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Parade-goers enjoyed the sights and sounds of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade along Broadway in South Boston in 2019. This year’s parade in Southie starts at 1 p.m. on Sunday, March 15. See more on Page 2.

Photo by Steven Senne/AP
WELCOME TO BOSTON IRISH!

By Ed Forry

You have in your hands the inaugural edition of a new publication that’s all about the community bearing that name.

I am not sure what term fits best to describe this new venture. It’s designed to be a magazine, but it’s larger than the print magazines we’re used to seeing at local newsstands and bookstores. It’s more compact than a broadsheet like a daily newspaper, or the tabloid like the Boston Irish Reporter, the monthly newspaper that is its progenitor, and which succumbed to the times we live in last December after three decades of publication.

Perhaps it’s best described as a periodical with a circulation schedule of every three months or so.

Since first announcing the new publication early this year, I have been encouraged by the expressions of support we’ve received from all sections of the community. For 30 years, the mission of the Irish Reporter was to tell the stories of the Irish communities in Greater Boston. A recent message from local non-profit porter was to tell the stories of the Irish communities in our city. For 30 years, the mission of the Irish Reporter, the monthly newspaper bearing that name.

I am not sure what term fits best to describe this new Boston Irish periodical.

The Boston Irish is not liable for errors appearing in advertise-

ments beyond the cost of the space occupied by the error.

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The Chieftains bring their “Irish Goodbye” tour to Symphony Hall in Boston on March 13 at 8 p.m. Paddy Moloney (pipes, whistle), Matt Molloy (flute, whistle) and Kevin Conneff (bodhran, vocals) will be joined by assorted “friends” for this latest go-round in their nearly six decades of upholding the Irish music tradition and, at the same time, pushing its boundaries through collaborations with Chinese and Spanish musicians, and popular and country music artists, among others. The tour title has invited speculation that the group is planning to bring down the curtain, but as they note, an “Irish Goodbye” can also mean a very extensive farewell.

Tickets available through celebrity-series.org/productions/the-chieftains.

THE BOSTON IRISH CALENDAR OF CELTIC MUSIC AND DANCE

March 2020

There will be Irish/Celtic music experiences aplenty in Greater Boston these next few weeks, as you might guess, highlighted by the annual “A St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn” production (See separate story in this edition).

- The month gets off to a fine start at The Burren Backroom on March 1 as Dervish comes in for shows at 4 and 7 p.m. Originally formed in 1989 as the Boys of Sligo, the band acquired a key part of its identity with the arrival in 1991 of lead singer and bodhran/bones player Cathy Jordan. Since then, Dervish - besides Jordan, its members are Shane Mitchell (accordion), Liam Kelly (flute/whistle), Brian McDonagh (mandola/mandolin), Michael Holmes (bouzouki) and Tom Morrow (fiddle) - has been a compelling exemplar of the instrumental and song traditions of Sligo and Leitrim. They’ve performed at events and venues all over the world, represented Ireland in the Eurovision Song Contest, served as cultural ambassadors to China (where they held an impromptu session on the Great Wall), and, last year, received a BBC Lifetime Achievement Award. Their most recent album, “The Great Irish Songbook,” features classic Irish songs sung by special guests like Steve Earl, Andrea Corr, Vince Gill, Kate Rusby, Imelda May, and Rhianon Giddon.

The Backroom will welcome Josephine County, a Maine-based quartet with wide-ranging musical interests, on March 4 at 7:30 p.m. Colleen Raney (vocals, guitar, bodhran), Hanz Araki (vocals, flute, whistle), Erica Brown (vocals, fiddle, guitar), and Matt Shipman (vocals, guitar, mandolin, bouzouki) are all individually accomplished performers who, together, represent vast experience not only in Irish but Scottish, English American, and Canadian folk traditions, but also in bluegrass and country.

Opening will be a recently formed local trio, Christine Hedden, Rebecca McGowan, and Lindsay Straw, which presents the union of instrumental, dance, and vocal components in traditional Irish music. Hedden (fiddle)

(Continued on page 18)

St. Patrick’s Day parades

Yarmouth on Cape Cod:
Sat., March 7, 11 a.m.

Lawrence:
Sat., March 14, 1 p.m.

Newport, RI:
Sat., March 14, 11 a.m.

Abington:
Sun., March 15, 1 p.m.

South Boston:
Sun., March 15, 1 p.m.

Scituate:
Sun., March 15, 1 p.m.

Worcester:
Sun., March 15, Noon.

Providence, RI:
Sat., March 21, Noon.

Holyoke:
Sun., March 22, Noon.

Weymouth:
Sun., March 29, Noon.

Dublin, Ireland:
Tues., March 17, Noon.

Source: Boston Irish Tourism Assoc.
Rian, the Irish word for path, honors our Irish roots while reflecting our inclusive mission of empowering immigrant and refugee families on the path to opportunity, safety and a better future for all.

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TUESDAY, MARCH 17TH, 2020 | 8AM
BOSTON HARBOR HOTEL, ROWES WHARF

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
IRISH GOVERNMENT MINISTER

GUEST SPEAKER:
BARONESS MAY BLOOD, MBE
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John F. Kennedy School of Government,
Harvard University
Seaport Boston Hotel
One Seaport Lane
Boston, Massachusetts
Tuesday, March 17, 2020

Cocktail Reception at 6:00 p.m. $195 per person
Dinner at 7:00 p.m. RSVP
Black Tie Optional March 10, 2020

R. Nicholas Burns is currently Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Politics at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Mr. Burns is a columnist, lecturer, and former United States Ambassador to NATO.

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Tickets are $175.00 per person
eiresociety.org
British wavering on border plan ‘spells trouble,’ says Irish envoy to US

By Bill Forry

Ambassador Daniel Mulhall, Ireland’s top diplomat in the United States, told an audience of Irish-American leaders gathered in Boston on Tuesday (Feb. 25) that recent “noise” about the United Kingdom possibly seeking to walk away from or amend its withdrawal agreement with the European Union “spells trouble for everyone,” particularly if London were to renege on its pledge for “no border” between the Republic and the North.

Mulhall’s remarks came at a luncheon hosted by the Sullivan & Worcester law firm and the Consulate General of Ireland at the Boston College Club in downtown Boston. The subject of his 30-minute talk was billed as “A Conversation on Brexit,” but the veteran statesman covered a range of topics, including uncertainty about who will represent Ireland at the White House.

“It’s taking place. There will be a Taoiseach. But I have no idea who he or she will be,” Mulhall said. “So, I had to issue invitations yesterday, which said in honor of ‘An Taoiseach.’ No name. We have to wait and see.”

Mulhall, a Co. Waterford native who has been Ireland’s envoy to the US since 2017, is a seasoned diplomat who was formerly Dublin’s top emissary to London and Berlin. He was a part of the Irish government’s delegation that helped negotiate the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

On Tuesday, Mulhall told his audience that they were now at “halftime” in the British-EU “divorce” process. He thinks that the British government should exercise its right to “look for an extension” beyond the deadline set for the end of this year for a trade agreement with the EU. Trade agreements of this sort, he says, typically take years to craft and ratify.

But weekend press reports indicating that the British government might seek to backtrack on its commitment to a “no border” agreement animated Mulhall’s remarks on Monday.

“I thought this issue had been resolved,” he said. “If I’d been speaking here two weeks ago, I would have been saying the border in Ireland got sorted. But now we see evidence of the British government resigning from its commitments under the withdrawal agreement and that spells trouble.

“Now this may be a bit shouting at halftime between the two sides, you know... and if that’s it, it’s fine,” he said. “But if it leads to a genuine push for the future is highly positive.”

Mulhall’s remarks on Monday.

“Now we will stand firm, and I think on the basis of experience to date, we will have the solidarity of our European neighbors, which has been very impressive. And I think it has really made a big difference to Irish people and their attitude towards the EU has actually strengthened and become more positive.”

But the border issue aside, could there be an upside to Brexit from the Irish perspective? Mulhall was unequivocal in his assessment that “there is no version of Brexit that is not detrimental to Ireland.”

“We lose out for sure. And the sad thing is the losses will mainly be in rural Ireland,” he said, “because it’s the food sector that will be damaged most.... They will diversify, but it will be difficult for them to diversify fully.”

One area in which Ireland will likely benefit, Mulhall said, will be increased growth in direct American business investment, which is already a huge part of Ireland’s economic growth. Over 750 American companies have a presence in Ireland. That number is likely to accelerate thanks to Brexit.

“Companies look at the UK and say, you know, they’re less attractive now because they don’t guarantee direct access to the European single market,” he said. “Ninety companies have moved to Ireland already because of Brexit. That’s 5,000 new jobs in Ireland, he said, not a small number in a nation of 5 million, which is already enjoying near “full employment, with an unemployment rate around 4.5 percent.”

“We’ve had the fastest growing economy in Europe for the last five years,” the ambassador said. “The prognosis for the future is highly positive.”

Mulhall also noted that the Irish people have embraced the fact that the global economy and their membership in the EU – which Ireland joined in 1973 – has been a major success.

“And the good news is that in our recent election, we had a number of candidates who stood on an anti-immigration platform. You know, send them all back and pull up the drawbridge. And none of them got any more than 2 percent of the vote. So, people in Ireland are comfortable with the idea of our being a global country, open to the world, exporting all over the world, importing ideas, technologies, and people. So that’s a very positive kind of situation that we find ourselves in.”
By Maureen Forry Sorrell

The shuttering of the historical mainstay pub and restaurant Doyle’s in Jamaica Plain last year was a tough pill for many Bostonians to swallow. The setting for many an election victory party over 137 years, Doyle’s was a beloved part of the city’s political landscape. For those lamenting the loss of the venerable gathering place, there is a good bit of news for this first March without the holiday revelry on site: The bar backsplash and mirror – all original wood from the 19th century when the storied pub first opened – that graced the function room at Doyle’s has been purchased by Richard Gormley, president of the Irish Social Club in West Roxbury, and installed in the club on Park Street.

Gormley said he also purchased some tables and chairs from Doyle’s. He plans to rededicate the structure at the club on March 14 during the Annual County Roscommon Association’s St Patrick’s Banquet. He proudly tells Boston Irish that the rededication will include remarks from Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III, a great-great grandson of Honey Fitz.

If you can’t make it to the banquet, the Social Club will be throwing a huge St. Patrick’s Day Breakfast and day-long celebration on March 17 featuring Irish dancing and music by the Fenian Sons and the Boston Police Gaelic Column, among others. Admission to that event is $25.

Tickets for the Roscommon Banquet can be reserved in advance only by calling 617-327-7777. For more information about club events, visit irishsocialclubofboston.org.

(1st Published Feb 20 at BostonIrish.com)

Maureen Forry Sorrell is a member of the Boston Irish Reporter staff.

For each petal on the shamrock
This brings a wish your way-
Good health, good luck, and happiness
For today and every day.
Go mbeannai Dia duit
(May God Bless You)

Mayor Martin J. Walsh
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St. Patrick’s Month at the ICC

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We have a wide variety of events and activities on offer at the ICC, from weekly Irish history, language and music classes to craft demonstrations on March 21st. Our annual Kids St. Patrick’s Day celebration usually fills the place (March 14). We have full day of entertainment on March 17!

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**Boston Irish**

**AOH Order of Hibernians**

**Division 8 AOH Lawrence announces 2020 awardees**

The Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA Division 8 Ancient Order of Hibernians has announced the recipients of its 2020 Awards: The Rev. Christopher J. Casey has been selected as the recipient of the Richard Cardinal Cushing Award. Mark J. Alaimo has been selected as the Irishman of the Year. Both of these awards will be presented at Division 8’s 149th Annual Saint Patrick’s Day Dinner Dance on Sat., March 7, 2020.

Larry F. Giordano will be feted as the recipient of the Hon. John E. Fenton Citizenship Award at Division 8’s 51st Annual Saint Patrick Day Luncheon on Fri., March 13.

Father Casey, a Lawrence native and one of seven children of the late Cornelius and Mary Casey, is pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Methuen. For the past 46 years the Cardinal Cushing award has been presented to an individual in the Greater Lawrence area who emulates the characteristics of this beloved prelate who was archbishop of Boston from 1944 to 1970.

Mr. Alaimo at present serves as a principal and the chief operating officer of LCW CPAs in South Lawrence, and for over 15 years has worked in the field of public accounting, family office advisory, and wealth management. Larry Giordano of Methuen has served his country, state and community in many capacities—the US Air Force, Methuen City Councillor, Massachusetts Commissioner of Public Safety, Methuen State Representative, and a Methuen Police Officer.

**County Roscommon Association**

**Annual St. Patrick’s Day Banquet**

**Saturday, March 14, 5-9pm**

Boston Irish Social Club
119 Park St, West Roxbury

$45 per person, tickets must be purchased in advance by calling (617) 327-7777

Sit down catered dinner of corned beef and cabbage with dessert
Entertainment by Margaret Dalton and Erin’s Melody

Special Guest Rep. Joseph Kennedy will rededicate the bar originally dedicated by Senator Edward Kennedy in honor of John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald

Co. Roscommon Association
Richard Gormley, President
Thomas Craven, Treasurer

**St. Patrick’s Breakfast and Celebration with Fenian Sons along with**

Joe Glyn
Ally Harron & Marion Curry
and
Richie Cernley
ISC President

**Tuesday, March 17, 2020**

Schedule: Breakfast at 10:00 am
Music by Joe Glyn from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Music by Fenian Sons from 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Irish Step Dancers
Boston Police Gaelic Column
Music by Ally Harron and Marion Curry from 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm
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Irish Heritage Month March 2020
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Preserving and Fostering our Heritage and Culture

Sunday, March 1, 2020
OPENING of the EXHIBIT “The Irish of Massachusetts – The Final Chapter” at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Sunday, March 1, 2020
26th ANNUAL CLADDAGH PUB 4 MILE Classic ROAD RACE - 11 am, 399 Canal Street, Lawrence, MA (rain or shine) - For more information contact 978 688 8337 the Barry Kara Foundation. (Race # 9 of the Wild Rover Series)

Monday, March 2, 2020
Monday, March 2, 2020 - IRISH FLAG RAISING Across from City Hall – Common St. @11 a.m.

Wednesday, March 4, 2020
Wednesday, March 4, 2020 - LAWRENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY - South Lawrence Branch, 135 Parker Street, Lawrence, MA: OPEN HOUSE 10:30 am – 1 pm Showcase of Irish Books, CD’s and DVD’s – Sponsored by Division 8 (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Saturday, March 7, 2020
THE 149th ANNUAL SAINT PATRICK’S DAY BANQUET AND DANCE at the Reliefs’ In, One Market Street, Lawrence, MA. Traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner with dancing to John Connors & the Irish Express from 6 pm – 11 pm – Awarding of the Richard Cardinal Cushing and Irishman & Irishwoman of the Year Awards. For more information contact Charles Breen at 508 328 0323. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – Handicap Accessible

Sunday, March 8, 2020
WHITE FUND LECTURE – with ROBIN GERRY - Ms. Gerry will discuss her book, “Healing the Family Heart Holes:

A Genealogical Quest to Solve an Illegel Adoption Mystery Using DNA, Old Records, and Irish Luck” - at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm (FREE) - Handicap Accessible

Wednesday, March 11, 2020
AOH NATIONAL HUNGER MONTH FOOD DRIVE: Please consider donating canned goods and non-perishable food items. All food items received will be donated to a local food pantry. 6 pm – 7:30 pm Claddagh Pub, 399 Canal Street, Lawrence MA:

Friday, March 13, 2020
51st ANNUAL SAINT PATRICK’S DAY LUNCHEON at the Reliefs’ In, One Market Street, Lawrence, MA Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner with entertainment by the Silver Spears Irish Show Band at NOON. Awarding of the Honorable John F. Fenton Citizenship Award - For more information contact Jack Lahey @ 603 560 8192 Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – Handicap Accessible

Saturday, March 14, 2020
SAINT PATRICKS DAY PARADE @ 1 pm – For more information please contact mcenko@cityoflawrence.com

Sunday, March 15, 2020
Sunday, March 15, 2020 – WHITE FUND LECTURE – with JOSEPH BLANCHETTE – Mr. Blanchette will discuss his book, “The View from Shanty Pond” - at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm (FREE) - Handicap Accessible

Wednesday, March 18, 2020
LAWRENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY - South Lawrence Branch, 135 Parker Street, Lawrence, MA: OPEN HOUSE 10:30 am – 1 pm Showcase of Irish Books, CD’s and DVD’s - Sponsored by Division 8 (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Sunday, March 22, 2020
JOIN PIANIST TERRI KELLEY AND VOCALIST BILL DONELAN FOR AN ALL NEW PROGRAM OF CELTIC MELODIES - FROM ANCIENT GAELIC AIRS TO CURRENT SONGS - at the Lawrence Public Library, Sargent Auditorium, 51 Lawrence St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm Presented by Division 8 (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Wednesday, March 25, 2020
Wednesday, March 25, 2020 - LAWRENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY - South Lawrence Branch, 135 Parker Street, Lawrence, MA: OPEN HOUSE 10:30 am – 12 Noon Showcase of Irish Books, CD’s and DVD’s – Sponsored by Division 8 (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Saturday, March 28, 2020
IRISH FILM FESTIVAL at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence @ 10 am Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Tuesday, March 31, 2020
EXHIBIT CLOSES “The Irish of Massachusetts – The Final Chapter” at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

IRISH HERITAGE MONTH IS SPONSORED BY THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS DIVISION 8 and DIVISION 8 LAOH

Irish Heritage Month is supported in part by a grant from the Lawrence Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

For information on AOH Membership please write to: Division 8 AOH Organizer, PO Box 1407, Lawrence, MA 01842 or e-mail our organizer @ division8aoh@verizon.net
A seismic Irish general election result: What’s next?

By Larry Donnelly

An earthquake. A revolution. A shock to the system. These were all terms employed by pundits to describe the outcome of February 8th’s general election in Ireland.

All 160 seats in Dáil Éireann (Irish parliament) were up for grabs. The two historic big beasts of politics here, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, elected 38 and 35 TDs (members of parliament) respectively. But Sinn Féin, which operated on the fringes until relatively recently and has been scorned for its connection to the provisional IRA and its legacy of violence, was welcomed in from the cold by the electorate and is sending 37 of its representatives to the 33rd Dáil.

No one saw this coming until the campaign’s final days. The party performed poorly in the 2018 presidential election and in the 2019 local and European elections. As such, Sinn Féin only ran 42 candidates this time. That 37 of them were elected, with most of those topping the poll in their constituencies, is amazing.

In the immediate aftermath, there was considerable speculation in the international media as to why the Irish people voted as they did. Frankly, these assessments have, for the most part, been absurd. The prevalent take seems to be that Ireland, perhaps the one country in the west where the culture of his Fine Gael party would chortle at Moore’s attempt to paint them and Sinn Féin with the same broad brush. In short, the Taoiseach and his party couldn’t be more different, ideologically and otherwise, to Sinn Féin. The efforts undertaken by Varadkar, foreign affairs minister Simon Coveney and others in Fine Gael to mitigate the damage of Brexit had little, if anything, to do with Irish reunification.

Meanwhile, back on planet earth, an Irish Times exit poll revealed that housing and health were, by an overwhelming margin, the biggest issues in the election. Brexit was cited by just 1 percent as their top issue; Irish unity did not feature. And in another blow to the “Trump…Brexit…Irish general election” narrative, a mere 1 percent indicated that immigration was their primary concern as they cast ballots.

Access to health care has long been a serious issue in Ireland. Several impressive politicians have sought to tackle what former Taoiseach Brian Cowen once infamously called “Angola” without much success. Although there are many excellent doctors, nurses and others in the health service providing great care, frightening stories about elderly and sick people waiting for hours to be seen abound. It is always at the top of the list for a segment of the electorate who harbour justifiable grievances.

Housing, however, has become a serious problem as Ireland emerged from the economic crisis. The present numbers of homeless men, women and children are unprecedented. The cost of renting a home is higher in 2020 than it was during the Celtic Tiger years.

And buying a home, given that wary banks have made it a lot tougher to obtain a mortgage, is currently beyond the reach of many young families, even those with two good incomes. The price of housing is particularly out of hand in Dublin. As an aside, this points to the need for the country to become less focused on the capital and to do better at promoting economic activity in the other cities and regions.

Sinn Féin capitalised on the anger that has grown up around health care and housing. This is down in large part to the capable leadership not only of its president, Mary Lou McDonald, but also to a new cadre of articulate, thoughtful politicians, such as Eoin Ó Broin, Pearse Doherty and Louise O’Reilly.

Many of those who voted for the party in February did so for the first time, would not subscribe to all of its policies and are deeply troubled by some undeniably sordid elements of its past. The key question is whether this election is a blip or whether it marks a reconfiguration of Irish politics. Are the two dominant centrist

Larry Donnelly, who grew up in East Milton, is an attorney who has lived and worked in Ireland for nearly 20 years. He is a lecturer and director of Clinical Legal Education in the School of Law at the National University of Ireland, Galway and a regular media contributor on politics, current affairs and law in Ireland and the US. Follow him on Twitter at @LarryPDonnelly.
Trouble looms on both sides of the pond in 2020
Controversy and common threads roil US, Ireland, and Northern Ireland alike

By Peter F. Stevens

For Irish America, the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland, 2020 will prove a momentous, even epochal year. Brexit, Sinn Fein’s stunning success in Ireland’s elections, and the looming U.S. elections threaten to upend what was once each nation’s status quo. If 2016 was the year in which Donald Trump shattered every political norm known to Americans, then Sinn Fein’s victory at the polls stand in the same category. According to an array of Irish political pundits and analysts, the very economic angst and anger that drove blue-collar voters to push Trump to narrow electoral triumphs in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin have fueled Sinn Fein’s sudden ascent.

Journalist and historian Patrick Cockburn, in a recent Counterpoint piece, labeled Sinn Fein’s feat as “Ireland’s Brexit moment when left-out voters turn on the elite.” County Cork journalist Christy Parker noted: “People wanted to kick the government and Sinn Fein provided the shoe to do the kicking.”

The mode of kicking should ring familiar to Irish Americans— to all Americans. Whether one calls it “grievance” in the States or “begudrery” in Ireland, the issue is the massive gap between the “one percent” and the rest of the lot in Ireland and America alike. To Cockburn, Parker said, “Every week people are hearing some new shocking story about the homeless trying to live off food banks somewhere in the country.”

Along with the economic disparities that underpin so much frustration with “elites” and various versions of “drain the swamp” on both sides of the proverbial pond, the common and controversial election outcomes in the US, the UK, and Ireland marked a public embrace of pronounced, even rank nationalism. Trump’s mantra of “Make America Great Again,” Chief Brexiteer Boris Johnson’s antipathy for European Union, and Sinn Fein’s long-professed determination for “One Ireland” have not only shaken the status quo, but also threaten to shatter it.

If ever there has been a year in which “elections have consequences,” they are rearing up in all three nations every day so far of 2020 and beyond. The 2016 American presidential election brought Donald Trump and his red-hatted legions to power on promises of a rebirth of factories, coal mines, and steel mills; on a wall to keep “outsiders” from swarming all 50 states; and on a platform of nativism, nationalism, racism, religious bigotry, and ethnic division. The same brand of issues— minus the literal wall— similarly fueled Brexit and the rise of Boris Johnson. In June 2019, President Trump did suggest that a wall on the Ireland-Northern Ireland border was as viable an idea as his “vision” for the US-Mexican border. Leaders in Dublin and Belfast alike quickly and emphatically derided the very notion of Trump’s tone-deafness and ignorance in regard to The Troubles. A wall aside, the way in which Sinn Fein surged to an unprecedented foothold in Irish politics does share a common chord with America’s 2016 and unfolding 2020 elections and Brexit. That chord is an appeal to nationalism and a rejection of the status quo.

Cockburn asserts: “In Ireland, Sinn Fein stumbled on a winning political formula whose potency it at first underrated but raised its share of the vote from 9.5 to 24.5 per cent between disastrous local council elections last May and the triumphant general election nine months later. The change in the party’s political prospects may have been astonishing, but nobody believes them to be a flash in the pan protest vote.”

There are those who worry that Sinn Fein’s rising star and the return of a “hard border” between the Republic and Northern Ireland could reignite The Troubles. Still, dreams of a united Ireland appear a long way off at best. A recent Belfast Telegraph poll took the pulse of any unification in the North: a mere 29 percent of voters in Ireland support a united Ireland; 52 percent are dead set against it. Sinn Fein, however, intends to pressure the British government to hold a poll or referendum on unification within five years. In a historical Irish milestone, Sinn Fein looms as a major political presence in both Dublin and Belfast.

Fears of a return to The Troubles notwithstanding, the reasons many voters gave for supporting Sinn Fein were issues of homelessness, healthcare, and economic disparity and displacement. Cockburn aptly notes: “Sinn Fein...has also been extremely lucky: after trying and failing to make Irish partition an international issue for almost a century, the Brexit vote in 2016 automatically did so by potentially turning the border into an international frontier between the UK and the EU. Sinn Fein chose the right issues on which to campaign in the general election, but it was also the almost accidental beneficiary of disillussonment with traditional parties, and that disillusionment has been leading to these parties’ shock defeat in elections across the world.”

That brings matters back to America’s 2020 election and the impact that those of Irish lineage will unleash upon Donald Trump’s continued occupancy of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Somewhere between 28 million and 44 million voters fall into the category of Irish Americans, and in Trump’s 2016 electoral-college triumph, somewhere, according to Irish Central, in the vicinity of 51 percent of Irish Americans cast their vote for Trump, with some 39 percent for Hillary Clinton. Whether Donald Trump wins a second term or is ousted, a case can be made that Irish American voters will have a pronounced say.

Bob and Maisie: our family’s giants

By Martin McGovern

As Ireland entered Europe in 1973 and the “troubles” raged in the North, I was lost in teenage heartache. So much so that I took refuge in my grandparents’ house one night to watch a BBC2 documentary about Joseph Stalin.

Distracted by the footage of Soviet terror, I was surprised when Gran sidled up beside me. Hand soft on my shoulder, she leaned in and said, “Never mind, chuck, there are more fish in the sea.”

From the school of hard knocks, Gran had razorlike intuition and, in a few words, she gave me the spark I needed to get back to school. “You want to be ready for what has eluded them.”

Most weeks I ran an errand for Granddad, who enjoyed a Guinness and a cheese sandwich before bed. I cherished that task, though he’d press me about reading pop papers he deemed too frivolous for a serious university candidate.

Fortunately, there was banter between us. Reading obituaries, he’d wink and say, “There’s more people giving up smoking and drinking.” With that humor, his concern wasn’t real pressure. But my capable grandparents, not just to me, but to a small army of aunts, cousins, and neighbors passed through their house – the hub of extended family life.

After parenthood, they became wonderful grandparents, not just to me, but to a small army of grandchildren and, indeed, great-grandchildren. Their names were Robert and Mary Flynn, also known as Bob and Maisie. He was a cook in the Irish army and she a housewife.

How they kept track of everyone – never mind how they kept track of so many of us – I will never know. Humble to their core, they had talents beyond their own imagination. In my book, they were giants.

Martin McGovern lives in Mashpee. His article is courtesy of the Cape Cod Times, where it was first published on Sept. 8, 2019.
Sinn Fein tops poll in election ‘earthquake’

By Jill Lawless and Nicola Dumitrache

Ireland’s political parties were scrambling to adjust to a new reality on Feb. 10, after an earth-shaking election that saw the left-wing nationalist party Sinn Fein win the biggest share of votes. Sinn Fein, the party historically linked to the Irish Republican Army and its violent struggle for a united Ireland, received 24.5% of the first-preference votes in Saturday’s election. That bested Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, the two centrist parties that have governed Ireland since it won independence from Britain a century ago.

Fianna Fail received 22.2% of the votes and Fine Gael, the party of incumbent Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, got 20.9%. Sinn Fein’s left-wing proposals for tackling Ireland’s housing crisis and creaking healthcare system proved a powerful draw for young voters in a country that is still dealing with aftershocks of the 2008 global financial crisis, which hammered its debt-driven “Celtic Tiger” economy.

Vote counting was resuming Monday to fill all the seats in the 160-Dail, the lower house of Ireland’s parliament. Ireland uses a proportional-representation system in which voters rank candidates from first to last, with the lower preferences of elected or defeated candidates redistributed among their rivals.

It’s highly unlikely that any party will get the 80 seats needed for a majority in parliament. That makes some form of coalition inevitable, but forming a stable alliance looks tough.

Both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael said before the election that they would not go into a coalition with Sinn Fein because of its links to past violence. Varadkar said Fine Gael’s stance was unchanged.

But as the scale of Sinn Fein’s surge became clear, Fianna Fail leader Micheal Martin said: “I’m a democrat.” “I listen to the people. I respect the decision of the people,” he told Irish broadcaster RTÉ.

The IRA was responsible for murders, bombings and other violence for decades during the “Troubles” in the U.K. region of Northern Ireland. More than 3,500 people were killed during decades of conflict between forces that sought to reunify Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland and those who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the U.K.

Associated Press

St. Patrick’s Day Party 2020

This much anticipated members only event, in partnership with the Irish Consulate, will be held on

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Happy St. Patrick’s Day from Aer Lingus
It all started innocently enough. Early in 2008, I got an e-mail from friend and fellow writer/musician Susan Geduts Lindsay asking if I could spell her just for a few months at the Boston Irish Reporter, where she covered music and arts. She gave me some potential story ideas as well as practical information (“graphics for the album reviews should be sized 2 x 2 inches at 300 dpi”) and wished me luck. Several weeks later, Susan wrote back to say she had decided not to return to the paper after all, so I could just keep on keeping on.

Twelve years later, here we are. Well, here I am, anyway, still on the job.

Writing for BIR was an opportunity I’d never imagined, or even considered – I already had, and still have, a full-time job that I find quite fulfilling. But something about it felt right, so when that opportunity became open-ended I opted to keep working. And you know, it still feels right.

My editor Tom Mulvoy – who along with BIR/Boston Irish Publisher Ed Forry has been continually supportive and encouraging – invited me to share some thoughts about this job and what it entails. Again, not an opportunity I’d banked for, but I’m taking him up on it because this is also a chance to say some things about Boston’s Irish music scene, which to my mind remains as dynamic and vibrant as when I embarked on my first BIR assignment.

I’m not from Boston, although I did live here for a few years in very early childhood. I returned in 1981 to finish up my undergraduate degree, and with the exception of two years spent in Worcester, I’ve remained in Greater Boston since then.

From an early age, feeling linked to Boston

Through childhood and early adulthood, I felt a connection to Boston. While my own memories of it were vague, I always had the sense my parents valued their time here, relatively short though it was. My father expressed his affinity for Boston in part by rooting for the Red Sox, Celtics and Patriots, allegiances he inculcated in me, even while my childhood peers favored the Yankees, Mets, Knicks, Rangers, Giants and Jets.

I don’t have particularly solid Irish ancestry, either. English and Scottish, yes, from my mother’s side. The Irish blood supposedly comes via my paternal grandfather, but the specifics are murky (long story).

That’s just how it is. Whatever the facts of my ancestral background, it’s fair to say I strongly identified as Irish, though by no means denying the English and Scots family ties my mother held dearly. My father loved Irish history and culture, and because of this I had two memorable childhood visits to Ireland, where nobody ever mispronounced my first name or wondered why I didn’t spell it “Shawn.” For a while, as a teenager when I wrote my name I included a fada over the “a,” and to accompany my senior photo in my high school yearbook, I used an excerpt from a Gaelic song (with English translation).

The roots of my interest in Irish music stem from my parents’ eclectic tastes, which included folk and traditional: Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, The Weavers, but also the Clancy Brothers and Irish Rovers. Early in my teens, I began attending an annual folk festival near Albany, NY, which featured not only Appalachian, old-timey, bluegrass and other American music performers, but acts from Ireland and the British Isles. Though I listened to plenty of rock and pop, I always had a folk music channel going in one part of my mind.

It was when I stumbled onto the folk revival in Ireland and the British Isles that I really became invested in the music. I was tremendously impressed with bands like Steeleye Span and Fairport Convention, and the fascinating intersection between folk/traditional and contemporary music they created. This led to other discoveries: Martin Carthy, Boys of the Lough, Nic Jones, De Dannan, The Bothy Band, Five Hand Reel, Planxty, Clannad, Dick Gaughan. I put aside whatever delusions I had of being a rock ’n roll, retired my Teisco-Del Rey electric guitar, added a mandolin to go with my acoustic guitar, and went all folk, all the time.

A year spent in the UK and Ireland literally studying the folk/trad music scene cemented my commitment and devotion.

So when the idea of finishing up my college degree in Boston presented itself, I had all kinds of motivation for doing so: living in a city I’d long admired from afar, one which housed some of my favorite sports teams, and – as I’d heard – home to a lively folk and traditional music scene.

The sessions scene: Music, rites, rituals

The word “community” gets tossed around very easily, but I know of no other word to describe what I encountered. I’d gotten a taste of this during my year abroad when I haunted the London folk clubs, and now I was experiencing it on a regular basis: the familiar faces at sessions, concerts and parties; the little amenities, rites and rituals that went on at such events – who sat where, who would get the first round, who would lead the next song or tune. Underlying it all was the idea that this was a thing worth doing, something bigger than all of us, but yet we each had a claim to it.

I happily made the rounds of sessions in places like the Village Coach House and Kinvary Pub, various house parties, or the monthly Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann gathering in Watertown, where my fellow 20-somethings and I – scruffy-haired and scruffy-clothed – were warmly welcomed and invited to play along with the older musicians, among them a very kind gentleman named Larry Reynolds who made you feel right at home.

Boston provided an assortment of contexts, circumstances and venues in which to engage the music. You could play casually with friends and acquaintances at the sessions, but you could also accompany dancers at a local ceilidh; or, if you aspired to perform, there were pubs as well as coffeehouses like Passim, the Nameless and Transfigured Night.

Naturally, there were disagreements about what we were all doing, clashes of temperament and personality, philosophical and artistic differences. Nor did people always behave well. But the music went on, through marriages, childbirths, departures, deaths. This, of course, occurred in other folk/trad circles I frequented, like those of English morris dancing or Scottish music – Boston being a big enough village to accommodate all (I’m sure I’d have observed the same thing in the Scandinavian or Bulgarian music communities, too).

At this point, I feel obliged to offer a disclaimer, annoyingly ineffectual though it may be: There have been so many individuals, organizations, places, events and milestones that shaped my impressions of the Irish music community here, I will inevitably omit, overlook or neglect some. Undoubtedly, within minutes of sending this draft to Ed and Tom, I will think of someone or something I should’ve mentioned. That’s just how it is.

After being relatively inactive, music-wise, for a number of years, I had an opportunity to attend an early-morning mass at the Irish Cultural Centre in Brookline, MA, performed by the Boston area’s very own Danú. It was a profound, moving experience. Not only did I identify with the music and lyrics, I was reminded of my ongoing desire to play and perform it myself. As the week went on, I kept thinking about it, and before I knew it, I called the Toronto-based Planxty and asked if they would play a session here when they were back from their summer tour. They said yes.

I imagined they would have a packed house of close to 500 people, maybe over 1000. I was wrong. I had expected the place to be nearly empty, and though I never quite got it right, the result was still high我只是说，它可能只是一种暂时的满足感。
good chunk of the '90s, I made my way back to find continuity in the Irish music scene, and indeed, the larger folk and traditional community of the area: still plenty of musicians and places to play, or listen to music, venerable organizations and entities like Comhaltas, the Country Dance and Song Society, Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, Pinewoods, NEFFA, Revels, the Canadian American Club and the Folk Arts Center of New England, invaluable in keeping the music and dance alive and accessible.

There were other key actors, of somewhat more recent vintage at that time, like Brian O’Donovan and his “A Celtic Sojourn” on WGBH, The Burren, and Boston College’s Gaelic Roots festival, that helped spark and nurture interest – not to mention the Boston Irish Reporter, of course, whose contributors included my predecessors Kieran Jordan and Susan Gedutis Lindsay.

There was change, too: not exactly surprising given the constant influx of young people (or at least people younger than me), enrolled in Boston’s various colleges and universities or drawn by the area’s unique characteristics. Students from Berklee, encouraged and inspired by the likes of MattGlaser and Darol Anger, and New England Conservatory seemed to be everywhere, playing at sessions or forming incredibly cool bands – sometimes two or three or more at a time – with fresh, inspired takes on folk/trad music.

**Change moves in, and sets off anxiety**

There’s been a goodly amount of anxiety about the Boston Irish music scene in recent years, what with the closing of some beloved venues or regularly occurring events, notably the Green Briar Pub and its justly famous weekly session. Discussions have been plentiful about what social, economic or other factors may be at work, and how these might play out in the years to come – and what the Irish music scene might look like as a result.

I’m not going to get into analysis and predictions. I’ll just say I have a hard time imagining the imminent demise of Irish/Celtic music in Boston. Too many people have worked too hard for too long – as musicians, teachers and organizers – for it all to come crashing down. (And I do mean “long”: Do yourself a favor and read Susan Lindsay’s wonderful “See You at the Hall: Boston’s Golden Era of Irish Music and Dance,” or talk with the Irish Echo’s Dan Neely about the research he’s done on Irish music in Boston.) There’s also anecdotal evidence that the interest is hardly waning if, for example, you look at the robust attendance at annual events like “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” and BCMFest.

I find encouragement in observing the many young people – elementary to high school age – around here who are active in traditional music and dance, whether Irish, Scottish, or other styles. I think of one fiddler friend of mine, now well established in her music career: I first got to know her when she was barely in high school, looking to mentors for inspiration and guidance, until one day she became a mentor herself, especially to a group of pre-teen/tween fiddlers – and now, not too many years later, those young fiddlers are taking on that role for the next wave of even younger musicians.

I think about other friends who are current or former teachers at the Boston Comhaltas music school (a local treasure), and the kids they’ve taught. Perhaps a few of their students will get good enough to make it all the way to the All-Ireland Feidhlim Cheoil (lest we forget, four Boston-area teens qualified last year). Undoubtedly, others will decide at some point that playing the music is not for them. Then there will be still others who learn enough to enjoy themselves and entwine the music into their lives – before long they’ll be the regulars we see at this or that session.

The supply of these young people may not be inexhaustible, but we certainly don’t seem to be running out of them. And being around the kids who have figured it out, who make the music their own, is a big reason why writing about Irish music in this town is such a pleasure.
Karan Casey, whose heart-on-her-sleeve approach to music has made her one of the more popular Irish singers of the past two decades, performs at the Backroom with her band on March 18 at 7:30 p.m. A Waterford native with a background that includes classical and jazz as well as traditional Irish music, Casey recorded three albums with Solas before striking out on her own. She has released seven solo albums, including “Two More Hours,” which consisted of her own compositions and incorporated jazz, blues and R&B and 2018’s “Hiero-glyphs Which Tell the Tale.” Casey has been active in other aspects of music: She co-founded FairPlé, an organization aimed at achieving fairness and gender balance for female performers in Irish traditional and folk music.

New England guitar-cello duo Dan Faiella and McKinley James will open for Casey. Both grew up playing Irish and New England traditional tunes and songs and have been active in various collaborations: Faiella has performed with premier fiddlers including Winifred Horan, Dan Foster, and Alden Robinson; James was a member of Boston-based fiddle ensemble Childsplay and was a founding member of the multi-genre band Night Tree.

A band with a legacy extending from the very beginnings of the Irish folk revival, McPeake will be at the Backroom on March 25 at 7:30 p.m. The McPeake family’s presence in traditional music goes back nearly a century, and their contributions to the folk revival of the 1950s and ’60s are numerous and memorable: They were the first to record “Wild Mountain Thyme,” the immensely popular song credited to Francis McPeake, who was also a legendary piper. After a period of inactivity following Francis’s death in 1971, the band reformed in the 1980s and began playing again. Now known as “McPeake,” the group – under the direction of Francis McPeake IV (pipes, whistles) and including Paula McPeake (songwriter), Mairead Forde (fiddle), and Paul Hughes (vocals, guitar, percussion) – mixes the traditional music that has long been part of the family heritage with more contemporary rhythms and styles.

For tickets and other information about the Burren Backroom series, go to burren.com/music.html. (You can also get details on the Burren’s St. Patrick’s Day activities there.)

• Grammy-winning Boston-area native Aoife O’Donovan is back in her old stomping grounds on March 12, with her “Songs and Strings” show in Sanders Theatre at 8 p.m. O’Donovan’s musical portfolio includes considerable experience in Irish/Celtic and American folk music – including a stint in Crooked I and With Her win a Grammy this year for Best American Roots Song, “Call My Name.” For “Songs and Strings,” O’Donovan will be accompanied by a string quartet as she performs the song cycle “Bull Frogs
Croon," which she created with Jeremy Kittel and Teddy Abrams, as well as a retrospective of traditional, contemporary and original songs.

See celebrityseries.org/productions/aoife-o-dovan for tickets and information.

• In what has become practically an annual (and greatly anticipated) rite, Cherish the Ladies returns once again to the Greater Boston area, at the Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport on March 5 at 8 p.m. Originally formed in 1985 as a concert series showcasing female Irish musicians, the group has proved to be a mainstay in the Irish/Celtic music scene for its excellent interpretations of traditional tunes and songs and as a launch pad for distinguished performers like Aoife Clancy, Eileen Ivers, Winifred Horan, Cathie Ryan, and Bridget Fitzgerald. Cherish the Ladies is led by co-founders Joanie Madden and Mary Coogan; current members also include Mirella Murray, Grainne Murphy, Deirdre Connolly and Kathleen Boyle.

On March 21 at 8 p.m., Shalin Liu will host the Mari Black Trio. A Boston native, Black – who has appeared locally at The Burren Backroom series and BCMFest – has distinguished credentials that include fiddling competition championships in Scottish and Canadian Maritime traditions. Her repertoire includes not only Irish and Scottish traditions but also American folk music, Argentine tangos, and even classic swing tunes, to name a few.

For more on Shalin Liu events, see tickets.rockport-music.org/events.

• The Fretless, a Canadian quartet that has championed the “chambergrass” folk-string ensemble sound, will be at Club Passim in Harvard Square on March 15 at 7 p.m. Fiddle and viola players Trent Freeman, Karrnel Sawitsky, and Ben Plotnick, and cellist Eric Wright, explore the rhythmic, harmonic, and structured arrangement of Celtic, old-timey, bluegrass and other folk/traditional styles in the essence of a chamber string quartet, hence the descriptive phrase “chambergrass.”

The band, and chambergrass itself, has a Boston connection: Freeman and Wright were Berklee College of Music students, and founded The Fretless with fellow Berklee acquaintance Ivonne Hernandez, who was active in the Boston music scene. The band’s album “Bird’s Nest” won a 2017 Juno Award for Instrumental Album of the Year, and their follow-up release, “Live at the Art Farm” – which focused on the traditional Irish part of its repertoire – was highly praised; a new recording is in the works.

The Ivy Leaf, a stalwart of traditional music in New England, will be part of Club Passim’s “NEFFA Preview” on March 17, a triple bill showcasing acts that are appearing at the 76th New England Folk Festival Association, which takes place April 24-26 at Acton Boxborough High School. Since forming in 2009, the band – its current line-up is Lindsay Straw (bouzouki, guitar, vocals), Armand Aromin (fiddle, English concertina, vocals, whistle), Dan Accardi (accordian, fiddle, concertina) and Benedict Gagliardi (concertina, harmonica, vocals, tenor guitar) – has expanded beyond its roots in traditional Irish dance music to survey the wider world of Anglo-Celtic and American folk music, adding in a wide-ranging catalog of sea shanties, work songs and narrative ballads. In addition to performing, Ivy Leaf members are active in the Irish session scene, in Providence as well as Boston.

Also performing at the NEFFA Preview are Zornitsa, a Bulgarian chorus and orchestra of men from the Boston area, and Klezmer trio Wandering Laughter.

Talisk, a Scottish trio whose propulsive, tightly-knit blend of Scottish and Irish music elements has earned them widespread critical and public acclaim, will make a return to the club on March 24 at 8 p.m. The enthralling melodic chemistry between Mohsen Amini (concertina) and Hayley Keenan (fiddle) is bolstered by Graeme Armstrong’s canny guitar-playing, creating a sound that pushes beyond tradition while maintaining ties to it. Talisk’s honors include the BBC Radio 2 Folk Award and Folk Band of the Year from the BBC Alba Scots Trad Music Awards; Amini also was the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards’ Musician of the Year for 2018. For ticket information and other details, go to passim.org.
• The Irish Cultural Centre of New England in Canton has a few special events this month, including a visit by Colm Keegan, a former member of Celtic Thunder, on March 3. Keegan, who has an “other” career as a teacher—he’s taught at performing arts and secondary schools, and launched an online instruction forum—will lead an Irish language workshop at 6 p.m. and a concert of “Celtic Favorites” beginning at 7:30 p.m.

• The ICC hosts High Time for a 4 p.m. matinee on March 8. The youthful trio of Ciarán Bolger (vocals, guitar), Séamus Flaherty (vocals, harp, bodhrán) and Conall Flaherty (vocals, flute, whistle) comes from Ardmore Ireland, and for their high-energy music and performances. In addition to their studio and live recordings—which have sold more than half a million copies worldwide—Leahy has been featured in three PBS television specials, including their memorable “Gael Force” appearance on the Chieftains that showcased the band’s dancing as well as instrumental prowess. This year, the band is set to release a new album, “Good Water,” that will emphasize its female members and spotlight its instrumental compositions, as well as the influences—rock, choral, country, classical—that have inspired them.

• Newfoundland folk and traditional singer Matthew Byrne visits the Linden Tree Coffeehouse in Wakefield on March 7 at 8 p.m. Renowned for his rich tenor voice and sensitive and empathetic treatment of songs from the song tradition of his homeland, and his own family, Byrne has built a solid following in New England through his critically acclaimed recordings and appearances at the St. Patrick’s Day and Christmas Celtic Sojourn shows, the Burren Backroom and New Bedford Folk Festival, among others.

Information for these events, as well as the ICC’s St. Patrick’s Day festivities, is available at irishculture.org. Information for the events listed above can be found at bostonirish.com and icc-canton.org.
Lankum’s ‘The Livelong Day’ highlights band’s attention to those who are living close to the edge

By Sean Smith

Last year at this time, the award-winning Irish folk quartet Lankum had recently finished its first-ever tour of the US, which included a stop in Cambridge where the band played to a full house in Harvard Square’s Club Passim.

The tour was a foundational experience for Lankum, an opportunity to see how its idiosyncratic blend of Irish ballads, as well as Irish street, Traveler and music hall songs, American folk tradition, original work, and varied acoustic and electronic music-based influences had caught on in the US.

“It all seemed to go very well,” recalls vocalist-guitarist-keyboardist Daragh Lynch, who founded the band – originally known as Lynched – with his brother Ian (vocals, uilleann pipes, concertina, whistle) several years ago. “We were very aware that this was our first foray into America, and we certainly weren’t complacent about it. But people definitely seemed on board with the music.”

The concert at Club Passim proved especially meaningful for Lynch and his bandmates, who also include Radie Peat (vocals, concertina, bayan accordion, harmonium and other keyboards) and Cormac MacDiarmada (fiddle, viola, other stringed instruments).

“After the gig had been booked, we did a little research and we learned all about Passim, its history and its lore. Being able to play there was definitely an honor, and the fact that so many people turned out made it all the better.”

Lankum returns to Greater Boston with a March 5 concert at Great Scott in Allston (they’ll also be at the Iron Horse Music Hall in Northampton on March 10), carrying even more of a buzz with them than last year, thanks to their third album, “The Livelong Day,” released late last year. The album affirms Lankum’s assurance in its music, its deprecatingly self-titled “folk miscreants” identity, rough around the edges and not lacking for irreverence or bold experimentation.

More importantly, “The Livelong Day” reflects the band’s strong regard for the populist element of folk music – traditional or contemporary – and its attention to the “common” people, particularly those at the margins: hence the inclusion of traditional songs like “Wild Rover” and “Katie Cruel,” and two band originals, “The Young People” – which Lynch wrote in the wake of concerns about depression and suicide among Ireland’s youth – and brother Ian’s “Hunting the Wren,” inspired by the true, tragic story of the Wrens of Curragh, a 19th-century community of women.

Summing up Lankum’s philosophy in this regard, Lynch points to the renowned traditional Irish singer Franke Harte’s quote, “Those in power write the history; those who suffer write the songs.” He adds: “If you look into the background of traditional songs and ballads, there are many that came about as forms of protest, airing grievances about injustice and inequality.”

“I can learn a different kind of history through these kinds of songs: what it was like to be a woman, to be poor, to work the hard jobs. Those are often the songs that have captured our attention, and they’ve also served as models or inspiration for the songs that we’ve written.”

“The Livelong Day” can be a challenging listen. Much has been made of its overarching dark tone, the haunting vocal harmonies, the slow and deliberate pacing on most tracks, the bleakly apocalyptic soundscape with ample use of drones from squeezboxes, strings and keyboards, and other enigmatic reverberations.

Lankum’s most recent album, “The Livelong Day,” has turned the group on to their unique assortment of musical influences and styles.

“It’s a natural progression from our earlier albums,” says Lynch. “We’ve always had musical interests that extend to modern, electronic, ambient-sound type of textures, and with the advice and help of our producer John ‘Spud’ Murphy – who has worked with us for a long time – we really pushed them forward here.”

To say “Livelong Day is “dark,” however, does not ipso facto mean it is “depressing.” To be sure, there are some powerful emotions in play here – which again, is rather the point of folk/traditional music – but through its arrangements Lankum invites you to consider the deeper, fuller meanings in the songs, as Lynch explains.

“It’s not that we’ve never done ‘fast’ songs, but our feeling is, slowing things down and creating a sound that brings about a kind of meditative state can make people more attuned to the song, and spend more time listening to the words.”

The version of “Wild Rover” Lankum plays is quite different than the rowdy, foot-stomping pub favorite, and not just because of its minor key: Peat’s spine-tingling lead vocals help locate the regret and sense of loss lurking underneath the apparent bravado of the song’s narrator; you end up really hoping his parents will forgive their prodigal son. While the band credits Drogheda singer Donal Maguire as the source for this variant, their indispensable album liner notes trace the song back to the 17th century.

“It’s got a very interesting backstory,” says Lynch. “You’ll find it as a pro-temperance English ‘broadside’ song in the early 19th century, but it’s basically a rewrite of an even earlier song that was the common ancestor for versions in Ireland, Scotland, England, even North America. But the version most people are familiar with doesn’t really speak to the grief and sorrow this so-called wild rover feels for having wasted his life.”

Recent decades have seen the forming of an increasingly nationwide conversation about these unsavory chapters in Ireland’s history, and the abuse and neglect of its vulnerable and marginalized populations, as personified by the Magdalene Laundry and clergy sex scandals. Daragh Lynch adds to the discussion with “The Young People,” the latest in a series of Lankum originals that speak to the economic, social, and mental health challenges faced by a generation bearing the brunt of Ireland’s post-Celtic Tiger malaise.

“Ireland has had a huge problem with male suicide – the ratio of men to women who take their own lives is very significant,” he says. “In Limerick, for example, they’ve recruited volunteers to patrol the river in hopes of keeping people from doing harm to themselves.”

“The Young People” confronts the issue of suicide in the very first lines: “Oh, the day they found him swinging/Aday they’ll not soon forget/Four long years ago/It can’t be over yet.” But something happens as the song continues, particularly when it comes to the chorus, where the key shifts from Aminor to Cmajor – it becomes an anthem, a call to think deeply about human fragility, as Lynch and his bandmates sing: “When the young people dance/They do not dance forever/It is written in sand/With the softest of feathers.”

“I didn’t write the song to be depressing, or to lecture people,” says Lynch. “It’s saying, ‘Look, life is fleeting, so appreciate what and whom you’ve got, and just try to take care of one another.’”

Two instrumental tracks on “Livelong Day” show yet another side to Lankum. “Bear Creek” – which is a segue from a brooding band original, “Ode to Larkin” – is a medley of two American fiddle tunes, and MacDiarmada shows a fine touch for the old-timey style; Peat’s prowess on the bayan – the hulking Russian accordion with its formidable bass – also is on display.

“We’re fascinated by traditional music and how it travels,” says Lynch. “The music doesn’t have any respect for borders – it morphs and changes as it moves along to suit the places it ends up. Of course, Irish music had a big effect on the development of American folk music, but American music has this pulse and backbeat we love.”

“The Pride of Petravore,” meanwhile, is Lankum at its most outrageous. A traditional hornpipe, it’s also known as the melody for the song – alternately called “Eileen Oge” – written by Percy French, a ballad full of comically aligned phrases about an improbably courtship. Here, the tune gallops along to the rhythm of a bowed string bass and a thumped piano, evoking the theme from “Jaws” and the gait of a 19th-century Irish woman. Lynch and his bandmates play the melody on a pair of tin whistles taped together; toward the end, a trombone wildly crashes into the proceedings, along with other odd noises – among them, Lynch notes, the sound of MacDiarmada smashing a microphone stand into a gong.

Information on Lankum’s US tour, including links to buy tickets, is available at the band’s website, lankumdublin.com.
CD Reviews

By Sean Smith

Gatehouse, "Heather Down the Moor" • This quartet’s second album carries the same appeal as its first: masterful technical proficiency among the musicians, but also those indefinable yet invaluable qualities – spirit and temperament – with which they invest this music. Gatehouse is oriented to the North Connacht/Roscommon tradition (which has given us, among others, Michael Coleman, Kevin Burke, Frankie Gavin and, more recently, Mousie Martin) and its core is around the rapport between John Wynne (flute, whistle) and John McEvoy (fiddle, mandolin) – who made a favorable impression with their 2007 release “Pride of the West” – with McEvoy’s wife Jacinta singing concertina and splendidly versatile guitar (her intro and backing on the slow reel “Jack Rowe’s” is gorgeous). Rachel Garvey sings in English and Gaelic, her voice equally elegant, winsome, and forceful as when appropriate.

Gatehouse is obviously steeped in tradition but also very cognizant of stylistic innovations, especially in arrangements, that have taken hold over the course of the Irish folk revival. So while the “Monasteraden Set,” a pair of reels, is basic all-hands-to-the-fore from start to finish, their medley of flings, “Kitty Got a Clinking Coming from the Fair,” has some variety: fiddle and whistle churning away to subtle backing and lovely chording by Jacinta McEvoy, and then John and Jacinta’s son Paddy – one of six special guest musicians on the album – takes up the rhythm on piano on the second tune as Wynne shifts to flute.

“On the Edge” is a trio of John McEvoy originals that begins with an accented 4/4 dark modal-minor-tune type, Michael McCague’s bouzouki alongside Jacinta’s plucked guitar; another McEvoy offering, Conor, joins John on fiddle as he shifts into the first of two jigs, and bodhran virtuoso John Joe Kelly plus Paddy McEvoy’s piano helps bring the medley home. Other guests include Alan Kelly – he of Alan Kelly Gang renown – Molsky two, adding Dublin and American voices to the mix. Not to be overlooked is another guest singer, Ágnes Herczku of Hungary, who vocalizes a Moldavian tune that leads into a dance melody (“Gyimes”). The overall effect is exotic to say the least: vintage Irish folk revival fretted-string accompanying, old-time/Appalachian drive, Eastern European rhythms and intervals – sometimes intertwining, other times set against one another, but always holding together the vision of commonalities in cultures and music traditions.

In addition to fine renditions of traditional American songs “My Little Carpenter” and “Old Virginia,” Molsky holds forth on a pair of fiddle tunes, “The Black Hills Waltz” and “The Red Steer,” the latter at times resembling that great Irish reel “The Foxhunter.” Irvine offers up a rather graphic whaling song “The Death of Queen Jane” and “Heather Down the Moor.”

Oh yes, the songs. In addition to “Queen Jane” and “Heather,” Garvey has a go at “As I Roved Out” and “The Cocks Are Crowing.” These are familiar, yet distinctly loved entries in the Irish trad canon, sourced by Garvey from the estimable likes of Rosie Stewart and Paddy Tunney to the Bothy Band and Voice squad, and she – and the band – do them plenty of justice. Sometimes a good song is, quite simply, a good song, and it’s an even better one with a singer like Garvey who plays accordion on four of the tracks, including two of the songs, “The Death of Queen

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

Mozaiq, “The Long and the Short of It” • This space sang the praises of Andy Irvine last month, with the recent release of his “Old Dog Long Road” retrospective. Well, here we go again, although in this endeavor he’s got plenty of company: old Planxty chum Donal Lunny, American old-timey musician Bruce Molsky, Dutch multi-instrumentalist Res van der Zalm, and Bulgarian Nikola Pirova. As Mozaiq, these five have for almost two decades now been finding common ground between the Irish, Appalachian, and Balkan music traditions. And on this, the group’s third release (recorded in 2015 but only issued several months ago), they add yet another element: Greek folk music, in the person of guest vocalist Chrysaoula Kecharagioglou who, while only appearing on a quarter of the album’s 12 tracks, is an absolutely enchanting presence.

The sheer variety of instruments these guys play make up a small orchestra: bouzoukis, mandolins, harmonica, guitars, fiddles, five-string banjo, whistles, uilleann pipes, bodhran, and from the Balkans, the violin-like gadulka, kaval (a wind instrument) and the gaida (bagpipes). Irvine leads on four of the songs, Molksy two, adding Dublin and American voices to the mix. Not to be overlooked is another guest singer, Ágnes Herczku of Hungary, who vocalizes a Moldavian tune that leads into a dance melody (“Gyimes”). The overall effect is exotic to say the least: vintage Irish folk revival fretted-string accompanying, old-time/Appalachian drive, Eastern European rhythms and intervals – sometimes intertwining, other times set against one another, but always holding together the vision of commonalities in cultures and music traditions.

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St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn 2020 is spreading the entertainment around

By Sean Smith

A welcome fixture in the annual March festivities, "A St. Patrick's Day Celtic Sojourn" returns this month for its 13th year of featuring performers with ties to Boston and New England as well as others from further afield. The show will stop at Rockport’s Shalin Liu Performance Center (March 11), Hanover Theatre in Worcester (March 12), the Northampton Academy of Music (March 13), Sanders Theatre in Cambridge (March 14), and Beverly’s Cabot Theatre (March 15).

Joining the lineup this year are The Murphy Beds – the duo of Jefferson Hamer and Emily O’Leary – and Irish-rock fusion show Road to Dublin, a variety of genres, including jazz (which she studied at the University of Leeds), Celtic and old-timey singer Clare Horgan, Boston-based fiddle duo Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen, Maine accordion and concertina player Chris Stevens, uilleann piper Torrin Ryan and, as featured dancer and choreographer, Boston-area native Ashley-Smith-Wallace, and dancer Kevin McCormack. Also on hand will be the show’s music director, guitarist-vocalist Keith Murphy.

In his customary role as emcee, narrator, and interlocutor will be Brian O’Donovan, creator of the show, which is based on his WGBH-FM "A Celtic Sojourn" program.

Hamer, who grew up in Massachusetts, and Dublin native O’Leary crossed paths in New York City more than a decade ago, and began performing as The Murphy Beds a few years later. Accompanying themselves on guitar, bouzouki, and mandolin, the two are known for their laid-back yet deceptively elaborate, quietly mesmerizing arrangements of traditional songs from Irish, American, Scottish, and English folk traditions, as well as their own compositions. The Murphy Beds’ wide-ranging interests are reflected in their 2012 album, which includes material from traditional singers like Donegal’s Lillis O’Laoire, Arkansas’ Almeda Riddle, and Paddy Tunney of Fermanagh, and from classic song collections, like that of Francis Child or Sam Henry’s Songs of the People, and even a 19th-century composition by W.T. Wrighton and J.E. Carpenter, "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still."

Both have numerous ongoing or recent collaborations of note: Hamer’s “Child Ballad" album with Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Anais Mitchell won a BBC Radio 2 Folk Award; O’Leary has played with John Doyle and Nuala Kennedy as The Alt and in The Immigrant Band, an Irish-American old-timey project.

"Jennon and Eamon are just riveting, with those vocal harmonies and close, curling strings around them," says O’Donovan. "There’s an authenticity and honesty in their selection of songs from different traditions, and the care they show them." Horgan, from South Kerry, has sung in a variety of genres, including jazz (which she studied at the University of Leeds), gospel, bluegrass, and swing, but has never stayed far from the tradition of her childhood, and current, home. One of her most recent projects has involved delving into archival recordings of traditional sean-nós singing of her native Iveragh, and she has been granted funding for research and teaching activities related to preserving and passing on the music. Last year, supported by a coveted grant award from Culture Ireland, she went on an extensive tour of the US, giving concerts and also holding sean-nós workshops. Her two recordings showcase her wide-ranging musical interests: from covers of Pee Wee King and Red Foley, to "The Tennessee Waltz" and "Hank Williams’ You Win Again" to traditional and contemporary Irish songs such as "An Leann Bhí (The Fairy Child)," "Sígerson Clifford’s Boys Of Barr Na Sgíde" and "The Road from Killorglin to Cahersiveen."

"Clare is a fascinating sort of singer, steeped as she is in folk tradition and especially the Gaelic vocal tradition," says O’Donovan, "yet also possessing the dexterity and color of a voice with strong jazz roots. She’s with us as a traditional singer, but it’s amazing to have someone with all those influences and chops."

Arriving in Boston several years ago within a few months of one another, Feddersen and Gourley – already well-acquainted with one another from various musical gatherings – quickly became stalwarts in the local Irish scene, whether at sessions, ceilís, or concerts. Their fiddling, as spotlighted in their 2015 album "Life Is All Checkered," yet also possessing the dexterity and color of a voice with strong jazz roots. She’s with us as a traditional singer, but it’s amazing to have someone with all those influences and chops."

Among their other activities, Feddersen and Gourley are part of the occasional quartet Ship in the Clouds; Gourley also plays in a duo with uilleann piper Joey Abarta, and Feddersen in the old-timey trio Wooden Nickels.

"It’s remarkable how Laura and Nathan capture the twin fiddle tradition – there’s such a raw brilliance to it," says O’Donovan. "They also are very thoughtful and articulate about what they play and how they play it, which suits our format very well: We’re looking to illuminate the music tradition and invite people to think about its nuances."

Stevens is widely acknowledged as one of the foremost Irish-style accordion and concertina players in the US. Although based in Maine – he was named a master musician and awarded a fellowship by the state’s Arts Commission – he has numerous connections to the Greater Boston area, performing at events and venues such as the Dorchester Irish Heritage Festival, BCMFest, The Burden Backroom, and the Boston College Gaelic Roots series, and teaching at Boston’s Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann music school. He is a member of The Press Gang, which has released three albums, and most recently showcased his talents on piano in a trio with fiddler Caitlin Findley and flute and uilleann pipes player Will Woodson that recorded the CD "The Glory Reel."

"Chris’s musicianship is just outstanding, and we’re especially looking forward to having him as part of the marvelous ensemble that will be playing during the show," says O’Brien.

Ryan, who in addition to uilleann pipes plays flute and whistle, has won five All-Ireland medals, including first place as the slow airs champion on pipes. He has taught at the Boston Comhaltas music school for a number of years, and received grants from the Southern New England Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program to support his teaching of Irish music and history to several apprentices, furthering the art of the session in New England.

It’s no secret that I’ve been enchanted by the uilleann pipes, and we’re glad to have a brilliant young musician like Torrin on hand for this year," says O’Donovan.

Smith-Wallace, the featured female dancer in last year’s “A Celtic Christmas,” has released three albums, and now she gets to spread her wings as choreographer for this year’s “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn,” says O’Donovan. "Kevin, like Ashley, is an extraordinarily accomplished dancer and is definitely used to the big stage."

Murphy has been a familiar figure in the Boston/New England folk music scene for the better part of three decades, as a co-founder (along with his wife, the fiddler Becky Tracy) of the groundbreaking trio Nightingale, an accompanist for numerous performers, including fiddlers like Brian Conway and Hanneke Cassel, or a soloist. To all his musical enterprises, Murphy brings a rhythmically savvy and engaging guitar style, and clear, resonant singing – with a repertoire drawn from his native Newfoundland as well as English, Scottish, Irish, and French traditions – as well as a masterful flair for arrangement and choreography.

"Everyone who’s worked with Keith has admired his creativity and leadership," says O’Donovan. "He just ties it all up with a splendid bow."

For ticket information and other details about "A St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn," go to wgbh.org/celtic.
Seamus Egan talks about life in Vermont: ‘Push the boat out and see where it ends up’

By Sean Smith

Seamus Egan, who has lived in Mayo as well as metropolitan Philadelphia and its suburbs — is in the midst of his third winter as a resident of Vermont, at the western edge of the Green Mountains, and all things considered, it has been going pretty well. “The first two winters were kind of shocking,” he says, with a laugh. “But this one’s not so bad. Mostly rain so far.” [As of mid-January, anyway.]

But truthfully, Egan hasn’t much minded the weather. Moving to Vermont was all part of a general life-overhaul after Solas, the groundbreaking Irish-American band Egan co-founded, decided to go on hiatus in 2017. Since then, he has embarked on a new collaboration that has resulted in his first solo album in more than two decades, “Early Bright,” which has just been released and was formally launched at the Celtic Connections festival in Scotland last month.

Egan will be in eastern Massachusetts to offer a taste of this latest creation, when he appears Feb. 28 at the Spire Center for the Performing Arts in Plymouth [spirecenter.org], along with Owen Marshall and Kyle Sanna, both of whom he worked with on “Early Bright.”

The 10 tracks on “Early Bright” all contain original instrumentals, and bear Egan’s familiar imprint, notably his superlative command of mandolin, tenor banjo, whistle, and nylon-string guitar (with a touch of keyboard and percussion as well). There are familiar rhythms and time signatures, too, that harken back to those propulsive, exquisitely arranged sets with Winifred Horan, Mick McAuley, Eamon McElholm, John Doyle, and all others under the Solas banner. But Egan goes beyond the Irish/Celtic domain to tap different musical influences: classical, Americana, progressive folk, and others for which labels and categories seem insufficient.

Most of all, “Early Bright” has the feel of someone who, however much he values the life he had for the better part of two decades, is quite happy with the life he’s leading now.

Still, the obvious question presents itself: How much does he miss Solas?

“After having something like that front and center in your life for 20-odd years, it definitely takes an adjustment,” he muses. “I absolutely miss a lot of what Solas was all about. There was no acrimony or anything that led to the band taking time off. I hope it reconvenes, and I look forward to that possibility. “When you make music in a particular context, though, you’re very much guided by the needs of that time and place. The writing and arrangements I worked on, I always thought in terms of the band. But I came to realize it didn’t have to be that way, that I could free myself of that mindset and approach music with the idea that ‘This can be anything it wants to be.’ So I found myself with a lot of open space.”

This is not unusual territory for Egan, as anyone familiar with the 1995 film “The Brothers McMullen” knows – Egan wrote its soundtrack, a mix of traditional tune sets with original instrumentals. The fol-

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Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency (Alpha-1) is a genetic condition passed on from parents to their children through genes. It can cause both lung and liver disease.

Alpha-1 is the most common known genetic risk factor for emphysema.
lowing year, he released his first solo album, "Early Bright," which featured six of his compositions (the title track also appeared in "Brothers McMullen"). That was a pretty long time ago, and one might wonder how the idea for that album came about. One thing that Egan was building up was a massive inventory of tune ideas in his head, waiting to unleash them.

Well, yes and no: While a couple of the compositions on "Early Bright" go back aways in terms of origin, he says, most took shape over these past few years since he reeounced full-time in the job he used to do – not to mention about what I do – not to mention the kind of, you know, the kind of place that Egan was working. And what with smartphone technology, we’ve practically got a mini-recording studio in our pockets, so I can quickly and easily preserve those moments and work with them.

Egan points to “Two Little Ducks,” his sumptuously ornate mandolin lead accompanied at close quarters by Sanna’s guitar and Marshall’s bouzouki, as a good example of how time and memory can incite a brainstorm. When he was in his teens, Egan began experimenting with finger-picking, because of its resonance, he says, and from many sources.

“Honestly, a lot of it is happenstance and being open to what’s going on around you,” explains Egan, who was an All-Ireland champion on four different instruments by the time he was 14. “I’ve always been intrigued by the possibilities of what can be brought to Irish music, how things can fit together. Over the years, I’ve been fortunate to have a lot of opportunities born of playing Irish music that have expanded to include other kinds of music, in other arenas. You get out of your comfort zone, perhaps, and then you take that experience back home with you.”

At a glance, some of the album’s track titles bespeak a rural setting like the one in which Egan lives now: “Early Bright,” “Simon Nally Hunt the Buck,” “Two Little Ducks,” “Under the Chestnut Street.” And there’s a similarly pastoral quality to some of the tunes: The solo keyboard on “Early Bright,” for example, might summon up an image of the morning sun appearing through passing clouds; “Welcome to Orwell,” which builds on a nifty nylon guitar-rhythm guitar duet between Egan and Sanna, could easily suggest a leisurely passage along a country road; “Simon Nally” – Marshall’s bouzouki interlacing with Egan’s mandolin – can perhaps put your mind’s eye in a blooming meadow. (Other musicians on the album include Egan’s Solas colleague Moira Smiley on accordion and Joe Phillips on double bass.)

But while many an artist is influenced by his or her environment, inspiration is not always so straightforward, says Egan. “There’s nothing pre-ordained about what I do – not like I look out a window and think, ‘Oh, I’ll write a tune about that cloud in the sky,’ or I decide I’ll compose something about that trip I took the other day. What’s happening is that I find myself tapping into something I’m feeling or experiencing, or I’m simply noodling around on banjo or mandolin, and I wonder where it leads. And what with smartphone technology, we’ve practically got a mini-recording studio in our pockets, so I can quickly and easily preserve those moments and work with them.”

Egan points to “Two Little Ducks,” his sumptuously ornate mandolin lead accompanied at close quarters by Sanna’s guitar and Marshall’s bouzouki, as a good example of how time and memory can incite a brainstorm. When he was in his teens, Egan began playing with Mick Moloney – an outstanding fretted-string musician himself – and would often sample Moloney’s large, varied record collection, which included baroque mandolin.

“‘So Two Little Ducks’ is a tangible manifestation of that experience – the process of listening to something different and getting inspired, attempting to learn from it – seeing into my blood. I’m never sure where that sort of experience might pop out again, I kind of wonder what else is hiding back there.”

“Welcome to Orwell,” meanwhile, actually owes its original inspiration to listening to Argentine singer-songwriter Juan Rosario Molina, according to Egan, who for a while carried around a sound file labeled “Molina” on his smartphone to preserve the idea. The tune is a particularly apt showcase for Egan’s innovative use of nylon-string guitar, which goes back quite some years ago. As he explains, he was loaned an instrument that resembled a tenor guitar only with double strings. He tuned it like the tenor banjo but, because of its resonance, he used it for slower pieces and began experimenting with finger-picking.

“After a while I had to return it to its owner, but I had fallen in love with the sound and the possibilities it afforded me. So, that got me thinking about what was out there that was similar but might have an even richer sound. That search brought me to the nylon guitar. It’s hard to say who or what influenced my playing on it: Steve Cooney used a nylon-string guitar but in a different way than I was thinking about. I think I really approached it like a banjo – but a banjo that had two extra strings.”

Egan’s tenure as music director for the annual “Christ-mas Celtic Sojourn” production wound up bringing another important component to “Early Bright.” Late in 2018, as the album project had begun to coalesce, one tune he’d been tinkering with kept sticking in his mind. What, he wondered, would it sound like with a string quartet – and where could he find a string quartet?

As it turned out, he had to look no farther than the “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” line-up for that year, which included The Fretless, a Canadian quartet that has championed the “chambergrass” folk-string ensemble sound. And serendipitously enough, Maeve Gilchrist, the “Sojourn” assistant music director, was a masterful arranger. Egan worked with The Fretless and Gilchrist, then organized a recording session for the quartet in the Cutler Majestic Theatre, where “Sojourn” was being staged. Their contribution can be heard on “Under the Chestnut Tree” as well as “Simon Nally.”

“Far and away, the most elaborate recording studio I’ve ever been in,” laughs Egan. “But it was so lovely to be in that space, in the morning before we all had to get ready for the next show. You make the best of circumstances, especially when you’ve got A-level accommodations.”

Being part of “Sojourn” – first as performer, along with Solas, and then also as music director – has been a revelation, Egan notes. “You get to know, and work with, a ton of great musicians – sometimes people you might not ordinarily cross paths with. And together you’re trying to make something that’s equally dependent on creativity and logistics. That’s the sort of experience which sharpens your skills in a lot of different ways; it’s kind of like being a producer in a recording studio. I feel I’ve learned quite a lot.”

It’s much the same spirit which has brought Egan to Vermont.

“I just embraced the season of change. I found myself in a moment to try something new, maybe take some chances, but feeling that it was worth doing. Push the boat out and see where it ends up.”

For more on Seamus Egan and “Early Bright,” go to seamus-egangproject.com.
In the harbor, a testament to *An Gorta Mór*

*An Gorta Mór* – Ireland’s ‘Great Hunger’ – saw an estimated 1.5 million people die of starvation and disease between 1845 and 1852. Another 2 million emigrated, and many of them perished from the plagues they fled. Thousands during Atlantic crossings, and thousands more on the shores of their destination. This monument commemorates the men, women, and children of the Great Hunger who sought deliverance in the New World only to perish while in quarantine on Deer Island in Boston Harbor.

**Historical Background**

Ireland was England’s first colony. Over centuries, an ‘ascendancy’ class, alien in race and religion, expropriated land and wealth, thereby breeding misrule, endemic poverty, violence, and war lasting into recent times. Theoretically part of the United Kingdom since 1801, Ireland remained a *de facto* colony, an agricultural resource that helped sustain England’s industrializing 19th-century population. Tariffs legislated by the Parliament in London devastated emerging Irish industries, leaving an expanding rural population to exist at subsistence level. The potato blight then destroyed their only food source. The Empire’s resources could have prevented mass starvation; instead, ineptitude, parsimony, prejudice, and a doctrinaire laissez-faire ideology that allowed food exports turned a crop crisis into a lingering famine. Government policy essentially starved the Irish people, by first creating scarcity, then prolonging it, effectively escalating death and mass emigration.

**Deer Island Great Hunger Memorial**

*From Economic Immigrants to Famine Refugees*

Between 1815 and 1845, nearly a million people abandoned Ireland’s ramshackle economy for North America. Thousands sought new beginnings in Boston and in New England factory towns. Most populated the poorest classes, suffering high mortality rates, and disproportionately occupying workhouses, jails, and asylums. Rapacious employers exploited those lucky enough to find work, while native working classes saw the immigrants as underpricing labor markets and stealing jobs. Nativist mobs publicly humiliated them, sometimes with violence.

Spring and summer of 1847 saw thousands of Famine refugees landing in Boston, many of them penniless, desperate, and clothed in rags. Hundreds arrived afflicted with “Ship Fever” – lice-born typhus – contracted aboard the ‘coffin ships’ that brought them across the Atlantic. Their numbers overwhelmed City institutions and threatened public health while stoking anti-immigrant nativism among alarmed Bostonians. In mid-May, the City Council formed a Committee on Alien Passengers, enforced laws requiring shipmasters to underwrite care for foreign paupers, and established a quarantine hospital on Deer Island for the immigrant sick.

**Deer Island Hospital**

Speedily adapting existing buildings, the city of Boston built its quarantine compound in days. Construction still in progress, the hospital opened on May 29, 1847, under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Moriarty and a team of fifty dedicated doctors, nurses, and support staff. Vessels packed with famine refugees immediately began arriving at the island where Calvin Bailey, the City’s Alien Passengers Inspector, identified paupers among the passengers and required captains to secure bonds indemnifying the City for their care. Port Physician Jerome Von Crowninshield Smith determined which passengers were afflicted with “malignant diseases” and transferred them to Dr. Moriarty’s care. A burial ground was located “near the north west corner of the most northerly hill on the island.” There, hospital steward James Turner buried the first three patients to die on the island: Mary Nelson, 1; Mary Connolly, 1; Mary Flaherty, 2.

By the year’s end, the hospital had treated 2,034 patients; nearly 300 had died, some 200 from typhus, which had also attacked hospital staff, sacrificing Dr. Moriarty himself. When the epidemic finally subsided in late 1848, the City Council entrusted the hospital to the House of Industry, which continued to service impoverished and disease-stricken immigrants throughout the Great Hunger and beyond.

**Deer Island’s Great Hunger Legacy**

Eight hundred and fifty men, women, and children perished on this island in the Famine years of 1847-1850, innocent victims of colonialism, racial prejudice, and imperial misrule. The Deer Island Great Famine Memorial commemorates these immigrant victims of a catastrophe induced by government policy that prioritized political power and private profit over poor people.

Since ancient times, the Celtic Cross, an icon of Irish heritage, has signified hallowed ground. This Cross marks as hallowed the ground of Deer Island where these Famine victims lie. They share this soil with peaceful Native Americans, starved in confinement on the island during King Philip’s War in the 1670s. Together, they attest to the crimes of colonial exploitation in Ireland, in America, and across the world. From this island, they cry out for an end to war, famine, and exile.

Text composed by John McColgan
Immigration center rolls out its new brand: ‘Rían’
Name means ‘path’ in Irish

By Bill Forry

One of New England’s most celebrated Irish institutions has a new name and brand that leans heavily on its roots while carving a “pathway” into the future.

The Irish International Immigrant Center announced its new name – Rían Immigrant Center – on Feb. 26. Pronounced “Ree-Ann, the word means “path” in the Irish language.

Rían’s executive director, Ronnie Millar, explained that the new nomenclature serves the dual purpose of honoring the organization’s Irish roots “while reflecting our inclusive mission of empowering immigrant and refugee families on the path to opportunity, safety, and a better future for all.”

The new logo – which includes a series of hexagonal shapes – is “inspired by the Giant’s Causeway on the north coast of Ireland, natural... stones formed 60 million years ago by cooling lava.”

“Our work has never been in higher demand,” said Millar. “In recent years that path has grown more difficult. Legal obstacles, bureaucratic thickets, even physical barriers obstruct the path to legal status and citizenship. Together with our public and private partners, we are undaunted in navigating those challenges, and we remain steadfast in creating pathways to new beginnings.”

Founded in the 1980s to meet the demands of a new wave of Irish immigrants to Boston, the original Irish Immigration Centre has broadened its mission and client base over the decades.

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The who, what, and when of the St. Patrick story

When St. Patrick set foot in Ireland in the 5th century AD, he faced an uncertain future in a little-known country. Warring Celts were scattered in tribal groups across the island, ruled with iron might by five provincial kings. Eerie dolmen monuments and ancient ruins dominated the landscape. Even the Roman conquerors of Britain had not ventured this far – apart perhaps from the odd traveler or adventurer.

Against this backdrop, St. Patrick’s phenomenal success as a Christian missionary seems all the more incredible. By the end of the 15th century, Ireland had become a Christian nation.

Perhaps Patrick’s elevation into sainthood was therefore inevitable. But his prominence in the traditions and legends of the country says something of the reverence, awe and affection in which he has been held in the intervening centuries and which are rekindled in the Irish every St. Patrick’s Day.

The Feasts of St. Patrick are now celebrated in nearly every country throughout the world where Irish descendants or influence have continued to reinforce its popularity. Among the countries with centuries-old traditions of celebrating St. Patrick’s Day were obviously the United States, Canada and Australia, but less obviously France and Argentina and even the Caribbean island of Montserrat. Nowadays it is also celebrated in countries such as Russia and Japan.

In Britain - Ireland’s closest neighbor and its biggest visitor market - the Trojan efforts of a large population of Irish descent have established March 17 as a day of celebration for British and Irish alike.

Who was St. Patrick? The man largely responsible for converting Ireland to Christianity over nearly 30 years, up to the year 462 AD or thereabouts - even if the work had been started by other missionaries before him.

Was he real then? Most definitely, even if the facts about his life have been freely mingled over the centuries with legend and make-believe, his existence is authentic. A written document, his Confession, is tangible evidence of his authenticity.

Where did he come from? An important thing to remember about Patrick is that he was not Irish. In fact he was what nowadays at least would be called British, even if he was of Roman parentage.

Where in Britain did he originate? To be honest, nobody knows. Patrick himself refers in his writings to his father owning a holding near the village of Bannavem Taberniae, but there is no such name on any map of Roman Britain. The date of his birth is commonly given as circa 389 AD.

How did he first arrive in Ireland? As a 16 year old named Succat, he was captured in a raid by the Irish King, Niall of the Nine Hostages, and sold into slavery, working as a herdsman for six years on Slemish Mountain in County Antrim. Irish pirate chieftains were given to raiding the western coast of Britain in those days. Hence, it has traditionally been assumed that Patrick originally came from South Wales, probably along the Severn Valley, which could also mean that he came from Gloucestershire. Modern scholars however, are more inclined to think of Strathclyde as being more likely.

How was that slave turned into a missionary? After six years, Patrick managed to escape from his master, Míchú - legend has it that he was told of a waiting ship in a dream - and made his way back to Britain. According to Patrick, he had another dream of monumental importance. In it, The Voice of Ireland called him to return to that country as a Christian missionary. As a result, he went to France, some say, to study to become a Christian and a missionary at the monastery of Auxerre, near Paris, and later was ordained a priest. In 432 AD, now a bishop named Patricius, he was sent by the Pope to Ireland to take up where a previous missionary Bishop, Palladius, had left off.

Information courtesy Tourism Ireland.

Ireland’s rugby matches against Italy postponed due to virus

Ireland’s Six Nations rugby match against Italy in Dublin was postponed on Feb. 26 because of concerns about the spreading virus in Europe.

The Italians were scheduled to play at Ireland on March 7, part of annual rugby competition that also includes England, France, Scotland and Wales. A women’s game the following day was also postponed.

The decision to postpone the matches came from Irish Health Minister Simon Harris, who met with rugby officials.

“[At the outset we made it clear that the IRFU was supportive of the governments’ need to protect public health in relation to the coronavirus],” the Irish Rugby Football Union said in a statement. “We were then advised, formally, that the National Public Health Emergency team has determined that the series of matches should not proceed, in the interests of Public Health. The IRFU is happy to comply with this instruction.”

Rugby officials plan talks about when the matches can be rescheduled.

Italy has the highest number of cases of the virus in Europe, with more than 300 people diagnosed with infection and 11 deaths linked to the disease.

“I know (it will cause a great disappointment to many, but it is important to make decisions in relation to public health above and beyond all other considerations, Harris told RTE before the decision to postpone was made. (AP)

UK: Bridge could link Scotland, No. Ireland

By Jill Lawless, Associated Press

The British government is seriously studying the feasibility of a bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland, an audacious idea that has been floated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Johnson has promised to build major new infrastructure to better connect the parts of the U.K. in the wake of Britain’s divisive exit from the European Union. He also has vowed to boost parts of the U.K. in the wake of Britain’s divisive exit from the European Union.

But engineers say spanning the deep and stormy Irish Sea would be difficult. The distance is 12 miles at its narrowest, one of the most likely routes for a bridge, between Larne in Northern Ireland and Portpatrick in Scotland, is about 28 miles. The water is up to 1,000 feet deep and the sea bed holds thousands of unexploded bombs dumped by Britain’s defense ministry after World War II. Johnson has a mixed track record with big projects.

As mayor of London between 2008 and 2016 he touted a “Boris Island” airport in the River Thames estuary and a lush “garden bridge” in the middle of the city. Neither was ever built. (AP)

Man in court over killing of N Ireland journalist Lyra McKee

A 52-year-old man appeared in court on Feb. 13 in Northern Ireland in connection with the killing of Lyra McKee, a journalist shot dead during a riot involving Irish Republican Army dissidents last year.

Paul McIntyre has been charged with murder, although police say they believe several people were involved and they are still seeking “evidence to bring the gunman to justice.”

McKee, 29, was observing anti-police rioting in Derry when she was killed in April 2019. The New IRA, a small paramilitary group that opposes Northern Ireland’s peace process, said its members shot McKee by accident while firing at police.

McIntyre’s lawyer, Derwin Harvey, told a hearing at Magistrates’ Court that his client was accused of picking up casings from the bullet casings that killed McKee. Supporters of McIntyre scuffled with police outside the courthouse before the hearing. He was denied bail and is to appear in court again on Feb. 27.

McKee’s killing caused widespread shock in a region still scarred by decades of violence known as the Troubles, in which more than 3,500 people died.

Supporters of Paul McIntyre protest outside Londonderry Magistrates’ Court, where he is appearing in court on Feb. 13, 2020. (AP)
Whistling past the graveyard on Mookie exit

By Dick Flavin

The idiom “Whistling past the graveyard” is defined as the attempt to stay cheerful in a dire situation. Well, I’m all puckered up and ready to blow. Are you ready? The Red Sox loss of Mookie Betts might not the mean end of the world.

There. I’ve said it, and I have anecdotal evidence to back me up. Less than 20 years ago there was another young player who, in the age of free agency, left his original team, the one that had brought him to the big leagues. He was, if anything, even better than Mookie. In approximately the same number of at-bats he had a higher batting average than Mookie does now (.309 to .301), many more home runs (189 to 139), more RBIs (595 to 476), and he even more stolen bases (133 to 126). Like Mookie, he was a defensive whiz at his position. And at age 25, he was even younger than Mookie is now, which is 27.

The year was 2001 and that player was Alex Rodriguez. He left the Seattle Mariners to sign a massive 10-year, $252 million contract with the Texas Rangers. How, you might ask, did the Mariners survive the loss of the best young player of the generation? Keep in mind that at this time there had never been any link made between A-Rod and performance enhancing drugs. In their first season without him, the Mariners set an all-time American League record for victories during the regular season, finishing at 116-46. That’s 8 more wins than the Red Sox had in their too-good-to-be-true season of 2018. Unfortunately for them, the Mariners ran into the Yankees of Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, and Bernie Williams in the American League Championship Series and so never made it to the World Series.

If you’re worried about the double whammy aspect of losing both Mookie and David Price, consider this: In 1998, just two and a half years before A-Rod’s free agency, the Mariners traded away, then went on to win a World Series without him. It happened more than a century ago, true, but it happened. Tris Speaker had compiled a .337 batting average in seven-plus seasons with the Red Sox, the American League only a few months after Jackie Robinson broke in with the Brooklyn Dodgers, his talent, deemed expendable. Things have a way of turning 28. As with Mookie, money was a contributing factor. The upstart Federal League had started pirating players from the National and American Leagues in 1914, and in order to protect their investment in Speaker, the Red Sox doubled his salary to $18,000. When the Federal League folded a year later, the Sox tried to cut Speaker’s contract back to the $9,000 it had originally been. Needless to say, Speaker resisted, so just before the 1916 season began, he was shipped off to Cleveland for pitcher Sad Sam Jones and infielder Fred Thomas, plus $50,000 in cash. Speaker refused to report until the Sox agreed to fork over $10,000 of the 50 grand they got from Cleveland, which they did.

Oh, and there was also the matter of religion that factored into the trade. Speaker, who was reportedly a member of the Ku Klux Klan back home in Texas, was virulently anti-Catholic during his Red Sox years, which caused a schism in the clubhouse. And since Boston’s fan base was, as was the city itself 100 years ago, largely Irish Catholic, he was, despite his great talent, deemed expendable. Things have a way of working out, though. Once he settled in Cleveland, Speaker met, fell in love with, and married an Irish-Catholic girl. It’s the end of the world after all. It sure feels like it is, though, doesn’t it?
Looking for a touch of gracious living? To Ireland’s Blue Book you should turn

By Ed Forry

Ireland’s Blue Book is a joint venture of a collection of descriptive listings of selected Irish country houses, hotels, and restaurants located all across the island. A visit to one of these gracious spots affords a unique experience of living and sleeping in glorious old grand estates, all preserved, maintained, and featuring a variety of outdoor activities: fishing, hiking, some golf. It’s really about decompressing from the pace of modern-day life. Having stayed now at four of these properties, I recommend them and the unique experiences they afford. Here’s a report on two visits last year:

Enniscoe House, an 18th century manor in Ballina, Co. Mayo

Owner Susan Kellett meets her guests at the door. She’s a member of the 12th generation of the family that has owned the estate, dating back to the 1650s when Oliver Cromwell granted the property to one of his commanders. Born Susan Nicholson, she studied history at Trinity College Dublin and never planned to have a career in the hospitality business. Now she, her son DJ Kellett, and his wife Colette, whose daughter live on the estate and welcome guests to the main house.

“I suppose I had never intended to take over the running of the house, but, as things worked out, my brother was not interested in staying here,” she said. “This would be back in the early 1980s, and I decided to have a go at it. At that time, there were very few people working here and there were very few people coming in and out of the place.

“There’s a bit of land left, but not enough to do serious farming. So the very obvious thing was tourism and getting people in. And the other obvious thing was involving the local community in it because when I came back in the late 1970s, I discovered that very few locals had been actually in the house, that they might come up as small boys to get bamboo sticks for fishing rods, and might’ve visited the local school came every year to visit the gardens.

“So I thought, well, the first thing is that you have to open the place up and if I’m going to stay here and the house has to be earning its keep, it’s not going to be from farming. And that’s what I did. And now it took me rather longer to get the place on its feet than I thought it would. But, we’re still here.”

Kellett said that she had “partly” grown up on the property. “It belonged to a cousin of my father, the 12th generation of the family that was from Ballycastle. Her family built a little holiday house down at Pontoon, which is the other end of the lake from here. So we spent all our summers in Mayo and when I was growing up, we used to come and visit what we as children thought was this rather grumpy old man living by himself in this big house.

“He died in 1950 and my parents inherited the house. At that point, my father discovered there was basically no money. He was a professor of veterinary medicine at the veterinary college in Dublin. So, as he used to say, ‘Earned the money in Dublin to lose it in Mayo,’ and that continued. So they never lived here full time. We spent a lot of time here, obviously, growing up. I mean, I was at school in Dublin at Trinity. So my intention was that if I was taking it on, the place had to pay and it had to be full time. I’d spent a childhood on the road backwards and forwards. Dublin, Mayo, Dublin, Mayo, Dublin, Mayo.

“There are just six bedrooms that I’m using for this business, and there are one or two extra, and I actually live in the back of the house as well. Some years ago, we converted the old stables into three self-catering apartments. Now they’re quite flexible. They can be used as extra bedrooms for the house. Essentially throughout the summer months, there will be people staying in those apartments who may or may not come and have dinner in the house. Just as they like.”

After breakfast that mild August morning, we wandered through the glorious gardens adjacent to the main house and visited the adjacent Mayo Heritage Center, viewing artifacts from centuries of settlements in that part of Mayo. Last year, The National Trust for Ireland – An Taisce – presented the prestigious Green Flag Award to Enniscoe House “awarded for exceeding tough environmental standards in green space management and excellence of visitor attractions.”

“It is over 30 years since I took over the ownership and management of Enniscoe House and Estate,” Kellett said in accepting the honor. “In that time, we have set about the restoration of the house and gardens and redeveloped the estate into a community-focused destination for this rural and regional community. I am delighted that the work carried out by so many people over the years has been recognized by An Taisce.”
Manager Brian McEvilly spoke about the property: “I grew up in the house. This was my family home, it was purchased by my parents in 1967. They opened the hotel in 1968 and we had Charles de Gaulle stay in May of 1969, which put Cashel ‘on the map’ as it were, in Ireland.

“Cashel is a tiny village. It consisted back then of this old house, and next door was an old property owned by Guinness’s, (and) a church. And then there was a local shop which was a post office or hardware shop, one of these all-in-one kind of units. And then there would have been a very small rural community.

“My father is from Sligo and my mother is from just outside Clifden, about 30 minutes drive from here. When they came to Cashel, they were looking to purchase a property to convert it into a hotel. They were both hoteliers and they had run a hotel in Athlone. So this property and another property up in Mayo became available to purchase and they were looking at both properties; the deciding factor was then the gardens at the hotel. They were exceptionally well maintained even back then.

“So my mother, a very keen gardener, said the gardens are going to go on to be a huge attraction, which was a great advantage over the other properties they were looking for. Plus it was very close to her parents.

“The house was a wedding present when it was built and the gardens were not as substantial as they were. The mountain actually ran right down by the side of the hotel. So there would have been just green fields. And each generation that has purchased the property has a secret garden was named because they have catalogued and geotagged several hundred of them in the whole British Isles. The secret garden there are some very rare trees. The Royal Horticultural Society of the UK have come over to Ireland and they have catalogued and geotagged the trees. There are only a handful of these all-in-one kind of units. And then they had gifted a wedding present of a rosebush that is still here to this day. We take very good care of it; we’ve actually transplanted into two or three other locations just in case so that we have that rose.

“We have a lot of rare azaleas, and hundreds of Rhododendrons as we have 26 acres of woodland walks and gardens. The plantings go back as far as 1840. It was many years after we purchased the property when we realized that in the secret garden there are some very rare trees. The Royal Horticultural Society of the UK have come over to Ireland and they have catalogued and geotagged the trees. There are only a handful of them in the whole British Isles. The secret garden was named because when my parents first purchased the house, there was no gate. There was a completely walled section and that’s where he kept the rare trees.”

Cashel House manager Brian McEvilly(left) was born and brought up at the property in Connemara. Ray Toorley, an Offaly man, met his wife there and has been a mainstay for some 40 years.
The Saint’s month offers a plethora of delights on the island of Ireland

By Judy Enright

Strike up the band and let the celebration begin! It’s March, that most welcome precursor of spring which, as they say, breaks winter’s back. And along with bidding snow, ice, and cold farewell for another year, comes the pleasure of celebrating St. Patrick with lively songs, stories, and parades here and all over Ireland. The Irish do enjoy a good parade and are masters at celebrating holidays such as March 17 with all due pomp and circumstance. From east to west, north to south, cities and towns organize their marchers for the traditional and colorful parades, often coupled with religious ceremonies before or after and gatherings later that rock the local pubs.

ST. PATRICK

So, who was this St. Patrick that everyone honors as Ireland’s patron saint? Was he just one man or were there several? It’s hard to answer with great certainty or accuracy, but it’s always fun to hear Irish legend and myth.

Scholars have done centuries of research on Patrick and perhaps one of the best places to see what they have concluded is at The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick, Co. Down, Northern Ireland – the world’s only permanent exhibition about the saint. The Centre is just a two-hour drive from Dublin Airport (where car rental is available) and about 40 minutes from Belfast. Those who don’t rent a car in Ireland can still visit by taking a bus or train from the Dublin or Belfast City Centers.

At Downpatrick, you can learn about Patrick’s life and legacy in interactive galleries and at the IMAX experience. Be sure to visit the Centre’s art gallery and excellent craft shop while there and stop for a bite to eat at the Garden Café.

There are many sites near the Centre that are associated with St. Patrick’s life, including the Cathedral of Down (where his grave is located), Inch Abbey (where the legend of the snakes was written), and Ireland’s first church at Saul (where Patrick died on March 17).

TITANIC

After you have walked in St. Patrick’s footsteps, be sure to continue north to the Titanic Belfast and see this wonderful attraction, which has welcomed more than 6 million visitors from more than 145 countries with 88 percent hailing from outside Northern Ireland. Jackie Henry, a senior partner at Deloitte Northern Ireland, has conducted an independent evaluation that he said showed the exhibit had generated 319 million pounds sterling for the local economy.

Saying that Titanic Belfast is committed to being a key driver for tourism in Northern Ireland, Judith Owens, the company’s chief executive, has outlined plans to re-invest three million pounds sterling into a gallery refreshment program, adding, “through our Gallery Refreshment Program, we aim to deliver a world-class spectacle that will continue to drive visitors to Belfast and Northern Ireland.”

The gallery work will be Titanic Belfast’s biggest single investment and most ambitious project since its opening in 2012.

An aside: While you are in the North, be sure to also visit the Giant’s Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, and Dunluce Castle as well as the many other historic properties preserved by The National Trust, including Derrymore House, Mount Stewart, and many others.

DUBLIN

Who can forget Dublin when talking about St. Patrick’s Day? No one, right? The capital city bursts with activity over five days and nights from March 13 to the holiday itself. There’s music, performance, art, spoken word, and literature as well as tours, trails, food events, family fun, and more.

Principally funded by Fáilte Ireland (the Irish arm of Tourism Ireland), Dublin City Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, the program offers hundreds of events throughout Dublin. See visitdublin.com and Ireland.com for more.

PERCY FRENCH

If you are a Percy French fan, you surely know his beautiful song “The Mountains of Mourne” and also that Jan. 24 marked the 100th anniversary of his death. A painter, musician, composer, and singer, William Percy French was born in Co. Roscommon and educated in Ireland and England. In 1872, he began an engineering degree program at Trinity College in Dublin, where he developed his talent for writing songs. French is perhaps best known for his humorous songs, but he was also an editor, concert promoter, landscape painter, sketch writer, poet, banjo player, and stage entertainer.
Like many of his fellow artists, he spent holidays on Achill Island in Co. Mayo during the early 1900s and drew inspiration there for the poem “Island of my Dreams,” or “In Exile.” He also painted a number of watercolors while there.

In January 1920, French, then 65, became ill while performing in Glasgow and died of pneumonia in Formby, England. His grave is in the churchyard of St. Luke’s Parish Church, Formby, Merseyside.

MICHAEL VINEY

I have long admired the environmentally focused writing and art work of Michael Viney in the Saturday editions of The Irish Times. He is so in touch with the world around him, its many issues and hopes, as evidenced by the excerpt below from his Feb. 1 column about pollinators. After reading the column, I wanted to immediately visit this farmer and see what he has accomplished.

Viney discussed the EU award of some four million euro toward the cost of a five-year conservation program on Donegal and Connacht farmland. The aim, he wrote, “is to save our summer corncrakes, all but extinct as migrants to Ireland and declining in western Europe but still breeding in millions in Russia and Kazakhstan.”

The award was gratefully received by the NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service), whose land management plans, agreed with farmers, include the planting of meadows with tall native vegetation to give corncrakes cover for their breeding.

“This costly program, for birds that are neither “keystone” for their habitat nor threatened with planetary loss, seemed a fair example of the challenge to conservation in choosing which species to save.”

“The column brought pertinent comment from Fearnal O’Cuinneagáin, a young farmer who has pioneered sowing for the corncrake ten grassy and windswept hectares (metric unit of measurement) of the Mullet Peninsula in Co. Mayo. His meadows of richly mixed native herbs and wild flowers, while primarily managed for corncrake cover, have attracted a striking variety of birds – ‘breeding skylark,’ lists O’Cuinneagáin, ‘meadow pipit, snipe, reed bunting, sedge warbler, grasshopper warbler, stonechat, wheatear and chough’.

“Even in winter, he has recorded barnacle and greylag geese, twite, golden plover and curlew. And the summer profusion of yellow rattle, bird’s foot trefoil and red clover offers food to the great yellow bumblebee, the rare pollinator that now survives only in parts of the west.

“So yes, biodiversity indeed. And in the careful elaboration of plants beyond the familiar nettles and yellow iris, it is the deliberate restoration of the meadows that used to be, full of insects and nectar in summer and spires of seeds in winter.”

‘Farming for Nature,’ however, the movement for which O’Cuinneagáin’s farm is showpiece, insists that ‘the plan is not a step back in time’ but a way forward, not least in helping to save the pollinators that flowering plants need to survive. In most of the high-nature-value farmland across Ireland, it argues, ‘the income from agri-environmental schemes is a lifeline in keeping farmers farming.’”

MINDFUL SELF COMPASSION

How about taking several days to treat yourself? Check out Caitriona Nic Ghiolaphadraig’s program March 22-24 at beautiful Lough Inagh Lodge Hotel in Connemara, Co. Galway. Check-in is Sun., the 22nd, in time for 7 p.m. dinner. The Mindful Self-Compassion session will be introduced afterwards as “a first step in emotional healing - being able to turn toward and acknowledge difficult thoughts and feelings (such as inadequacy, sadness, anger, confusion) with a spirit of openness and curiosity.”

Two and three-day packages are available. For more information, visit Lough Inagh’s website at loughinagh-lodgehotel.ie or visit embodiedbrain.ie. Lough Inagh’s location is also perfect for outdoor activities, including hill walking, fly fishing, cycling, golf, sightseeing, and exploring.

Above all, enjoy Ireland and all it has to offer when you set down there in March.
Irish Honors
The program will begin at 10 a.m. on St. Patrick’s Day when members of the Charitable Irish Society gather for their annual meeting at the Boston Athenaeum on Beacon Street and elect the officers and board members for 2020-21. Immediately following the meeting, Society members will proceed to the Irish Famine Memorial on School Street to lay a memorial wreath.

The main public event, the Society’s 283rd annual dinner, will be held at the Seaport Hotel beginning with a reception at 6 p.m. The night’s honoree and keynote speaker will be Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns of the John F. Kennedy School of Government where he has been a professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Relations since 2008. He will discuss the role of the Republic of Ireland on the global diplomatic stage.

Ambassador Burns will speak at Charitable Irish Society dinner

A recipient of 15 honorary degrees as well as the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, Mr. Burns will pick up yet another award at the dinner, the Society’s Life Achievement Award for 2020.

For information about tickets and other questions, visit charitableirishsociety.org or call 617-228-4445. Reservations should be made by March 10.

For 283 years, the Charitable Irish Society has provided assistance to newly arrived immigrants to Boston as they face the multiple challenges of adjusting to a new city and environment. Through its Silver Key program, it has in recent years given timely aid to immigrants from Ireland, Haiti, Nigeria, and Honduras.

Submitted by Catherine B. Shannon, former Society president.
By Katie Trojano

Dorchester Brewing Co. (DBCo) rang in the new year with an opening celebration of their brand-new expanded taproom, featuring a rooftop “Hopser- vatory” space with sweeping views of the Boston skyline. The $4 million dollar build-out added roughly 8,000 square feet to their Mass Ave. facility, which now includes a new performance area, restaurant space occupied by M&M BBQ, and an enhanced gaming area.

“Our goal was to create something special, so we really thought long and hard about what we wanted to build,” explained DBCo’s CEO and chief “keg-washer” Matt Malloy. “We didn’t want to just keep up with the other breweries, we wanted to create something that was really unique and that Boston didn’t really have,” he told the Reporter.

The new second-floor adds 4,200 square feet, utilizing the property’s roof space with a glassed-in beer hall surrounded by a wrap-around outdoor deck with beautiful city views. The glass encasing surrounding the rooftop tasting room is designed to look and function as a greenhouse and includes wood furnishings and a fireplace.

Since its opening in 2016, the brewing facility and public tap room has experienced great success, drawing customers from Dorchester, Greater Boston, and around the state to its craft-beer bar and brewery on Massachusetts Ave.

“Now we’re about a nine to ten thousand square foot taproom, which is kind of crazy,” said Malloy.

The team at Dorchester Brewing Co. has always had expansion in the back of their minds. Malloy said that the team intentionally left space open for it when they began initial building in 2016. A little over a year ago, the DBCo team started thinking seriously about what kind of build out would work best for the community and began construction in early April 2019.

“When the tap room opened up three-and-a-half years ago, and we kind of knew then that if we could get people to come to Dorchester we were going to expand. We had nothing but amazing support from the community, and from all the towns around Boston,” he said.

According to Malloy, much of the inspiration for the expansion came directly out of feedback that the DBCo staff heard from their customers and neighbors.

“People love the communal aspect of it here, and we were hearing people say that it would be great if they could get food here, or if there was more deck space outdoors. Sitting outside on Mass. Ave in the summer is fun, but if it could be a couple floors up, overlooking the city, would that be much better? A lot of us that work here are Dorchester residents and we said ‘Let’s just do it,’” said Malloy.

“We’re really trying to incorporate what a brewery is all about– which is the local community and using our own resources. We want to reflect community so much so that our restaurant partner is Geo from M&M ribs.”

M&M BBQ, which will operate out of the floor level at DBco, is a local standby that made its name selling ribs from a food truck that has trundled down the streets of Dorchester and Roxbury for decades.

Founded by Marion and Maurice Hill in 1982, M&M is now operated by their grandson, Geo Lambert, who took over the business ten years ago. The brewery-based restaurant will be the business’s first brick-and-mortar operation.

Malloy was first inspired by seeing the strong sense of community that breweries create and provide space for when he was in Munich, Germany.

“While I was building companies globally I thought, ‘I live in Dorchester, why can’t I do something local for my community?’ It really came out of that, I had that ‘aha’ moment in Munich,” said Malloy.

From there, he teamed up with partners Todd Charbonneau, Travis Lee and Holly Irgens to co-found the company.

“We were looking for the perfect place in Dorchester to do world-class manufacturing, but also create a space where the community could come and enjoy beer,” said Malloy. “I’ve never been happier. I see all of my neighbors, I’m part of my community and that is the thing that is just so magical to me.”

Katie Trojano is a Reporter staff writer.
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS...

Titanic Belfast

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