

Introducing ‘Boston Irish’ – Page 4



Beannachtaí na Nollag
Christmas Blessings by Mary McSweeney



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CHRISTMAS AT THE ICC

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA CLAUS

DECEMBER 7TH FROM 10AM TO 12:30AM



VISIT WITH SANTA & MRS. CLAUS IN THE SANTA GROTTO

Write a letter to Santa & mail in our North Pole mailbox

Arts & Crafts. Take a hayride around the premises/ Step it out with Santa's dancing elves .

Christmas sing-song in the ICC cottage - w/hot chocolate

Chocolate Chip Pancake breakfast & home baked goods.

FEATURING THE KENNY ACADEMY OF IRISH DANCERS

\$10 per person (adult/child) includes gift & breakfast



Irish Cultural Centre 200 New Boston Drive Canton, MA 781-821-8291

CHLOE AGNEW - A CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

At the Irish Cultural Centre

FORMER CELTIC WOMAN STAR

SATURDAY DEC 21, 2019 at 7:30PM

Tickets \$35 General Admission



Meet and greet to follow the concert

\$50 per person

200 New Boston Drive, Canton MA 02021

781-821-8291

www.irishculture.org



Would you like to win

\$30,000 just in time for Christmas?

Call now to get your lucky ticket !

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2019 ICC ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DRAWING

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 @ 6PM

FEATURING : LIVE MUSIC, BUFFET & CASH BAR

1st Prize—\$30,000

2nd Prize—\$5,000 / Plus Five \$1,000

Tickets \$100

Yes, I would like to win the grand prize of \$30,000 or one of the other cash prizes and support the ICC by purchasing an Annual Drawing Ticket.

I am enclosing \$ _____ for _____ Raffle Tickets

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Check ☐ Credit Card _____

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____ Exp Date _____

3 Digit V Code _____

Please make checks payable to : Irish Cultural Centre of New England (ICCNE). Do not send cash.

Mail to Irish Cultural Centre, 200 New Boston Drive, PO Box 246 , Canton MA 02021 to be received no later than Monday, December 4th. You will receive a ticket stub in the mail once your request has been processed. Thank you. ***We do not accept American Express**

Gather friends & family & join us for

AN IRISH CHRISTMAS DINNER & CELEBRATION

Saturday December 21, from 4:30pm to 7:30pm

CHRISTMAS SING-ALONG

WITH

"FOR FOLK SAKE"





Serving a Carved Turkey Buffet Dinner. Selection of Irish Christmas desserts. Tea & Coffee. Arts & Crafts for kids.

UGLY SWEATER/COSTUME COMPETITION:

Whiskey Gift Basket for most original outfit

Adults: \$15pp / Kids: \$8pp

For Reservations call: 781-821-8291 / mdoohier@irishculture.org



200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 02021

www.irishculture.org

NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION



AT THE ICC

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31ST

LIVE MUSIC WITH ERIN'S MELODY

6pm: Hot Appetizers to start

7:30pm: Carving Station & Buffet Dinner

Dancing & Champagne Toast

DON'T MISS THIS GREAT SELLOUT EVENT, PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS TODAY.

Call the office: 781-821-8291 / email: mdoohier@irishculture.org

or Mai Gallagher: 781-492-0181 / email: annmsnow@verizon.net

Payment due upon reservation.

Tickets \$60 pp



200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA

www.irishculture.org

Happy New Year

200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 781-821-8291

www.irishculture.org

New home for Irish Pastoral Centre



Cardinal Sean O'Malley blessed the Centre's new offices at 512 Gallivan Blvd., on November 22. Pictured front left is former IPC Director Daniel J. Finn. Behind Cardinal O'Malley is current director Peggy Davis Mullen. See Harry Brett photos on Page 13.

Boston Friends of GPA draw crowd to luncheon at Fenway

A luncheon in support of the Boston Friends of the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) drew a large gathering to Fenway Park's State Street Pavilion on Fri., Nov. 8. Sam Kennedy, president & CEO of the Boston Red Sox and Fenway Sports Management, offered remarks at the luncheon, along with Bill Powers, founder and CEO of Cambridge Mobile Telematics.

Later, Kennedy and Powers joined Boston Friends of the GPA Chairman Aidan Browne and GPA CEO Paul Flynn for a panel discussion on leadership and adversity.

The luncheon was the latest success for the Boston-based friends group, which seeks to raise funds and awareness of the GPA's mission, which is to support Ireland's amateur athletes.



GPA CEO Paul Flynn, Sam Kennedy, president and CEO of the Boston Red Sox, Bill Powers of Cambridge Mobile Telematics, and Aidan Browne, chairman of the Boston Friends of the GPA. Kyle Klein photos



The scene inside Fenway Park's State Street Pavilion.

HAPPENINGS DECEMBER 2019

Sun., Dec. 1 – The Donegal Association will hold its Christmas party at Florian Hall in Dorchester from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

- The Irish Social club will have John Connors and the Irish Express for its Sunday evening dance from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

- The Irish Cultural Centre will have a Mass at 11 a.m. on its campus in Canton.

Mon., Dec. 2 – The County Sligo Association will have a meeting at Waterford's in Dedham at 8 p.m.

Tues., Dec. 3 – The Leitrim Society of Boston will have a meeting at the Adams Corner Butcher Shop, 762 Adams Street, Dorchester, at 7.30 p.m.

Fri., Dec. 6 – The Irish Network-Boston will hold its Christmas party at Finn Mc Cool's Public House from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Admission is \$25.00.

Sat., Dec. 7 – The Irish Music Club of Greater Boston will have its annual Mass at 6.30 p.m. at the Irish Social Club, 119 Park St., West Roxbury. Father Dan Finn will be the celebrant. Following the Mass, Erin's Melody with Margaret Dalton will play for dancing.

- The ICC will have Santa for breakfast. Call 781-821-8291 for information.

- The North Shore Irish Association will have Fintan Stanley for its dance at the Knights of Columbus, 23 West Forest St., Melrose from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 8 – The County Sligo Association will have its Christmas Party at Waterford's in Dedham from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Music, food, raffles and Santa. Members \$20, non-members, \$25. Always a full house. Make your plans now.

- Leitrim Society Christmas Party and dance will be at the ICC from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. For tickets and information, please call Cathy Mawn at 617-549-3230.

- The ICC presents an Irish Christmas in America at 1 p.m. with Seamus Beagley and Oisín Mac Diarmada.

- The Reynolds-Hanafin-Cooley branch of Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann has its Larry Reynolds memorial scholarship fundraiser at 202 Arlington St. in Watertown. Always great traditional music and set dancing.

- The ISC has Erin's Melody for its Sunday evening dance from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 14 – The Knights and Ladies of St. Finbarr - Cork club hold a benefit dance to help the African Mission Fathers. This is the Cork Club's Christmas Party. Santa will make an appearance, the installation of officers will be held, and there will be a sing along and lots of great food. Denis Curtin's band will

entertain from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Get your copy of the entertainment for 2020. For more information, call Mary at 978-664-4652 or email richarda10@hotmail.com.

- The ICC will have its \$100-a-ticket drawing. To join in, call 781-821-8291.

- **Sun., Dec. 15** – The ICC presents its Nativity play at 11 a.m.

- The ISC has Mossie Coughlin for its Sunday evening dance from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Fri., Dec. 20 – The ISC will hold its Christmas Party for members at 7.30 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 21 – The Norwood Irish Music club have its Christmas dance with the Andy Healy band at the Knights of Columbus Hall at 572 Nichols St. in Norwood.

- The ICC will hold a Christmas celebration with Chloe Agnew at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$30 for members, \$35 for non-members.

Sun., Dec. 22 – The ISC has Andy Healy for its Sunday evening dance from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 29 – The ISC has Fintan Stanley for its Sunday evening dance from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Tues., Dec. 31 – The ISC has the Andy Healy band for its New Year's Eve celebration. Dancing from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Champagne toast, food, and lots more. Admission is \$20.

Our sincere thanks to the *Boston Irish Reporter* and stations WROL and WUNR for keeping the Irish tradition alive and well in Boston. For those who receive and read the *Irish Reporter* monthly, we will miss its print edition as the paper moves online to BostonIrish.com (there will still be quarterly print editions during the year). "Happenings" will continue to appear each month on the BostonIrish.com website

"Happenings" is a listing of the activities of various Irish associations in the Boston area prepared by the Knights and Ladies of St. Finbarr - Cork club. To the best of our knowledge, the listing is accurate, but always subject to change.

As we come to another end of the year, the Knights and Ladies of St. Finbarr

Cork club wish all a Happy and Blessed Christmas and wonderful health during the year ahead.

RICHARD ARCHER

Point of View

A visit from the Spirit of Christmas Future

Looking toward events that may or may not come to pass

By PETER F. STEVENS
BIR STAFF

As the 2019 holiday season races in, Christmas and New Year traditions take on special meaning for families across the nation. This year, though, the very traditions that have ostensibly governed since the Founding Fathers crafted the American Experiment are crumbling. For that, both major parties share blame for stuffing political, legal, and cultural coal into the Republic’s stocking and tearing the Constitutional fabric that was fraying even before President Trump descended on his gilded elevator into the 2016 race. With apologies to Charles Dickens’s immortal “A Christmas Carol,”

The Spirit of Christmas Future might not have revealed a festive picture of the events about to unfold for our country. As with the silent, terrifying wraith of Dickens’s creation, the following could happen unless America. And that involves both major political parties. All of these musings are the Yuletide rants of this space and this space alone...

When it comes to the Constitution’s Article 2, Section 4—the removal of a president for “Treason, Bribery, or other High Crimes and Misdemeanors—the “Impeachment Clause(s)” will be renamed the “Impotence Clause(s).

President Trump will be impeached by the Democrat House. President Trump will be “acquitted” in the Republican Senate. If, as is surely possible, he wins re-election via the Electoral College, Donald Trump stands above the law. Case closed.

President Trump will be steamrollered in the popular vote total—but has every hope of matching his winning 2016 Electoral College tally.

In the spirit of giving, if Hunter Biden and his Dad receive an investigation from Trump *consigliere* Lindsay Graham or Irish-American “stalwart” Bill Barr for alleged financial misdeeds via nepotism, the president, Donald Trump, Jr., Ivanka, and Eric merit the same consideration. Is there any possible proof that any of the Trump brood could have made it without their father, placing them on the same “Thanks, Dad” turf as Hunter Biden.

As 2020 beckons, it is high time for the entire nation to acknowledge that the Republican Party has gone the way of the Whigs. The GOP is RIP—replaced by the Trumpist or Trumpian Party.

For that matter, if the Dems believe that Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders can beat Trump in the general election, they should be required to acknowledge that the “D” in Democrat stands for “Delusional.”

Irish-American “titan” Mick Mulvaney/Malarkey’s words for the nation to “get over it” if the Administration stoops to possible extortion or bribery of another nation will absolve the president and his team for any accountability anytime, anywhere, any place.

Every member of Congress and the Senate who pushes the conspiracy theory that Ukraine—not Russia—unleashed state-sponsored interference in the 2016 Presidential election will receive a personal, handwritten letter of gratitude from Vladimir Putin—along with an invitation to attend the 2020 Russian May Day bash.

Hillary Clinton will accede to all the self-professed “pressure” for her to jump into the 2020 presidential campaign and ensure Donald Trump’s re-election.

At the end of 2020, the Constitution will be declared “quaint and outdated” by President Trump, and, if the Trumpist Party wins both the House and the Senate, Alice in Wonderland will be anointed as the nation’s new guiding document—with a foreword by bestselling author Donald Trump, Jr.

In his second term—again, if the GOP recaptures the House—Trump will attempt to present an Act of Succession with a choice of son Donald, Jr., or daughter Ivanka to follow him in office via a special election open only to Fox Nation viewers.

The Democrats win the White House, but Trump declares the election results rigged by Ukrainians and urges supporters to resist until he can find out—his words—“what the hell is going on...”

Senator Graham’s putative investigation of the Bidens will “prove” that the former vice president is a Ukrainian “asset.”

In a reflection of the ever-widening chasm between the two political parties, the Democrat House and

the Trumpist Senate will agree on one and only one bipartisan bill: an edict banning inter-party marriages for the greater domestic good.

Democrat legislators will publicly swear to fight any and all measures proposed by Trump, and GOP legislators will swear a public oath of fealty and obeisance to him.

When Trump’s Supreme Court strikes down the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”), all Trump voters who lose their protections for pre-existing conditions will still vote for him as they await his mythical healthcare plan that he says will be “great” and “unbelievable.”

After his reelection victory via the Electoral College, Trump will invite his BFFs—Putin, Erdogan, Duterte, and Mohammad Bin Salman—to a boys’ weekend at Mar-a-Lago. New VP Nikki Haley won’t be invited.

Of course, it doesn’t have to be this way. All or most of the aforementioned events will, I hope, not come to pass. Still, as this holiday season opens, a watershed moment confronts the US—whether one is Democrat, Republican, Independent, or politically agnostic: Is the president—any president—above the law. For that matter, is any president even accountable? Lately, the oft-repeated words of Ben Franklin that we have a republic “if we can keep it” resonate as Trump and his legal mouthpiece, William Barr, push an ever-expansive doctrine of executive privilege and power. With the GOP marching in lockstep with Trump in a “Fearless Leader” cult of personality, and with the Democrats forming their all-too-usual circular firing squad, we will learn whether the Constitution still holds or whether the Great American Experiment is failing.

Every American who does not pay attention and does not cast a vote in 2020—no matter for which party— will be equally culpable for what happens next year.

As Ebenezer Scrooge discovered, courtesy of the Spirit of Christmas Future, change can alter a potentially gloomy future. On that true and heartening note, here’s wishing everyone a very merry holiday season.

Until the late 1880s, Christmas was hardly merry for Boston’s Irish

By PETER F. STEVENS
BIR STAFF

From 1800 to 1850, Irish immigrants could scarcely have picked a worse place than Boston to celebrate Christmas. The Puritans loathed “Popish” Yuletide rituals so much that, in 1659, the Massachusetts General Court had enacted laws against honoring the day. Anyone caught toasting the occasion suffered a five-shilling fine.

BIR History

Above all, for the Mathers and other Puritan luminaries, Christmas celebrations symbolized “Papists” and their church.

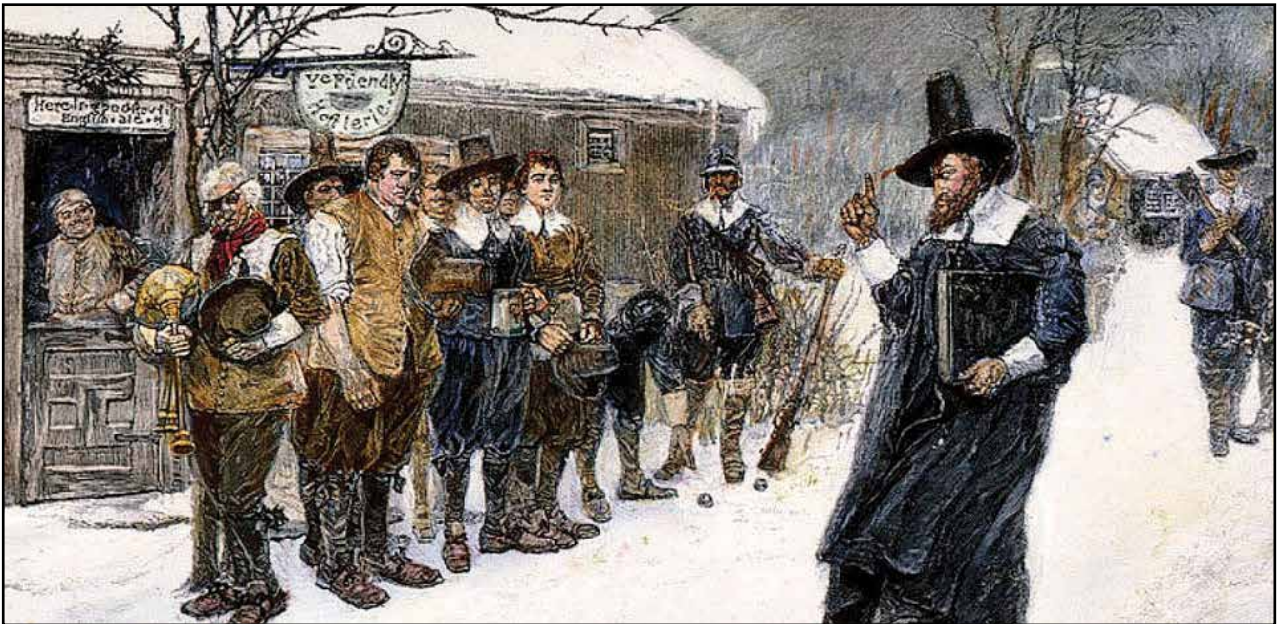
In such a climate, Boston’s Irish celebrated the holiday in muted fashion until their political clout swelled in the late 1800s. On the “old sod,” the holiday had largely revolved around Mass and family, not the raucous celebrations of any feverish Puritan and Yankee imaginations, so the early Irish of Boston noted the holiday simply, with many families keeping children home from schools later in the century.

At St. Augustine’s, in South Boston, and later at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Christmas Masses were held in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, always under suspicion by the local Yankees. As German Catholic immigrants arrived and began attending the local “Irish churches,” the newcomers introduced locals to Christmas trees and greeting cards; a thaw in the region’s traditional, Puritan-steeped Christmas notions was slowly emerging.

The Christmas season of 1887 brought a “holiday” card that inflamed Irish from Dublin to Boston. Issued by Angus Thomas and entitled “Ode to the Specials (police),” the card belittled the largely Irish crowd that had gathered at Trafalgar Square on Nov. 13, 1887, to protest the imprisonment of Irish MP William O’Brien. Thrown in jail for having orchestrated riots against landlords, O’Brien had become a hero to his countrymen in both Ireland and Boston not only for his stand against the rent collectors and their agents, but also for his refusal to wear prison clothing and his campaign to wrangle political prisoner status for fellow Irishmen in British cells.

On Sun., Nov. 13, 1887, a throng defying Commissioner of Police Sir Charles Warren’s ban on open-air meetings assembled at Trafalgar “to demand the release of William O’Brien, MP.” Constables, foot guards and life guards waded into the crowd to clear the square. No shots were fired, but fists, feet, and clubs killed two people. The protestors’ phrase described the tragedy, a term to chill the Irish again and again: “Bloody Sunday.”

Shortly after the melee, Angus Thomas released his



Long before the immigrant Irish Catholics swelled Boston’s population in the mid-1800s, the Puritans had made clear that Christmas Day was an odious happening. This artwork relates to 1659, when the General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law setting a five-shilling fine from anyone caught “observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting, or any other way.” The law was repealed in 1681, and it was not until 1856 that Christmas Day became a state holiday in Massachusetts.

Artwork courtesy of Mass Humanities and its Mass Moments series.

vitriolic card, hardly a subject to foster “peace and goodwill to all men.” His “Christmas” theme featured not the images of St. Nick or a Nativity scene, but a club—a police truncheon. His idea of humor was the following lines about the weapon swung against O’Brien’s supporters: “To be used with great care.”

For the Irish at home or abroad, the card’s Yuletide sentiments were appalling:

*Ode to the Specials
In Trafalgar Bay where the French men lay,
A Hero was Nelson there!
But nothing was he tho’
King of the Sea.
To the Kings of Trafalgar Square.
With Jack on Watch and with battered hatch.
There France in the pride was quashed.
Washed in the waves where they found a grave—
But they batton’d “The Great Unwashed!”
Then surely the fame of Nelson’s name
The Specials have right to share:
He won the day in Trafalgar Bay
But They in Trafalgar Square
With Best Wishes for a Specially Jolly Christmas*

By the time of 1887’s “Bloody Sunday,” Boston’s Irish were a genuine community, slowly amassing clout at the ballot box and bucking Yankee strangleholds on business and the courts. If any in the Irish wards ever needed a reminder that as hard as life in Brahmin

Boston could be, their countrymen overseas still faced greater obstacles, the Bloody Sunday “Christmas Card” was vivid proof.


Thankfully, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, Boston’s Irish could celebrate Christmas as openly as they wanted, with family parties and dinners, church socials and midnight Mass turning the Yuletide season into a genuine holiday.

As Thomas H. O’Connor writes in *Boston Catholics*, “Boston Catholics participated in a perpetual calendar of familiar religious devotions that...bound them more firmly together as members of their own distinctive parishes.”

During the period of Advent in late November and early December, for example, persons of all ages prepared for the coming of the Christmas season by attending daily Mass. They then enjoyed the celebration of midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, often followed by festive and early morning breakfasts with friends and relatives.

Those scenes would have been virtually unthinkable for Boston’s earliest Irish immigrants. Yet by the turn of the twentieth century, the Irish openly celebrated the Yuletide as cheerfully as they pleased in the city where Puritans had once banned the holiday and had punished transgressors with fines or the stocks.

Through religion, reflection and revelry, Boston’s Irish could finally celebrate Christmas in “grand fashion.”



IRISH INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRANT CENTER

An agency accredited by US Department of Justice

One State Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02109 (617) 542-7654 Fax (617) 542-7655

Website: iiicenter.org Email: immigration@iiicenter.org

Immigration Q&A

Just got my green card; so now what?

Q. *I have just been granted permanent resident status in the US. Can you give a summary of my rights and responsibilities regarding such issues as travel abroad, reentering the US, losing my green card, and registering for service in the armed forces?*

A. With your permanent resident status (green card), you can live and work legally anywhere in the US. You can petition US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for green cards for your spouse and unmarried children. Generally, after living here for four years and nine months (two years and nine months if your status is based on the fact that your spouse is a US citizen and you are still living in marital union with him/her), you can apply to become a US citizen.

You can travel outside the US whenever you like. You must have your green card, along with a valid foreign passport, with you to present to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) when you reenter the US. You should keep a record of the dates each time you leave and return (backed up if possible with travel documents such as airline tickets and boarding cards), and it is important always to reenter the US legally by using a CBP border checkpoint, including brief trips over the border to Canada and Mexico.

When you travel abroad you must be careful not to “abandon” your residence in the US. If you want to leave for more than 12 months you must get a “reentry permit” from USCIS before you leave or CBP will presume that you have abandoned your status and may not readmit you. A reentry permit is granted at the discretion of USCIS for specific purposes: for example, going abroad to attend university, or going to your original home country to take care of an elderly or ill parent. Also, if you leave for more than six months but less than a year, you are not automatically presumed to have abandoned your US permanent residence, but you can face scrutiny on this issue from CBP when you return. It is important to consult with us at IIIC or with your immigration lawyer before taking a trip out of the US lasting more than six months.

Even if you have a green card, the immigration authorities can prevent you from reentering the US, or deport you if you are in this country if you are convicted of certain crimes. Certain offenses that may not seem very serious could be viewed as grounds for deportation, or they could keep you from being readmitted if you leave the US, or from obtaining US citizenship.

If you are charged with a crime, it is *essential* that you consult an immigration lawyer as well as a lawyer specializing in criminal cases, as the law involving the consequences of criminal convictions on a person’s immigration status is extremely complex.

If you are a male at least 18 years old and under 26 at the time when you got your green card, your responsibilities include registering with Selective Service (even though there is no military conscription in effect in the US at this time). If you do not register, you may be subject to criminal prosecution. If convicted, you could be deported. Failing to register may also prevent or delay you from becoming a US citizen. You can get the necessary form at any post office, or you can register online at sss.gov.

Other responsibilities of permanent residents include filing accurate federal and state tax returns annually and paying any taxes that you owe; reporting any change of address to USCIS within 10 days; and having your children who are permanent residents register with USCIS within 10 days of turning 14. Your green card does not entitle you to vote in US elections or serve on juries – you must be a US citizen for that. Doing so as a legal permanent resident amounts to a false claim of US citizenship and can have very serious consequences.

Visit one of our weekly legal clinics advertised in the Boston Irish Reporter for a free, confidential consultation on your specific questions about any immigration-related issue.

Disclaimer: These articles are published to inform generally, not to advise in specific cases. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services and The US Department of State regularly amend regulations and alter processing and filing procedures. For legal advice, seek the assistance of IIIC immigration legal staff.

THE NOTEBOOK

Irish Holiday Chat Night and Winter Irish Classes - We continued to run our very successful Irish language program with our partners Cumann na Gaeilge - Boston. During the fall semester we provided 20 students with 3 classes & levels of Irish, from beginner to advanced speakers. Our students come for a reconnection to Irish culture, the camaraderie of learning in a new city and the craic.

Support our work: The IIIC’s Annual Campaign – The IIIC’s annual campaign is under way, and thanks to a generous gift from Mr. Arnold Hiatt and the AM Fund, every dollar donated up to \$25,000 will be matched! If you would like to partner with the IIIC to help create a better future for immigrant and refugee families this holiday season, visit iiicenter.org #donate or contact Sari Foundas at 617-542-7654. Our amazing community of supporters make it possible for families from Ireland and around the world to build safe, stable, bright futures in the United States. Heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes from all at the IIIC!

Discussing ‘Douglas Hyde: My American Journey’

The IIIC, in partnership with Cumann na Gaeilge, was delighted to host Cuan Ó Seireadáin and Brian Ó Conchubhair, editors of the newly published ‘Douglas Hyde: My American Journey’ on October 26. The IIIC was the final stop on their US tour. It was a great presentation by Cuan and Brian, with a lively and interactive discussion on Douglas Hyde’s time in the US. Thank you to everyone who came along.



Cuan Ó Seireadáin and Brian Ó Conchubhair along with those who came to the Center to hear about the book they edited “Douglas Hyde: My American Journey.”

Sarah Benn of Meath endorses Boston

When Sarah Benn left Meath to go all the way to Boston a year ago, she wasn’t sure what she was getting herself into. Now she is reaching the end of a cycle in her life, and she feels she has learned so much more than she ever could have at home.

On the professional side, Sarah did not have a lot of experience in a hospital setting, and her profession is relatively new in Ireland. Working at Boston Foot and Ankle was definitely a learning curve, she says. “I really just threw myself into it, really committed to my work, really trying my best. Just trying to provide as much support as I could to everybody.”

She also found support from her friends back in Ireland, who were going through the process of acclimating to their new jobs as well. With such adaptation strategies, Sarah went from not knowing her way around

the hospital to feeling like she had “become part of the furniture of the place.” She was so busy that she didn’t even have time to get homesick.

Sarah also learned a lot about life outside of Ireland. She lived on her own in a big city, visited many different places in New England, and endured unforeseeable (by her) low temperatures. But she also had lots to say about the cultural differences she noticed. Boston is so diverse, she says, that it provides experiences with cultural differences both in and out of the workplace.

Sarah says that health-care culture is different in that people in the US are more likely to go “under the knife,” and getting time off work is also done differently. Outside of work, she couldn’t help but observe the different religions, the sports culture, and the melting pot that Boston is.



Sarah Benn (right) at her job at the Boston Foot and Ankle.

For anyone considering the J-1 Intern visa,

Sarah highly recommends Boston: “it’s quieter than NY, friendly, it has four seasons. It’s a nice city, reminds me of Dublin.”

Her stay in Boston is about to end, so this is a bittersweet moment for her. She is glad she’ll be home again for Christmas with her family. And she has exciting plans for the future, like working abroad in the UK, or possibly even Australia. She is very happy that she had the opportunity to work in a reputable hospital, and she believes she has come a long way since she started in Boston, noting, “It was a big decision for me to come out here with no friends or family, but it was one of the best decisions I have ever made.”

The IIIC’s Wellness Team, Cumann na Gaeilge-Boston, and the Irish Consulate are excitedly waiting on their first “Holiday Irish Chat Night” on Dec. 5 and our winter Irish class here at One State Street Boston, MA starting on January 16. Please email Siobhan Kelly skelly@iiicenter.org at for more details. One student noted about our Irish classes: “I love the balance of grammar, practical conversation, and the songs & sayings! I feel like I’m learning a little bit of everything here!”



HOLIDAY IRISH CHAT NIGHT

IIIC WELLNESS SERVICES

Join us at the Consulate General of Ireland for a casual Irish conversation night to celebrate the holidays, open to the public.

Tea and Irish baked goods will be served.

Thursday, December 5th at 6pm
535 Boylston St, 5th Floor
Boston MA, 02116

Please bring a photo ID to check in

ALL LEVELS WELCOME!

All attending must RSVP to Siobhan Kelly (skelly@iiicenter.org)

FEARADH NA FÁILTE ROIMH CHÁCH

A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL

TeamMR8’s final Boston Marathon run will be its largest

More than 140 Runners gathered at the Seaport Hotel on Fri., Nov. 22, for the kick-off of the Final MR8 Boston Marathon Team. The evening started off with a three-mile run around Boston’s Seaport, with a special stop at Martin’s Park.

The run next April will mark the final time the Foundation will host a team for this event. Team MR8 runners will contribute to the Foundation’s Legacy Fund, ensuring that its Giving Program continues to fund direct service, community-based orga-

nizations that address the issues of youth development, adaptive and inclusive efforts, and/or social equity within the community.

“We are excited to have the largest team this year and this group of runners is a dedicated group of many people who have run with us before,” said Bill Richard, co-founder of the foundation. “They understand that we are deepening our impact through philanthropic work and charitable giving as part of our Renewed Focus”

Since 2014, the Martin Richard Foundation has

worked to advance the values of sportsmanship, inclusion, kindness, and peace by investing in community programs that broaden horizons for young people and encourage them to embrace civic engagement and celebrate diversity.

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Believe in the ‘Miracle on 34th Street’

By R. J. DONOVAN
SPECIAL TO THE BIR
Greater Boston Stage Company in Stoneham is celebrating the holiday season with “Miracle on 34th Street,” based on the classic 1947 film of the same name, starring Maureen O’Hara and Natalie Wood. Directed by Ilyse Robbins, the production runs through Dec. 22.

A white-bearded gentleman named Kris Kringle steps in at the last minute to play Santa Claus in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. Good will spreads but eyebrows are raised when he claims to be the real Santa.

Kris frowns on Christmas commercialism, says his eight reindeer are his next of kin, and, in a tip of the hat to the Irish satirist Jonathan Swift, claims he’s “as old as his tongue and little bit older than his teeth.”

Still, there are doubters, including Doris, the store’s event director, and her young daughter,

Susan. Is it possible he’s actually Santa? Do they believe? Do we?

Kris Kringle is played by William Gardiner. Aside from performing on stages from Wheelock Family Theatre to Actor’s Shakespeare Project, he has been seen in several holiday shows in Stoneham, including “It’s a Wonderful Life,” “Christmas on the Air,” and “Twas The Night Before Christmas.”

Originally from Maryland, Bill lived in Milwaukee before winding up in Boston during high school. His initial dream was for a career in politics and he worked on his first campaign in the sixth grade. Eventually the theater bug bit when he was cast as Captain Von Trapp in “The Sound of Music.” However, his route to the stage was a less than traditional one.

He married directly out of high school and had a family by the time he was 21. He and his wife soon enrolled at UMass



Sydney Newcomb & William Gardiner as Susan and Kris Kringle in an earlier production of “Miracle on 34th Street”

in Amherst. He said recently, “We were a married couple in the theater department. They didn’t quite know what to do with us, God love ‘em.”

He subsequently left school to support his family, and he and his wife worked Renaissance Fairs. He also did children’s theater and landed a long-term gig at Boston’s renowned Medieval



William Gardiner

Manor. At the age of 43 he returned to school to pursue his BFA and a masters at Boston University. He now teaches drama at Boston University Academy.

We talked about “34th Street” during a break between classes. Here’s an edited look at our chat.

Q. You’ve made a cottage industry out of holiday shows in Stoneham, haven’t you?

A. (Laughing) Certainly have. They’ve been really, really good to me. I think this is holiday show No. 10.

Q. Since you’ve done several, what makes “34th Street” so special?

A. Magic. That sense of magic, if you allow yourself to go into the story. Is Kris Kringle really Santa Claus? And what are the implications if he is? . . .

It’s about love . . . It’s about being in service to other people. Being kind is defined in your actions, not in your attitude. I think that’s part of the

message of the story . . . That’s why I think the story still has its appeal, and why a kid in 2019 can still appreciate and relate to Suzie in the 1940s.

Q. Tell me about Christmas when you were a boy.

A. We would get to open one present on Christmas Eve and had to wait for the rest. For many years we decorated the tree on Christmas Eve. We’d get the tree early and maybe put the lights on it, but the decorations happened on Christmas Eve . . . Then the next morning you’d get to open the stockings . . . But the gift giveaway didn’t happen until after we’d had breakfast. There was that building anticipation. You got fed little things along the way, but you didn’t get to the big stuff until after you sat down and ate as a family.

Q. Was it a challenge going back to college later in life?

A. It was great. I loved going back to school in my 40s . . . When I went to BU I had already worked professionally with probably half the department. And one of my mentors there, Jon Lipsky, said, “Make sure you come in as if you had never gone to school before or never done anything.” It was a wonderful piece of advice. I had a body of experience going into school, but I went in trying to be as wide-eyed and bushy-tailed as the next freshman. And I had a blast.

A. Is there a moment in “34th Street” that speaks to you personally?

A. Yeah, actually there is one moment that always gets me choked up. Early on, Doris has fired me and then rehired me, and I tell her that I’m so glad to be back because I was worried about Christmas and what’s happening to it. And she says, “Well, Christmas is still Christmas. And I say to her “Christmas isn’t a day. It’s a frame of mind.” I love that . . . And there’s a moment at the end of the play where my final exchange is with Doris, where for the first time she says “Merry Christmas,” and I get to say “Merry Christmas” back to her. It seems so simple, but it’s huge because she’s acknowledging to me that she’s into Christmas now as well. She understands the Christmas spirit that I’ve been trying to save, for lack of a better term.

Q. And what about your own Christmas this year? Between teaching and performing in a holiday show, you don’t have a lot of time for yourself.

A. Christmas Eve, we don’t have a show, so my wife and I will probably hit a midnight candlelight service . . . Christmas morning, a little exchange of gifts. Probably more than not, just a quiet day at home. *That* is a Christmas gift.

Robert J. Donovan is editor and publisher of onstageboston.com.

“Miracle on 34th Street,” through Dec. 22, Greater Boston Stage Company, 395 Main Street, Stoneham. 781-279-2200, greaterbostonstage.org.

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‘A Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ offers mix of the old, the new, and the nyckelharpa

BY SEAN SMITH
SPECIAL TO THE BIR

Liz Carroll and Haley Richardson, outstanding Irish fiddlers from different generations, and Newfoundland folk/traditional singer Matthew Byrne are featured in this year’s “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” the holiday show that entertains and enchants thousands every year at venues in Boston, and elsewhere in New England, with music, dance and storytelling from Irish, Scottish and other Celtic – and occasionally non-Celtic – traditions.

After kicking off on Dec. 11 in Rockport, “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” will come to Boston’s Cutler Majestic Theatre Dec. 13 through 15, then head out for shows in Worcester and Providence before closing its 2019 run back at the Cutler Dec. 19 through 22. [Ticket information and other details are at wgbh.org/celtic.]

Other prominent performers in this year’s production will include singer-songwriter Siobhan Miller, three-time winner of the Scots Trad Music Awards “Best Singer” honors, and Olav Johansson, a virtuoso on the Swedish nyckelharpa and a member of the famed trio Väsen. Cellist Natalie Haas returns, as do guitarist Owen Marshall and bassist Chico Huff, while percussionist Jordan Perlson joins the house band this year. Multi-instrumentalist Seamus Egan and harpist/pianist Maeve Gilchrist once again bring their leadership as, respectively, music director and assistant music director, as well as their musical skills.

Headlining the dance segments in “Sojourn” are Irish dance champions Jason Oremus and Ashley Smith-Wallace, a Boston native, along with youngsters in the Harney Academy of Irish Dance.

WGBH-FM broadcaster Brian O’Donovan, the show’s creator, once again will serve as host, narrator, and occasional performer, joined by his singer/pianist wife Lindsay.

This year’s “Sojourn” will have an innovative new wrinkle: its first “sensory-friendly” performance, from 3-4 p.m. on Dec. 20 in the Cutler. The concert will be dedicated to creating a more welcoming and accessible space for individuals with sensory input disorders, autism spectrum disorder, anxiety, and for anyone else who may benefit, O’Donovan says. Modifications throughout the theater space – such as lowering the overall sound level and keeping the house lights on but at a lower illumination – will create a friendly, non-judgmental, and supportive environment that encourage patrons to experience the event in their own way.

O’Donovan credits his wife for the inspiration. “Lindsay has long had an interest in adaptive performances, and when she came across an ad for a Boston Pops sensory-

friendly concert, we went and were totally into it. So, we began talking about how we could do something similar for ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ – it’s a complicated process, but we’re very excited about the possibilities.”

Here’s a look at this year’s line-up:

•Grammy-nominated, National Heritage Fellowship-winning Liz Carroll is easily one of the most respected and influential Irish-American fiddlers of her generation. From her duets with guitarist John Doyle to her collaboration with other female fiddlers in The String Sisters, among other work, Carroll has shown herself not only as a foremost interpreter of traditional music but a top-notch composer of tunes from tradition. Her most recent partnership with guitarist-pianist Jake Charron of Canadian trio The East Pointers, including their 2019 album, “Half Day Road,” has added further luster to her resumé.

•Haley Richardson, who turns 18 next year, has already established herself as a rising force in the generation of Irish musicians just starting to come of age. The New Jersey native, who began classical violin at age two and Irish fiddle just a few years later, has long displayed an uncommon command and presence in competition and performance alike. A student of Sligo fiddle master Brian Conway, Richardson has played with such luminaries as Liz Carroll, The Chieftains, Altan, Dervish, Cherish the Ladies, John Whelan, Paddy Keenan, and is a member of Green Fields of America and The John Whelan Band. She already has two albums to her credit: “Heart on a String,” which she recorded with her brother Dylan when she was 12, and this year’s “When the Wind Blows High and Clear,” with Canadian multi-instrumentalist Quinn Bachand.

Carroll and Richardson have both appeared in “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” although not at the same time.

“This is deliberate on our part – we’ve never really done anything like this before, where we have two representatives from different generations on the same instrument in the show together,” says O’Donovan. “Liz constantly says that Haley is better than she was when she was that age. There’s a real ‘passing on the tradition’ element here.”

•Matthew Byrne is renowned for his rich tenor voice and sensitive and empathetic treatment of songs from the song tradition of his homeland, and his own family. Through his critically acclaimed recordings and appearances at “A St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn,” the Burren Backroom and New Bedford Folk Festival, among others, he has built a solid following in New England.

•Siobhan Miller earned awards at age 13 in traditional singing compe-

titions and from this background went on to cultivate a successful career in several different collaborations—including as co-founder of the band Salt House and in a duo with fiddler Jeana Leslie, with whom she recorded two well-received albums – and more recently as a soloist. From her traditional music background, Miller has increasingly focused on songwriting, and her 2018 album “Mercury” featured all-original material, some of which she co-wrote with established singer-songwriter Kris Drever. She also has had a cameo on the popular drama/fantasy TV show “Outlander.”

Miller will also perform in combination with Byrne, Maeve Gilchrist, and the O’Donovans.

“There’s sure to be a feast of harmony singing,” says O’Donovan. “Matthew, of course, has a great following here – in fact, I first heard about him through the Folk Song Society of Greater Boston – and with good reason: It takes you about three seconds of hearing him to know he’s simply outstanding. And I think Siobhan will build herself an audience here, too. She

has a long track record in folk and traditional music, and now her own, very impressive work.”

•The inclusion of Olav Johansson in this year’s cast continues the “Sojourn” fascination with Scandinavian music – and reflects the increasing interest, held by many in the Celtic music community, in exploring its links with other traditions. As a teenager, Johansson and his friend Mikael Marin often visited with older musicians, who shared their knowledge and love of Swedish folk music. Johansson and Marin would later team up with 12-string guitarist Roger Tallroth to form Väsen, which for three decades has brought a new dimension to Scandinavian traditional music, incorporating elements of rock, jazz, and classical as well as the trio’s original compositions. Johansson has received numerous honors for his work as a musician, and particularly as a champion of the nyckelharpa tradition; in 2013, he was awarded the Zorn Medal in gold, one of the highest achievements for a Swedish traditional musician.

“In ‘Christmas Celtic

Sojourn,’ we often like to showcase a specific instrument, like the uilleann pipes or perhaps the concertina,” says O’Donovan. “The nyckelharpa has what you might call ‘a gorgeous winter sound,’ and I’ve long dreamt of incorporating it into the show and our larger ensemble. In Olav, we have one of the absolute masters of the nyckelharpa.”

•Maureen Berry, who appeared in the 2017 show, will assume the role of dance director for this year’s “Sojourn.” She has produced feature-length stage shows such as “Step-Dance,” “Sláinte” and “Celtic Storm” and is director and choreographer for Maryland-based Teelin Irish Dance Company. This year, she will work with featured dancers Jason Oremus and Ashley Smith-Wallace.

A five-time solo national Irish dance champion, Australian-born Oremus was the principal lead dancer in “Riverdance” for more than eight years. He is the co-founder of award-winning dance company Hammerstep, and has performed across the world on stages including London’s Hammersmith Apollo, the Palais des Congrès



Olov Johansson

de Paris and the Kremlin State Palace in Moscow. His choreography and creative work have been praised by *Rolling Stone*, *Billboard*, *WIRED* and the *Huffington Post*.

Smith-Wallace, who studied at the Smith-Houlihan Irish Dance Academy of Norwood, won the World Irish Step Dancing Champion in 2004 – the youngest American female ever to win the world title at that time – and went on to garner two more gold world medals in 2005 and 2009. Moving to New York City, Smith-Wallace expanded her portfolio to include ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop and musical dance theater. She is currently the female lead dancer on the national tour of “Rockin’ Road to Dublin.”

For more details on this year’s “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” including the Dec. 20 sensory-friendly performance, go to wgbh.org/celtic.

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The Irish offer many ways to remember the reasons for the season

By JUDY ENRIGHT
SPECIAL TO THE BIR

It sure seems as though this mad world needs the peace, quiet, and holiness of the Christmas season this year to offset the turmoil and turbulence that's raging everywhere.

Has there ever been a time in recent memory when people have been so rude, mean-spirited, and thoughtless of others' feelings and beliefs? We don't remember if there ever was one.

Christmas is a perfect time of year to change all that. It's a time to reconnect, recollect, and reach out to help the less fortunate and remember the reason for the season.

There are holiday celebrations aplenty in Ireland this month and you'll easily find them wherever you travel.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Christmas markets are a tradition and there will be many set up in towns and cities across the country, offering an interesting variety of food and gifts that are fun to shop at and visit.

Belfast sets up its Continental Christmas Market in front of the city hall and you can find gifts, food, entertainment, and more there through the month until Dec. 22.

Waterford offers Winterval Dec. 18-23. (See winterval.ie for more dates and details.) Then there's the Milk Market in Limerick (milkmarketlimerick.ie) and Glow in Cork on weekends leading up to Christmas (corkchristmascelebration.ie).

If you're in Dublin, the stores and streets are gaily lit for the holiday and you can find great gifts everywhere - especially in the George's Street Arcade and, of course, along Grafton Street and its many interesting stores.

This year's Magic Parade in Killarney, with Santa Claus, took place on Nov. 24. Mini parades will take place on the Dec. 1, 8, 15, and 22 starting at 6 pm. Killarney On Ice returns to the Beech Road Car Park and operates through Jan. 6.

Be sure to check with local tourist board offices while you're there for more details on markets and other holiday activities in the areas you're visiting.

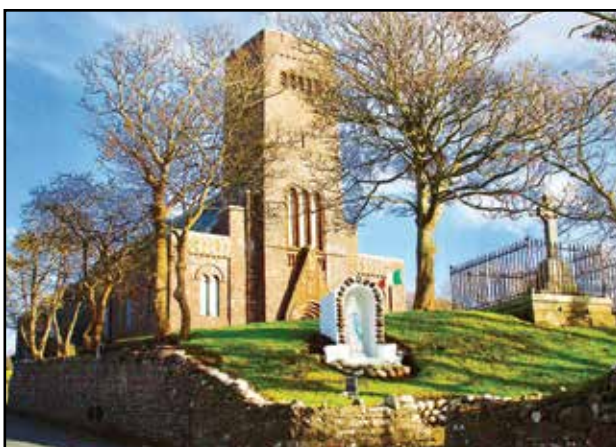
HARRY CLARKE

I visited Co. Mayo many times before I was introduced to the brilliant work of the Irish stained-glass artist Harry Clarke. His beautiful windows enhance St. Patrick's Church, which sits on a hill overlooking the town of Newport.

Local lore says the pastor there in the 1920s - Canon Michael MacDonald - commissioned Clarke's stained-glass windows for the church and sold his life insurance policy to pay for them. Clark reportedly went to see the church and met the canon in his rose garden, carrying a basket and wearing a large straw hat. The two men made an instant connection and



Detail from a stained glass window at St. Mary's Church in Ballinrobe by Harry Clarke.



St. Patrick's church in Newport, Co. Mayo, has Harry Clarke's Last Judgment window - often described as his most magnificent work - over the high altar in the east wall.



Magnificent Harry Clarke stained glass windows over the altar at St. Patrick's Church in Newport, Co. Mayo.

the deal was done.

Clarke's much too short life began on St. Patrick's Day in 1889 in Dublin, where his father, Joshua, had a stained glass and ecclesiastical decorating business. Harry was the younger of two sons - his brother Walter was also born on March 17 exactly one year earlier. Harry left school at 14 to join the family business after his mother died. He studied stained-glass making and won several scholarships, which ultimately led him to study in London and France.

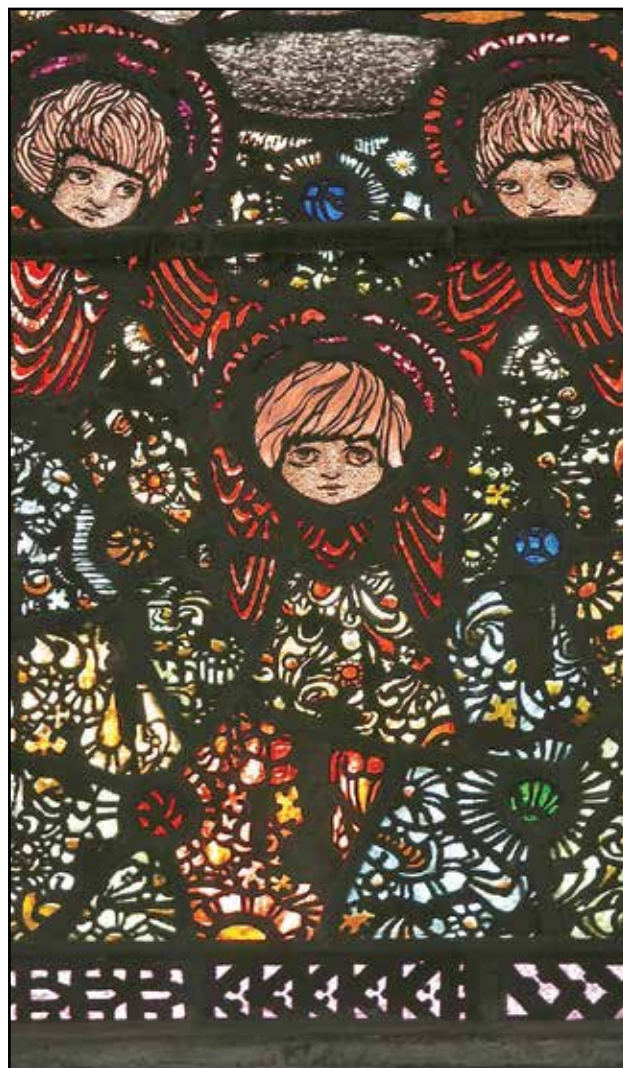
NEWPORT WINDOWS

The beautiful Last Judgment window, over the high altar in the east

wall of St. Patrick's, took four years to complete and has been described as Clarke's most magnificent work. The window includes a self-portrait of Clarke that is said to portray his suffering from prolonged poor health.

Clarke continued to work on the Newport design even while he was a patient in a Swiss sanatorium for tuberculosis in both lungs. He died in 1931 at 41 while on his way home to Ireland and a month before his studio installed the final window in the Newport church.

Although his life was short, Clarke was commissioned to create more than 160 windows for religious and commercial



Detail from a Harry Clarke window in St. Mary's Catholic Church in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo.

Judy Enright photos

properties and was also well known as an illustrator. Among his more famous were drawings in two editions of Edgar Allan Poe's works.

Clarke and Walter not only both worked in the family stained glass business but they also married sisters and died within six months of one another.

Of course, visiting Ireland is always a treat, but if you can't, you can still see Clarke's works. Harry created nine windows for the Basilica of St. Vincent de Paul in Bayonne, N.J., and the Geneve Window for the Wolfsonian-Florida International University design museum in Miami, FL. You can also find Harry Clarke

the highest number of accidents in the entire country. I was surprised because I have driven that curvy but lovely stretch many times and have never seen any accidents along that route. Of course, I do not drive it every day of the year.

The N59 from Leenane rolls down the coast along Killary Fjord to Connemara's hills and dales, passes the entrance to the Inagh Valley on the left and Kylemore Abbey (well worth a visit) on the right and then winds down into Clifden. It's a very scenic road.

The data were collected by the Dublin company Gamma Location Intelligence and were based on collision rates, determined by the number of road accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometers between 2015 and 2017, the newspaper said.

Co. Galway had the highest number of "accident black spots" in the country, the report noted, with eight of the most dangerous road segments located there.

Next on the most dangerous list was the stretch between Abbey Square roundabout and Seamus Rafter Bridge in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, while the Killashee, Ballymahon, and New Streets junction in Longford town was the third most dangerous in the country. The research also listed the most dangerous road in each county and ranked Exit 5 on the M1 as Dublin's most dangerous location for collisions.

In the story, Richard Garry, director of Location Intelligence for Gamma, said: "Overall, according to the data provided by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, collision rates are decreasing across the country. However, there are specific stretches of roads where the frequency of collisions is still high. Not only does this analysis show drivers where they need to take extra care, but it is also useful for insurance companies as it identifies the areas that are the worst for road accidents and enables them to better assess risk."

Ireland's Road Safety Authority (RSA) recorded a seven percent year-on-year increase in road deaths in the first six months of 2019, with 89 people killed. RSA Chief Executive Moyagh Murdoch said the increase was "alarming" and urged motorists to slow down on Ireland's roads.

This is great advice from Murdoch for all those planning to drive in Ireland or anywhere actually. But in Ireland, it does pay to be extra careful, especially when driving on what we call, "the wrong side of the road."

HOLIDAY WISHES

We wish all our readers the very best holiday season and a healthy, happy New Year. And, we hope many of you will find tickets to Ireland in your stockings or under your tree.

ACCIDENT BLACK SPOTS

It was shocking to read a story recently in *The Irish Times* reporting that a Dublin group's research shows that the stretch of the N59 running from Leenane to Clifden has

The BIR's Calendar of Celtic music and dance

By SEAN SMITH

In addition to “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” (see separate story in this edition), there are – unsurprisingly – plenty of other Irish/Celtic-related holiday music events in Greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts over the next few weeks.

•The Irish Cultural Centre of New England in Canton will host “**Irish Christmas in America**” on Dec. 8 at 1 p.m. The show, marking its 15th year, features music, song, dance, and stories of seasonal Irish traditions, with Sligo-born producer and fiddler Oisín Mac Diarmada – a co-founder of popular band Téada, and accordionist Seamus Begley, known for his lovely Kerry-influenced singing and his witty stage banter. Performers also include vocalist and flutist Niamh Farrell, who has toured with English indie singer-songwriter David Gray, and step dancer Samantha Harvey.

On Dec. 21 at 7 p.m., the ICC presents “A Christmas Celebration” with original “Celtic Woman” star **Chloe Agnew**. Joining “Celtic Woman” at age 14, Agnew – who had already released two recordings – stayed with the ensemble for nearly 10 years, during which time she recorded two more albums and earned Female Vocalist of the Year honors at the 2012 Irish Music Awards. In addition to her solo work, she has performed as a guest with Celtic Thunder and appeared as part of “The Voice of Ireland” and “A Celtic Christmas.” In recent years, Agnew has turned to songwriting, and last year issued a five-track EP, “The Thing About You,” which includes four original songs.

For tickets and other information about these events, go to irishculture.org.

•In what has now become an annual occasion, the **Berklee Celtic Vocal Ensemble** will present “The Holly Bears the Crown,” on Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. in the David Friend Recital Hall (921 Boylston Street). These eight Berklee College of Music vocalists perform ballads, bawdy tales, sea shanties, and other songs from Ireland, the British Isles, and the Canadian Maritimes, backed by a nine-piece Celtic band. Admission is free.

•Local husband-wife duo **Matt and Shannon Heaton** share their holiday cheer once again at Club Passim on Dec. 6 at 8 p.m. with “A Fine Winter’s Night,” a show of traditional and original material inspired by their 2007 album of the same name. Shannon (flute, whistle, accordion, vocals) and Matt (guitar, bouzouki, vocals) make a point of forging connections with their audiences, through their breezy, good-spirited stage presence along with their dynamic musicianship. With a solid grounding in traditional Irish music, the Heaton’s also have become noteworthy as tune composers and songwriters, as reflected in “A Fine Winter’s Night.”

The following afternoon, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m., Club Passim hosts one of the more recently launched holiday-themed Celtic shows, this one by another Boston-area act, **Scottish Fish**. These five young women (Julia Homa, Ava Montesi, Caroline Dressler, and Maggie MacPhail, fiddles; Giulia Haible, cello, keyboard) have spent a good chunk of their teen years developing an exciting take on traditional Scottish and Cape Breton music. Nurtured by their sojourns at the



Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy (and their kids) will present “A Celtic Family Christmas” at The Cabot in Beverly.

Boston Harbor Scottish Fiddle School, “The Fish” have gone on to appear at Club Passim, Boston Celtic Music Fest, and WGBH-FM’s “A Celtic Sojourn,” Boston’s EarthFest, and a number of other public and private venues. In 2017, they released their debut album, “Splash.”

Other, less holiday-centric concerts at Club Passim this month include a triple bill on December 11 with **Rakish**, the duo of Maura Shawn Scanlin (fiddle, vocals) and Conor Hearn (guitar, vocals). With influences ranging from Irish and Scottish to Americana and classical music, Scanlin and Hearn – though quite at home playing up-tempo and with intensity – tend to go for a more contemplative, colloquial approach, giving space to the subtleties and nuances of a tune or song. Rakish has performed at BCMFest, the Burren Backroom series, and last month’s inaugural Rockport Celtic Music Festival.

Also performing that night with Rakish are **mammiferes**, a quartet that brings roots music into a new, experimental domain, and improvisational guitarist, banjo player, singer and poet **Wendy Eisenberg**.

The following night, Dec. 12 at 8 p.m., will see an appearance by thye Massachusetts-based Celtic ensemble **Fellswater**. Known for its meticulously arranged sets of Scottish, Irish, Breton, and other Celtic-related music, Fells-

water started out as a quartet more than a decade ago but in the past few years has doubled its ranks, with newest member, cellist Dave Cabral, joining Kyle Forsthoff (percussion), Betsy Ketudat (violin, Hardanger fiddle, Celtic harp), Jim MacConduibh (acoustic bass guitar, high-strung guitar), Sarah MacConduibh (Irish flute, whistles, fife), Andrew McIntosh (Scottish small pipes, border pipes), Chris Myers (vocals, guitar, octave mandolin), and Diane Myers (vocals). In addition to Club Passim, the band has played at the New Hampshire Highland Games, Blackstone River Theatre, The Burren Backroom Series, and Colonial Williamsburg, as well as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo.

Ticket information available at passim.org.

•Irish harpist-vocalist **Áine Minogue** will present her annual program of music celebrating the winter solstice and Christmas, with tunes and carols that have roots in ancient traditions of Ireland and the British Isles, on several dates including: on Dec. 2 and 16, Peabody Institute Library; Dec. 9, Bourne Public Library; Dec. 14, Blackstone River Theatre, Cumberland, RI; and Dec. 23 at Club Passim. For tickets, times and other information, see aineminogue.com/events.

•Cape Breton trad power couple **Nata-**

lie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy come to the Cabot Theatre in Beverly for “A Celtic Family Christmas” on Dec. 13 at 8 p.m. Representing the union of two legendary family music traditions, fiddlers and step dancers MacMaster and Leahy have now started one of their very own: Their children will be among the array of musicians joining the pair for a concert of powerful, up-tempo instrumentals as well as intimate, heartfelt melodies. See thecabot.org for details.

•The Burren hosts its yearly **Benefit for the Somerville Homeless Coalition** on Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m., with a ton of musical guests from the Irish/Celtic/folk domain, among them The Revels with David Coffin, The Ruta-Beggars, Windborne, Tommy McCarthy and Louise Costello with Sean Clohessy, Mary Casey, Lindsay O’Donovan, The Bagboys, Siobhan Miller (who will be featured at this year’s “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn”) and the Kieran Jordan Dancers.

On Dec. 11, the big sound of **Lúnasa** comes to the intimate setting of the Burren Backroom for two shows, at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Innovative and compelling, the band (Kevin Crawford, flute, whistle; Patrick Doocey, guitar; Cillian Vallely, uilleann pipes, whistle; Trevor Hutchinson, double bass; Colin Farrell, fiddle, whistle) is known for its layered, harmonically sophisticated, and quite modern treatment of Irish traditional music, marked by tight – but not suffocating – precise and polished arrangements yet full of passion and power. Their visits to the Burren often involve a special guest or two.

For tickets and updates on Burren shows, see burren.com/music.html.

Irish music singer and scholar, Dan Milner plumbs integration of New York’s ‘Unstoppable Irish’ Time frame: 1783-1883

See BostonIrish.com



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CD Reviews

By Sean Smith

Martin Hayes & Brooklyn Rider, “The Butterfly” • Hayes is a paragon of East Clare fiddle, with its somewhat slower, relaxed feel compared to other traditions, marked by long, fluid bowing. He’s also shown himself adept at bringing East Clare fiddle into a contemporary milieu, vis-à-vis his partnership with guitarist Dennis Cahill, and their exploration and “deconstruction” of Irish tunes; the two also are members of the experimental quintet The Gloaming, and Hayes’ eponymous quartet.



So it seems quite natural for him to collaborate with the self-described “omnivorous” string quartet Brooklyn Rider (Johnny Gandelsman and Colin Jacobsen, violins; Nicholas Cords, viola; Michael Nicolas, cello), which has gone well beyond the classical and chamber music dominion to work with Sting, Elvis

Costello, Kate Bush, newgrass banjo pioneer Bela Fleck, and jazz saxophonist Joshua Redman, among others.

Irish/Celtic/classical crossovers have been around for a long time: Arthur Fielder and the Boston Pops’ “Irish Night at the Pops”; works by Charlie Lennon; Bill Whelan’s “Connemara Suite”; the chambergrass sound championed by Fretless; Lúnasa’s album with the RTE Concert Orchestra. On “The Butterfly,” Hayes and Brooklyn Rider seek out and zoom in on the intersections between their respective musical idioms, in the context of Irish tunes, all but two of them from tradition; the others are from the pens of Hayes (“Maghera Mountain”) and Peadar Ó Riada (“Bob and Bernie”). Most of the tunes – there is one per track – will be

familiar to musicians and listeners alike, such as the title track, “Jenny’s Welcome to Charlie,” “O’Neill’s March,” “An Rogaire Dubh,” even “The Drunken Sailor” (the hornpipe, not the sea chantey).

In fact, as Hayes and Brooklyn Riders’ members have said, the familiarity of the tunes is the whole point of this collaboration: it’s easy for a musician or listener to get jaded about them, especially when, as Hayes has put it, they get dragged through the kitschy dirt. Reframing them with a string quartet holds the promise of reinvigoration and reappreciation, and the album achieves that goal. For one thing, there’s a very conscious effort at forging a partnership, as opposed to casting Brooklyn Rider simply as Martin Hayes’ Backup Band. While sometimes the quartet may be in a supportive role, playing rhythm, held notes or chords around Hayes’ lead, at other junctures their variations on the tune become the dominant sound, and Hayes is more in the background.

The arrangement on “O’Neill’s March” is a masterpiece of build-up and anticipation, as gradually the instruments coalesce around the melody – Nicolas’s cello at one point seems to summon the solidarity – before the intensity softens, as if a parade was passing. The title track begins with an aural landscape of mainly atonal dashes and darts, until along comes that recognizable E-minor theme in 9/8, and Gandelsman, Jacobsen, Cords, and Nicolas swoop and glide on all sides of it. Another bit of enjoyment is when the guys zero in on a phrase or other component of a particular tune, such as the first two notes in the B part of “Mulqueen’s” (to almost comic effect – at one point, it’s as if they’re imitating a locomotive blowing its horn); they do a similar two-note emphasis in “P Joe’s Reel” – associated with Hayes’s father, P.J., himself a celebrated musician.

Hayes and Brooklyn Rider take a different tack on “Port Na bPucal,” focusing on wringing just about every grain of emotion out of this gorgeously mournful air, and the result is stunning. It serves notice, as if

any were needed, that this collaboration isn’t about experimenting for its own sake, but about illuminating Irish music from new, even unusual angles. And the beauty of that music is as profound as ever. [“The Butterfly” is available for download at brooklynrider.bandcamp.com.

The String Sisters, “Between Wind and Water”

• There are some musical ventures that require a lot of patience and forbearance, both on the part of the musicians involved and the listeners who eagerly await the results. So it is with The String Sisters, an occasional ensemble that includes some of the foremost female fiddlers around, representing the Irish (Liz Carroll, Liz Knowles, and Mairead Ni



Mhaonaigh), Scandinavian (Annbjorg Lien and Emma Hardelin) and Shetland (Catriona Macdonald) music traditions. All of them have plenty on their creative plates – Ni Mhaonaigh, for example, is a member of Altan and Na Mooneys, Macdonald is part of Blazin’ Fiddles, Hardelin plays with Garmarna and Triakel, Knowles with Open the Door for Three – so finding time and energy to gather and perform, let alone record an album, is a rare and wonderful thing.

Which is why it took nearly a decade for the Sisters to release this, their second album, coming 17 years after the six first joined forces at Scotland’s Celtic Connections festival. And, yes, the anticipation was definitely justified. Part of the enjoyment, obviously, is to hear how the fiddlers are able to fit snugly into one another’s music traditions, often transitioning between them over the course of a single tune set.

And because they – Carroll and Lien in particular – also are accomplished composers, and some of their originals are included here, you can appreciate the way traditional and contemporary influences intersect with one another. The very first track, “The Crow’s Visit,” starts with Carroll’s “As the Crow Flies,” relentless in its modal, Appalachian-like groove, and segues into Lien’s “A Visit,” which changes the vibe (and key) while holding onto the momentum; in the liner notes, Lien says the tune is meant to evoke those occasions when musicians visit and jam with each other – “These sessions have no borders.”

Can’t go this far into the review without acknowledging the outstanding work of the Sisters’ rhythm section (sometimes known as “The Misterys”): Pianist David Milligan, bassist Conrad Ivitsky Molleson, guitarist Tore Bruvoll and drummer/percussionist James Mackintosh are brilliant, whether in full ensemble or smaller combos; Milligan in particular is a revelation, contributing some masterful solo breaks as well as undergirding the rhythm.

One highlight is “Open to the Elements,” opening with Knowles’s “Walking Intro” – a pattern of plucked notes set against bowed ones – that becomes a counter-melody for the traditional Irish/Scots reel “Gravel Walks to Grannie,” then going into Milligan’s “Resistance Reel” before firing up a brisk “Glen Road to Carrick.” Lien’s hardanger fiddle is the linchpin in the “Hjaltland” medley, as she leads a traditional Norwegian tune “Dolkaren between Macdonald’s “Hjaltland to Flatland” and the way-cool Shetland tune “Up Da Stroods Da Sailor Goes.” Lien’s driving, churning “Late Night in Fårde” somehow becomes a pensive hardanger solo, until Milligan’s piano restarts the engine. For good measure, the Sisters even have a go at a trotto, a medieval dance tune.

There’s fine singing from Ni Mhaonaigh and Hardelin, too. They combine on “Wind and Rain,” an American version of the old British Isles ballad “The Two/Twa Sisters,” a tale of fatal jealousy and magical redemption, with Knowles’s stately “Parker Street” interpolated throughout. Hardelin sings a traditional Swedish song, “Det Bor,” with spare, dramatic backing from Milligan, and Ni Mhaonaigh offers up one of her own, “Mo Níon Ó,” a lullaby in Gaelic she wrote for her daughter – Knowles’s string arrangement, the accompaniment from Milligan and Molleson, and Hardelin’s harmony vocals tie the proverbial bow. [stringsisters.net]

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BRETT'S BOSTON
By Harry Brett
Exclusive photos of Boston Irish people & events

Cardinal Sean O'Malley dedicated the new home of the Irish Pastoral Centre in Adams Village on Fri., Nov. 22. The event drew a large gathering.

1.) Laoise Moore, Ireland's Consul General; Shane Caffrey, Vice Consul; 2.) Cardinal O'Malley addressing the group; 3.) Brid Coll, Vancouver; Fr. John Ronaghan, St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish, Dorchester; Maurin Keady, Dorchester; 4.) Fr. Dan Finn, former executive director IPC; Cardinal Sean O'Malley; Peggy Davis-Mullen, IPC executive director IPC; 5.) Mary Salis, Dorchester, Susan Doody, Canton; 6.) Grace and Michael O'Donovan, Plymouth; 7.) Tish McMullin; 8.) Neil Hurley, Maureen McNally, Rockland; 9.) Ciara O'Shea, Quincy; Johnny Joyce, Dorchester; 10.) Maryann Casavant, Westwood; Anne Finn, Milton; 11.) Dearthbha Moloney, Galway; Dorothy McCormack, Quincy; 12.) Margaret Brett Hastings; Fr. Brian Clary, St. Brendan/St Ann Collaborative, Dorchester; Della Costello, Dorchester; Ed Forry, Dorchester.

'Jack' Conroy, accordionist, scholar, 'gentleman'; at 87

Boston's Irish music community is mourning the passing of John F. "Jack" Conroy on Nov. 9 at age 87. His funeral Mass was said on Nov. 15 at St. Margaret Church of St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Dorchester.

Anative of Milton whose parents, John and Bridget, were from Connemara, Conroy played accordion and for decades was a welcome presence at dances, ceilidhs, sessions, and other Irish music or social events in the Boston area. Friends and acquaintances recalled him as an affable, gentlemanly type

who enjoyed sharing his Irish music experience and knowledge.

Mr. Conroy was part of the lively Dudley Street Irish music scene in the 1950s and played with three bands, and years later was a regular at popular local sessions held at venues such as the Green Briar in Brighton and the Irish Cultural Centre in Canton. He also was a long-time member of Boston's Reynolds-Hanafin-Cooley branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, and worked in an administrative capacity for the CCE music school.

He was inducted into the Boston CCE Hall of Fame in 2004.

Mr. Conroy served in the Korean War as a second lieutenant in the US Army. He earned his doctoral degree from the University of Southern California and taught science and math for the Department of Defense in Taiwan, Germany, and Korea.

For more about him, including a video of him playing accordion and a link to profile written on the occasion of his Hall of Fame induction, go to the CCE Boston blog

at cceboston.org/jack-conroy-r-i-p.

Mr. Conroy was the husband of Gail M. (Agnew) Conroy for 46 years, and the brother of Sr. Mary A. Conroy SCH (Sisters of Charity, Halifax) of

Bayside, NY, Sr. Catherine A. Conroy SCH of Dorchester, Sr. Lillian A. Conroy SCH of Quincy, Rev. Francis X. Conroy of Beaumont, TX, Frederick A. Conroy of NY, and the late Thomas J. Conroy.



John F. Conroy

Skepticism aired on 'Brexit Watch'

Britain's Dec. 12 vote has been dubbed the "Brexit election," dominated by the country's stalled exit from the European Union and questions about a no-Brexit happening. The electorate remains deeply skeptical of politicians' promises, if a televised question-and-answer session late last month is any indication.

In addition to Brexit maneuverings, citizens deplored the lack of information or parties' perspectives on economic issues, Russian interference in the country's affairs, child poverty, taxes, renewable energy, Scottish independence.

As for Ireland, North and South, it's watch-and-wait for the latest word on

the border-crossing setup post-Brexit, should the breakup come to pass.

The latest Brexit plan leaves Northern Ireland as part of the UK's customs territory and the entry point into the EU's single market, but certain EU rules would apply, a notion deemed unacceptable by Northern Ireland leaders.



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