it; whereas in actual fact, everybody else does see that there's a problem."

Family members can find themselves walking on egg shells, worried about how their loved one is going to behave, and whether he or she is going to show up at family gatherings at all, or if there is going to be some kind of catastrophe.

"If you go into treatment, then you're safe," says Strang. "Your family knows that you're safe, and everyone now

has hope. You're providing your family and yourself with peace of mind."

Ultimately, it would serve anyone struggling with substance use to get away from the "I can't be away for Christmas, I'll get sober for my New Year's resolution" mentality.

There is an inherent value in actually starting the new year already sober.

The holidays are a time of year when substance use can be at its highest so being in the safe, supportive environment of a recovery center is a great way to practice sober living and develop the tools for surviving future celebrations, Christmas and beyond.

Resources: If you are struggling with addiction or your recovery, consider celebrating the holidays at Orchard Recovery, where you'll be in a tranquil, beautiful setting surrounded by people who want to help. <https://orchardrecovery.com>.

If going into treatment is not an option for you this holiday season but you are in need of support, please use these resources and attend as many AA or NA meetings as you need to get you through the holidays sober: <https://www.vancouveraa.ca> – <https://www.bcyukonaa.org> – <http://www.bcrna.ca>.



Celebrating Robbie Burns

Thursday - January 24, 2019 at 7:00pm

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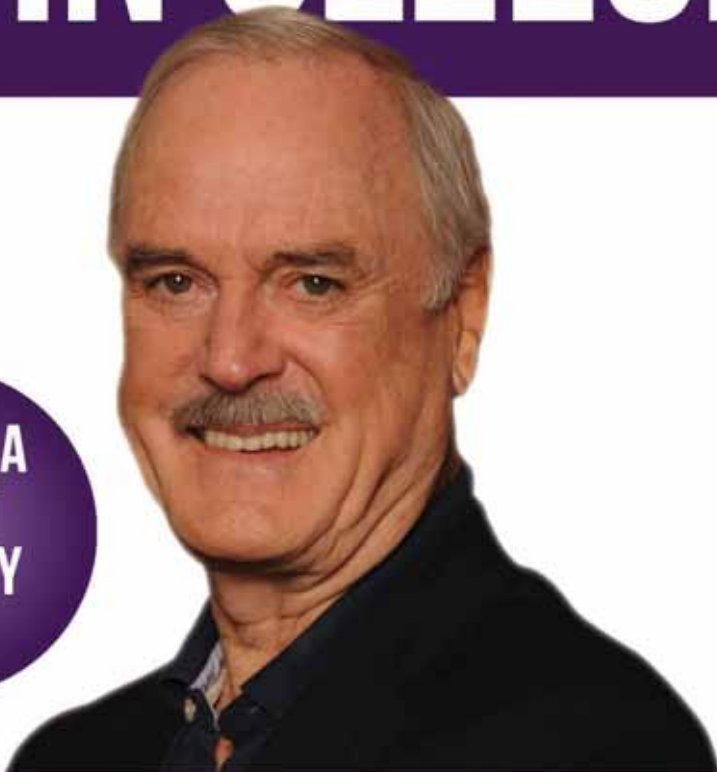
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Reflections on a great year...and looking forward to another in 2019

VANCOUVER – I can't believe that 2018 is almost over! December already! Soon be time for wassailing and gift exchanging and festive gatherings.

And year-end lists, and a time for reflection on what we've achieved – and what – and who – we have lost along the way.

I've witnessed some incredible music this year, both at **The Rogue** and around town and beyond.

One of my main highlights of 2018 was The Rogue's **Fiddle Festival – The Driven Bow** – which made a hugely successful debut in February.

Thanks to a grant from Creative BC we were able to stage three concerts and six participatory workshops, all featuring B.C. bands led by amazing fiddle players: **Locarno** (Kalissa Landa), **Metis Dance Project** (Kathleen Nisbet), **Daniel Lapp**, **Early Spirit** (Gabriel Dubreuil), **Jocelyn Pettit**, and **Mad Pudding** (Cam Wilson).

Unfortunately, one of the stipulations of that grant was that Creative BC would not fund a second year, so in 2019 the scope of the event will expand to include concerts by Louisiana's **The Revelers**, Cape Breton's **Ashley MacIsaac**, and (to be confirmed) Quebec bands **Genticorum** and **De Temps Antan**.

Mercurial fiddler Ashley MacIsaac will perform a very rare set as an acoustic duo with the brilliant Victoria guitarist **Quinn Bachand** (celebrating the tenth anniversary of their first tour together!).

Quinn will also play a set with his sister, **Oristina**, who is another excellent fiddler and a fine singer too. The festival will take place **February 9-11** at St. James Hall. Full details on www.roguefolk.com.

In February we also presented two shows in a day with Donegal legends **Altan**, who were in brilliant form in support of their latest CD *The Gap Of Dreams*.

A few days later, Margaret and I took the train to Portland to see **Altan** in a remarkable double-bill with **Lunasa**, who also released a great CD in 2018 – *Cas* (which features vocals for the first time). Guest singers **Natalie Merchant**, **Tim O'Brien**, **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, **Daoiri Farrell**, and **Eric Bibb**.

You can see **Lunasa** – sans vocals – at West Vancouver's Kay Meek Theatre on **March 26, 2019**.

Over the next few months, we had spectacular shows from Canada's **StepCrew**, English guitar wizard **Martin Simpson**, Scots guitar maestro **Tony McManus**, B.C. fiddler extraordinaire **Kierah**, Nova Scotia's **Laura Smith** and **Madison Violet**, Welsh singer **Martyn Joseph**, and the amazing fiddle/cello duo **Alasdair Fraser & Natalie Haas**.

Outdoor festivals in Jericho Park (**Vancouver Folk Music Festival**), Fraser River Heritage Park (**Mission Folk Festival**), Maillardville (**Festival du Bois**), and Granville Island (**RogueFEST**) also had some truly memorable performances from a wide range of musical styles and musicians from all over the world.

ROGUE FOLK CLUB



By
**STEVE
EDGE**

We are very lucky to live in a place that is on everyone's list of favourite destinations!

Our trip to the **Edmonton Folk Music Festival** in August was marred by appalling weather (everything from extreme heat to dense smoke to cold rain), but the music won through as usual, with great performances by the likes of **Sharon Shannon**, **Mairtin O'Connor**, **Iarla O'Lionaird**, **Breabach**, **The StepCrew**, and **Martin Simpson's** incredible workshops!

Unfortunately I couldn't make it to Cape Breton for **Celtic Colours** this year, but caught a few of their Live Stream shows before heading over to St. James Hall for some stunning concerts by the likes of Galway's **We Banjo 3**, Nashville's **Claire Lynch** (with a hot Canadian trio backing her up), **The Fretless**, and **Guy Davis** – all during the Celtic Colours' week!

Following that, we had **The East Pointers** (PEI), **The Once** (Nfld), **Irish Mythen** (from Wicklow, via PEI), and a memorable CD launch from **Early Spirit**.

It's been a great year at **The Rogue!** And we show no signs of easing off in 2019, either!

Meanwhile, we present the return of Portland Old Time/Old Country duo **Caleb Klauder** and **Reeb Willms** on Thursday, December 13 at St. James.

They are half of the wonderful **Foghorn Stringband** and have released two CDs as a duo as well.

Tickets are available at **Highlife Records** and **Tapestry Music** and also on www.roguefolk.com.

Our annual celebration of the season – **Van Django's Cool Yule** – takes place the following evening (Friday 14) when the amazing gypsy jazz quartet are joined by chanteuse **L.J. Mounteney** (who starred in the re-

cent *White Album Revisited* show), and harmonica wizard **Keith Bennett**.

Tickets are going fast, so I'd recommend that you purchase yours ASAP at **Highlife** or **Tapestry** or www.roguefolk.com.

In January 2019 we have some stirring trad music from Swedish quintet **Sver** (16th), the irrepressible wit of **Loudon Wainwright III** (24th), and Nova Scotia backwoodsman/banjoist/songwriter **Old Man Luedecke** (28th).

February 1st sees the return of **Sarah MacDougall** (BC/Sweden/Yukon songwriter extraordinaire), and then **The Driven Bow Fiddle Festival** with **The Revelers** on Feb 9, **Ashley MacIsaac** and **Quinn & Oristina Bachand** (10th), and **Genticorum & De Temps Antan** (11th).

Ontario's hugely entertaining songwriter **Danny Michel** returns on Feb 20th, and Cape Breton quartet **Coig** come back to The Rogue with a brand new CD on March 9.

There's a mouthwatering bluegrass double bill on March 10 with **Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen** and dobro master **Rob Ickes** with guitarist **Trey Hensley**, then the Celtic 'supergroup' **Imar** makes its Vancouver debut at The Rogue on March 20.

Loads more shows to be announced. Check out the full concert schedule on www.roguefolk.com.

We lost some wonderful musicians in 2018, including Irish piper **Liam O'Flynn**, Donegal fiddler **Tommy Peoples**, De Dannan's bouzouki master **Alec Finn**, Fairport multi-instrumentalist **Maartin Allcock**, English singer **Roy Bailey**, blues legend **Otis Rush**, gospel singer **Terry Evans**, South African trumpet player **Hugh Masekela**, Jefferson Airplane's **Marty Balin**, Rogue volunteer **Mary Bentley**, and renowned scientist **Stephen Hawking**.

May their memories stay with us through their music and/or their inspiration.

Here are few recommendations for CDs for the Celtic music lover on your Christmas gift list:

• Scots bands **Old Blind Dogs** (*Room With A View*), **Tannahill Weavers** (*Orach: 50th Anniversary Special*), and **Talisk** (*Beyond*);

[Continued next page]

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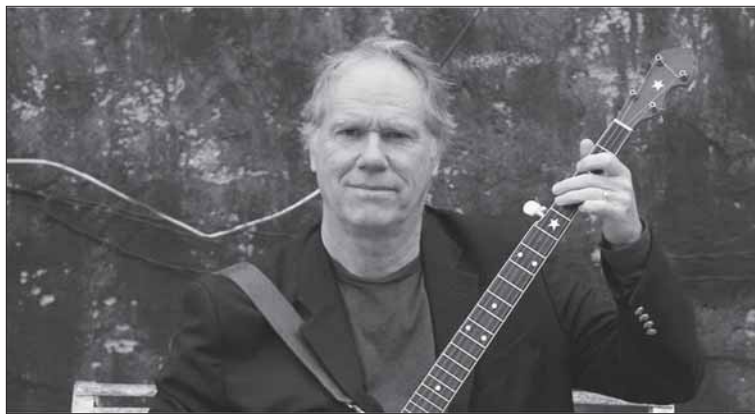
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THE ROGUE Folk Club annual celebration of the season – Van Django's Cool Yule is at St. James Hall on Friday, December 14.



FOLK LEGEND Loudon Wainwright III brings his irrepressible wit to The Rogue on Thursday, January 24.

[Continued from page 4]

• **Imar's** second CD *Avalanche* is another one hot off the press, as is **Early Spirit's** debut *Unrelated*;

• The collaboration between Quebec bands **Le Vent Du Nord** and **De Temps Antan** (*Notre Album Solo*) has just come out, and is amazing!;

• **Kevin Burke** (ex Bothy Band, Open House) recently launched *An Evening With Kevin Burke: Tunes and Stories*, which showcases his dexterity on the fiddle, skill as a raconteur, and his truly unique accent;

• If you haven't already found these 2018 releases, I reckon they are well worth hunting down as well: **Lunasa** (*Cas*), **Altan** (*The Gap Of Dreams*), **Mike McGoldrick & Dezi Donnelly** (*Dog In The Fog*), **Fear Of Drinking**



THE SWEDISH trad quintet Sver play The Rogue on January 16.

(*Live In Zurich*), **Maeve MacKinnon** (*Stri*), **Julie Fowlis** (*Alterum*), **Luka Bloom** (*Refuge*), and **The Fretless** (*Live From The Art Farm*).

We have some **2019 Rogue Folk Calendars** available at our shows and also at our Granville Island office (1504 Duranleau Street, above Theatre

Sports near the entrance to the 'island'. Call us on (604) 732-1305 first, to ensure there is someone here before you venture down!)

The calendars include over 40 colour photos of performers at Rogue gigs in 2018 – taken by yours truly. The price is \$20.

You might also like to purchase a **Rogue gift certificate** in any amount, a **Rogue membership** (\$30 individual, or \$50 family) and/or **Parcel O'Rogues** (\$179), or tickets to our 2019 concerts. These are all on sale on our website, at all Rogue concerts, and also on demand at our Granville Island office.

You can hear much of the music from these albums on my radio show, *The Saturday Edge On Folk*, every Saturday from 8 AM to noon on CiTR fm 101.9 in Vancouver and www.citr.ca everywhere. Tune in for the following special editions:

- December 15 – Steve's Best of 2018;
- December 22 – My annual Christmas Special;
- December 29 and January 5 – To be announced. (Could be a remote broadcast from the South Pacific, or more likely guest host Paul Norton in the chair!)
- I'll be back for the January 12 show.

Meanwhile, here's wishing you all the very best for the Solstice / Christmas / Hanukkah / Kwanzaa or whatever else you celebrate at this festive time of year. *Wassail!*

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A visit to Mahony and Sons is to taste the Emerald Isle

By LIA HART

VANCOUVER – I'm lucky enough to have had a storytelling Irish immigrant great-uncle, whose image I remember as sitting on the porch smoking a pipe.

During my years at the University of B.C., I found a refuge in Mahony and Sons restaurant on campus.

In hindsight, it was probably a series of details within the family's three running restaurants that continue to both comfort and attract me – the Irish oak interior, the Mondrian-style stained glass, the painted murals – especially prominent at the Stamps Landing location – and the quotation honouring the salmon.

Or, maybe it's the history and heritage that's kept alive through a small display of artifacts and photos in the restaurants.

The presence of history is alive in each location like no other I've ever seen in this city. History and heritage, in combination with a family's story of exile, yet continued success in business is what the Mahonys stand for.

Truth and value in their Irish roots gives authenticity and bravery to the telling of their struggle for cultural continuance from 1811, despite deportation to Australia for supposed pickpocketing and war.

Mahony and Sons stays true to an identity formed next to the ocean – a world where camaraderie over football goes alongside a hearty meal.

This Irish, or one might say Irish-Canadian restaurant brings with her Irish sons spirit- language, food stuffs, award winning bangers and mash, potato soup, and an Irish take on poutine, among other comforts of a land so many miles from Vancouver.

A fusion food between Irish and multi-



THE UNIVERSITY of British Columbia campus location was the first Mahony & Sons restaurant launched in Vancouver in 2006.



MAHONY & SONS Burrard Landing located overlooking Coal Harbour and Stanley Park, features exquisite Celtic artwork on the ceilings and magnificent woodwork throughout.

cultural Canadian eats makes Mahony and Sons a popular place for any soul.

Taking the effort to include local fresh ingredients like Salt Spring Island mussels and dim sum – as well as honouring local talent such as that of

chocolatier Greg Hook makes Mahony and Sons unique.

Mahony and Sons has proven their adaptability to Canadian food culture, while hanging onto the heritage they so obviously treasure.

Shane MacGowan is married at wedding ceremony in Copenhagen

DUBLIN – The Pogues front man and his long-term love Victoria Mary Clarke tied the knot on November 26 in a ceremony attended by their closest family and friends – including Hollywood actor and close pal of the groom Johnny Depp.

The couple, who go back 32 years, said "I do" in a private celebration in Copenhagen City Hall after revealing just days earlier that they were to be wed after an 11-year engagement.

The beaming bride stunned in a long sleeved V-neck red dress by Bella Freud London, after previously revealing that she would be forgoing the traditional 'big white dress' on the day.

She finished her look off with a fresh flower crown which featured festive-feel red berries and carried a hand-tied bouquet of berries, roses and green foliage.

Groom Shane donned a black suit jacket, navy tie and trousers, topped off with a black trilby hat.

Matching the groom's headwear was gothic-clad *Pirates of the Caribbean* star Johnny Depp, whom the bride revealed would be performing at the low key nuptials.

Depp looked in flying form, mingling with guests and sharing an embrace with both the bride and groom as they posed for formal photos.



SHANE MacGowan and his longtime love Victoria Mary Clarke tied the knot in a ceremony attended by close friends and family, including Hollywood actor Johnny Depp, on November 26.

Clarke had earlier revealed that during her 11-year engagement she has discovered something special about weddings.

"People really, really want to show that they love the people that they care about. And no matter how awkward or introverted you are, the love that they have for you finds a way to smash through the walls that you put up. And when it happens, it is a magnificent thing."

In her pre-wedding portrait, Clarke revisited her first meeting with her now husband, explaining that she was "awe-struck" by him.

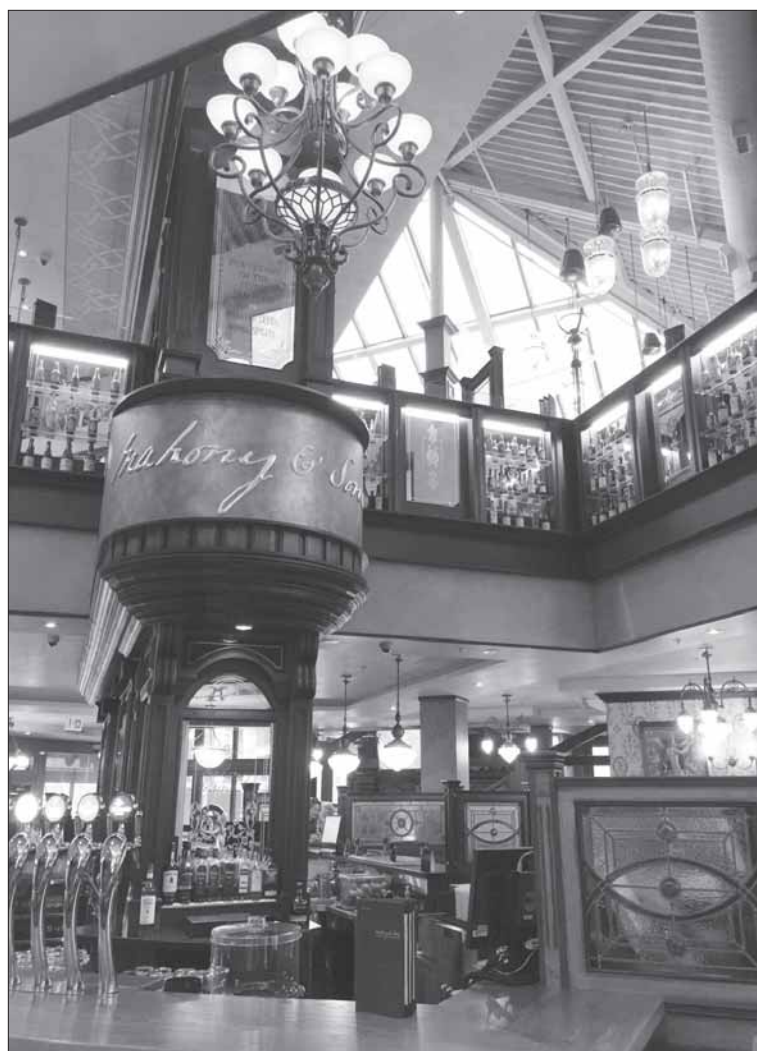
"I became consumed by the thought of him. He says that he felt the same

way, that we were destined to be together.

"But ours were not to be easy, uncomplicated lives and ours was not to be an uncomplicated love affair.

"There have been times when you have wished each other dead – you see each other as flawed, nasty, fragile, maybe even hideous.

"But when you get there, if you still look into each other's eyes and laugh at the sheer joy of each other's existing; if you still see each other's faces and know that these are the most beautiful faces that you have ever seen and know that this person is the one you would chase to hell and back, then I think you are on the right track."



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Big Winner at The Wolf & Hound: Session Music and Roast Beef Dinner

By CATHOLINE BUTLER

VANCOUVER – Irish music sessions and roast beef Sunday dinner is proving to be a big winner at the Wolf & Hound Irish Pub on West Broadway.

Owner Brian Dsouza said, “The Irish sessions are going phenomenal, the customers are bringing new customers in. I think that’s what is missing in this city, people really want more live music.

“The roast beef dinners are just the perfect combination” said Brian, “and we have added a dollar off Guinness, Harp, Kilkenny and Magners pints...so this is a win-win for everybody.”

He said, “It’s always difficult to add more live music, but when you see the participation from the customers, so many enjoying and relating to it, there’s a feeling of belonging and we are very happy to have it here. It’s a home away from home for people.”

For Christmas, The Wolf & House will once again have carol singing on December 18, at 7 PM.

On New Year’s Eve, at 4 PM (PST), to coincide with New Year’s Eve in Europe, The Wolf & Hound will again show the big ball drop in England.

Brian said, “This is very popular every year with so many away from home.”

Later in the evening, he said, “we are very lucky to have the group Lucky Pennies playing for our New Year’s Eve.

“We will not have a cover charge on New Year’s Eve and will offer a drink and food special. Everyone is invited to bring in 2019 at the Wolf & Hound.”



WOLF & HOUND owners Brian Dsouza and Chandrahaas Pathak.



LIVE Irish music sessions have been a big draw on Sunday nights. Pictured above (far left) popular local fiddle player Mary Brunner and bodhran maestro Blake Williams (centre).

The Wolf & Hound is located at 3617 West Broadway (between Dunbar and Alma) in Vancouver. For more information, call (604) 738-8909, or online at: www.wolfandhound.ca.

Black Pudding Imports: Stocked up and ready for the Christmas holidays

By CATHOLINE BUTLER

LANGLEY, BC – Greg Bowles and Linda Hazelton have been in business for almost 20 years in Langley. They moved shops a couple of times when the merchandise simply outgrew the store.

Greg Bowles spoke about some of the new products in the store this year saying, “We have just received plaice and cod fillets from Ireland and they are really delicious. So many of our customers kept asking us for plaice fish.”

For Christmas, Black Pudding has ordered some old favourites such as Marks and Spencer cakes, Thorntons toffee, Macsweens haggis and Caledonian haggis from Scotland.

With Robert Burns celebrations on the horizon, Greg said, “We have tons of haggis, along with Cadbury selection boxes and chocolates, Harris tweed hats, caps and bags from Scotland.”

He added, “we’re also getting in some unique handmade bags from Scotland with Pictish designs on them.”

In addition, they also have Hanna hats and caps coming from Ireland and they have just received Irish white pudding and Irish sausages which are really selling very well.

There are lots of gift items, souvenirs and footballs and other soccer paraphernalia for the sports fan on your list at Black Pudding.



LINDA Hazelton and Greg Bowles of Black Pudding Imports have steadily built a thriving business in Langley over 20 years.



Give yourself plenty of time to look around. There are nice wide aisles in the store with lots of items to choose from for the holidays.

Black Puddings Imports is located at #107 - 20353 - 64th Avenue, Langley, B.C. For more information, call (604) 532-1223 or check out online at: www.blackpudding.ca.



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MICHAEL PRATT who owns and manages the Celtic Traditions is also a talented musician. Along with Celtic merchandise, Celtic Traditions also features a music room with lessons available on various instruments.

Celtic Traditions: Everything Celtic...from sweaters to jewellery

By CATHOLINE BUTLER
VANCOUVER – Celtic Traditions on West 10th Avenue in the Kitsilano area of Vancouver is known as the sweater shop for their distinctive quality and design wool products from Scotland and Ireland....but really they offer so much more.

Owner Michael Pratt was born in England but his mother and father are both from Ireland. He frequently travels back and forth to Ireland to visit relatives and on buying trips for the store.

Pratt is also a fiddle player and within the store are music rooms to teach fiddle, harp, whistle, bodhran, concertina and voice lessons.

Speaking about some of the merchandise he stocks, he said, "This year I have some beautiful lightweight wool scarves from Mucros Weavers.

"Also new this year are merino cashmere blankets – beautiful soft wool in a herringbone design.

"I have lots of Aran fisherman knit sweaters and Fair Isle sweaters from Scotland, especially on the women's side.

"My Aran sweaters are from Galway and the Scottish ones are from Harley in Aberdeen. Our sweaters come in all sizes and weights – light, medium and heavy weights.

"We also have some beautiful wool and mohair throws and capes and lots of silver Claddagh rings, pendants and earrings. Actually, I have a great selection of everything Celtic."

Celtic Traditions is located at 3721 West 10th Avenue in Vancouver. For more information, call (604) 222-2299 or visit online at www.celtictraditions.ca.



BRIAN HARDING at Tapestry Music demonstrates some of the most popular instruments for Christmas gifts.

Tapestry Music: Your one-stop music store for all age groups

By CATHOLINE BUTLER
VANCOUVER – Tapestry Music on West Broadway is a one-stop store for all your music needs, whether it's for instruments, music lessons, repair services, school band rentals, or sound system rentals.

The knowledgeable staff will help you select the correct musical instrument for all age groups on your holiday list.

There are also music lessons and gift

cards for that aspiring musician with lessons in violin, guitar, banjo, ukelele, drums and woodwind instruments to name a few.

Brian Harding at Tapestry Music spoke to me about what are some of the most popular Christmas instruments.

"The ukelele is still very popular, we have them in sizes ranging from soprano to baritone, and also a little baby size ukelele.

New location for the hugely popular Celtic Creations in North Vancouver

By CATHOLINE BUTLER
NORTH VANCOUVER – Celtic Creations has moved to a new location in North Vancouver at 21 Lonsdale Avenue on the southwest corner of Lonsdale and Esplanade, across from the Pinnacle Hotel.

Cork-born Helen Ritchie is well-known in the Vancouver area and has been in business for the past 24 years.

Celtic Creations is mainly known for their Celtic gifts and goods but their first love is their beautiful Celtic jewellery and they carry an especially wide selection of Claddagh rings in silver and gold.

Keith Jack from Scotland designs beautiful Celtic jewellery for the store and his award-winning designs are known worldwide.

Helen Ritchie said, "Our new location is a flagship store for Keith Jack, so we have an incredible collection of his designs in stock.

"One of the hot items for men that we have in the store for Christmas are hats and scarves from Mucros Weavers in Killarney. But, for women, it's always our specialty jewellery."

Drop in to the new Celtic Creations location where you will receive a warm *fáilte* (welcome) and say hello to Helen Ritchie and Keith Jack. For more information, call (604) 903-8704, or visit online: celticcreations.ca.



HELEN RITCHIE and Keith Jack of Celtic Creations are proud to announce the opening of their new location at 21 Lonsdale Avenue in North Vancouver.

A whole array of Christmas gift ideas on offer at the Celtic Treasure Chest

By CATHOLINE BUTLER
VANCOUVER – Celtic Treasure Chest in the Dunbar area of Vancouver is a family owned and operated business.

This will be the third Christmas for the Coulson family at the Celtic Treasure Chest since becoming the proprietors and it was just by chance on the day I stopped by that the whole family was there.

As you enter the well merchandised store, the first thing to catch the visitor's eye are tables of delicious Christmas items.

"We also have a bass ukelele that is very popular with all age groups. Especially for children – particularly in the age group three to five. We have lessons for ukelele, strings and pretty much all the instruments."

Tapestry Music also has experienced music educators who teach everything from violin, cello, double bass, all the brass instruments – trumpet, trombone – woodwinds, guitar and banjo.

They offer gift cards which can be used for any item in the shop, including music lessons.

The violin and piano are good instruments for small children to start learning since they come in smaller sizes which is really good for young children to handle.

There are three Tapestry Music store locations: **Vancouver** – 3607 West Broadway – call (604) 736-3036; **White Rock** – 1335 Johnston Road – call (604) 538-0906; **Victoria** – 828 Fort Street – call (250) 590-0752. For more information, check out: tapestrymusic.com.



THE COULSON FAMILY own and operate Celtic Treasure Chest in Dunbar. (L-R) Lalla, Cristina, Gianluca, and Stephen Coulson.

Stephen Coulson said many holiday items have already been received from overseas with many others en route.

"We have all the fixin's for the traditional U.K. breakfast including black and white pudding and specialty bacons and sausages.

"We have a baker in Richmond who is Scottish trained and supplies us with all the traditional meat and chicken pies. We also have a very nice spicy curry meat pie."

Stephen then laughed as he told me a great story.

"Speaking about curry, my uncle was a salesman and he used to travel all over the place. On one of his trips when he was staying in Bombay, he went down to the concierge and asked if there was a good place to get curry. Without batting an eye, the concierge replied... 'Yes, in London'."

Continuing, he said, "We will be getting the little mince pies and the Mr. Kipling's mince pies and the Battenburg cakes shortly.

"We already have quite a variety of puddings and cakes from small right up to the two pounders.

"New this year is our Guinness fruit pudding. We also have Cloutie pudding and, of course, the ever popular, Scottish shortbread cookies."

Celtic Treasure Chest offers a whole array of gift ideas, including *Harry Potter*, *Game of Thrones*, and some doormats that are quite amusing. One with a quote from the *Lord of the Rings*, reads 'You Shall Not Pass'.

Celtic Treasure Chest is located at 5639 Dunbar Street in Vancouver. For more information, call (604) 261-3688, or check online at: celtictreasurechest.com.

MUSIC REVIEW

Reviewed
by Catholine Butler

LORI PAPPAGJOHN *Call of the Sea*

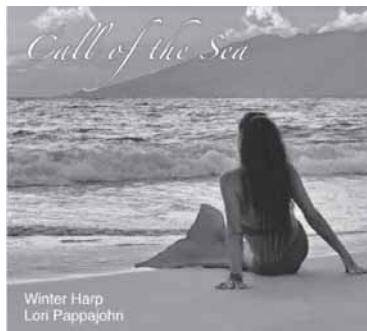
Fans usually associate singer and musician Pappajohn with the music of Winter Harp and she continues to present her wonderful annual Christmas concert series but her new CD, *Call of the Sea*, is a departure from her usual style.

This CD features a collection of songs about sea sirens and sailors. Some of these sea maidens are whimsical and fun, while others are treacherous and haunting.

What we may not know about Lori Pappajohn is that she is also a mermaid and is surprisingly and equally at home on both land and sea.

Her great joy is donning a monofin and diving deep into the mysterious watery-blue sea and swimming eye-to-eye with all the sea creatures.

She is a professional mermaid with her own company – Mermaids International – and has been featured on *Good Morning America* and *The Rick Mercer Report*.



Her new CD *Call of the Sea* features Lori's mesmerizing singing voice accompanied by harps, flutes, fiddle, cello, percussion, and guitar.

She takes inspiration from poets Thomas Moore, Lord Alfred Tennyson, Shakespeare, and Walter de la Mare in creating the lyrics for her Celtic-styled songs.

This is a seductive journey into the watery-blue world of the mysterious rolling sea. Featured tracks include: *The Hidden Cove*; *A Sailor's Life*; *I Will Search for Her*; *Origin of the Harp*; *The Mermaid*; *I Had a Love*; *Lisdoonvarna*; *The Merman*; *The Lass and Her Sailors*; *To Drive the Sailors Mad*; *Are Ye Sleeping Maggie?*; *Sam*; *The Siren*.

In a world increasingly noisy, Pappajohn takes us under the rolling sea that becomes calmer the further you venture and as she says, "there is nothing like swimming in the turquoise blue waters of the tropics. It is pure magic."

"You are truly in another world and one never wants to return to the surface again. Swimming with a monofin is very demanding. The fin is large and moves a lot of water, so you can dive deep very quickly."

"Diving through the corals and swimming with the wild creatures truly takes one into another dimension – dimension of mystery and surprise."

This is the fourteenth album Lori has produced under the Winter Harp label.



Mary's British Home Store in Langley all ready for Christmas

By CATHOLINE BUTLER

LANGLEY – Birmingham, England-born, Mary Carter is the proud owner of Mary's British Home Store in Langley.

In business for over 39 years, Mary's British Home Store was a destination in Steveston Village in Richmond before moving to Langley last year.

Shortly after opening the new shop in Langley, *The Celtic Connection* dropped in for a visit and shelves were just getting stocked and the new outside sign hadn't even arrived yet.

This year the sign is up and prominently displayed outside, shelves are fully stocked and many Christmas items are already in with more on the way.

Store manager Bernie Blake, who hails from County Meath in Ireland, spoke about the U.K. products already in and on the shelves.

"We have just received our shipment of haggis for Hogmanay and Robbie Burns celebrations and it is also a great stuffing for poultry."

"Along with the sausages, specialty bacons and cheeses, we also have a lot of items for gift giving such as football items, jams, preserves, specialty biscuits and chocolates,



STORE manager Bernie Blake holds a haggis sample as she discusses the products available.

including the Cadbury Selection boxes.

"We already have our Christmas cakes and puddings in, and Mr. Kipling items with the Battenburg cakes are expected shortly."

"Our baker in Richmond is making our mince meat tarts...he made them for us last year and he's wonderful."

Visit Mary's British Home Store in Langley at 20435 Fraser Highway at the intersection of Glover Road. For more information, call (604) 427-0368.



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TOP 10 CELTIC HITS FOR DECEMBER

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

www.worldbeatcanada.com.

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>Step Up</i> by Afro Celt Sound System - <i>Flight</i> on ECC Records. | and Mash - <i>Quicksand Café</i> on independent. |
| 2. <i>Bi Bi Box</i> by Vishten - <i>Horizons</i> on independent. | 7. <i>The West Highland Line</i> by Dolphin Boy - <i>The Highland Swing</i> on Skye Records. |
| 3. <i>Pack It Up</i> by We Banjo 3 - <i>Haven</i> on independent. | 8. <i>Santy Ano</i> by Pat Chessell - <i>I Confess</i> on independent. |
| 4. <i>John Wallace</i> by The East Pointers - <i>What We Leave Behind</i> on independent. | 9. <i>Botany Bay</i> by Fear of Drinking - <i>Live in Zurich</i> on Big City. |
| 5. <i>Borderline</i> by Skerryvore - <i>Evo</i> on Tyree Records. | 10. <i>'S Trusaidh mi na Coilleagan</i> by Daimh - <i>The Rough Bounds</i> on Independent. |
| 6. <i>Summer in Dublin</i> by Bangers | |

Celt In A Twist - Pick Of The Month:
Afro Celt Sound System - Flight
(ECC Records)

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Black Humour Prevails Amid Warnings the Ship is Sinking

POSTCARD FROM LONDON



By
ELFYN
JONES

THE weather here today is what Scottish people call 'gey drieck'.

I don't know if that is the correct spelling, but it means bloody miserable.

The grey, dreary damp conditions suit the mood of the country; we are all depressed...sick to death of the word Brexit and the shameful self-seeking antics of our politicians.

According to Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, we are doomed....doomed!

In 10 years time our economy will be in the gutter, the Queen – if she is still alive – will be taking in washing to make ends meet, Prince Charles will have a market stall selling organic vegetables, and the rest of us will be scratching a living working for the Chinese.

It would be wonderful to find an enlightened leader who cares more for the good of the country than for their political party or personal ambition.

David Cameron, our previous prime minister, started this chaos simply to see off a challenge to his leadership from a faction in his own party and quell a threat from an ultra-right wing party called UKIP, whose sole raison d'être was to get the U.K. out of Europe.

After the debacle of the referendum, Cameron skipped off into the sunshine to count his money and write his memoirs hopefully entitled "How to Screw Up a Country."

Added to the Brexit fiasco, we have just had Black Friday.

Over the decades many wonderful things have crossed the Atlantic from the U.S.A., although apart from Marilyn Monroe I can't think of one at the moment, but Black Friday we could do without.

The run up to Christmas is, for independent retailers, the busiest and most profitable time of the year, so giving large discounts at a time when people are spending money buying gifts makes no economic sense to them.

I remember an American department store buyer telling me that he bought in bulk at discounted prices for these promotions.

The products are initially put on sale



THE pro-Brexit flotilla sailing down the River Thames may be headed for France in the near future if dire predictions by the Governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney are correct.

at an inflated price for a few weeks before the promotion, then drastically reduced for the promotion, still achieving a larger than normal mark up.

The way he put it was, "we are trying to fool all of the people all of the time."

Small retail stores cannot buy in bulk and in the U.K. we already have a problem because independent stores are struggling to survive.

The gift shop, clothes shop, butcher, greengrocer, baker, ironmonger etc. are disappearing from the centre of towns, all affected by the uncertainty of Brexit, high business rates, parking difficulties, and, of course, online shopping.

Consequently, our high streets are losing their individuality, the independents being replaced by charity shops, estate agents, or just lying empty.

In France, the small town centres are still where people shop and although the chain stores are there they sit alongside the independents, so the towns retain their charm and are busy.

Sale promotions are heavily regulated in France with official start and end dates set by the government, safeguarding the independents.

The latest news shows films of refugees currently camped outside Calais, now risking life and limb to cross the English Channel in little boats from France to start a new life in Britain.

They must know something we don't because if business carries on the way it's going there will be an armada going the other way.

Although, life is not quite all gloom and doom.

Wales won all four of their winter rugby Internationals, and most importantly we defeated the Wallabies, for the first time in years.

I think the last time we beat them Australia was a penal colony.

Ireland played simply marvellously and outplayed the All Blacks, tempting me to spend my life savings and go to Japan next year for the Rugby World Cup.

The worry is that if Mr. Carney from the Bank of England is correct, the pound will be worthless and I will not be able to afford a glass of sake, let alone a ticket to the Wales v Ireland final.

And finally, a news item from Scotland.

In Edinburgh the city council is considering banning silent discos because they are too noisy.

These events have become a craze with stag and hen parties where the revelers dance along the Royal Mile wearing headphones and all listening to the same music.

Councillor Jo Mowatt said, "silent discos are not silent because there is a lot of whooping and screaming, especially when you have 40 women on a hen party."

She added that they are dangerous because the dancers cannot hear approaching vehicles.

On the other hand, a witness remarked that the out-of-tune singing and the grunts of the dancers is great fun for the people watching.

On that silent note, I wish you a very Merry Christmas,

Elfyn.



A SILENT DISCO on Edinburgh's Royal Mile during the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Mark Carney's dire Brexit warnings earn the wrath of British politicians

LONDON – Mark Carney, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, rarely shies away from expressing strong opinions.

As Governor of the Bank of England, he is facing a backlash over a blunt Brexit analysis that has led to calls that he's hysterical, incompetent and a "failed, second-tier Canadian politician."

Carney has been under fire since the central bank released a detailed report on how Britain will fare after the country leaves the European Union on March 29.

The study examined several scenarios including the possibility of the country crashing out of the EU without any agreement on trade or other matters.

Under that scenario, the bank said that within five years Britain's economy would shrink by eight percent, house prices would fall by 30 percent, unemployment would nearly double to seven and a half percent, the pound would lose 25 percent of its value and inflation would soar to six and a half percent.

That's a far worse hit than the country experienced after the 2008 financial crisis.

"Our job is not to hope for the best but to prepare for the worst," Carney told reporters after releasing the assessment. "We have looked at a potential no-deal, no-transition Brexit... the reason we do that is to be prepared for all eventualities."

He went further, telling the BBC that British businesses were largely unprepared for a no-deal Brexit.

"Less than half of the businesses in the country have initiated their contingency plans for a no deal Brexit," he said, citing the bank's contacts with businesses and other surveys.

He stressed that the no-deal scenario was unlikely and that Britain's financial system could withstand the turmoil.

And he took pains to say that he wasn't advocating government policy but simply responding to a request for information from Parliament.

That did little to quell the criticism.

Several pro-Brexit members of Parliament attacked Carney for being hysterical, politicizing the central bank and seeking to undermine a hard Brexit.

"It is unusual for the Bank of England to talk down the pound and shows the governor's failure to understand his role. He is not there to create panic," said Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg.

"Unfortunately, he's a second-tier Canadian politician. Having failed in Canadian politics, he's got a job in the U.K., which he isn't doing well."

Another pro-Brexit Tory MP, Bernard Jenkin, said Carney had trashed the economy "as part of a propaganda exercise."

It wasn't just politicians piling on. Nobel Prize winning economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman also weighed in.

"I'm anti-Brexit, and have no doubt that it will make Britain poorer," Krugman said in a series of posts on



MARK CARNEY, the Governor of the Bank of England.

Twitter. "And the [Bank of England] could be right about the magnitude. But they've really gone pretty far out on a limb here – their bad-case losses from a no-deal Brexit look extremely high."

Krugman, who is based in New York, has been a critic of many of the dire economic forecasts surrounding Brexit, suggesting that economists' claims have been dubious.

Andrew Sentance, a former member of the bank's rate-setting monetary-policy committee, also criticized the report, calling it bogus and "highly speculative."

The report "will add to the view that the bank is getting unnecessarily involved in politics and that will further undermine perceptions of its independence and credibility," Sentance said on Twitter.

But the report won the backing of Prime Minister Theresa May, who has been scrambling to win support for a Brexit deal she has struck with the EU.

That agreement, which calls for a transition period and close economic ties to the bloc, will be put to a vote in the House of Commons on December 11, and so far few MPs expect it to pass.

May has argued that if MPs don't support her deal, the country risks the chaos of a no-deal Brexit, and she has cited the bank's report as evidence of what could happen.

This isn't the first time Carney has run into controversy over Brexit.

Just before the 2016 referendum on Britain's membership in the EU, he warned the country could fall into a technical recession if it left.

That prompted anger from many pro-Brexit Tories, who have since noted that the economy has performed better than expected since the vote.

Carney has refused to back down and defended the bank's analysis. "We have a responsibility to have the system ready for whatever happens," he told the BBC. "In order to do that we need to do this type of analysis."

He also has a bit more at stake personally in Brexit.

While he still holds Canadian citizenship, he recently became a British citizen as well. He told reporters that his new status hasn't made him any more or less comfortable about speaking out on important issues.

"I feel as comfortable as I've ever done talking about Brexit or any other issue facing the U.K.," he said.

Theresa May is the first British PM to be found in contempt as extraordinary scenes play out in House of Commons

LONDON – On Tuesday, December 11, Britain's House of Commons will vote on whether Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal should go ahead.

Given that May's Conservative party has no overall majority and too many of her own members of parliament are against it, she was already braced for defeat in that vote.

But after extraordinary scenes in the Commons on Tuesday, December 4, that likely defeat could also mean the end of her premiership.

In little more than an hour, the government suffered three defeats on its Brexit plans.

The first two were embarrassing enough: MPs voted that the government was in contempt of parliament, the first time that's ever happened in British history.

By refusing to publish in full the legal advice on the Brexit deal agreed with the European Union last month, ministers were found to have breached the sovereignty of parliament – and parliament has fought back and reasserted its control.

The third defeat, while more technical, was still hugely significant because it means that MPs from all parties can decide not only to reject May's deal but instruct the government on what to do next.

Until now, the prime minister has warned MPs that voting down her Brexit plans will mean a no-deal departure from the EU by default.

That scenario is relished by some hardline Brexiteers who want out of the EU at any cost. But it has spooked financial markets, businesses and the Bank of England, who have warned that it will come at a severe economic price to Britain.

But Tuesday's scenes made one thing clear: MPs are likely to use their newfound power to block a no-deal outcome. The hardest of all Brexits seems off the table.

After that, everything seems up for grabs. Proposals are already being put forward for a softer Brexit.

For example, Britain could adopt a model similar to Norway, which is not a member of the EU but pays for access to its single market.

The campaign for a second national referendum, or People's Vote, is gathering momentum – one that could lead to no Brexit at all.

But the likely defeat of the vote on December 11 could also see the opposition Labour party call for a vote of no confidence in the government. If May lost that vote, a general election could follow.

Labour says it is ready for another election – the second in less than two years.

Significantly, the Northern Irish DUP party, which has an agreement to support the Conservative minority government in order to keep it in power, has made clear it is also ready for an election.



THOUSANDS of Pro-EU protesters took part in a march in July, on the second anniversary of the Brexit vote. The People's Vote protest was calling for a second referendum on the UK's final deal. Organisers say more than 100,000 people attended the march last summer. Many now believe the December 4 amendment to give Parliament more power over the Brexit process could open the way for a second referendum.

"If I had banged the table, walked out of the room and delivered the very same deal that is before us today, some might say I had done a better job. But I didn't play to the gallery. Don't let anyone here think that there is a better deal to be won by shouting louder."

Its leader in Westminster, Nigel Dodds, said, "We will happily go to the electorate and put our views to the people if needs be."

The DUP opposes May's Brexit deal because it holds out the prospect of Northern Ireland operating on different regulatory and customs arrangements from the rest of the UK, in the event that future negotiations on a trade deal between London and Brussels collapse.

On Wednesday, December 4, when the government was forced to publish that legal advice in full, it became clear that under the "backstop" or insurance arrangement, the agreement would provide different EU regulatory and customs rules for Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK and be treated as a "third country" in terms of trade with England, Scotland and Wales.

Goods passing between Britain and Northern Ireland would have to undergo customs checks. The DUP, a staunchly unionist party, see this as effectively breaking up the union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Since taking over as prime minister from David Cameron in July 2016 after the turmoil of the Brexit vote, May has portrayed herself as a dutiful, businesslike leader acting in the national interest.

Despite several ministerial resignations and letters of no confidence from her MPs, the PM has been resilient in the face of such turbulence. Her aides have long insisted May is not the type to quit when the going gets tough.

Those around her are also fearful that if she were to resign, her successor

would be someone who wants a harder Brexit – such as Boris Johnson, the former foreign secretary, or backbench Euroskeptic Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg. She has much more to protect than her own reputation.

And yet, events in Parliament on December 4 may have changed those assumptions.

When the prime minister addressed the Commons minutes after those three bruising defeats, her tone was typically determined – but this time, her speech sounded more like a farewell address.

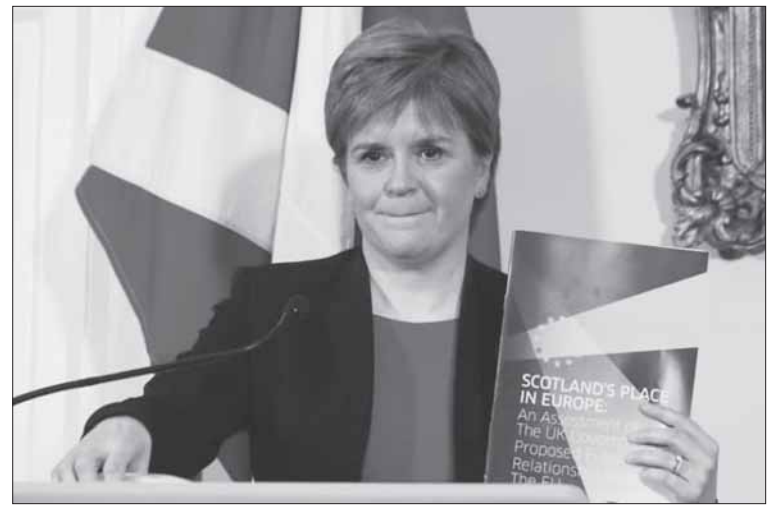
"I have spent nearly two years negotiating this deal," she said. "If I had banged the table, walked out of the room and delivered the very same deal that is before us today, some might say I had done a better job. But I didn't play to the gallery. Don't let anyone here think that there is a better deal to be won by shouting louder."

This is the heart of May's message to her own and opposition MPs – that there is no better deal to be done with Brussels.

After events in the Commons this week, MPs clearly think otherwise, and are likely to make their position clear on December 11.

A large-scale defeat would not only mean the end of May's Brexit plans, but it would amount to a loss of confidence in her premiership.

After her government has been held in contempt, and with such a crushing defeat on the most important policy of her premiership, it is hard to see how May would be able to remain in Downing Street.



SCOTTISH First Minister Nicola Sturgeon challenged Theresa May to a debate on the UK Government's Brexit proposals last month. She also met all opposition leaders at Westminster and said they were united in planning to vote down May's deal, but claimed the next step was to agree on an alternative.

Nicola Sturgeon travels to London in bid to force Brexit delay

EDINBURGH – Nicola Sturgeon has stepped up efforts to "postpone" Brexit in talks with Theresa May as the UK Government's agreement with the EU appears increasingly doomed to defeat in the House of Commons.

The Scottish first minister was in London seeking an "alternative way forward" for the country, with MPs expected to vote on delaying the Article 50 process that will take the UK out of the EU next March.

The prime minister is also facing a motion of no confidence in the event that her deal is rejected on December 11, Labour has said.

A defeat for May would prompt a general election. But Environment Secretary Michael Gove has insisted the government can win the Commons vote, despite scores of Tory MPs threatening to vote against it.

Sturgeon urged opposition parties in the Commons to use the parliamentary process to avoid both the current deal and the "cliff edge" no-deal scenario.

Nationalists will be among those who vote down the deal, but the SNP leader insists she also wants to see the "article 50" process under which the UK leaves the EU to be put back.

"The last week has been a watershed moment in the Brexit process," Sturgeon said ahead of the meeting.

"Having now finally published its own official analysis of the economic consequences of Brexit, the UK Government can no longer hide behind their own spin – it is clear that any kind of Brexit will make Scotland and the UK poorer."

"The reality is the best deal is remaining in the EU, which is exactly what the people of Scotland voted for."

"With so much at stake for people's jobs and living standards, it is vital that MPs come together to reject the PM's deal, to rule out a No Deal Brexit and to secure an extension to Article 50."

MSPs at the Scottish Parliament are expected to reject the prime minister's

"Having now finally published its own official analysis of the economic consequences of Brexit, the UK Government can no longer hide behind their own spin – it is clear that any kind of Brexit will make Scotland and the UK poorer."

Brexit proposals with the SNP, Labour, Liberal Democrats and Greens having agreed a joint motion which both rejects the current plan, but also rules out a no deal Brexit.

"I hope the Westminster Parliament will follow suit," the first minister added. "As soon as the prime minister's deal has been put to bed, all parties and MPs must come together to agree a better way forward."

Pro-remainers such as the SNP leader object that the deal will take the UK out of the EU single markets and customs union while Brexiteers also oppose the agreement struck last month arguing it give too many concessions to Brussels.

Gove has said the most difficult element of the deal was the Northern Ireland "backstop," intended to prevent the return of a hard border with the Republic.

Brexiteers have warned that it could see the UK tied to EU customs arrangements for years with no exit mechanism, while negotiations continue with Brussels on a trade deal.

But Gove insisted there was no incentive for the EU to prolong Britain's stay in the backstop.

Holiday Season Can't Come Soon Enough in Brexit Britain

By
HARRY
McGRATH



EDINBURGH – According to the Office of National Statistics, about 82,000 Canadians live in the UK.

The figure isn't that recent and in the last couple of years, would have been marginally affected by two high profile immigration cases in Scotland.

A Canadian family had to return to Calgary despite running a shop in Laggan in the Scottish Highlands and a Nova Scotian Gaelic teacher was denied a visa despite being the only applicant for a Gaelic-language teaching job on the Isle of Mull.

The Wikipedia list of notable Canadians living in the UK is also in need of updating.

It includes, for instance, a former student of mine who came to Scotland to play professional soccer but returned to Canada in 2004.

It also, however, cites one Canadian who has left his mark (pun intended) on British public life and still lives on this side of the Atlantic.

Mark Carney has been Governor of the Bank of England since 2013 having previously served in the same capacity for the Bank of Canada.

Last week, with scant regard for the season, Carney announced that, a no-deal Brexit could plunge Britain into its deepest recession since the 1930s.

The pound would plummet, the UK economy shrink by eight percent and house prices fall by a third.

Brexiters tend to have the same attitude as Donald Trump when it comes to 'experts'.

It wasn't long before leading Brexiteer Jacob Rees-Mogg (a kind of amalgam of various characters from P.G. Wodehouse) derided Carney as "a second tier Canadian politician who failed to get on in Canadian politics and then got a job in the UK."

This initiated a bout of head scratching among those of us who remember Carney as a banker and economist in Canada, but not as a politician. A quick Google search confirmed that Rees-Mogg had been economical with the truth.

The "failed politician" jibe carries a particular irony in Scotland where voters of a certain age remember Rees-Mogg's first foray into politics.

He stood for the Conservative Party in Central Fife in the 1997 general election and came third with nine percent of the vote.

And this despite having a nanny in at-



ONCE a thriving destination, the former home of Edinburgh's House of Fraser, now lies empty and forlorn.

tendance and touring the constituency in a Bentley (Rees-Mogg claims it was a Mercedes).

Needless to say, all of this has done little to enhance the festive atmosphere in the run up to Christmas.

In Edinburgh the ever-expanding Christmas market is doing its best to jingle over whatever doubts the locals have about Brexit, but even the market has seen its share of controversy this year.

Back in October 50 trees were felled in Princes Street Gardens, ostensibly to allow for landscaping work and an extension at the Scottish National Gallery.

The sight of Christmas stalls being erected on the cleared land sent the Twitter conspiracy brigade into overdrive.

Just west of the Christmas market, the grand building that was the source of so many Christmas presents in past years lies empty and forlorn.

Edinburgh's House of Fraser didn't survive the chain's takeover by Sports Direct and was picked clean back in September in a sale that included the mannequins and the shelving. We now await the inevitable office conversion.

It would be difficult to pin the House of Fraser closure on a yet-to-happen Brexit – Internet shopping and failure to move with the times are more likely explanations – but there are those who will see it as a symbol of Carney's possible future with more, and worse, to come.

So where can we look for holiday joy between forecasts of economic catastrophe and the prospect of not-so-splendid British isolation?

Family and friends would be an obvious place to start. We could all just *coorie in* (to use a good Scottish expression that is suddenly back in vogue) and hope that our Brexit troubles eventually pass.

Or I may head down to the Edinburgh Christmas market where I will try to drown out that Joni Mitchell song about trees and museums that is lodged in my head.

All kinds of good things are on offer there – Swedish Grogg, German Bratwurst, Italian Panettone, French crepe, Czech pilsner and so on – and folk have come from across Europe and elsewhere to share the holiday season with a city that voted 74 percent remain to 26 percent leave.

Withdrawing from the EU and the feeling of being European are not necessarily the same thing but they are starting to coalesce, at least in Scotland.

While I was writing this, the news broke of a senior adviser to the European court of justice averring that EU law allows a country to unilaterally revoke Article 50 which triggers Britain's EU departure notice.

He was responding to a cross party group of Scottish parliamentarians that launched a legal action last December. Hope springs eternal, as a famous Pope once said.

Happy Holidays everyone.

Robert Burns: The National Bard of Scotland

Robert Burns [25 January 1759 – 21 July 1796], also known as Rabbie Burns, the Bard of Ayrshire, Ploughman Poet and various other names and epithets, was a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland and is celebrated worldwide.

Each year, January 25 is recognized worldwide as Rabbie Burns Day. After his death he became a great source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism, and a cultural icon in Scotland and among the Scottish diaspora around the world.

As well as making original compositions, Burns also collected folk songs from across Scotland, often revising or adapting them.

His poem (and song) *Auld Lang Syne* is often sung at Hogmanay (the last day of the year), and *Scots Wha Hae* served for a long time as an unofficial



national anthem of the country.

Other poems and songs of Burns that remain well known across the world today include *A Red, Red Rose*, *A Man's a Man for A' That*, *To a Louse*, *To a Mouse*, *The Battle of Sherramuir*, *Tam o' Shanter* and *Ae Fond Kiss*.

Burns passed away on July 21, 1796, of rheumatic fever. His most famous poem, *Address to the Haggis* is now recited at Burns Suppers and other celebrations of the man now remembered as the National Bard of Scotland.



MEMBERS of the six-time world champion SFU Pipe Band march in formation with their youth division, the RMM Pipe Band. The group will celebrate the RMM Pipe Band's 25th anniversary at their Robbie Burns Fundraising Dinner on Saturday, January 26.

25th Anniversary Celebrations of the RMM Pipe Band

BURNABY – The Simon Fraser University Pipe Band is proud to announce that the Robert Malcolm Memorial (RMM) Pipe Band, the youth (8-18) division of the SFU Pipe Band organization, is turning 25 years old this January.

The six-time world champion SFU Pipe Band is working hard to develop the next generation of pipers and drummers, getting ready for another 25 years of success.

The celebration kicks off with the SFUPB annual Robbie Burns fundraising dinner and silent auction, hosted at the Executive Plaza Hotel Metro Vancouver (located at 405 North Road in Coquitlam), on Saturday, January 26, 2019.

This will be followed by an exclusive SFU Pipe Band in concert performance specifically in honour of this 25th anniversary year, on Saturday, April 12, 2019, at the Vogue Theatre on Granville Street in Vancouver.

Pipe bands are a vital part of our Canadian heritage and world music experiences, performing in many important celebrations and memorials.

The SFU Pipe Band is proud to have created a strong and successful learning environment for this unique style of music and instruments, developing the next generation of players.

RMM draws youth (8-18) from across all of Metro Vancouver, the province, and beyond.

The SFUPB provides their young players with world-class instruction by members of the SFU Pipe Band, and the opportunity to gain strong musical and leadership skills. The RMM Pipe Band also participates in many local charity and community events.

RMM was founded 25 years ago in January 1994, to honour the untimely loss of two young SFU Pipe Band players and instructors – Robert Barbulak and Malcolm Bokenfohr.

When these young players were tragically killed by an impaired driver on the 28th of November 1993, their loss was felt deeply by the pipe band that they loved.

Pipe Major Terry Lee, Lead Drummer J. Reid Maxwell, and Pipe Sergeant Jack Lee, were determined to memorialize the contributions these two young men made to their community, and create a legacy through the training of young pipers and drummers directly through the SFU Pipe Band.

This legacy lives on. Starting with a humble 35 players in January 1994, RMM has since taught over 2,000

young players, moving through the ranks of this ambitious youth band, and developing musical talent and important life and leadership skills along the way.

Now, the band enjoys a membership of nearly 150 pipers and drummers annually, and has levels ranging from beginner up to grade 2, with the potential for motivated players to join the coveted grade 1 SFU Pipe Band itself.

RMM proudly continues to compete and perform at local, provincial, and international events, and on the world stage in Scotland.

The success of this youth pipe band shines through their history, including four consecutive wins in the juvenile category at the World Championships in Scotland, and ongoing high placements at the Worlds and at many competitions within our region and internationally.

And with this 25th anniversary celebration comes a changing of the guard.

Band manager Jack Lee is passing the torch to his highly talented son, Andrew Lee, who will be ushering in the next era for RMM, with a renewed focus on high performance band levels.

And the band is in excellent hands – quite literally.

Andrew Lee, a proficient solo competitor as well as RMM band instructor and pipe major, has accrued an admirable list of accomplishments, including his unanimous win in early 2017 at the Boney Music Invitational – a fundraising event created by the late SFU Pipe Band piper and BC Pipers' Association Life Member Andrew Bonar in support of the BC Cancer Agency.

Lee's knowledge of the instrument is deep; Lee and his father, Jack Lee, are the creative forces behind Lee & Sons, making the bags and drones that create the iconic music of the great Highland bagpipes.

With the strength of the talents of the SFU Pipe Band leading the way, the Robert Malcolm Memorial Pipe band has every reason to be jubilant in their upcoming 25th anniversary year!

We can all look forward to great things yet to come from this young and enthusiastic band in 2019 and beyond.

To book tickets, or for more information on the SFU Robbie Burns fundraising dinner on Saturday, January 26, 2019, e-mail SFUPB Burns dinner committee chair Lucinda Pentin at: robbieburnsdinner@sfupipeband.com, or visit: <https://sfupipeband.com>.

The heart of Scotland lives in Coquitlam at Tartantown

By CATHOLINE BUTLER
COQUITLAM, BC – Tartantown shop in Coquitlam is a hotbed of Scottish culture steeped in bagpipes, kilts, Highland dancing and all things Scottish.

Manager Terry Lee is the former pipe major of the world champion SFU Pipe Band and was with the band when they received the top title six times in Scotland. A huge accomplishment for a Canadian pipe band.

Heather Jolley, the other partner in Tartantown, leads the award-winning Heather Jolley School of Highland Dance. Many of her students have also won acclaim in Scotland.

This is an extremely busy time of the year at Tartantown with Christmas, Hogmanay and Robbie Burns all on the horizon.

Kilts and full Highland costumes are a huge rental item for all of the above events, including weddings.

Terry said, "We have been in business for over 40 years (1976) and this year our expansion into more Highland and casual gent's wear is our newest product line."

He said, "Our 'casual' kilts, along with our budget-line of complete outfits, helps make Highland dress more affordable. We can produce an outfit head-to-toe starting at \$399."

Along with kilts and bagpipes, Tartantown offers luxurious shawls, beautiful chinaware and other unique gift items from Scotland....no need to go to Scotland, everything Scottish is at Tartantown.

Tartantown is located at 555 Clarke Road, Coquitlam. For more information, call (604) 936-8548, or call toll-free at 1-877-800-5458. Visit online: www.tartantown.com.



TERRY LEE, former pipe major of the world champion SFU Pipe Band, is the manager at Tartantown. He said this is an extremely busy time of year at the shop with Christmas, Hogmanay and Robbie Burns celebrations all on the horizon.



Stars out in force for the Scottish music awards

GLASGOW – Annie Lennox, Susan Boyle and Mark Knopfler were among the big winners at a star-studded awards ceremony in Scotland.

Snow Patrol, The Script and Kyle Falconer also picked up honours at the 20th annual SSE Scottish Music Awards.

Singers Boyle and Lennox were both inducted into the Scottish Music Hall of Fame during the event in Glasgow on Saturday, December 1.

The event is the main fundraiser for the music therapy charity Nordoff Robbins Scotland.

Upon receiving her award, Boyle, who opened the night with a performance of *Wild Horses*, said, "I'm very humbled and pleased. I'd like to congratulate Nordoff Robbins on their anniversary. Thank you so much, I will treasure this."

Lennox was unable to attend the event but sent a video message to the audience. She said, "I just wanted to say thank you so much for giving me this very special award."

"I'm very, very sorry that I can't join you tonight, but I'm there with you in spirit. I'm so proud of the work that Nordoff Robbins does and all I can say to you is thank you, thank you, thank you."



SUSAN BOYLE accepted the first award of the night. Along with Annie Lennox, she was inducted into the Scottish Music Hall of Fame.

Knopfler, who made a name for himself as Dire Straits' frontman, picked up the "living legend" award, saying, "When I was a little fellow lying in bed not far from here listening to the music of the River Clyde, the noise of the fog horns and the ships, I used to absorb all the sounds of Scotland."

"A songwriter couldn't ask to be born in a better place."

The View's Falconer was handed the best album award for his first solo project and said he had put his "heart and soul" into the record.

Snow Patrol, who played an acoustic

set, were named artist of the year while Irish trio The Script took the best international artist gong.

Donald MacLeod, chairman of Nordoff Robbins Scotland, said, "We've had a phenomenal night celebrating the 20th SSE Scottish Music Awards with some of the biggest and best stars in the world, together with all of our wonderful partners and friends."

"To see musicians like Snow Patrol, Mark Knopfler, Amy Macdonald and more come together to support Nordoff Robbins Scotland and all who work there is truly outstanding, and it gets bigger and better every year."

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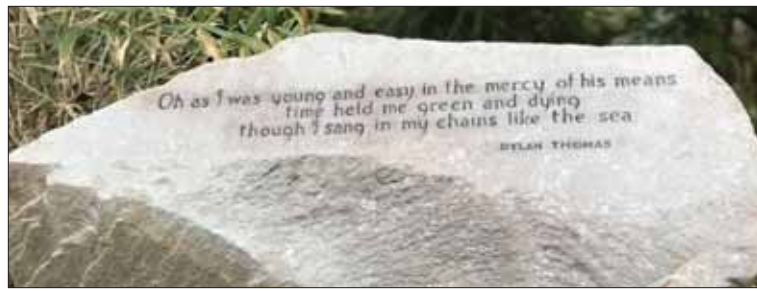
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An afternoon of Welsh Spirit at the Cambrian Hall



THE DYLAN THOMAS Memorial Stone in Swansea's Cwmdonkin Park. The poet was born a few yards from the park and many of his poems and prose writings were inspired by his visits there. Cwmdonkin Park is a popular destination for Dylan Thomas fans. The Memorial Stone was recently restored after years of natural erosion and overgrown vegetation.

VANCOUVER – On Saturday, November 17, Welsh Society members and visitors enjoyed an afternoon dedicated to two well-known Anglo-Welsh poets.

DYLAN THOMAS

Long-time Dylan Thomas Circle member David Webb gave a presentation on the work of the Swansea-born poet, while Welsh Society member David Llewelyn Williams discussed the life and work of poet R.S. Thomas.

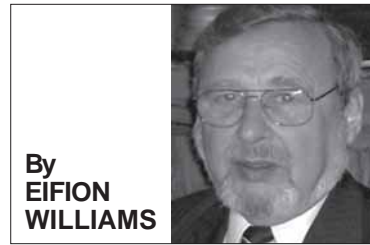
The event was the latest presentation in an on-going monthly series entitled "Welsh Spirit," whose aim is to present stories from myth, legend, music, history, poetry and dance that form part of the Welsh experience.

These monthly events are organized by Welsh Society member Pat Morris.

Dylan Thomas's works are well-known throughout the world and David Webb pleased the audience with a spirited reading of some familiar excerpts from the poems.

Although Dylan Thomas wrote exclusively in English, David Webb's major theme was an analysis of how the poet's works fit into the Welsh bardic tradition.

While decrying any nationalist feelings, Thomas drew inspiration from his early years in Swansea, the "ugly, lovely town" where he grew up, as well



By
EIFION
WILLIAMS

as from the characters and rural landscape of his native land.

Thomas's poetry also celebrated the divine purpose that he perceived in nature amid the recurring themes of love, birth, death and renewal. Above all, Thomas's universal appeal is largely based on the richness and imagery of his words.

R.S. THOMAS

In his presentation on R.S. Thomas, David Llewelyn Williams also referred to God's divine purpose, albeit in a different environment.

R.S.'s poetic world centred largely on lonely Welsh hill farms and the farmers who endured the harshness of that environment.

In the words of one critic, "R.S. Thomas produced remarkable poetry out of the unforgiving hill country of Wales."

R.S. Thomas was born in Cardiff and studied to become an Anglican priest. He spent his working life in a succession of remote Welsh communities until his death in 1990.

He was also a prolific poet, producing a body of work that received high acclaim from critics.

His volume *Song at the Year's Turning* was praised by John Betjeman, while R. George Thomas, in the *Anglo-Welsh Review*, called him the finest living Welsh poet writing in English. In 1996, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature.

R.S. Thomas's poems reflect the harshness of the Welsh environment and the characters who inhabit it.

A fervent Welsh nationalist, he endows his subjects with love and compassion and criticizes the alien influences that would destroy their rural way of life.

David Llewelyn Williams, a great admirer of the poet's work, shared some of R.S. Thomas's poems with the audience.

The afternoon's celebration and appreciation of the works of two of the Twentieth Century's most talented and admired poets was well-received by the audience.

Readers are reminded of the presentations of *A Child's Christmas in Wales* at the Cambrian Hall on December 15 and 16.

Popular actor Russell Roberts, together with Colleen Winton and musician Brian Tate will again read Dylan Thomas's famous short story. For tickets at \$25 each, call (604) 294-4332 or (604) 970-6434.



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Beannacht Nollaig

PAGE 1



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Lynn Owens-Whalen,
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Merry Christmas

PAGE 2



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Beannacht Nollaig

PAGE 3



Nollaig fé shéin is fé mhaise dhaoibh go léir

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*During the coming
Christmas season
May you be blessed
With the spirit of the season,
which is peace,
The gladness of the season,
which is hope,
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which is love.*



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May peace, everlasting peace, reign supreme."*

- Soundings, Vol. 2, #12

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Merry Christmas

PAGE 4



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Hereditary Hemochromatosis: Reflections on a diagnosis

By **RAYMOND FYNES**

President, Canadian Hemochromatosis Society

It is the time of year when we give and receive gifts and count blessings.

My hereditary hemochromatosis diagnosis came as a shock, but over time I have come to realize it was also a blessing in disguise because it was timely.

Luckily, I had not sustained organ-damage despite years of my body being unable to regulate how much iron I absorb, particularly over the decades when I used to take a daily multivitamin with iron.

After the hematologist confirmed my diagnosis, I thanked my family doctor for his timely suspicion, since it likely added back whatever my life span might otherwise be, simply because he ticked the 'serum ferritin' box on my annual check-up lab requisition.

Not only that, but his intervention has probably spared me years of declining health and symptoms caused by iron loading in my liver, heart, pancreas, joints, brain, etc.

He smiled modestly and acknowledged that I was probably right!

I asked what had raised his suspicions when he examined me, and he replied that he could not remember, but it might have been small patches of skin pigmentation.

What a gift to have hemochromatosis diagnosed before organ damage ensues. Thank you to doctors who raise the alarm early! I will take some credit though for having an annual medical check-up.

There is a saying that when a doctor diagnoses a patient with hemochromatosis, a family gets diagnosed as well.

In my case, when my sister-in-law (also Irish-born) learned of my diagnosis, she asked her family doctor if she might have hemochromatosis.

Her doctor ordered tests and confirmed that she did.

Further genetic testing confirmed that her sister – my wife – has hemochromatosis too!! That knowledge is a huge gift for our siblings and especially our children.

I think of my diagnosis as a gift that kept on giving, the other beneficiaries being family members who discover that they might be carrying the gene mutation, or have a double mutation and be at risk of developing iron-loading. Or they can sleep easy.

Happily my siblings sleep easy. However, each of my children has a 50 percent risk of being a carrier and a 50 percent risk of inheriting double mutations, so they know to forewarn their children about the "bronze killer" lurking in their family tree.

How common is hemochromatosis? In the Canadian population, estimates range from 1:200 to 1:400. In Ireland, the estimate is 1:83.

Those of us with Irish parents need to be especially mindful of hemochromatosis.

There is another way my diagnosis is a gift that has kept on giving.

I now keep the iron in my body from building up by donating blood to Canadian Blood Services every two months.



RAYMOND FYNES, president of the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society.

How wonderful that my treatment can also be life saving for others.

So, timely diagnosis is a gift of life span that is not shortened prematurely, added quality of life, an alert for siblings and offspring, and a gift of life for the person on the receiving end of the unit of blood.

What a win-win-win! Or is it blessing-blessing-blessing?

Discovering the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society was another blessing in coming to terms with my diagnosis.

It took several months from my family doctor's first suspicions until a specialist could see me and report back.

There was a lot of nail-biting in those months: did I need a liver biopsy, or an MRI – and how long would that take?

I found answers to many questions online at the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society.

I would urge anyone who has questions about hemochromatosis to browse the www.toomuchiron.ca website.

My wife and I subsequently became members of the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society.

Later I was invited to join the board of directors and then last year I was nomi-

nated and elected to become president. Being involved with the Society is a wonderful experience for me.

I am awed by the generosity of everyone involved – donors, volunteers, board members past and present, and professionals who provide their services pro-bono.

All of us either have hemochromatosis or have a spouse, relative or friend who has.

I am struck by the generosity of new and long-term donors, but also distressed by the increasing number of In Memoriam donations we receive from friends and family of a hemochromatosis sufferer who died.

It is a reminder that diagnosis is not always timely for everyone.

Let me take this opportunity on behalf of the Society to wish you a blessed holiday and happy new year.

[The Canadian Hemochromatosis Society's mission is to strengthen the well-being of Canadians affected by iron overload through its programs designed to foster awareness and early detection of hemochromatosis. You can support this mission with a donation to the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society, 285 – 7000 Minoru Blvd., Richmond, BC V6Y 3Z5. More information can be found at www.toomuchiron.ca/celtic.]



Ireland investigating UFO sightings by multiple pilots

DUBLIN – Authorities in Ireland are investigating reported sightings of possible unidentified flying objects (UFOs) by several commercial airline pilots, including a flight from Montreal to London on Friday, November 9.

Chatter between the airline pilots and Irish air traffic control focused briefly on the sightings, with at least four aviators confirming that they'd seen the phenomenon.

The exchange began when the pilot of British Airways Flight BA94 from Montreal asked Shannon air traffic control if there was nearby military activity.

When the air traffic controller replied in the negative, the pilot said that she had seen something moving "so fast."

"OK, it was moving so fast," the BA pilot reported. "It came up on our left-hand side and then rapidly veered to

the north. It was a very bright light that disappeared at very high speed."

The pilot said the speed that the object – or objects – were traveling was "absolutely astronomical, like Mach 2 or something."

Commercial jetliners travel at a cruising speed of around 430 knots, or Mach 0.64. The F-18, the mainstay fighter of the U.S. Air Force, can travel at up to Mach 2.5.

A Virgin Airlines pilot noted that he saw "multiple objects" about the same time, during the flight to Manchester.

"Meteor or another object making some kind of re-entry," the pilot said. "There appears to be multiple objects following the same sort of trajectory, very bright from where we were."

The Irish Aviation Authority said it is investigating the reports of "unusual air activity."

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Many new Irish immigrants proud to be making positive contributions to Canada

The Celtic Connection speaks to some of the enthusiastic and competent Irish immigrants who have made their home in western Canada.



EMMA MCCRUDDEN

'Dream Job'

Educating Canada's future athletes is all in a day's work for Irish dietitian Emma McCrudden, who moved to Vancouver almost six years ago.

The 33-year-old has worked as an applied performance dietitian for the English Institute of Sport and was the lead dietitian for Leinster Rugby.

Following her move to Vancouver in 2013, with her husband Gavin Murray, Emma secured a job with the Canadian Sport Institute, where she supported the Canadian Women's Soccer team, Swim Canada and multiple winter sports competing in domestic and international competitions and the Olympic games.

Three years later she landed her "dream job" at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Emma teaches sport nutrition and provides sports dietetics support to the UBC Thunderbirds Athletics teams.

She also has a consultancy role with the Vancouver Whitecaps professional soccer team.

She relishes both roles and points to the differences between the two.

"In the UBC varsity program, we are not only training athletes to be athletes, but we are training them to be high achieving adults as well. We are helping them on their journey into young adulthood. For a lot of them it's their first time living away from home."

In contrast, the pro-environment is "high stakes" and medals are "all that matters."

Of her UBC role, Emma says, "It's nice working with students and seeing them graduate. They come up to you after and thank you for everything you taught them."

In a world of fad diets, "it is a real moment of pride" for Emma when students approach her with questions and demonstrate critical thinking about their health.

Emma and her husband have taken up new sports since they moved here, including back country skiing, back country hiking, canoe kayak camping and curling "which is a lot harder than you think!"

Emma reflects, "When we first moved over, we were conscious that we were moving to Canada and we wanted to experience Canadian culture, which we do.

"But, when you move abroad, you really realize how special the Irish community are and how it is so nice to have friends who understand your traditions and values – and who get your Fr. Ted references!"



CIARA REYNOLDS

'No Intention of Going Home'

Six years ago, Ciara Reynolds had just graduated with a degree in criminal justice.

The Limerick native was on the JobBridge scheme in Ireland which meant she worked as a legal assistant in exchange for a supplement to her welfare payment.

"It was terrible and awful, and I couldn't do it anymore," the 29-year-old recalls.

"There was a lack of opportunities in Ireland and I didn't want to be stuck as a legal assistant for the rest of my life with no chance to utilize the skills I had learned at university."

She moved to Calgary, where her career immediately took an upturn.

Ciara initially worked with a private investigation and risk management company, before securing a job as judicial assistant with the Court of Appeal in Edmonton.

She is currently employed as a policy analyst at the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, working to "improve and enhance access to justice for Albertans."

She finds her career very fulfilling, in particular, her interactions with indigenous communities, who often assume that the Irish will understand some of the injustices they suffered when the European settlers came to North America.

Ciara and her partner have bought a home in Alberta and "have no intention of going home."

In winter, Edmonton can reach lows of minus 30 but Ciara enjoys the winter events in the area and the fact that she



**By
MEADHBH
MONAGHAN**

is just four hours away from Jasper.

She volunteers for the Alberta Dachshund Rescue, taking abandoned dachshunds for walks to the vet.

Like many Irish who are new to Canada, Ciara's first port of call was the local GAA club. She has been secretary of the Edmonton Wolfe Tones for the past two years.

"People back home would scoff at the idea of me being involved in the GAA but it's purely an admin role!" Ciara laughs, adding, "The GAA club is a social outlet and a great way to stay connected."

'Do Something to Help'

Falling in love with a North Vancouver girl sealed Ronan Deane's fate as a Canadian resident.

The Cork native arrived in British Columbia long before it became the current destination of choice for increasing numbers of Irish immigrants.

He faced many obstacles, and despite being a qualified mechanical engineer, spent his early days nannying, plumbing and landscaping.

The couple have moved 14 times in 14 years and are now settled in Deep Cove with their daughters, Lily (12) and Gretta (eight).

They initially moved to Calgary, where Ronan worked on various oil, gas and power projects with Delta Hudson.

From there, the couple moved to Fort McMurray, taking advantage of the oil boom which came to a grinding halt four years ago.

In 2006, they considered moving back to Ireland, but instead decided to move to Vancouver, where Ronan transitioned to civil projects.

He is now business development manager at Graham Infrastructure LP.

During his time in Calgary, Ronan became secretary of the Calgary Chiefs GAA club, later helping establish the Western Canada division.

As a mainstay of the local community in western Canada, he was considered a first point of contact for hundreds of young Irish men coming across to work in construction.

Ronan would often take their resumes and make sure they landed on the relevant desks. After the economic crash, he noticed a lot less "spoiled brats" arriving in Canada.

Outside of work, Ronan is chair of the Vancouver Regional Construction Association's Education Committee.

Under his watch, volunteers have visited 4,000 young people in 40 different schools, aiming to create a positive image of construction as a career choice.

An avid Tough Mudder athlete, the 43-year-old trained by running through Vancouver at night. During those runs, he was struck by the homelessness in the city.

"All these people had parents, and someone was glad they were born. But something changed in their lives. When you see that enough times it does hit you. I wanted to do something to help," he says.

Ronan runs races in aid of charity, and, for the past two years he has completed a charity sleep out to raise money for Covenant House, a homeless shelter for young adults in Vancouver.

He also found time to establish and oversee the Irish Sporting and Social Club's (ISSC) Youth Gaelic Games Program which, to date, has promoted the Gaelic Games to over 6,000 youths across the Lower Mainland.

'Diversify'

In Saskatchewan at this time of year, the Irish employees at Glenform Construction are getting ready for a harsh winter.

The company's managing director is 29-year-old James Bradley, from County Derry.

"We've had a few hard winters in Saskatchewan. It's flat and the wind chill is severe."



RONAN DEANE, a native of Co. Cork, arrived in Canada long before it became a destination of choice for many young Irish. After meeting a girl from North Vancouver, the couple settled in B.C. with their two daughters.



JAMES BRADLEY

"At one stage in Estevan the wind-chill was minus 52 Celsius. You stop working after minus 38-40," James comments.

While temperatures plummet, the hard workers continue their mission to complete projects on time.

"The guys still travel back and forward to Ireland."

"Whenever they are here, they want to make as much money as possible," says James, adding, "Whenever we go in to do a job, whatever it takes to get the job across the line on time, we will try our best to make that happen."

He has observed that "many people on the two-year visa come over, put their heads down and work hard. Then they find that they fall in love with here and end up staying for good."

Hurting from the financial crash, which had decimated the Irish construction industry, Glenform moved to Canada in 2011.

The company, founded by his father Conor, made good initial impressions and "just kept building our connections in Saskatchewan."

Over the past six years, Glenform has secured projects across Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, and B.C.

"The construction sector out here has been good to us," says James, who notes that the Irish construction workers are recognized for "not messing around and getting the work done."

Community out-reach is important to the charitable businessman, who now lives in Vancouver.

Glenform sponsored the jerseys for a Gaelic team in Saskatoon and a second company which James is involved with – CLA – currently sponsors the Fraser Valley Gaels female team jerseys.

A recent visit to the Canuck Place Children's Hospice had a lasting impact on James, who decided to arrange a charity golf event at Whistler which raised \$21,000 for the facility.

Not content with success in Canada, James has his sights firmly fixed on the United States of America; initially California, which is experiencing a boom and is only a two-hour flight away.

James concludes, "I would rather not be reliant exclusively on the Canadian economy. If we can drum up some business and get some guys working down there, it means we don't have all our eggs in the one basket."

[Continued next page]



ÁINE COADY

[Continued from page 20]

'Exciting Time to be Here'

Back in Vancouver, it took just one weekend hanging out in Donellan's Irish Pub on Granville Street for newcomer Áine Coady to plant the seeds for the first Vancouver Irish Film Festival.

The television producer from Kilkenny arrived in Vancouver eight months ago, fresh from her travels around South America.

Following a psychology and sociology degree at University College Cork, Áine completed a Masters in Film Production through Stafford University, based at the Dublin Film Base campus.

She spent five years working full time in television and film production, including: the BBC One Show, *Goggle Box Ireland* and various freelance indie shows with TG4.

She also co-produced a successful low-budget feature film called *The Poison Pen* which was featured at film festivals across Europe.

"I just fancied a change in scenery and pace, so I decided to come to Vancouver," the 29-year-old explains.

"I came here for adventure but there is a really thriving film industry here and I craved having a career again after my travelling."

She continues, "There are Irish film festivals worldwide and I was surprised that in a city with such a big proud Irish community and thriving film industry, that there wasn't that kind of outlet."

Áine "put out the feelers" among the Irish community and "got a really positive response."

Her next stop was the Vancity Theatre – "a stronghold in film in Vancouver" – which needed convincing that hers was a good idea.

"They said Vancouver is saturated with film festivals but they were aware that there is a strong Irish community, so they said they would give me a chance," she recalls.

She screened two sold-out Irish films during the summer, and, based on that success Áine, decided to hold her first official festival in Vancity Theatre from December 7-9.

She is excited to offer Irish films to Canadians and Irish alike.

Áine, who plays for the ISSC Vancouver Ladies Gaelic Football team, concludes, "I really like Canada. Canadians are really open to ideas and opportunities here in the creative industry. It's an exciting time to be here."

Meadhbh Monahan is a freelance journalist and communications specialist from County Fermanagh. Meadhbh was senior journalist in her local newspaper, *The Impartial Reporter*, before making the move to Vancouver seven months ago. She hopes to undertake a Canadian road-trip in the near future and would like to gain permanent residency.

Irish citizens returning home facing barriers to housing and social welfare

DUBLIN – Irish citizens returning home from abroad are facing significant barriers to housing and social welfare, a government committee has heard.

Representatives from Safe Home, Crosscare Migrant Project and the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas say lack of knowledge, delays in administration and the current housing problems are plunging some returning emigrants into crisis situations.

The committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade heard that many people are blocked from returning to Ireland because those with children or a partner from non-European Economic Area (EEA) countries are not automatically given a visa, and when applying for the visa from Ireland, the partner is not eligible to work.

Richard King, from Crosscare, said, "The reason a majority of people return is to be closer to family, they left Ireland after college and now want to come back to raise their family here, but this process acts as a deterrent and is difficult.

"One Irish citizen I dealt with in New Zealand is pregnant and cannot return home because they cannot survive if she and her partner cannot work for six months."



THE TEAM at Crosscare Migrant Project is working to help Irish citizens returning home. A government committee recently heard of the difficulties faced by many citizens returning home from abroad and which are plunging some returning emigrants into crisis situations.

It was noted that EU citizens who have a non-EEA partner do not face the same visa requirements, meaning returning Irish citizens have a "lesser" status than current EU citizens.

Another growing trend for returning emigrants being refused social welfare is because of lack of access to information on the Habitual Resident Condition.

The Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) is a situation that you must satisfy in order to be eligible for most means tested social welfare payments in Ireland.

Danielle McLaughlin from Crosscare said the people facing these issues are some of the most vulnerable returning home.

"In majority of these cases individuals face vulnerable situations with no income or family support," she said.

"Last year, we dealt with 280 queries and worked directly on 18 cases on HRC, and every case successfully appealed.

"There is a five to nine month long delay and those surveyed said the process was intimidating, demeaning, and made them feel guilty."

She added those dealing with the process expressed misconception, lack of information and said it was actively deterring emigrants returning home.

Karen McHugh, from Safe Home Ireland, referred to one case of an Irish citizen returning to care for an elderly uncle who was turned down for carers allowance and not considered a "habitual resident."

The man, who was saving the state over 52,000 euro a year by caring for his family member, won his appeal five months later, however was told he

would not have money for another month, which is likely to be January 2019.

The committee chair, Fianna Fail's Brendan Smith, said there was a "totally unacceptable" delay in carer allowances applications and said every committee member had faced similar issues with their own constituents.

The groups asked that the 30 recommendations produced in the Indecon Economic Report on Addressing Challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants be acted upon, as since the report was published no time frame has been set or seen any productive action taken.

They also asked that provisions be made in the current housing allocation system for returning emigrants, especially for returning elderly people who want to spend their remaining life in Ireland.

Is it time for an Irish language immersion weekend in Vancouver?

By BARRA Ó SCANNLÁIN

The reactions I got when I started to tell people I would be moving halfway across the world to teach Irish to Canadian students were mixed.

Most were positive of course, some were confused, but everyone I told was curious. "Who would be learning Irish out in Canada?" "Are they just a crowd of plastic Paddys, aye?"

And, honestly, I asked myself similar questions.

Luckily for me I already had plenty of experience working with learners from North America – I've spent the last four summers working in Oideas Gael, a cultural centre in remote southwest Donegal which offers Irish language courses to adults in the summer, and attracts a huge amount of people from the U.S. and Canada – and I even taught at an Irish language weekend in Cleveland, Ohio this summer.

So, I knew what I was letting myself in for – to an extent!

Let me give a bit of context. Since my university days I had always known of the Ireland Canada University Foundation's *teagascóir Gaeilge* (Irish language instructor) programme.

Every year, thanks to funding from the National Lottery and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, they send eight Irish instructors to Canadian universities to teach courses in language and culture.

I imagined myself going to Montreal, or Ottawa, and being immersed in Franco-Canadian culture, as these are

longstanding partners of the programme.

What I didn't imagine was that on my last day working at a high school in the west of France in late April, I'd get an e-mail telling me I was going to be the first *teagascóir* to be working in the University of Alberta in one of the northernmost cities in North America.

A quick Google maps search of Edmonton was enough to make me feel cold – and reading that minus 20 degree in winter is commonplace didn't help!

But that initial shock quickly turned to tangible excitement, as I realised that I was after being presented with an amazing opportunity.

I am now teaching the language and culture I am so passionate about, in a fantastic (underrated) part of the world which is rich with history (good and bad) and its own indigenous cultures and languages which, like Irish in many ways, have resisted efforts towards their extinction and continue to thrive in their native lands.

Now that I'm here I still get asked those questions – who would be taking Irish language as a university course in the Canadian prairies!?

Well, I have six committed students in my class this term – not a bad start!

Yes, they all have some Irish heritage, some more immediate than others, but that's not necessarily their motive for taking on this language which is nothing like anything they've encountered before.

One, for example, is studying Irish mythology; another student is doing a PhD in Irish contemporary art; there is a linguistics major in the class and another who is interested in literature.

We cover topics like ordering food in a restaurant, talking about your average day at work, discussing hobbies, making excuses, and a whole lot in between.

For those who don't see themselves mastering the language, I'm also teaching a course through English called Irish Culture, where we will discuss various aspects of Irish history, culture, and society.

One of the topics covered in that course is Irish islands.

We'll look at the isolated strongholds of Gaelic culture from Toragh off the coast of Donegal (the last place in Ireland to have a king, who recently passed away – RIP Patsai Dan), to the majestic Blascaoidí in West Kerry, evacuated in 1953 and home to legendary storytellers like Peig Sayers.

I've been surprised at how prominent the Irish community is here in Alberta.

As far as I knew, all my Irish peers were going to Toronto and Vancouver, but what I've found here is a strong close-knit community of Irish ex-pats, and even a few Irish speakers!

For updates on Irish cultural events in Edmonton and to see how my students are getting on, follow @EdmontonGaeilge on Twitter.

You might learn a *cúpla focal* if nothing else!



IRISH LANGUAGE instructor Barra Ó Scannláin at Oideas Gael in Gleann Cholm Cille with then Minister of State for Gaelige, Gaeltacht and the Islands Joe McHugh (funding for the Irish language programme comes from that department).

Are you interested in learning Gaelige (the Irish language) in Vancouver? Maybe it's time to start an Irish language immersion weekend out in the west, like *Gleann na Gaeilge* in Nova Scotia. [Deireadh seachtaine Gaeilge in Vancouver, Deireadh Fómhair 2019]. If that sounds like your *cupán tae*, contact by e-mail: gaeilgewesterncanada@gmail.com.



IRISH health service says pet names should no longer be used by hospital staff so care is more 'person-centred'.

Irish hospital staff told to stop calling patients 'love' or 'dear'

DUBLIN – Nurses and doctors at Irish hospitals should no longer call patients by pet names such as 'love', 'dear', 'girls', 'lads' or 'boys', under new recommendations.

Staff should instead refer to patients by their first name in an effort to make treatment more "person-centred," Ireland's state health services provider has said.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) also instructed staff to avoid referring to patients by their bed number, diagnosis or affected body area.

The advice, issued in a report responding to a national patient experience survey, prompted some to lament the passing of "how are you feeling, love?" and other informal expressions.

Michael O'Keefe, a consultant ophthalmologist at Mater hospital in Dublin, said the recommendations were political correctness "gone mad" in the midst of an acute hospital bed shortage and soaring waiting lists for operations.

The report said hospital staff's communication skills could have a profound

impact on healthcare outcomes and the experience of patients and their families.

Working in healthcare could lead to burnout and less compassion and empathy for patients, so it was important that staff used "person-centred" language, it said.

"Are collective names used where the person's name would be more appropriate, do they use pet names such as 'dear' or 'love', 'girls', 'boys', 'lads', etc. instead of the patients/colleagues names?"

"Do we talk about 'feeding people' instead of assisting with meals or refer to someone coming back from theatre as 'the hip'/'the hernia/knee etc. This is a powerful exercise to help raise awareness of how depersonalising some commonly used language can be."

The Irish Patients' Association told BreakingNews.ie that hospitals should strike a balance and not come across as completely clinical and cold.

"Sometimes the relationship of a nurse or a doctor or other allied professions – by the way they interact with a patient in an empathetic way – can actually make their journey a little bit easier," it said.

Canada has 10,700 working holiday visas for young Irish under the IEC program

OTTAWA – The International Experience Canada 2019 program is now open for 18 to 35 year old Irish citizens.

The program offers 10,700 work permits for young Irish people and the application system for next year has just opened. It allows people aged 18 to 35 to work in Canada for up to two years.

Similar to this year, 10,700 IEC visas are available for Irish applicants in 2019, but the breakdown of the different visa types has changed slightly.

Ireland is one of approximately 30 countries worldwide that has a reciprocal agreement with Canada to allow young people to live and work here.

The application rules changed in 2016, to prevent the prior annual crush for visas among Irish applicants.

Under the old system, a quota of visas for Irish citizens was released in one or two rounds each year, on a first-come, first-served basis.

Quotas were filled within minutes for several years in a row, leaving disappointed candidates waiting another year before they could apply again.

Now, applicants for visas can begin the process now by creating an online profile on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website (cic.gc.ca/english/work/iec/index.asp), which will then be submitted to a "pool" of candidates if it meets requirements.

Applicants are drawn randomly from these pools at "regular intervals," and sent an Invitation to apply for a work permit. Draws continue until all places are filled for the year.



The International Experience Canada program offer 10,700 work permits for young Irish people and the application system for 2019 has just opened. It allows people aged 18 to 35 to work in Canada for up to two years.

You will need a scanned copy of the identification page of your passport and an electronic version of your up-to-date curriculum vitae, which must follow the format provided in a template on the IEC website, along with a fee of C\$150.

Participants in the working holiday-makers category must also pay an open work permit holder fee of C\$100 when submitting an online work permit application through MyCIC.

International Co-op (Internship) participants, including those applying through an employer-specific recognised organisation, do not have to pay any other fees, but your Canadian employer will need to pay the employer compliance fee of C\$230, and complete and submit an offer of employment directly to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Visas are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Successful candidates have a year from the date of issue to enter Canada. On arrival in

Canada, you must have health insurance, a return flight or enough money to buy one, and proof of C\$2,500 in your bank account.

For the first time this year, applicants will also have to complete a biometric test (photograph and fingerprints) as part of the application process. This can be done at the Canadian Embassy in Dublin, which offers the service two days per month.

In 2018, demand for Working Holiday work permits was higher among Irish people than for any of the other countries that have a similar agreement with Canada.

Visa agents cannot guarantee a work permit, or speed up the application process; the onus is still on the applicant to fill out the paperwork themselves, and an agent is not required.

For more information, visit the Immigration and Citizenship Canada website at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/iec.html>.

Republican senators put hold on E3 Irish visa bill in major surprise



JOHN DEASY, Ireland's special envoy to the U.S. works to assist the Irish undocumented. It is understood that Deasy is quietly confident that an agreement can be reached on this issue. He has been the driving force behind the E3 strategy, and says that nothing is taken for granted at this stage.

DUBLIN – There is a possibility that thousands of Irish citizens may be able to avail of a new visa to work in the United States under proposed legislation passed by the Lower House in the U.S. Congress.

The E3 work visa, a two-year renewable visa currently reserved for Australian nationals, would under the bill which passed through the House of Representatives become available to Irish applicants.

It is for workers in "special occupations" – there is no prescribed list of jobs but the requirement mandates a specialized knowledge.

Only unused visas, not taken up by Australians, would be issued to Irish citizens under the proposed changes.

If the law is passed, there will be a maximum of 5,000 visas awarded to Irish citizens. It will not be accessible to undocumented Irish in the U.S.

The bill must now be cleared by the

Senate where it needs unanimous consent however there are reports that it has stalled in the Senate as a number of Republicans have put a hold on the program.

The GOP holds on the bill came as a major surprise as fears had been expressed that Democrats in the Senate would be the problem and despite Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announcing his backing for it.

Work has been ongoing, spearheaded by the Department of Foreign Affairs, to gain access for Irish people to the coveted scheme over the past number of months.

Ireland's special envoy to the U.S., John Deasy, initially welcomed the bill's progress but said he was under no illusions over the difficulty the bill may face in getting through the Senate.

Tánaiste Simon Coveney also welcomed the passage of the bill in the House, describing it as a "positive development for future generations to travel to [the] USA." However, he acknowledged there was "still work to do."

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.

– PJMK, MJK, CB, CLF, KLSLK, BC



Prayer for our First Responders

Lord, may you watch over all of the men and women who work protecting others. We pray for police officers, firefighters, and paramedics, that they may have safe shifts and come home to their families each and every night.

We pray that through all the evil they see on a daily basis, that they remain compassionate and caring towards all. Lord I ask that you hear these prayers through St. Michael the Archangel. Amen

Irish construction bosses warned to prepare for hard Brexit

DUBLIN – Irish construction bosses have been warned to prepare for a hard Brexit and a possible restriction in the supply of building materials from the UK.

Officials from Ireland's housing department told a parliamentary committee that it was making contingency plans for the UK to be treated as a "third country" in the event of Britain leaving the EU without an agreement being reached.

Concerns were raised about the supply of construction materials from the UK during the meeting examining the effect of Brexit on the housing sector in Ireland.

Sarah Neary confirmed that in a no-deal scenario, every single construction product imported from the UK to Ireland would have to be re-certified to ensure they comply with EU regulations.

Neary said, "Post Brexit, UK manufacturers, distributors and importers of construction products placing products on the Irish market will need to continue to comply with the Construction Products Regulation [CPR].

"As we do not yet know what the eventual outcomes of the Brexit negotiations will be, we are nonetheless planning on the basis that the UK becomes a third country as of 30th March 2019."

She added: "For our particular area of responsibility in the notification process and that underlying certification of construction products, we are saying prepare for a hard Brexit which means you have to use a notified body that's established in a member state – be that in Ireland or in Europe has to be used."

At present, the regulation of products across Europe is harmonised by the EU.

Neary said the department had sought clarity from the European Commission about whether a transition agreement separate from the withdrawal agreement would be put in place in the case of the UK left without a deal.

Without a transition arrangement, the movement of goods may be delayed.

Asked whether there was a danger that the cost of construction materials may rise once the UK exited the EU, Neary said she could not comment.

The committee also heard that the department had concerns that higher net migration was going to lead to more people becoming homeless.

Neary said Brexit clearly had the potential to create further sharp swings in migration patterns.

"It is the strong view that significant increases in net migration would present a concern in relation to increased numbers of households having difficulty in accessing affordable accommodation," she said.

Neary said programmes aimed at increasing delivery of all types of homes – social, affordable and private – and strengthening the regulation of the private rental market and the delivery of additional emergency accommodation beds for the homeless were of "critical importance."

"Naturally, it is the department's ambition that increased housing output will be sufficient to meet demand, but we are also cognisant of the potential risk in this area and will be monitoring the situation very closely," she said.



THERE ARE concerns that Brexit will contribute to problems accessing affordable accommodation in Ireland due to a significant increase in net migration. At the moment it is estimated that 9,500 are homeless in Ireland, including more than 3,600 children.

More than 9,500 people were recorded as being homeless in Ireland at the end of September, according to the latest official figures, including more than 3,600 children.

The Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, which co-ordinates services across the capital's four local authorities, has set up a team to prepare for Brexit.



IRISH FERRIES setting sail from Pembroke Dock – but what happens next for Welsh ports? Over 400,000 lorries use the port of Holyhead every year – just one of several major routes to Ireland from Wales.

Welsh ports sign Brexit 'gagging orders'

CARDIFF – Welsh ports have been made to sign gagging clauses as part of Brexit discussions with the UK Government.

In a letter to the assembly's Brexit committee, UK minister Robin Walker said it was standard practice for "some conversations on confidential terms."

He said non-disclosure agreements made it easier for ports to share commercially sensitive information during Brexit preparations.

Plaid Cymru said the claim was "beyond laughable." The party's Brexit spokesman in the assembly, Steffan Lewis, added, "Why would any port need to sign an NDA in order to stop itself releasing information that could harm its own interests?"

But in the letter to the Senedd committee, the UK minister said the approach "allows a more free exchange of views about options and potential impacts in advance of there being settled policy."

He added, "It is anticipated that NDAs will be a diminishing feature of these steering groups as an increasing amount of information is made available generally."

A member of the UK Government's 'Welsh Ports and Airports Steering Group' confirmed they were "requested" to sign an NDA.

The source added that it prevented "speculation because some of what is discussed will be discounted" and that "nothing that I've heard suggests Armageddon."

The Welsh Government said it had not

"subjected any individual or organisation to an NDA."

The assembly's Brexit Committee has also released a report saying that a "no-deal" Brexit would pose a "serious threat" to the ports sector in Wales.

The committee's chair David Rees AM said, "What we found is that there needs to be a step-change in Welsh Government activity to support the sector prepare for a no-deal Brexit.

"If our worst fears of new delays and checks at Welsh ports like Holyhead and Fishguard are realised, Wales will need detailed plans to manage the fallout.

"That is why we were calling on the Welsh Government to publish details of any traffic management contingency plans it has, including outlining what new infrastructure spending may be required."

Welsh Government officials said its position was clear and no-deal "should be unthinkable."

"The UK Government must ensure that the UK as a whole participates in the single market and a customs union," said a spokesman.

"That would mean no new barriers to trade and no new customs infrastructure at our ports. These matters remain entirely the responsibility of the UK Government."

EU leaders signed off on the prime minister's Brexit deal in Brussels on November 25, but the potential of leaving the EU without a deal remains because there is no guarantee that Theresa May will be able to get support for the deal in the House of Commons.

IRISH SPORTS and SOCIAL SOCIETY EDMONTON
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Upcoming Events

December 2018

Dec 14 - Poker for Hampers (*Members Only*)

Dec 15 - Amie Weymes & The Atta Boys

Dec 21 - 25 For Hampers (*Members Only*)

Dec 31 - New Years Eve Dinner Dance with Music by Vibram Souls

January 2019

Jan 26 - Robbie Burns Night



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The Irish Women's Network of BC: marking 20 years of community service

VANCOUVER – Looking back at the first 20 years of the Irish Women's Network of B.C., what strikes me is that IWN has always been about responding to needs in our community. Take, for instance, the reason the Network was formed in the first place.

The fact that women who had no connection to business were joining the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce so as to attend social functions pointed to a gap in the offerings of Irish groups in the Lower Mainland.

The hope that the proposed network might fill this gap was realised in the alacrity and enthusiasm with which women joined it.

A notice in *The Celtic Connection* (where else!) brought 29 women to Burnaby Public Library on that April evening in 1998.

Although many were meeting for the first time, it wasn't long before the room was filled with chatter, warmth, and laughter, as women basked in the oasis-like relief of being among people to whom you didn't have to explain yourself; that, for instance, when you said "I'm after having my lunch" you were referring to an action taken, and not an intention or, indeed, if you said "she's out to lunch" you weren't implying that she wasn't the full shilling.

In groups, they talked excitedly about home, common interests, and possible activities.

The agreed aims were modest: to provide Irish women with opportunities for companionship, conversation, and mutual support and to be a resource for new immigrants. (This latter aim was initially vague and unambitious: where to find this, how to do that, and so on. It wasn't realised in any meaningful way for quite a few years.)

Like cream in the milk bottles of yore, leaders have a way of rising in any group.

And so it wasn't long before we had golf outings (organised by Marie Morris and her sister Noeleen Corr), literary gatherings, a book club, an anniversary lunch, and (my favourite) celebrations of that uniquely Irish event, Nollaig na mBan.

One woman who was notable for her innovation and endeavours from the beginning, and for many years, was Deirdre O'Ruairc, first as vice president and then as president.

She was the one who saw the need to recognise the contributions to the community, whether Irish or Canadian, made by Irish women. So she initiated the Woman of the Year award, springing the first one on my unsuspecting and astonished self in 1999.

As well as organising lunches, dinners, etc. and our participation each March in the CelticFest parade, Deirdre spotted another need: Ireland's representation among our fellow Europeans at an annual festival in Burnaby.

This she (supported by the ever-reli-

able and capable Geraldine Megannety) spearheaded for a number of years. She also represented Ireland's proud literary tradition at an exhibition mounted by Vancouver Public Library.

To this day, it is a mystery to me how Deirdre managed to get a special greeting to us at our Nollaig na mBan celebration from President Mary McAleese, and how she then followed that with the even more impressive achievements of IWN having a special lunch with President McAleese and her



IRISH WOMEN'S
NETWORK OF BC

By MARY
HATCH

husband, and later a breakfast with former Irish President and UN Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson.

The demise of the Celtic Tiger in 2008 was a shock to the Irish diaspora everywhere, but alarm bells rang when we started hearing Irish accents among young people here, for we realised that the haemorrhage of Ireland's lost gen-

eration had brought so many lately graduated and jobless young people to Vancouver.

Many of us, especially those working in education, knew the Irish way of looking for employment does not work in this part of the world.

Enter IWN's President Eilis Courtney who quickly established links with the Irish Government representatives.

She applied for, and received, funding to provide free information events for the newcomers, assisted by Geraldine who had valuable contacts among job-search gurus.

They rounded up members of the Irish community to advise and help with insider knowledge and contacts.

In the process, they not only enabled people to find jobs, but became the

go-to people for new arrivals helping them, among other things, with advice and passport applications.

At a recent lunch celebrating IWN's 20th anniversary, newly appointed Consul General Frank Flood, thanked Eilis for her hard work, saying she had "put the Irish Women's Network in a significant relationship with the Consulate and the Embassy."

NB: In contemplating our activities over two decades, many faces and names come to mind, faces and names of people whose efforts and enthusiasm have been so important in building IWN. Unfortunately I do not have enough space to mention them all, but I cannot finish without recognising the vital role played by Maura De Freitas and Catholine Butler of *The Celtic Connection*. We will always be grateful for their support and goodwill.

'Changed Utterly': A verbatim play based on the words of Constance Markievicz

VANCOUVER – Coming to the Jericho Arts Centre this February.....*Changed Utterly* created and directed by Joan Bryans.

Changed Utterly is a verbatim play based on the words of Constance Markievicz and some of the principle participants of the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, together with the songs and poetry of the day.

The play explores this founding member of the Citizen Army, gun in hand fighting for Ireland in the Easter Rebellion.

Who is this woman stirring the pot to feed the strikers of the great 1913 lock-out? A poet, actress, suffragette, who becomes the first female British member of parliament, the first woman cabinet minister anywhere? Constance Markievicz was indeed a woman to be reckoned with.

A press update from the director says the actors of *Changed Utterly* are busy rehearsing their first drill as members of the Irish Citizen Army.

Don't miss this play based on one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising – February 22 to March 16. More details at www.vitalsparktheatre.com.



REHEARSING as members of the Irish Citizen Army, actors prepare for opening night of 'Changed Utterly', a new play based on the words of Irish revolutionary Constance Markievicz

IRISH CLUB OF WHITE ROCK

A warm céad míle fáilte from White Rock

By DEIRDRE O'RUAIRC

The Irish Club of White Rock had a very successful year and we would like to extend a big welcome to all our new members this year.

Many new families have moved to the area, and it has been wonderful to have them join our various events throughout the year.

Please let your friends, family and newcomers know that there is a very active Irish club out here in White Rock, including Surrey and Langley, and all are welcome.

Our big events this year included our annual St. Patrick's Day dinner dance at the Hazelmere Golf and Tennis Club; our annual summer picnic at Redwood Park, Surrey; the children's Halloween party; and several pub socials.

In August, several club members helped out the Fraser Valley Gaels Football Club with the Western Canada GAA Championships held this year in Burnaby.

Our club works closely with the Fraser Valley Gaels, it is a lovely mutual part-

nership and one we greatly appreciate.

Our next big event is the annual Christmas dinner party, and this year it is held on Friday, December 7 at Cosmos Greek Restaurant on Marine Drive in White Rock.

In the new year, the annual St. Patrick's Day dinner dance will be held on Saturday, March 16 at the Hazelmere Lawn and Tennis Club.

Tickets are \$60 and details for reservations will be announced in the new year. Tickets sell out fast for this event as we have limited seating.

Don't forget, White Rock is only a 45-minute drive from Vancouver and there is always a welcome here for you, so be sure to share with family and friends.

The Irish Club of White Rock would like to wish each and every one of you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas and the very best of Irish luck in 2019.

Be sure to check our Facebook page for all upcoming events.

Sona Nollag agus an bhliain nua sásta.



Constance Georgine Markievicz, known as Countess Markievicz (née Gore-Booth) [February 4, 1868 – July 15, 1927] was an Irish politician, revolutionary, nationalist, suffragette and socialist who served as Ireland's Minister for Labour from 1919 to 1922. A founder member of Fianna Éireann, Cumann na mBan and the Irish Citizen Army, she took part in the Easter Rising in 1916, when Irish republicans attempted to end British rule and establish an Irish Republic.



FRANK FLOOD (centre), the new Irish Consul General in Vancouver, and his wife Orla Ní Bhroíthe (third from left) with Eilis Courtney, Mary Hatch, Marie Morris, and Deirdre O'Ruairc at the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Irish Women's Network.



MARY HATCH with former President of Ireland Mary Robinson who was a special guest of the Irish Women's Network during her term as UN Commissioner for Human Rights in 2006.



DEIRDRE O'RUAIRC with President Mary McAleese who was a guest of the IWN in 2005.



EILIS COURTNEY, Geraldine Megannety, Mary Hatch and Siobhan Airey at a free information event to assist new Irish arrivals in 2011.



FIRST PLACE at the IWN golf tournament in 2009 – Ann Innis, Marie Morris, Ann Carr and Noeleen Corr.



CEILI DANCING at an Irish Women's Network celebration of Nollaig na mBan.



IRISH WOMEN'S NETWORK volunteers at the 2008 St. Patrick's Day Parade in Vancouver.



OPENING CEREMONIES of the European Festival at the Scandinavian Community Centre with members of the Irish Women's Network representing Ireland. Pictured on the dias centre front: Deirdre O'Ruairc, 2006 president of the IWN, and 2006 Irish Woman of the Year, Catholine Butler of *The Celtic Connection*.



MEMBERS of the Irish Women's Network book club in Surrey in 2009.



PRESIDENT Michael D. Higgins has issued his Christmas and New Year message to the people of Ireland and all the Irish family.

Michael D. Higgins' message for the homeless as he lights Áras Christmas tree

DUBLIN – President Michael D. Higgins has lit the Áras Christmas tree and said his thoughts are with the homeless and the bereaved this year.

Speaking alongside his wife Sabina, President Higgins urged people to be aware of those less fortunate than them and those who have been recently bereaved.

Addressing an assembled crowd at the Áras, Higgins said, “As we enjoy the warm glow of Christmas that lights up the darkness of mid-winter it is important that we remember that Christmas can also be a very sad time of year; a time when people can feel especially lonely or sad or under pressure.

“Some people may be mourning the loss of a loved one, some people are far away from home and are probably missing their family. Others are without the security of a home and will

wake up on Christmas morning in shelters, in cramped rooms or even out on the bitterly cold streets.”

Higgins then used his speech to send a message to all those who are homeless in Ireland, especially the children and those caught in the direct provision system.

He added, “We call to mind in a special way all the children in temporary shelter or in hotel rooms for whom we must care at this time.

“And so this evening, as we light the Christmas tree in Áras an Uachtaráin, let us remember all of the people for whom it is being lit – we will remember the lonely, the ill and the homeless, the bereaved for whom this Christmas will be a particularly sad and difficult time, our emigrants, particularly those who cannot make it home for Christmas this year but will

be with us in spirit ; and those who have come to Ireland in recent times to make a new home here, including all those in direct provision, and who will be bringing their own special memories to their Christmas celebrations.

“We also remember all those who will be working this Christmas to keep us safe and well – members of the Irish Defence Forces who will be absent from home this Christmas due to peace-keeping duties abroad; and we remember – the Gardaí, the fire service and all the medical staff who will ensure that the sick and the elderly continue to be cared for while the rest of us are enjoying our family celebrations.”

The president said that despite the difficult economic times Ireland is experiencing there is much to be proud of as we prepare for the New Year.

‘Families need a Christmas miracle’: Irish-funded doctors to help Chernobyl babies in war-torn Ukraine

DUBLIN – A TEAM OF Irish-funded doctors have travelled to Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine to perform life-saving surgeries for children affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

But the group, who are travelling with the charity Chernobyl Children International, did not have an easy passage because of an ongoing conflict involving Russian separatists in the region.

The area, which is under martial law, has seen daily exchanges between Ukrainian Government troops and pro-Russian militias who have de facto control of border areas.

“History has a habit of repeating itself, but I didn’t expect the repetition so quickly,” Dr. William Novick, one of those travelling.

“But we’re not deterred, because we know how valuable our help is and how anxious families are looking for their Christmas miracles.”

In 1986, a catastrophic nuclear accident occurred at a power station in

Chernobyl, releasing huge amounts of radioactive material into the environment.

The disaster led to the creation of a 30 kilometre exclusion zone around the station, as well as long-term health effects on those who lived in the region, including fatal cancers.

One of these conditions ‘Chernobyl Heart’, affects children born in the region whose bodies absorb radioactive material as they develop.

Over 6,000 babies are born with heart defects in the country every year, and they suffer from a range of health effects, including high blood pressure and holes in their hearts.

To assist them, the Irish-funded doctors have travelled to perform life-saving operations on babies as young as one day old who live in towns and villages affected by the accident.

For Novick, however, their journey has recalled previous missions by the group.

“It was not too long ago when politics and egos tried to disrupt our mission to help the children with heart defects,” he recalls.

In 2014, violence in the area forced the charity to suspend surgeries for Chernobyl’s youngest victims.

However, the group’s founder Adi Roche said despite the risks involved, the team has assessed the situation and feels that their role is too important not to travel.

“The reality is that one in every four children diagnosed with the heart defect known as ‘Chernobyl Heart’ will die before they reach the age of six,” she said.

“So the programmes we organise and fund each year are really a race against time.”

She added that while the atmosphere in Ukraine is still volatile, the team will continue the work it has been doing in the country for the past 14 years while it can.

Majority of people think Sinn Féin should take its Westminster seats for crucial Brexit vote

BELFAST – A majority of people believe that Sinn Féin should break its long-standing policy of not taking its seats in Westminster, so it can back the Brexit deal that guarantees no hard border in Northern Ireland

The deal agreed between Theresa May’s government and the EU has been hailed a good one for Ireland, offering crucial guarantees on a backstop that would prevent such hard border on the island.

However, the numbers currently don’t look good for the deal to be ratified by parliament as the crucial House of Commons vote looms on December 11.

According to a poll for RTÉ’s Claire Byrne Live by Amarach Research, 57 percent of people said they think Sinn Féin MPs should take their seats in Westminster so they can vote for May’s Brexit deal.

Of the over 1,000 Irish adults surveyed for the poll, 20 percent said the MPs shouldn’t, while 23 percent said they didn’t know either way.

As it stands right now, Theresa May needs all the help she can get.

The House of Commons has 650 seats, with four of its members abstaining from voting – the speaker and his three deputies.

The Conservative party as it stands does not have a majority in the parliament in Westminster.

It has been backed up by the DUP since last year’s general election, as its 10 seats have supplemented the Tories’ 315.

It is highly unlikely that the DUP will back the deal.

So, on that alone, if all opposition parties voted against the deal – May would lose even if all her party members voted for it.

And, again, there’s likely to be a sizeable number of Conservatives voting against the deal.

May has been seeking to canvass support throughout the past few weeks, but her position is looking increasingly precarious as the vote looms.

Given the current state of the numbers, it is not clear that Sinn Féin could sway the vote with its 7 MPs.

Republican abstentionism from elected office stretches back over 100 years. It is just over 30 years ago that Sinn Féin agreed to end its abstentionist policy from the Dáil by 429 votes to 161.

The long-standing practice of refusing to take up seats in Westminster continues to this day, with the party running candidates on the clear policy of abstentionism.

Voters are made aware that a vote for Sinn Féin in the House of Commons means they’re voting for a candidate who will not take up a seat if elected.

All MPs must take an oath to the Queen when taking their seats in Westminster, swearing true allegiance to the monarch. Sinn Féin opts not to do this.

Writing in the Guardian in March, Sinn Féin MP Paul Maskey said that sitting in the British parliament is “not what I was elected for”.

“We are not British MPs,” he said. “We are Irish MPs and we believe the interests of the Irish people can only be served by democratic institutions on the island of Ireland.

Sinn Féin goes to the electorate seeking a mandate for that position. We are elected as MPs who vote for Sinn Féin not to take seats at Westminster.

Maskey went on to say that the “people of Ireland will not find a solution to Brexit in the parliament that is imposing it”.

In a poll conducted by the same pollsters earlier this year, 67 percent of people said they thought Sinn Féin MPs should take their seats to vote on Brexit issues.

How should Sceilg Mhichíl be protected? People urged to have their say

The Irish Government has launched a public consultation on a new 10-year management plan for the World Heritage Site off the coast of Kerry – Sceilg Mhichíl.

The towering rocky island has become a huge tourist draw in recent years, as it has served as the home of Luke Skywalker in the latest installments of the *Star Wars* saga.

Its history dates back centuries, when monks founded a monastery on the rock. While the monastic community had largely moved back to the mainland by the 13th Century, it continued to be venerated as a place of pilgrimage.

However, as it is a UNESCO protected site, visitors are strictly limited by number and to certain times of the year.

The new consultation is around “protecting and preserving the outstanding universal value of the site, while allowing it to be accessible to local com-

munities and visitors to experience and enjoy its cultural and spiritual richness,” a statement from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht said.

Those with an interest in the management of the site are urged to make their views known so they can be considered before the department sends its full plan to UNESCO in the New Year.

Minister Josepha Madigan said Sceilg Mhichíl stood above all of Ireland’s wonderful archaeological monuments in terms of its visibility and prominence.

She added, “It is the remit of my Department and of the OPW to preserve, conserve and manage this great site not only for the people of Ireland, but for the whole world.

Anyone seeking to participate in the consultation can send a submission to skelligmanagementplan@chg.gov.ie.

Poppies, Protest and the Past

REMEMBRANCE Sunday, November 11, 2018, passed off as it always does in the United Kingdom with an efflorescence throughout the disunited polity of red artificial flowers worn on lapels to commemorate “the fallen” in the Great War, 1914-18. The only problem is that that is not all the poppy symbolises.

The association of the poppy with the First World War dead derives from a poem by a Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel, John McCrae:

*Take up our quarrel with the foe!
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high!
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep,
though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

The poppy, according to this verse, represents an incitement to war and the rallying cry in a recruitment campaign.

Given that the poem was published in 1915, it played its part in thickening the supply of young volunteers for WWI.

Not enough though: By January 1916, men were being conscripted in Britain. Ultimately conscripted soldiers outnumbered volunteers, which gives the lie to the myth of the gallant patriot leaping to sacrifice himself for his country.

It is also to write out of history the mass protests against WWI conscription, something that suits the British Government eminently well.

The soldiers made their sacrifice for King and country – so the rhetoric goes – yet it is more plausible to assert that Britain sacrificed the soldiers.

Unfortunately, the explosive device within the poppy’s delicate bud is rarely perceived in Britain today; and public figures who do not wear a poppy in the run up to Remembrance Sunday are systematically hectorated.

In 2015, for example, actress Sienna Miller was pilloried for not wearing a poppy when she was interviewed on the Graham Norton Show.

She later explained: “Of course, I don’t think there’s anyone in this country who isn’t grateful and respectful and never would want to cause offence and wear a poppy all the time.”

Progress on peace walls in NI stalled over politics

The lack of devolved government in Northern Ireland is hampering efforts to transform the region’s peace walls, according to the chairman of the International Fund for Ireland.

There are an estimated 116 barriers separating unionist and nationalist communities across Northern Ireland.

They are mostly located in Belfast but are also present in Derry as well as Co. Armagh towns Lurgan and Portadown.

A small number have been removed or transformed, including one at a former flashpoint in Ardoyne in north Belfast in 2016.

THE VIEW FROM IRELAND



By
**MAURICE
FITZPATRICK**

Well, not quite. Negative reaction to the poppy is reasonably prevalent and it is, at a minimum, worthwhile considering why some people resent the pressure to wear it.

During WWI, an average of 6,000 soldiers were killed *per day* over a four year period.

It is hardly surprising that a government substantially culpable for this level of carnage should try to focus people’s attention on the victims rather than the victimisers – lest uncomfortable questions arise about its machinations, past and present.

As poet Wilfred Owen put it, elders who encourage the young to die for their country spread the “old lie” that it is “sweet and proper” to do so.

Before the Troubles, it was much more common for nationalists and unionists alike to remember the WWI dead in town squares throughout the North in November, and to wear the poppy.

After 1969, many Republicans consciously repudiated those affinities; and attacked those, typically from a unionist background, who retained them. Hence the IRA’s horrific bombing of Protestant civilians in Enniskillen on Remembrance Sunday 1987.

The massacre at Enniskillen is always in the backdrop when a new crop of Sinn Féin politicians, who are seeking distance from the IRA’s violent campaign, comment on the poppy.

For example, in an RTÉ television debate in October, interviewer Claire Byrne pushed Sinn Féin presidential

candidate Liadh Ní Riada about her attitude towards wearing a poppy, which put Ní Riada in a double-bind.

If she were elected head of state, her duties would involve laying wreaths at cenotaphs, raising the expectation from a British and unionist perspective that she might wear a poppy. To many Sinn Féin supporters, that would be anathema.

On the occasion, Ní Riada replied: “I think it is a sign of maturity that if you wear a symbol, such as the poppy, that you are saying we have come this far in extending the hand of peace and friendship, and so, yes, I would.”

A poster of Liadh Ní Riada outside Letterkenny in Donegal was promptly smeared in red: “Wear your blood stained poppy.”

Sinn Féin Senator Padraig Mac Lochlainn (who also featured on the defaced poster) swiftly stated that he would never wear a poppy since it “represents all British soldiers in all conflicts.” Mac Lochlainn’s assertion is factually correct.

As Gulf war veteran Charles Plumridge argued: “*Any questioning* of the poppy can only cause anguish to the people that have worn it with pride over the years, the families of those who gave their lives and those people *who are still doing so* [italics mine].”

This reveals the nub of the matter. If people are free at all, they must be free to question, and they are right to question what the poppy means.

In part, it means and Plumridge – as good as admits this – refusing to question the justifications given by the British Government for deploying its army to kill and be killed, and in recent decades even breaking international law in the process.

It means refusing to confront Wilfred Owen’s exhortation to cease telling children “the old lie.” And, by refusing to question and to form a judgement of one’s own on the matter, it means falling well short of the maturity that defenders of the poppy are so apt to invoke.

There is nothing so unnerving to people who insist on the universal acceptance of the poppy than self-definition.

The message is clear: piety is in; probing is out. Remembrance Sunday invites soft-spoken patriotism, delimiting the commemorative act to feeling the WWI loss, but not thinking it through.

The objective of this deceit is to debar historical enquiry and debate about why 6,000 soldiers a day died, and where responsibility for their death lies. That is the pup being sold by British officialdom.

The public pressure to wear a poppy today mirrors the distribution during WWI of white feathers to “cowards”, conscientious objectors who did not sign up to fight. *Plus ça change....*

It is a pathetic sight to now watch people who presume to advocate republicanism buying into the same fraud in the name of “maturity.”

That is another lie. In one version of *Waltzing Matilda*, a survivor of WWI, having returned from the Gallipoli peninsula without his legs, is forced to witness commemorations of WWI back in Australia.

He ruefully observes: “And the young people ask, ‘What are they marching for?’ and I ask myself the same question.”



Light in the Dark – How Science and the Solstice Illuminate a Landscape of Hatred

By CYNTHIA WALLENTINE

From our archaic past, the fundamental message of the Solstice season lights our way toward a greater day of reason a day that is seemingly beyond humanity at present.

A recent opinion piece in *The New York Times* discusses the neuroscience of hate speech.

Barbarism, deceit, misogyny, ignorance, racism, and select transactional truth are routinely fed into the world by the American president, ostensibly to “fire up” his voter base in the United States.

Yet governments and fascist groups around the world are using his vitriol to their advantage, willing even to murder to ensure their path to power is clear.

As most of us know, propaganda has long been used to vilify the “other,” whether it is an individual of a different gender, religion, background, or appearance.

The author of the *Times* piece, Dr. Richard Friedman, cites several studies that remind us that when threatened, we humans can behave pretty poorly.

By terrorizing people into a chronic state of fear, confusion and uncertainty, bogies like Trump groom their audience to despise those whom he suggests are waiting to take jobs, money, or physical security.

Gifted only at name-calling, Trump works hard to dehumanize anyone and anything that protests his sick agenda.

Citing a study at Princeton, Friedman notes, “distrust of an out-group is linked to anger and impulses toward violence.

“This is particularly true when a society faces economic hardship and people are led to see outsiders as competitors for their jobs.”

From the standpoint of neuroscience, we are hard-wired to react quickly to threat.

If an out-group, such as immigrants, or just those who are different than us, are constantly portrayed as a threat, it becomes easier to forget higher level behavior, and drop into the gutter with threats and even violence.

Of the overall population, the majority of people living in North America are immigrants, or descended from immigrants. We were, or are, all members of an “out-group” at some point.

It is shocking and disturbing that we forget our empathy, our intelligence, and our manners, just because the sandbox bully in the American White House can form words on an electronic device.

Science tells us negativity is catchy. The primal base of our brain, the amygdala, doesn’t understand we no longer live in caves. It responds to threat, with action if need be.

That kind of stress shortens lives, constricts arteries, and makes enemies out of neighbors.

Trump agitates his base at ongoing campaign rallies to feed himself from the fires of hate that he stokes in the audience. Are you among them?

In a world so polarized, it is not hard to turn friends into enemies, make strangers threatening, or justify violence against women, children, or men. It is wrong.

All humans are capable of dark twisted violence under the right conditions. Hate is easy, it takes no strength. It has always been so.

Humans are also capable of inestimable grace, joy, and compassion.

But finding the light in someone else, or something else, now, that takes work. It takes empathy.

Have you ever sought to be understood? Lived in a desperate condition? Known or loved someone who has?

Our genetic inheritance is riven with tides of lives whose struggles left their mark in our cells.

The winter solstice is on Friday, December 21 this year. It occurs when the sun appears to finally turn back to a darkened world.

The new growing season is born from the darkest moment of the solar year.

The world has always awaited the light of the solstice, our kind has created festivals, customs, and religions to explain and to nurture the newborn sun.

Tyrants and heroes populate the history and mythology of humankind.

Folklore offers a steady word on how the rest of us might live our lives facing challenges that repeat over and over again through the ages.

This day, and this tyrant, are not special.

Just as light can never vanquish darkness, darkness can never conquer light.

Solstice gives us unswerving knowledge that light will return to the world, and that light can return to the heart that is open to showing compassion and empathy to others.

Remember the stories of your forebears, remember your children, or your friends and family. Remember the light.

When you can illuminate the night for another, instead of adding to the darkness, you return balance to a world in need, or maybe just offer warmth to a passing soul.

Blessed Be.

DANIEL MULHALL

Ireland's Ambassador to the U.S. Visits Seattle, WA



DAN MULHALL the Ambassador of Ireland to the United States speaking to members of the Irish Network Seattle at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle on December 7, 2018.



(L-R) ROBERT O'DRISCOLL, Consul General of Ireland to the Western United States; Matthew O'Toole, Irish Network Seattle board member; Caroline Lee, president of the Irish Network Seattle; Dan Mulhall, Ireland's Ambassador to the United States; with Irish Network Seattle board members: Padraic Jordan, Fionnuala O'Sullivan, and Aine Richards, following the Irish Network Seattle breakfast at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle on December 7, 2018.



(L-R) IRISH NETWORK SEATTLE president Caroline Lee, the Consul General of Ireland to the Western United States Robert O'Driscoll, Ireland's Ambassador to the United States Dan Mulhall, Port of Seattle Commission president Courtney Gregoire, Amazon director for user experience and people technology Elaine O'Toole, and Ivar's restaurants president Bob Donegan pose for a picture after Mulhall spoke at an Irish Network Seattle breakfast at the Washington Athletic Club December 7, 2018 in Seattle.

By JOHN KEANE

SEATTLE – Daniel Mulhall, Ireland's 18th Ambassador to the United States, was in Seattle from Thursday, December 6, to Saturday, December 8.

The purpose of his visit was to extend business links between the Pacific Northwest and Ireland, especially following the start of a direct Seattle-Dublin flight last May, and to support the possibility of a Seattle-area business mission to Ireland in 2019.

While in Seattle, he had various meetings with local businesses and business groups.

He also met with Washington State Governor Jay Inslee and Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson.

His public events included a speech at Seattle University hosted by the University's Institute of Public Service; a talk at a business breakfast hosted by Irish Network Seattle; and he attended an Irish seniors' luncheon where he was greeted by about 180 attendees.

Ambassador Mulhall took up his duties as Ambassador of Ireland to the U.S. in August 2017.

He was born and brought up in Waterford and after studying at University College Cork joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1978.

His early diplomatic assignments were in New Delhi, Vienna (OSCE), Brus-

sels (European Union) and Edinburgh where he was Ireland's first Consul General, 1998-2001.

He served as Ireland's Ambassador to Malaysia from 2001-05, as Ireland's Ambassador to Germany from 2009-13, and as Ireland's Ambassador in London from 2013-17.

During his diplomatic career, Ambassador Mulhall also served as a member of the Secretariat of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (1994-95) which was set up in 1994 in order to promote political dialogue between different political traditions in Ireland.

From 1994-98, he was the Department's Press Counsellor and in that capacity was part of the Irish Government's delegation at the time of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

A keen advocate of public diplomacy, Ambassador Mulhall makes regular use of social media in order to provide information on the work of the Embassy, to highlight Ireland's achievements and to engage with Irish communities and those with an interest in Ireland.

During his time in Washington, he provides daily updates on Twitter @DanMulhall and through regular blogs posted on the Embassy's website.

Daniel Mulhall is married to Greta and they have a daughter and a son.



AMBASSADOR Mulhall speaking at the podium at a breakfast meeting hosted by Irish Network Seattle on December 7, 2018.



LOUISE MARTELL, president of the All-Ireland Cultural Society of Oregon, Dan Mulhall, Ireland's Ambassador to the U.S., and John Keane, Honorary Consul of Ireland in Seattle at the Irish Network Seattle breakfast at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle.



PHOTO: Brendan Shriane

(L-R) GRETA MULHALL, Rozarii Lynch, Ireland's Ambassador to the United States Dan Mulhall, Eidin Dolan, and Don Brady at the Irish Network Seattle breakfast at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle on December 7, 2018.



IRISH CONSUL GENERAL to the Western United States Robert O'Driscoll; Irish Development Authority's Turlough McCormack; Greta Mulhall; Ambassador Dan Mulhall; and Starbucks Senior VP John Kelly at the Starbucks Reserve Roastery in Seattle.



PIANIST John Tobin, uilleann piper Rod Margason, choir director Miriam Doyle, and harpist Molly Bauckham, with Nancy Ingle in the background (rear left), at the social hour following Seattle's Mass in Gaelic on November 9.



FR. MARTIN BOURKE and Fr. John Madigan chatting with Philomena Kenna, Cecilia Richards and Elizabeth Belton at the social hour following Seattle's Mass in Gaelic on November 9.

SEATTLE IRISH NEWS

PASSINGS

• Ed Harkin (86), who grew up mostly in Donegal and Westmeath, and lived in Seattle for 52 years during which time he coached the Seattle Gaels, died on November 26 in Thailand;

• Sister Rose Donohoe, CSJP (103), a native of Co. Leitrim who joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in Bellingham in 1936, died November 12 in Bellevue;

• Colm McGlynn, husband of Monica and a Seattle resident since the 1950s, died in his native Co. Donegal November 10;

• Ann Harvey Lynch (91), whose parents were from Armagh and Donegal, and who was a sister of the late Jack Harvey and mother of Judge Brian Lynch, died November 6 in Seattle;

• Vera Carlston (93), a native of Co. Kildare who lived in Everett for over 50 years, died in Dublin November 2, two years after she returned to live in Ireland following her husband's death;

• Máirtín Durrane (54), a native of Inis Mór (Inishmore), Aran Islands, Co. Galway, a fisherman who worked in Seattle for over 20 years, drowned in Seattle October 24;

• Helen Tannahill (60), daughter of Irish immigrants the late John and Kathleen Duggan, died October 19 in Tacoma;

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis
— May their faithful souls
rest at God's right hand

IRISH WEEK 2019 – For those planning ahead, the main events of Irish Week 2019 in Seattle will be the May-

By
JOHN
KEANE

or's Irish Week Proclamation Luncheon on Friday, March 15; the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Saturday, March 16; while the Irish Festival at the Seattle Center will be held Saturday and Sunday, March 16 and 17.

The Irish Heritage Club website is currently being updated but when complete all the details for the upcoming Seattle Irish Week can be found at www.irishweek.org.

IHC AGM – At the recent annual general meeting and election of officers for the Irish Heritage Club, Betty Egan, Candace Dunne, Heather Murphy, and Jane Sepede were re-elected to three-year terms on the board of directors while officers for the coming year

were elected as follows: David Jacobsen, president; Ari Hausler, vice-president; Jane Sepede, secretary; John Keane, treasurer; and Caron McMahon, membership secretary. More information at www.irishclub.org.

MISCELLANEOUS

• Contact Seattle's Irish Book Club at jaadams095@gmail.com (note new email address)

• The 40th Annual Magical Strings Celtic Yuletide Concerts throughout the Northwest, through December 21 with Seattle's concert on December 15 – visit www.magicalstrings.com.

• Mark your calendar for Nollaig na mBan, the Irish Women's Christmas celebration on Sunday, January 6, 2019 – call 253-237-2811

• Also mark your calendar for 2019 Irish Night at the Seattle Mariners on Thursday, July 25, vs. the Detroit Tigers

*Go raibh síochán na Nollag agus
Bliain Nua faoi shéan 's
faoi shonars ort 's ar do mhuintir!*

May the peace of Christmas
and a happy and prosperous
New Year be with you and yours!

Special thanks to Brendan Shriane for the photo round-up



MARY SHRIANE and Tara Barnes at the social hour following Seattle's Mass in Gaelic on November 9.



OLIVIA BERMINGHAM-MCDONAGH and Caron McMahon at the social hour following Seattle's Mass in Gaelic on November 9.

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WORLD RUGBY MEN'S 15s Player of the Year award winner Johnny Sexton (L) and Irish national team captain Rory Best pose with their trophies during the World Rugby Awards on November 25, 2018 at the Monte Carlo Sporting Club in Monaco.

Johnny Sexton becomes the first Irishman to be crowned World Player of the Year in 17 years

DUBLIN – Johnny Sexton has become the first Irishman since Keith Wood in 2001 to be crowned World Rugby Player of the Year.

The announcement was made at a lavish ceremony in Monte Carlo on the evening of November 25.

Ireland captain Rory Best had to read out Sexton's acceptance speech because he had lost his voice due to a throat infection.

The Ireland and Leinster out-half beat off competition from Beauden Barrett, who was trying to win the award for the third year in succession, Rieko Ioane and South Africa duo Faf De Klerk and Malcolm Marx.

Joe Schmidt, who has announced his decision to leave his position as Ireland head coach after next year's Rugby World Cup in Japan, was crowned World Rugby Coach of the Year.

The 53-year-old Kiwi has guided Ireland to number two in the world

rankings after a stellar 2018 which included a third ever Grand Slam, a series victory in Australia and a first win over the All Blacks on home soil, but will not extend his contract beyond next year's tournament.

Ireland were also named World Rugby Team of the Year after losing just one game in 2018.

Sports Minister Shane Ross congratulated the IRFU on a "remarkable achievement."

"What we saw against the All Blacks was an unbelievable team performance to do something that hadn't been done before, this group of players are very special and continue to raise our expectations, Joe has brought the team to a new level and these are indeed exciting times as we look forward to next year.

"Johnny Sexton has been that general on the field, and is a role model off it as well so it is fitting that he is crowned player of the year."

Best in the world: Ireland defeat All Blacks with epic display

Ireland 16
New Zealand 9

DUBLIN – Raise the arm, salute the winner, the undisputed heavy-weight champions wearing emerald green.

It didn't need a hyped-up promoter to over-sell an occasion that lived up to its top-of-the-card billing from first whistle to last with punch and counter-punch, a match for the ages, confirmed only at the death with New Zealand striving right to the end.

The All Blacks didn't score a try. Now there's a sentence that has rarely been penned over the last decade and encapsulates just how stirring Ireland's defence was, built on the credo that they shall not pass. And they didn't.

So now Ireland duly lay claim to being the best in the world in 2018 after recording their first ever win over the All Blacks in Dublin thanks to Jacob Stockdale's 48th-minute try.

It was a moment of affirmation, a significant staging post en route to next year's Rugby World Cup, a statement of intent for that tournament and a tantalising re-ordering of the leading contenders.

New Zealand, particularly in the first half, were well beaten, more than the scoreboard suggests.

Ireland have been a gathering force for the last two years, a team on the rise with a Grand Slam to their name but without that final notch on the belt that would confirm their improving status. This was it.

This was the result that Ireland craved, proof that they belonged among the real elite of the game.

If they had fluffed this audition, their self-belief would have splintered and they would have travelled to Japan with hope rather than expectation to fortify them.

To judge by the roars of acclaim that rang out far across the Dublin dockside, such thoughts lay within the hearts and minds of their supporters, too.



JOEY CARBERY and Jacob Stockdale pump their fists at the final whistle for the Rugby World Cup.



JACOB STOCKDALE scores a sensational try for Ireland.

Ireland are on their way. Champions of Europe is one thing. This is quite another. As New Zealand themselves recognised.

"As of now they are the number one team in the world so I guess that does make them favourites for the World Cup," said All Blacks head coach Steve Hansen.

"But there is a lot of water to go under the bridge before the World Cup starts.

"When you get beaten it hurts. The dressing room is quiet, sombre. The players are gutted and that is how you should feel when you get beaten."

And even if Ireland were under the

pump as the clock went into the red and waves of black shirts bore down on them again, there was simply a feeling that this was their time.

They would not give way, that deep-rooted desire and punishing defence eventually causing Brodie Retallick, a man who can probably count the errors in his entire career on the fingers of one hand, to knock on.

That was a measure of Irish defiance and sense of certainty.

Flanker Peter O'Mahony was a giant – resolute, implacable, persistent. The Munsterman gave his very being to the cause.

Johnny Sexton, forever probing, forever challenging, had to be dragged from the field with cramp a few minutes from time, fighting to the last for every inch.

Josh van der Flier on the other flank, a late call-up on Friday, played with the devil and assurance of a regular.

Kieran Marmion didn't miss a beat at scrum-half, Jacob Stockdale on the wing was a force field of activity, getting the vital touchdown that sent Ireland clear.

It was the sort of classy finish that is the hallmark of an All Black. Those terms of reference will have to be redefined.

It was the collective identity of Ireland's play that left an indelible mark. There was not a single second in the frenetic action when anyone in green was not on-message.

They had been brilliantly schooled by Joe Schmidt, whose stock in his New Zealand homeland will have risen considerably after this triumph, cementing his own claims to be the next All Blacks head coach, and imbued, too, with the zeal of defence coach Andy Farrell.

This was the fourth victory over New Zealand in which he has been involved in the last six years.

Raheem Sterling: Manchester City star accuses British newspapers of helping to 'fuel racism' in football

LONDON – Football star Raheem Sterling has accused British newspapers of helping to "fuel racism" in their portrayal of young black players, the day after he was subjected to alleged racist abuse in the Premier League.

Sterling said he "expects no better" following the incident during Manchester City's 2-0 defeat by Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Saturday, December 8.

The incident, which showed supporters allegedly shouting racial abuse at Sterling, was captured on camera and widely shared on social media, is being investigated by police, Chelsea and the English Football Association.

In a heartfelt post written on Instagram, Sterling said he "just had to laugh" at



RAHEEM STERLING

the events of Saturday before urging newspapers to treat both black and white players equally.

"Regarding what was said at the Chelsea game, as you can see by my reaction, I just had to laugh because I don't expect no better," he wrote.

Next to his message, Sterling posted screenshots of two articles, both on the *MailOnline*, about two Manchester City teammates Tosin Adarabioyo

and Phil Foden purchasing houses.

"You have two young players starting out there [*sic*] careers both play for the same team, both have done the right thing which is buy a new house for all [*sic*] mothers who have put in a lot of time and love into helping them get where they are, but look how the newspapers get there [*sic*] message across for the young black player and the young white player," he wrote.

"I think this is unacceptable both innocent have not done a thing wrong but just by the way it has been worded.

"The young black kid is looked at in a bad light. Which helps fuel racism and aggressive behavior, so for all the newspapers that don't understand why people are racist in this day and age all I have to say is have a second thought about fair publicity and give all players an equal chance."

Sterling has often been featured on both the front and back pages of a number of British tabloid newspapers.

Before last summer's World Cup he was attacked for having a tattoo of an assault rifle on his leg, a tattoo that Sterling said was a tribute to his father who was murdered when the footballer was just two.

The 24-year-old England star has also been criticized for buying clothes at a high-street store and for buying his mother a house.

His actions were praised by a number of ex-professional players on Twitter, including former England striker Gary Lineker. "He most certainly has a point. It's brave and right that @sterling7 speaks out," Lineker tweeted.

Former France and Manchester United defender Patrice Evra also praised Sterling while hitting out at the alleged racist abuse which took place Saturday.

"I saw what happened with @sterling7 yesterday....How does this happen still in 2018?!"

"It doesn't matter what colour your skin is or your religion or what country you are from we need to be kind to each other. Love is so much more powerful than hate," Evra tweeted.

Martin O'Neill waves goodbye to Republic of Ireland

DUBLIN – Martin O'Neill has said he left the job as Republic of Ireland football manager with a "heavy heart" after agreeing to part company with the FAI.

O'Neill has occupied the manager's seat since 2013. He was summoned to emergency talks with FAI CEO John Delaney late on November 20 where the decision was made for him and assistant Roy Keane to depart.

O'Neill subsequently released a statement through the League Managers' Association.

"I will not forget the night in Lille when we beat Italy to secure the nation's best ever achievement in the Euros competition, the terrific night we beat the world champions Germany at home in Dublin, or James McClean's goal in that euphoric win against Wales in Cardiff that put us through to the play-offs for this year's World Cup," he said.

"The Irish fans have been a source of motivation to myself, the team and the whole backroom staff, embodying the passionate Irish spirit, and I thank them for their fervent support of the team.

"I am also very proud of the relationships I have built with the players, who have carried that very same spirit, imbued by the fans, on to the field of play."

O'Neill added, "A special thanks to Roy Keane my assistant, an inspirational figure in the world of football, Seamus McDonagh, Steve Guppy and Steve Walford for their brilliant contributions and to those backroom staff at the FAI that were of enormous help to me."

The Republic didn't win a competitive game in 2018, and like their northern counterparts, were relegated from their group in the newly-established Nations League.



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND football manager Martin O'Neill (R) and his assistant Roy Keane (L) have been fired by the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) after the team won just one out of their nine games in 2018.

The Republic were also mired in controversy over claims of rows between players and O'Neill's fiery assistant Keane.

O'Neill stoutly defended the former Manchester United star, who was infamously sent home from the Republic's World Cup squad in Japan in 2002 after a furious bust-up with manager Mick McCarthy.

O'Neill's own experiences of the World Cup were altogether happier ones as he was one of the heroes, and captain, during Northern Ireland's glory days in Spain in 1982.

A statement from the FAI has confirmed O'Neill's exit. The management team of Keane, Seamus McDonagh (goalkeeping coach), and Steve Guppy (assistant coach) have also parted company with the FAI.

FAI President Donal Conway said, "On behalf of the FAI Board, I would like to thank Martin, Roy, and the management team for their work with

the Republic of Ireland team over the last five years.

"Martin ensured that we enjoyed some great nights in the Aviva Stadium and on the road in Lille, Vienna, and Cardiff, which were fantastic high points for Irish football."

FAI Chief Executive John Delaney paid tribute to O'Neill by saying, "I would like to thank Martin, Roy, and the management team for the impact that they had with the Ireland team. There have been many highlights during Martin's reign – none more so than EURO 2016 in France, which will live long in the memory of all Irish supporters.

"Martin did a great job guiding the team out of a difficult qualifying group – where we beat World Champions Germany along the way – to reach EURO 2016 and advance to the Last-16 following a historic victory over Italy in Lille.

"I wish Martin, and the management team, the very best for the future."

500-year-old skeleton, still wearing thigh-high boots, found in London

LONDON – British archaeologists have unearthed a "mysterious" skeleton found lying face down in the mud near the shore of the River Thames in London, still wearing thigh-high boots and believed to be from the 15th Century.

A team of archaeologists was working on a site for London's new "super sewer" in Bermondsey earlier this year when they found what is believed to be a 500-year-old male skeleton with a pair of leather boots still intact around his feet.

"By studying the boots, we've been able to gain a fascinating glimpse into the daily life of a man who lived as many as 500 years ago," Beth Richardson of the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) said in a statement.

"They have helped us to better understand how he may have made his living in hazardous and difficult conditions but also how he may have died."

The museum believes the boots date back to the late 15th or early 16th Century and are thought to be waders.

"Leather was expensive and often re-



PHOTO: Museum of London Archaeology

BRITISH archaeologists have unearthed a "mysterious" skeleton found lying face down in the mud near the shore of the River Thames in London.

used at this time, and experts believe it is unlikely that someone would have been buried wearing such a highly prized item," the museum noted.

MOLA said based on its studying of the footwear, research suggests the man wasn't buried deliberately due to his "unusual" position. The skeleton was found with "one arm above his head with the other bent back on itself to the side."

"These clues could suggest that he fell or drowned and was covered quickly

by the ground as it moved with the tide," MOLA noted.

The museum's osteologists believe the man was no older than 35 before he met his demise and possibly suffered from osteoarthritis.

"Possibly the biggest clues about his life are deep grooves found on his teeth," MOLA noted. "They were caused by a repetitive action like passing rope between his teeth as a fisherman might, which may also suggest that he made his living from the river."



ACTOR Joe Whiteman previously played his ancestor at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2016.

Descendant to play Andrew Carnegie in his hometown

EDINBURGH – The great-great-great-grandson of Andrew Carnegie is to play the Scottish philanthropist when a musical about his life is staged in his hometown.

Joe Whiteman, is descended from the Dunfermline-born business man on his mother's side.

The 28-year-old music teacher will reprise the role in *Carnegie – The Star Spangled Scotchman*, after playing the part at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2016.

The show will have a two-night run at Carnegie Theatre in Dunfermline, Scotland from May 17 next year.

Carnegie, who died in Massachusetts in 1919, is said to have given almost 90 percent of his fortune to charities, foundations, and universities – about £273 million (\$350 million).

The musical tells the story of his life from the perspective of a steelworker killed in the controversial homestead steel plant dispute of 1892.

He has returned from the afterlife to decide on Carnegie's eternal fate in the last two hours of his life.

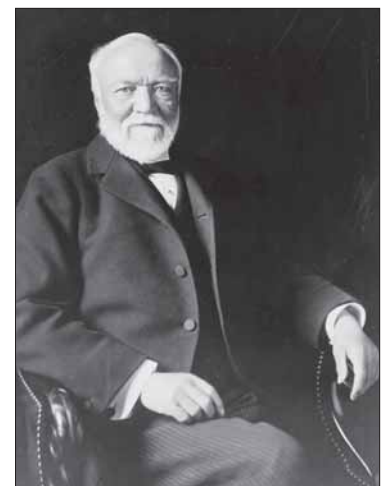
"It's always been my dream to perform the show at the Carnegie Theatre and it's particularly poignant in 2019 as it's the centenary year. Many thanks to Fife Cultural Trust for its support."

Fife Cultural Trust donated the hire of the theatre free of charge in tribute to the legacy of Carnegie.

Born in Dunfermline, Andrew Carnegie immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1848.

His first job was as a bobbin boy in 1848, changing spools of thread in a Scottish owned mill – he worked 12 hour days, six days a week.

A series of successful investments and the birth of Carnegie's steel empire



ANDREW CARNEGIE [November 25, 1835 – August 11, 1919] was a Scottish-American industrialist, business magnate, and philanthropist. He led the expansion of the American steel industry in the late 19th Century and is often identified as one of the richest Americans in history. During the last 18 years of his life, he gave away about \$350 million to charities, foundations, and universities – almost 90 percent of his fortune.

saw him accumulate substantial wealth.

In 1901, he sold the Carnegie Steel Company to JP Morgan for more than \$300 million (£233 million).

The 1901 deal meant Carnegie surpassed John D. Rockefeller as the richest American of the time and he devoted the rest of his life to philanthropy, with emphasis on libraries, world peace, education, and scientific research.



MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS which opens on December 21, stars Margot Robbie as Queen Elizabeth and Saoirse Ronan as Mary Stuart.

New Mary Queen of Scots film to be released this month

A new film to be released this month *Mary Queen of Scots* explores the turbulent life of the charismatic Mary Stuart.

Focus Features has released the official second trailer for the upcoming historical drama starring Academy Award-nominated actresses Saoirse Ronan (*Lady Bird*, *Little Women*) as Mary Stuart and Margot Robbie (*I, Tonya*, *Birds of Prey*) as Queen Elizabeth I.

Queen of France at 16 and widowed at 18, Mary defies pressure to remarry. Instead, she returns to her native Scotland to reclaim her rightful throne.

But Scotland and England fall under the rule of the compelling Elizabeth I. Each young Queen beholds her "sister" in fear and fascination.

Rivals in power and in love, and female regents in a masculine world, the two must decide how to play the game of marriage versus independence.

Determined to rule as much more than a figurehead, Mary asserts her claim to the English throne, threatening Elizabeth's sovereignty. Betrayal, rebellion, and conspiracies within each court imperil both thrones – and change the course of history.

The cast also includes Jack Lowden (*Dunkirk*, *England is Mine*), Joe Alwyn (*The Sense of an Ending*, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*), Martin Compston (*Sweet Sixteen*, *Line of Duty*), Gemma Chan (*Captain Marvel*), Ismael Cordova (*The Catch*), Ian Hart (*The Terror*), Adrian Lester (*Riviera*), James McArdle (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens*), and Brendan Coyle (*Downton Abbey*, *Me Before You*).

Also featuring in the cast are David

Tennant (*Doctor Who*, *Broadchurch*) and Guy Pearce (*Memento*, *LA Confidential*, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*).

Josie Rourke, artistic director of *The Donmar Warehouse*, makes her feature directorial debut with this movie.

The producers of *Mary, Queen of Scots* are Working Title co-chairs Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, and Debra Hayward, all Academy Award nominees as producers of Best Picture Oscar nominee *Les Misérables*.

Beau Willimon, an Academy Award nominee for *The Ides of March* and Emmy Award nominee for *House of Cards*, has written the screenplay adaptation. *Mary, Queen of Scots* is based on John Guy's acclaimed biography *My Heart is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots*.

In a review published in Rolling Stone, Peter Travis writes, "Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie earn all the bows and curtsies coming their way for breathing feminist fire into *Mary Queen of Scots*, a 16th Century drama that messes just enough with recorded fact to avoid being dismissed as textbook-stuff."

In summary, he says, "The film succeeds best when it shows how in times more conducive to the friendship of women in power the two queens could have been sisters under the skin."

"Ronan and Robbie were both nominated for a Best Actress Oscar last award season, and even when the pace of the film falters, these two performers hold you in thrall. That's royalty."

Mary, Queen of Scots is set for a limited release on December 7 in New York and Los Angeles and will open everywhere on December 21.

From *Baby It's Cold Outside* to *Fairytale of New York*, should old classics be censored?

A debate has been ongoing recently over what old Christmas songs are acceptable to play.

With the advent of social media and the changing times we live in, old artefacts of pop culture are seen in a new light and talked about in terms of the modern cultural context, separate from the one in which they were originally created.

Today, in this more hyper-aware era, movies and pop songs from bygone days are seen in a different light, with aspects that were once fine or seen as acceptable not regarded as such anymore.

In recent weeks this debate zeroed in on beloved and not-so-beloved Christmas classics and whether radios should censor parts of songs or not play them at all.

The flashpoint of this has been the old song *Baby, It's Cold Outside* – a duet written in 1944 and performed over the years by scores of artists, including Dean Martin, Dolly Parton, Ray Charles and Lady Gaga.

The song is seen by many commentators as problematic, with its depiction of a man seemingly pressuring a woman into staying the night with him, when she appears reluctant to do so.

Lyrics include: "I've gotta get home (but baby, you'd freeze out there); Say lend me a coat (it's up to your knees out there)."

"Say what's in this drink? (No cabs to be had out there)," sung by the woman, is arguably the song's most controversial lyric.

A radio station in the state of Ohio was first to announce it was pulling the song from its playlist last week-end after receiving complaints.

Several other stations across the U.S. and Canada duly followed suit.

Across the Atlantic in Ireland, beloved seasonal station Christmas FM confirmed that the song had been pulled from its own playlists last year, as it didn't "resonate" with listeners.

Cue cries of "PC gone mad", and "censorship" and offended "snowflakes".

The debate has been raging, amplified of course by Twitter and other social media, where every argument is put forth and regarded and cast aside.

Inputs and opinions have come from music critics, celebrities, radio hosts, songwriters and everyday punters on the matter.

Arguments have ranged from differing interpretations of the song, to whether any song should be banned for its content, to the inevitable anger that people feel when they believe someone is trying to ban or censor something beloved from the past.

Following the initial story about one radio station pulling the song going viral, a huge amount has been written on the subject with lots of different opinions expressed.

Comedian Jen Kirkman put forward an argument in a series of tweets stating that the song was being wrongly interpreted.

"The song seems odd now not cuz it's about coercing sex but about a woman who knows her reputation is ruined if



A SCREENGRAB from The Pogues' iconic *Fairytale of New York* video featuring Shane MacGowan and Kristy MacColl.

she stays. 'Say what's in this drink' is an old movie line from the 30's that means 'I'm telling the truth.' She wanted to get down and stay over," she said.

A reading in the pop culture magazine *Persephone* builds on this, stating that the song is about the woman wanting to stay the night in the man's house, but society frowning on this.

Others take a less favourable view on the song, calling it "rapey" and offensive and saying it shouldn't be played. In the song, the woman gives some version of "No" several times, while the man apparently wears her down.

Moving on from this particular controversy, the debate then focused on other classic Christmas songs, and whether they, too, should be censored or stopped being played altogether.

In Ireland, it stopped on The Pogues' classic Christmas song *Fairytale of New York*.

Debate around the use of the word "fagot" in the iconic song has rumbled on for several years and it returned to the headlines this week following the controversy around "Baby".

Two RTÉ 2FM DJs raised objections to the festive hit.

Eoghan McDermott said he asked two gay members of his team how they felt about it and one favoured censoring the song while the other didn't want to play it at all.

Fellow presenter Stephen Byrne also talked about he felt when he heard the song played in a club:

"I stood in a room as over 200 people screamed a word that's been used to make me feel like an outsider, with such joy and cheer."

Both of these statements were met with vitriol and criticism, prompting McDermott to tweet this in response.

"My basic point is it just doesn't seem at all radical to me beep one word, when we – all of us, beep a thousand others in songs all the time. Tis just a conversation. Play away! Namaste."

After this, songwriter Shane MacGowan himself weighed in, saying that the word was "used by the character because it fitted with the way she would speak and with her character."

"She is not supposed to be a nice person, or even a wholesome person. She is a woman of a certain generation at a certain time in history and she is down on her luck and desperate."

He said he had no problem with people bleeping the word if they chose to, but that he didn't want to get into an argument over it.

RTÉ followed this up by saying that it wouldn't be bleeping the word when it played the song.

Debates like these around old songs and what they mean in a modern context have been ongoing for years and will continue to crop up as long as society keeps having conversations with its past (or playing old Christmas songs).

With that said, you don't need to look to the past to find hugely offensive terms or imagery in pop music, with modern music arguably pushing the boundaries in terms of what is acceptable on the airwaves (Kanye and Lil Pump anyone?).

But old classics will be brought up again and again and looked at and talked about and considered as long as the pop culture machine keeps churning. Opposing sides should try to set out their stall in a measured, considered way and listen openly to those who oppose them.

And what better platform than social media to have respectful debates, right?

This is the Solstice

"...This is the solstice, the still point
of the sun, its cusp and midnight,
the year's threshold
and unlocking, where the past
lets go of and becomes the future;
the place of caught breath, the door
of a vanished house left ajar..."

— Margaret Atwood,
Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965-1995