

Boston Irish

Vol. 1, Issue 1

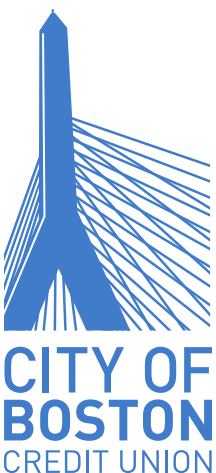
March 2020

BostonIrish.com



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



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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 news stands 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 Irish group said, "We are pleased to learn that there is still a print media that allows us to get the word out."



For the most part, printed newspapers and periodicals are a vanishing breed, as the ink-on-paper media industry has decamped to the digital world, with

an accompanying loss of revenue and, sadly, large numbers of journalism jobs. The demise of our monthly newspaper is emblematic of those trends.

As the new year began, the companion website BostonIrish.com was expanded and improved, with additional news and features from our town as well as from our collective ancestral homeland. The immediacy of this digital presence enables Boston's Irish to connect with current news on a daily basis.

Maybe it's the obstinate Irish kid in me, but I still relish the tactile feel of holding my newspapers, books, magazines, and periodicals in my hand while reading them.

As we move forward with this new venture, I invite you to read through this inaugural edition of Boston Irish and let me know what you think. You can reach me at 150 Mt Vernon Street, Dorchester MA 02125. Or email me at newsroom@BostonIrish.com. You can stay in more frequent touch and also sign up for a digital news alerts on breaking news and features by visiting BostonIrish.com.

Ed Forry, formerly the Publisher of the Boston Irish Reporter, continues in that role with BostonIrish.com and this new Boston Irish periodical.



• **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.

There will be Irish/Celtic music experiences a-plenty here 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 Rhiannon Giddens.

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)

THE BOSTON IRISH CALENDAR OF CELTIC MUSIC AND DANCE

March 2020

Senator Collins moves breakfast back to Convention Center

By Katie Trojano

The highly anticipated St. Patrick's Day breakfast in South Boston is just a few weeks away and state Sen. Nick Collins and his team are readying the event for a familiar venue, the Boston Exhibition and Convention Center. The event, which was held last year at the Flynn Cruiseport, is slated for Sun., March 15, at 9 a.m.

The annual breakfast is a longstanding tradition that offers a dual celebration of Boston's Irish community and Evacuation Day, the commemoration of the ousting of the British forces from Boston Harbor in 1776. Collins took over as host last year for the first time.

"We really enjoyed having the breakfast at the Flynn Cruiseport last year. I thought it was a great venue," Collins told the *Reporter*. "I'm excited that it's getting the first phase of renovation and

as that process has begun and cruise season is in full-swing, we've decided to move the event to the Convention Center."

Collins said he'll likely bring the event back to the Flynn Cruiseport in years to come.

The breakfast kicks off St. Patrick's Day festivities in South Boston and precedes the annual parade that runs through Southie. The event attracts a large gathering of Massachusetts politicians every year and this March will be no different.

Massachusetts US Sen. Ed Markey and state Rep. Joe Kennedy, who are contenders in the closely followed US Senate race, will be in attendance, Collins said. He also expects a cohort of state and city elected officials, including Mayor Martin Walsh, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, and Suffolk District Attorney Rachael Rollins, among many others.

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.

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Mary C. Forry, President (1983-2004)

Edward W. Forry, Publisher

Thomas F. Mulvoy Jr., Managing Editor
William P. Forry, Editor

Peter F. Stevens, Contributing Editor
News Room: (617) 436-1222
Ads: (617) 436-1222

Fax: (617) 825-5516 news@bostonirish.com

On The Web at www.bostonirish.com

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St. Patrick's Day 2020 Breakfast Celebration

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 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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FEATURING IRELAND'S PREMIER TENOR
PAUL BYROM

Our mission is to connect you directly with education and community programs in Ireland, North and South, honoring our heritage by investing in Ireland's youth.

Thanks to our incredible network of support, Partnership members have provided more than **\$33+ Million** in assistance to Ireland, North and South, supporting Irish students, schools, and communities.

TO RESERVE TABLES & TICKETS: WWW.IRISHAP.ORG/EVENTS

1737



2020

*The President and Board of Directors
of*
The Charitable Irish Society

Cordially invite you to attend the
283rd Anniversary Dinner

Response to "The Day We Celebrate"

Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns

*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.
Dinner at 7:00 p.m.
Black Tie Optional

\$195 per person
RSVP
March 10, 2020

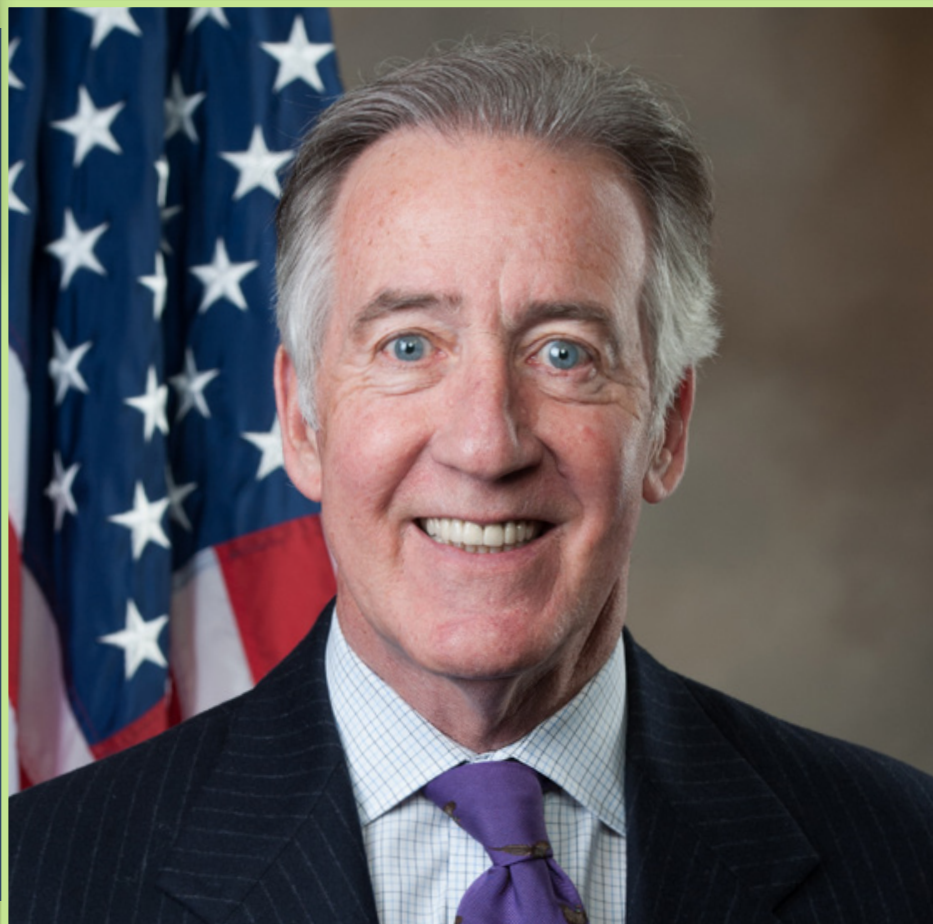
R. Nicholas Burns is currently Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Politics at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Mr. Burns is a columnist, lecturer, and former United States Ambassador to NATO.

Reservations: www.charitableirishsociety.org

**The Charitable Irish Society
c/o Ms. Hilda Landry
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55 Old Bedford Road | Suite 300
Lincoln, MA 01773**

Telephone: 617-228-4445

The Éire Society of Boston
2020 Gold Medal Dinner & Award Ceremony
Monday, May 4, 2020
6pm
Seaport Boston Hotel



Honoring 2020 Gold Medal Award Recipient
Richard E. Neal, US Representative of the
First Congressional District of Massachusetts, and
Chairman of the House of Ways and Means Committee

*Chairman Neal is head of the Congressional Friends of Ireland Committee and
an indispensable friend of Ireland and Irish America.*

Join us for a lively and elegant evening in honor of Richard E. Neal!

For more information, contact Gold Medal Dinner Committee Members:

email William J. Smith at WJSBoston@gmail.com or

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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 traditional St. Patrick’s Day visit to 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 we are 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 on the part of the British government to walk away from commitments it made last October, that spells trouble for everyone, including for Ireland.

“So 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



Ambassador Daniel Mulhall

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 1974 – 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.”



Free Performing Arts Programs for Children at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

Celtic Bells

The Irish in Boston

Saturday, March 14, 2020

St. Patrick’s Day

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m

Listen to the story of Irish immigrants in Boston through songs and poems of work, humor, protest, longing for home, and longing to feel at home as immigrants in America. Enjoy the lively music of the fiddle, bodhran (Irish drum), banjo, flute, guitar, and bagpipes.



Bright Star Theatre

We Can Do It! American Women Through History

Saturday, March 28, 2020

Women’s History Month

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m

Be inspired by some of the world’s most remarkable female pioneers. Discover incredible and groundbreaking women like Amelia Earhart, Sojourner Truth, Sacajawea, Susan B. Anthony and more!



Rick Adams

Red’s Recycle-O-Rama

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Earth Day

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m

Assisted by Rusty, the recycled and recycling dog, Red uses storytelling, magic, juggling, hand shadows, original songs and fun-loving tips on how and why to recycle, reuse, and reduce. Join in and explore creative and concrete ways that your home and community can become more planet-friendly.



The *Celebrate!* series is appropriate for family audiences and children ages 5 and up. In order to optimize your comfort and enjoyment, reservations are required for all visitors to this free program. Visit jfklibrary.org/celebrate or call 617-514-1644 and leave a message to make a reservation. Children are seated on the floor with their caretakers. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Children must be accompanied by an adult.



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Children 12 and under are always free. Additional student, military, senior and EBT discounts available.

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A little section of Doyle's finds its way to the Irish Social Club

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 backplash 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.

Noted Gormley: "There is a plaque up there that says 'In Memory of John

Fitzgerald Kennedy' – Honey Fitz – which was dedicated in 1988 by his grandson, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. He dedicated it and it's a big mirror with fancy woodwork from the 1880s when Doyle's was built."

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



Club member Bill Smith is pictured at the Irish Social Club in West Roxbury.

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.

Markey vs. Kennedy: A bare-knuckle Irish brawl

By Peter F. Stevens

With the first head-to-head debate between incumbent US Sen. Ed Markey and Congressman Joe Kennedy III now history, an old-style Boston Irish

political fight is unfolding. This one is shaping up as a generational clash, as both candidates have equally progressive "creds."

In talking with a number of voters, one finds that many are divided about whether Kennedy is displaying his

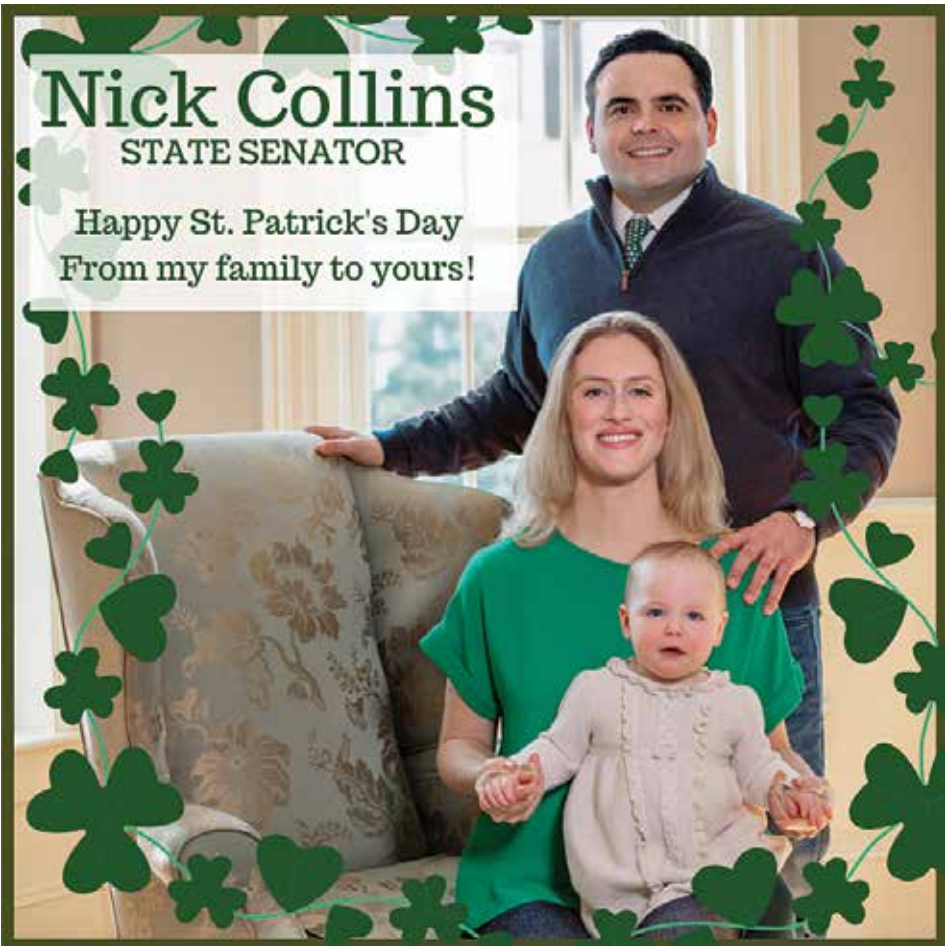
family's acute sense of office-seeking opportunism. Others, however, believe that Kennedy is correct in his assertion that there is no rule about waiting one's turn in deference to other Democrats.

History reflects that Teddy Kennedy's first, and winning, run for the US Senate and Bobby Kennedy's successful Senate campaign as a transplant from Massachusetts to New York are evidence of the bare-knuckle political posture of the clan. They were, and are, right that politics is not a genteel, "lace-curtain" profession.

Markey supporters and undecided voters might well wonder about any compelling urgency for the challenge

by Kennedy, who is arguing that it's time for a generational change—he is three-plus decades younger than Markey and more in step with under-40 voters. Ironically, Markey has always been in step with the Kennedys on issues then and now—with the exception of the 2020 campaign.

Of course, ambition and a sense of public duty dwell in both Kennedy and Markey. Both are pleading their case to voters. The race "trumps" any vestiges of party or personal loyalty. Sounds like a classic Massachusetts Irish political "donnybrook."



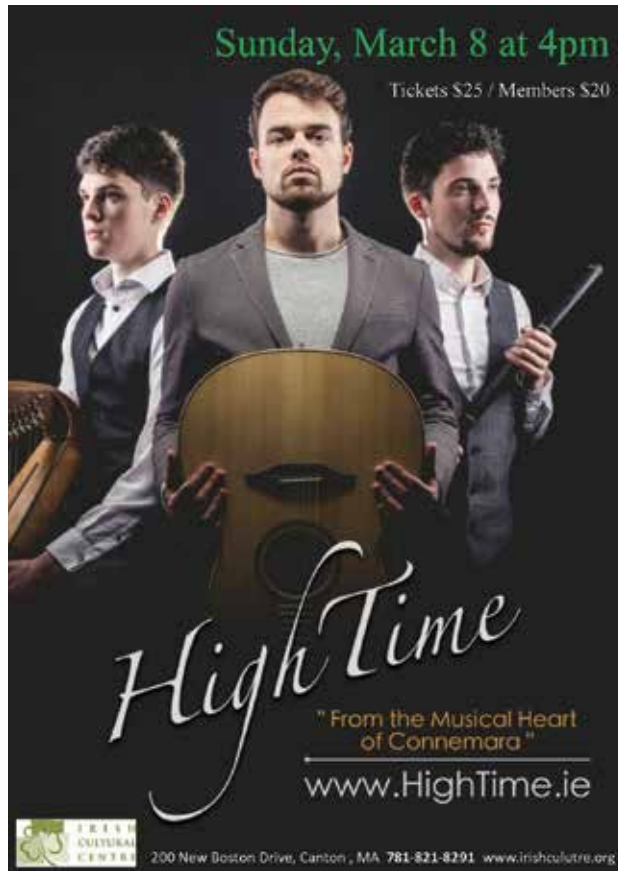
For each petal on the shamrock
This brings a wish your way-
Good health, good luck, and happiness
For today and every day.
Go mbeannai Dia duit
(May God Bless You)

Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Paid for and Authorized by The Committee to Elect Martin J. Walsh

St. Patrick's Month at the ICC

Sunday, March 8 at 4pm
Tickets \$25 / Members \$20



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200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 781-821-8291 www.irishculture.org

ST. PATRICK'S WEEK OF CELEBRATIONS
Saturday, March 14th

10am -12:30: Upstairs/Downstairs
ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATIONS FOR KIDS
Songs, stories, Irish dancers, face painting & arts & Crafts (Adm.\$8)

12:30 - 1:30pm:
KATIE McD & FRIENDS IN THE ICC PUB

2:30pm - 7:30pm
BILLY O'NEILL IN THE ICC PUB

8pm - late
FOR FOLK SAKE IN THE ICC PUB

Admission for concerts \$10 - one admission for either or both events

4:30pm-7pm: In the Downstairs Room
SCOTTISH FISH
This is a young fiddle & cello group from Boston. They expertly weave together traditional & contemporary Scottish & Cape Breton music.

7:30pm til late: In the Downstairs Room
RARE OLD TIMES
Dance the night away with your favorite tunes & songs with this band from the Cape "Rare old Times".

200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 02021
www.irishculture.org 781-821-8291

ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION FOR KIDS

Arts & Crafts / Sing-along with Katie McD
Performances by local Irish dance schools
Hayride around the fields / Face Painting
Music session in the ICC Cottage
Folklore Story Telling / learn a few Irish Words
Tea & Coffee & home baked goods included



SATURDAY, MARCH 14TH FROM 10AM -12:30PM
ADMISSION: \$8PP / FAMILY MAX: \$25

200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 781-821-8291 www.irishculture.org

ST. PATRICK'S DAY AT THE ICC
Serving Corned Beef & Cabbage all day *Best Pint of Guinness
*Non-stop music *Irish dancers

THE PLACE TO BE ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY

11am-2pm: Sing-along with Yokeshire
2pm-5pm: Dancing with Joe Glynn
5pm-8pm: Irish Trad session with Billy O'Neill

8pm: Paul Byrom in the Downstairs
Separate ticketed event.

Music in the Pub all day starting at 1pm



200 New Boston Drive, Canton
www.irishculture.org 781-821-8291

The ICC is proud to present a one man show featuring

KEVIN FLYNN: FEAR OF HEIGHTS

Saturday, March 21 at 8pm
Tickets: \$25/members \$20
\$30 on the night

This show, based on Kevin's life and relationship with his tough, Irish Catholic, steelworker roots is sure to be funny and moving.
Kevin is a world-class comedic performer who has appeared on multiple TV shows, standup comedy specials and films. A great storyteller is the key to a great play and Kevin Flynn is just that!

200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 781-821-8291 www.irishculture.org

The ICC Drama Group Presents:
THE TWO LOVES OF GABRIEL FOLEY
BY PLAYWRIGHT JIMMY KEARY

The Two Loves of Gabriel Foley is set in Aggie Foley's farmyard parlor in rural Ireland, in the 1980's. Aggie is close to seventy and is keen that her only son, Gabriel - now past forty - will find himself a wife. And that's when the shenanigans begin.....

Thursday, April 2nd @ 8pm / Friday, April 3rd @ 8pm
Saturday, April 4th @ 8pm / Sunday, April 5th @ 2pm

TICKETS
\$25 / Members \$20

200 New Boston Drive, Canton, MA 02021 www.irishculture.org 781-821-8291

The Irish Cultural Centre located in Canton, MA is a mecca for touring Irish musicians, dancers and emerging artists. It is also a solid home base for Irish and Irish American musicians in the US.

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!



200 New Boseton Drive., Canton, MA
781-821-8291 www.irishculture.org

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 and 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

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

\$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



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

St. Patrick's Breakfast and Celebration
with *Fenian Sons*
along with *Joe Glynn*

Ally Harron & Marion Curry

and *The Boston Police Gaelic Column*

Tuesday, March 17, 2020
Schedule: Breakfast at 10:00 am
Music by Joe Glynn 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
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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 Illegal 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 E. 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 mcheco@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 AIRES 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 CLOSING "The Irish of Massachusetts – The Final Chapter" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

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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.



Larry Donnelly

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 political centre had held, has at last succumbed to the populist and nativist mood which has facilitated the Trump presidency, Brexit and the rise of the far right on continental Europe.

Charles Moore's column in the *Daily Telegraph* - "How we all helped Sinn Féin win in Ireland" - may be the most egregious example of this woefully misguided analysis.

"Then, along comes Brexit and in 2017 the new Irish Taoiseach (prime minister), Leo Varadkar, forgets his modernising, liberal stance and puts on the old green jersey of Irish nationalism. It turned out that virulent nationalism had not gone away after all. So, if Brit-bashing is again the approved mainstream sport in the republic's politics, why not turn to Sinn Féin, the best qualified players in that nasty game?"

Anyone remotely familiar with Leo Vardkar's persona and outlook or with 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



Sinn Féin Leader Mary Lou McDonald, center, with party lawmakers, arrives at Leinster House, Dublin, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020. Brian Lawless/PA via AP



Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin, center, with party lawmakers, speaks to the media at Leinster House, Dublin, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2020. Brian Lawless/PA via AP

parties now to be joined by a third large party on the left?

Confronting what may be the new reality has been to the fore in the post-election process of government formation. A majority of 80 or more TDs needs to be cobbled together. Fianna Fáil seemed open initially to coalescing with Sinn Féin in government, but its leader, Micheál Martin, poured cold water on the idea in a fiery speech in which he accused his putative partners of "legitimising a murderous sectarian campaign" and "operating outside the democratic norms of regular political parties."

At the time of writing, then, there seem to be two possibilities for what will come next: a previously unthinkable coalition of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party or a second election if they fail to reach an agreement. Another costly, exhausting campaign and unpredictable exercise in democracy is not something that either independent or party affiliated TDs - except those from Sinn Féin, who probably would be joined by more aspirants from within their own ranks - want and is the least likely scenario.

The marriage of the two long-time foes, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, so divergent historically and culturally, though not ideologically, may be the only game in town. Irish politics has definitely changed, even if we can't yet foresee the exact nature and scale of the change. Stay tuned for further extraordinary developments in the wake of a truly seismic election.

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 Féin's stunning success in Ireland's election, 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 Féin'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 Féin's sudden ascent.

Journalist and historian Patrick Cockburn, in a recent *Counterpoint* piece, labeled Sinn Féin'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 Féin 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 "begrudgery" 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 Féin'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 Féin 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 Féin 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 Féin'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 would support a united Ireland; 52 percent are dead set against it. Sinn Féin, however, intends to pressure the British government to hold a poll or referendum on unification within five years. In a historical Irish milestone, Sinn Féin 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 Féin were issues of homelessness, healthcare, and economic disparity and displacement. Cockburn aptly notes: "Sinn Féin...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 Féin chose the right issues on which to campaign in the general election, but it was also the almost accidental beneficiary of disillusionment 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 my teenage self desperately wanted. I loved her for it, as I did my grandfather, who understood my love of history and desire to attend university.

Because my parents did not have the BBC2 channel, my grandfather disrupted his usual viewing schedule so I could see the documentary. In the age of single-television households, aunts and uncles had missed their favorite programs – not a popular decision!

Most weeks I ran an errand for Granddad, who enjoyed a Guinness and a cheese sandwich before bed. On Saturdays, I returned his empties to the local pub, and lugged home a fresh supply to him. 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



Maisie and Bob

younger aunts and uncles, his children, had missed the expansion of Irish higher education by a few years, and he wanted me to be ready for what had eluded them.

After university I came to America in 1979, and my grandparents, with Gran as the communicator, followed my journey. As a member of the Dublin working class, she took strength from her Catholic faith and was a force to be reckoned with. In her shaky hand, she wrote regularly, especially when I battled cancer, sending prayers and reminding me to get in touch with St. Anthony, a performer of miracles.

She signed her letters "Your Loving Gran," with a few X kisses, but occasionally she'd impishly write "Granny Cool." On trips home, theirs was the first

house I visited after sleeping off jet lag, and I'd see them daily.

On one such trip, several months before I was to be married in Massachusetts, Gran, by then a widow after six decades of marriage, caught me off guard. As we chatted, she produced Granddad's wedding ring, saying she'd like me to have it.

Stunned then, I still cannot recall my reaction, but I have worn that band of gold for 30 years of marriage to my wife, Helene. It reminds me of my grandparents' embrace and symbolizes what they achieved together: raising 14 children in a small house during some of Ireland's toughest economic decades.

Against odds, and with modest resources, they made ends meet, held things together, fulfilled their responsibilities, and always with good hearts. A stream of aunts, uncles, 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 did so much for 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.

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BOSTON IRISH Ireland

Sinn Fein tops poll in election 'earthquake'

By Jill Lawless
and Nicolae 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-represen-

tation 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 RTE.

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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inside the fab
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Writing about Irish music and arts is my gig, and it continues to be a blast

By Sean Smith

It all started innocently enough.

Early in 2008, I got an e-mail from friend and fellow writer/musician Susan Gedutis 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 hankered 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.

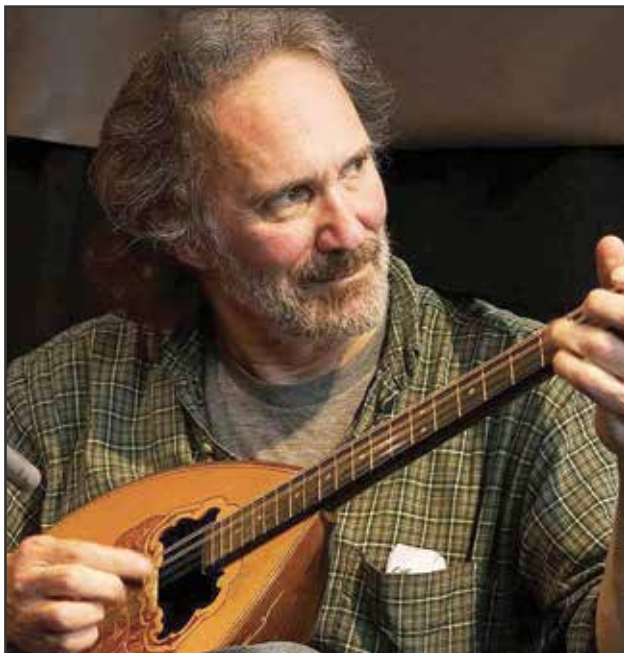
From an early age, feeling linked to Boston

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).

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.



Sean Smith at play and at work.

Joni Lohr photo



Seamus Connolly with Jimmy Hogan during a musicians' photo shoot in Jamaica Plain, 2006.



Two generations, one instrument. John Gannon, left, and Rory Coyne at the 2014 Féile Cheoil Boston.

Sean Smith photo

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' roller, 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 Kinvara Pub, various house parties, or the monthly Comhaltas Ceóltoíri Éireann 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

Boston Irish

Essay

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 Matt Glaser 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 Fleadh 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.



Joe Derrane at his home in Randolph, 2010.

Sean Smith photo



Liz Carroll and John Doyle in concert during the 2007 ICONS Festival at the Irish Cultural Center of New England in Canton.

Sean Smith photo



The author, left, with friends/bandmates Tom Kagan and Margy Rydyski outside the Village Coach House, c. 1985.

About my choices for what to review

Finally, some thoughts on how I choose what to write about for *BIR*/Boston Irish.

Obviously, I focus on local angles: People who have a connection to Greater Boston or Eastern Massachusetts as native or resident, for example; or events taking place in "the area," the exact geographic dimensions of which tend to be admittedly fluid.

Greater Boston, of course, is a stop for many renowned touring performers. Who are these folks in our midst, however briefly? Interviewing them is an opportunity to get them to talk about their chosen vocation and how and why they devote time and energy to it – and in the process, hopefully, they become more than just names on posters, album covers and websites.

The complicated part is, what do I mean when I say I write about "Irish music"? Is it "music from Ireland"? Music played by someone who's Irish? How Irish, exactly? Perhaps the music evokes, subtly or almost imperceptibly, something of Ireland – the land, the people, history, culture – even if it didn't emanate from Ireland, or come from someone with Irish ancestry. Maybe the music locates Ireland in a larger context, through shared experiences and stories with other peoples and cultures.

To me, all of that is fair game, even if we're talking strictly about traditional Irish music, which constitutes the bulk of my coverage. Traditional music, Irish or otherwise, does not stand still, remain trapped in aspic, never changing. It influences, and is influenced by, other music – classical, pop, rock, jazz – as well as other folk music traditions.

I sometimes use the term "Celtic." I do so with some trepidation, because I know the word has long provoked arguments about its historical appropriateness and accuracy. I'm also of the view, shared by more than a few others, that "Celtic" has morphed into a brand name, all too easily affixed to events, ensembles, productions and products. But "Celtic" can at least provide a point of reference, however imperfect, perhaps sufficiently enough to begin or guide a conversation.

And from my vantage point, conversations about Irish music – or Celtic music, or whatever-in-heck name you want to use – are almost as important, and frequently as pleasurable, as the music itself. I plan on having many more of them.

Thanks, Susan Gedutis Lindsay, wherever you are.
Sean Smith can be reached at sean.smith@bostonirish.com.

THE BOSTON IRISH CALENDAR OF CELTIC MUSIC AND DANCE

(Continued from page 2)

has explored connections between traditional, classical, and contemporary music as a composer/arranger as well as a musician; McGowan, a co-founder of the Rising Step Irish dance company, draws on the musicality of the older, *sean-nós* dance styles; Straw (guitar, bouzouki), a member of The Ivy Leaf, is a gifted singer and accompanist.

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 “Hieroglyphs 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



Aoife O’Donovan

Still – and in more recent years she has emerged as a confident, eloquent songwriter, as evidenced by her solo album “In the Magic Hour” and as part of the trio I’m With Her (with Sara Watkins and Sarah Jarosz), which won 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

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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-donovan 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 (accordion, 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.

(Continued on page 20)



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(Continued from page 19)

•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, bodhran) and Conall Flaherty (vocals, flute, whistle) comes from Ardmore in Connemara, and boasts substantial performance experience: Bolger has toured with the “Celtic Legends” international stage production, as has Conall Flaherty, who also appeared in another extravaganza, “Rhythm of the Dance”; Conall’s brother Seamus, meanwhile, played with Cherish the Ladies two years ago at Celtic Connections and has been involved in other traveling shows. They bring together diverse elements in its sound, from *sean-nos* songs to classic tunes of the Irish Atlantic coast to traditional and contemporary folk songs animated by three-part harmony.

Another Celtic Thunder alum, **Paul Byrom**, will be at the center on St. Patrick’s Day (March 17, in case you might not remember) at 8 p.m. A Dublin native who recorded his first album at age 14, Byrom was an original member of Celtic Thunder. Going solo in 2010, he released the CD “This Is the Moment” and a DVD of his PBS special of the same name; his most recent album, “Thinking of Home,” reached the top of the iTunes, Amazon, and World Billboard Charts.

There will be a different sort of performance at the ICC on March 21 when **Kevin Flynn** presents his one-man play “Fear of Heights” at 8 p.m. The show is based on Flynn’s life and relationship with his tough, Irish Catholic, steelworker roots and relates the story of his family’s progress from blue-collar immigrants to “lace-curtain Irish” in the suburbs of Connecticut. Flynn, a veteran of television, stand-up comedy, and film, won awards at the HBO Aspen Comedy Festival and Boston Comedy Festival for his first two one-man shows, “Around the Kitchen Table” and “The Go for It Guy.”

Information for these events, as well as the ICC’s St. Patrick’s Day festivities, is available at irishculture.org.

• The Cabot in Beverly will present a show by **The High Kings**, the epitome of a 21st-century Irish ballad group, at Berklee Performance Center on March 7 at 8 p.m. Vocalists and musicians Finbarr Clancy, Brian Dunphy, and Darren Holden, along with other founding member Martin Furey, joined forces in 2007, their sound deriving from the classic Irish ballad style that swept into popularity during the 1950s and 60s through such bands as the Clancy Brothers and The Dubliners. The band went on to tour extensively throughout the US and Europe, record four studio albums and two live albums, and release two live DVDs, combining modern songs in the folk idiom – and even from other genres – with some of the classic ballad repertoire. Last fall, Paul O’Brien became the High Kings’ newest member.

Tickets are at etix.com/ticket/p/2583779.

• The harp/guitar duo of spouses **Máire Ní Chathasaigh** and **Chris Newman** will perform as part of Boston College’s Gaelic Roots series on March 19 at 6:30 p.m. in the Theology and Ministry Library auditorium, located on BC’s Brighton Campus off Lake Street. Since teaming up in 1987, Ní Chathasaigh and Newman have taken their blend of traditional Irish, jazz, baroque, and bluegrass, along with original compositions, far and wide while recording seven albums. Ní Chathasaigh, from a celebrated Irish music family, is widely hailed as an innovator of the Irish harp technique; English native Newman has performed throughout the UK and beyond both as a soloist, as a member of The Boys of the Lough, and with a lengthy list of collaborators ranging from jazz violin legend Stéphane Grappelli to Northumbrian



Connemara trio High Time appears at the Irish Cultural Center of New England in Canton on March 8.

Conor McCarthy photo

pipes virtuoso Kathryn Tickell to Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa.

Go to bc.edu/irish for information.

• **Máiréad Nesbitt**, the capering, cavorting violinist for Celtic Woman, will play with her trio ensemble at the Lynn Auditorium on March 15 at 5 p.m. Nesbitt comes from an impressive musical heritage, as she demonstrated on her “Devil’s Bit Session” album in 2017 that featured 13 members of her family. A former All-Ireland fiddle champion and past member of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, she studied at CIT, Cork School of Music under Cornelia Zanidache and the London Royal Academy. PBS recently announced Nesbitt will be part of a new musical special, “Celtic Heart,” premiering this year.

Tickets, information at lynnauditorium.com.

• **Leahy**, one of Canada’s most esteemed progressive folk-roots bands, will be at the City Winery of Boston on March 6 at 8 p.m., presented through the Global Arts Live series. Leahy’s members are all siblings from an Ontario family with Irish and Cape Breton ancestry – national and cultural legacies they proclaim through 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 with 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 song and instrumental compositions, as well as the influences – rock, choral, country, classical – that have inspired them.

Nostalgia and memorable music will be in the air on March 12 when the City Winery hosts, “**Too-Rye-Ay**,” a tribute to Irish punk-soul sensation Dexys Midnight Runners -- known in the US for their hit “Come On, Eileen” (No. 18 in VH1’s “100 Greatest Songs of the 1980s”) -- at 8 p.m. The show will feature members of Ted Leo & The Pharmacists, The Dambuilders, and Elk City, who will perform two sets in the wardrobe of two different Dexys era, spotlighting smash hits and deep cuts from the band’s late 1970s/early ‘80s albums and singles. “Too-Rye-Ay” organizers say it will be a fond, and enlightening, salute to a group often overlooked in discussions of Celtic-influenced pop/rock.

Go to citywinery.com/boston for tickets and other

information.

• 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.

See lindentreecoffeehouse.org for information.

• The “roots-and-branches” trio **Low Lily** plays at Readings’ Ivy Chord Coffeehouse on March 21 at 8 p.m. Flynn Cohen (guitar, mandolin, vocals), Liz Simmons (guitar, piano, vocals), and Lissa Schneckenburger (fiddle, vocals) – all of whom once lived in Greater Boston/Eastern Massachusetts, and now reside in Brattleboro – have solid backgrounds and extensive experience in Irish and other Celtic music. But their tastes and interests have long ranged beyond those traditions, and their American descendants in New England and Appalachia, to encompass contemporary folk and even pop. Low Lily released its first full-length album, “10,000 Days Like These,” in 2018.

Details at uureading.org/concerts.

• Greater Boston-based trio **Ceol Corvus** plays a free concert at the Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood on March 29 at 3 p.m. The band’s members (Emily Peterson, concertina, whistle; Steve Levy, vocals, bouzouki, mandolin, tenor banjo; Sean Smith, vocals, guitar, bouzouki, bodhran) have long been active in the local music scene. Their free-reed/fretted-string dynamic combines the spontaneity and spirit of the Irish session with latter-day influences and arrangements inspired by the modern Irish folk revival.

For information and registration, see norwoodlibrary.org/morrillcalendar.

• The JFK Library will offer an historical take on the St. Patrick’s Day season with “**Celebrate! Celtic Bells: The Irish in Boston**” on March 9 at 10:30 a.m. The story of Irish immigrants in Boston will be recounted through songs and poems of work, humor, protest, longing for home – and longing to feel at home in America. Free admission; space is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Go to jfklibrary.org for further details.

Compiled by Sean Smith

Lankum's 'The Livelong Day' highlights band's attention to those who are living close to the edge

Quartet plays Great Scott in Allston on March 5

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 assuredness in its self-deprecatingly, self-titled "folk miscreants" identity, rough around the edges and not lacking for irreverence or bold experimentation.

More importantly, "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," he says. "You 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 soundscapes with ample use of drones from squeezeboxes, strings and keyboards, and other enigmatic reverberations.



Lankum's most recent album, "The Livelong Day," has turned the spotlight on 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."

Most renditions of "Katie Cruel," an Appalachian song said to date from the American Revolution, tend to be up-tempo, highlighting the verbal intricacies in its chorus: "If I was where I would be/Then I'd be where I am not/Here I am where I must be/Where I would be, I cannot." Again, Lankum goes the opposite way, emphasizing the song as a lament from a woman whose questionable past has brought her to a sorrowful present, auguring a future that looks equally pessimistic. The band's liner notes for the song mention that its Scottish relative, "Licht Bob's Lassie," makes clear that the protagonist is a sex worker, raising the specter of exploitation only hinted at in "Katie Cruel." Once more, Peat's commanding voice sits us squarely in the midst of the narrator's despair.

The lot of women viewed as outcast also lies at the heart of "Hunting the Wren" – in this case, the unmarried mothers, harvest workers, ex-convicts,

alcoholics, prostitutes and free-thinkers "beyond the pale of respectable society" who made up the Wrens of Curragh, as described by the author Rose Doyle in her historical novel "Friends Indeed." Ian Lynch uses chilling imagery of Ireland's Wren Day as a metaphor for the Wrens of Curragh's mistreatment by the authorities and townspeople: "The wren is a small bird/Though blamed for much woe/Her form is derided/Wherever she goes."

"These women were totally villainized, and suffered greatly," says Daragh. "But they tried to form a functioning community among themselves, sharing chores and food, looking after each other's children. Again, it's an example of the history you don't hear about."

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/A day 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 A minor to C major – 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 Lullaby" – 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."

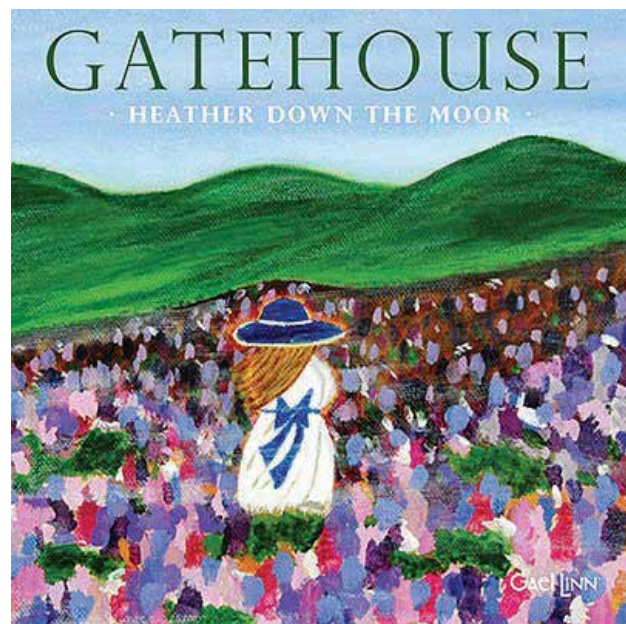
"The Pride of Petravore," meanwhile, is Lankum at its most outrageous. A traditional hornpipe, it's also known as the melody for the song – alternately called "Eileen Oge" – written by Percy French, a ballad full of comically aligned phrases about an improbable courtship. Here, the tune galumphs along to the rhythm of a bowed string bass and a thumped piano, evoking the theme from "Jaws" and the gait of Frankenstein's monster, while Ian Lynch leads 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.

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 the music. Gatehouse is oriented to the North Connaught/Roscommon tradition (which has given us, among others, Michael Coleman, Kevin Burke, Frankie Gavin and, more recently, Mossie 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 supplying 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 churn 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-type tune, Michael McCague's bouzouki alongside Jacinta's plucked guitar; another McEvoy offspring, 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 – who plays accordion on four of the tracks, including two of the songs, "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 dearly 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 can provide the proper care and attention. Her treatment of the album's two Gaelic songs, "Seán Bán" and "Mo Cheallaichín Fionn," is similarly exemplary.

The album finishes, appropriately enough, with two more John McEvoy compositions, both inspired by longstanding rituals and ancient beliefs – the

latter, "The Healing Stone," comes from the idea that water gathered in the hollows of stone possessed special virtues and healing powers. There's something delightfully elemental in that, and it's the kind of affability to be found throughout "Heather Down the Moor." [gaelinn.ie]

Mozaik, "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 Mozaik, 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 Chrysoula Kechagioglou 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, 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 accompaniment, old-timey/Appalachian drive, Eastern European rhythms and intervals – sometimes intertwining, other times set off against one another, but always holding together the vision of commonalities in cultures and music traditions.

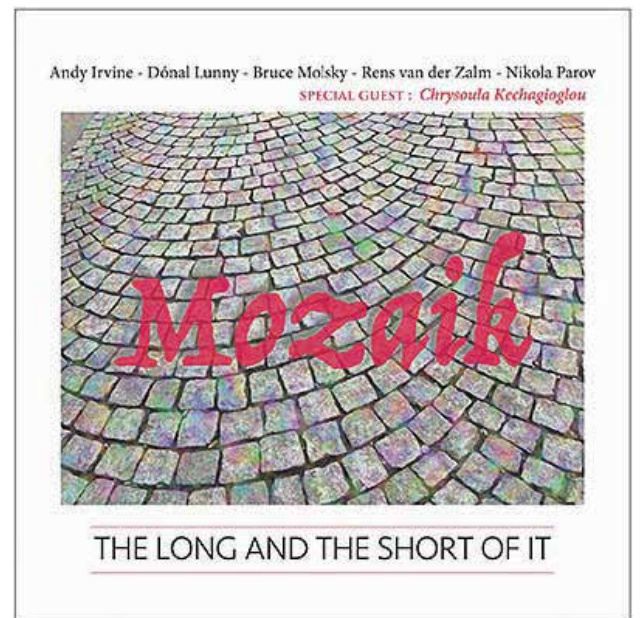
In addition to fine renditions of traditional American songs "My Little Carpenter" and "Old Virginia," Molsky holds forth on a pair of fiddle tunes, "The Black Hills Waltz" and "The Red Steer," the latter at times resembling that great Irish reel "The Foxhunter's." Irvine offers up a rather graphic whaling song from England, "The Coast of Peru," the start of which features a Parov-van der Zalm duet on whistles that has a South American tint to it.

Irvine's excellent songwriting is spotlighted here, too, with one of his trademark historical biographies, this time of the enigmatic, tragic Harry Houdini – who, as Irvine relates, for all his incredible feats most desired to escape from "the chains of eternity." There's also another in his series of memoirs from his youthful travels in Eastern Europe, "As Good As It Gets." The song was on the album he recorded in 2017 as part of Usher's Island (with Lunny, John Doyle, Michael McGoldrick and Paddy Glackin), but this was its earlier incarnation. It is particularly appropriate to the Mozaik repertoire, since this period of Irvine's life was so integral to his involvement with Balkan/Eastern European music. And above all, it's just a brilliant song – fun, playful, self-deprecating, a joyful reminiscence of being a young Irishman in the midst of overwhelming sensual wonders.

But the real gem is "Rainbow 'Mid the Willows," Irvine's take on an Ozark ballad sung by the legendary Arkansas singer Almeda Riddle – he wrote a couple of new verses and adapted a melody by UK musician Chris Algar. It's a powerful tale of forbidden romance, lyrics full of intense, vivid emotions, yet Irvine and the band treat the song with a gentle poignancy.

Which sets the stage for the next track, Kechagioglou's outstanding performance of "The Song of the Nightingale," a traditional song from Thrace (translated, for the most part, into English) that presents as a parable on wealth and poverty. The delicacy and sensitivity of the arrangement complements Kechagioglou's warm, engaging vocals. She's also featured on "Like a Soft Breeze," a setting of a poem by Napoleon Lapathiotis, duets with Molsky on "My Little Carpenter" and – in an indication of the band's respect for her – does an *a cappella* solo to close out the album: "Neratzoula," a song passed along to Kechagioglou by her grandmother who as a young woman, Kechagioglou writes in the liner notes, "was rough, ran faster than anybody else, and had the voice of an angel."

However one might laud Kechagioglou, Irvine and Molsky on "The Long and the Short of It," the artistry of Lunny, Parov and van der Zalm should not be overlooked. Like its namesake art form, Mozaik can be admired for both its carefully arranged and assembled individual pieces and the greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts picture it produces. [andyirvine.com/disc/Mozaik-disc-new.html]



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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 Eamon O'Leary – Irish-born 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-pianist 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, and 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.

"Jefferson and Eamon are just riveting, with those vocal harmonies and close, curling strings around them," says O'Donovan. "There's an authenticity about them in terms of 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),



Celtic Sojourn maestro Brian O'Donovan.

WGBH photo

gospel, bluegrass, and swing, but has never strayed 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-nos 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-nos workshops. Her two recordings showcase her wide-ranging musical interests: from covers of Pee Wee King and Redd Stewart's "The Tennessee Waltz" and Hank Williams's "You Win Again" to traditional and contemporary Irish songs such as "An Leann Si (The Fairy Child)," Sigerson Clifford's "Boys Of Barr Na Sráide" 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, ceilis, or concerts. Their fiddling, as spotlighted in their 2015 album "Life Is All Checkered," represents what they call "the American style of Irish music": an amalgam of the styles and influences that developed over time in places like Boston, New York City, Chicago, and wherever else strong Irish music communities have thrived – offshoots of the regional traditions that originated in Ireland, but also dependent on the individual player who's playing it.

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 Burren 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 more recently showcased his talents on piano in a trio with fiddler Caitlin Finley 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 Christmas Celtic Sojourn" production, studied at the Smith-Houlihan Irish Dance Academy of Norwood and was the World Irish Step Dancing Champion in 2004 – the youngest American female ever to win the world title at that time; she went on to garner two more gold world medals in 2005 and 2009. Moving to New York City, Smith-Wallace expanded her portfolio to include ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop, and musical dance theater. Her stage credits include "West Side Story," "Peter Pan," "A Chorus Line," "Guys and Dolls" and "Pippin." She also was the female lead dancer on the national tour of "Rockin' Road to Dublin," a nationally touring Irish-rock fusion show.

McCormack, who started dancing at the age of five for the O'Shea-Chaplin Academy of Irish Dance in Boston, has an equally impressive record as a competitive dancer: He placed in the top five at multiple national and international competitions, including first at the All-Ireland Championships and the World Championships in ceili/figure dancing. He started his professional career with Michael Flatley's "Lord of the Dance," and after performing in London's West End and on Broadway, he landed a coveted role in "Riverdance" in 2017.

"Ashley was a pleasure to work with in 'Christmas Celtic Sojourn,' 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 arrangements.

"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



Solas co-founder Seamus Egan has launched ‘Early Bright,’ his first solo album after a 20-year hiatus.

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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lowing year, he released his first solo album, "When Juniper Sleeps," which featured six of his compositions (the title track also appeared in "Brothers McMullen"). That was a pretty long time ago, and one might get the idea that Egan was building up 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 away in terms of origin, he says, most took shape over these past few years since he relocated to Vermont. But the metaphorical soil in which these tunes grew has been nourished and enriched far longer, 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," says Egan. "What ends up 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 just follow it to 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 – seeping 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 Juana 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 re-

cording 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."

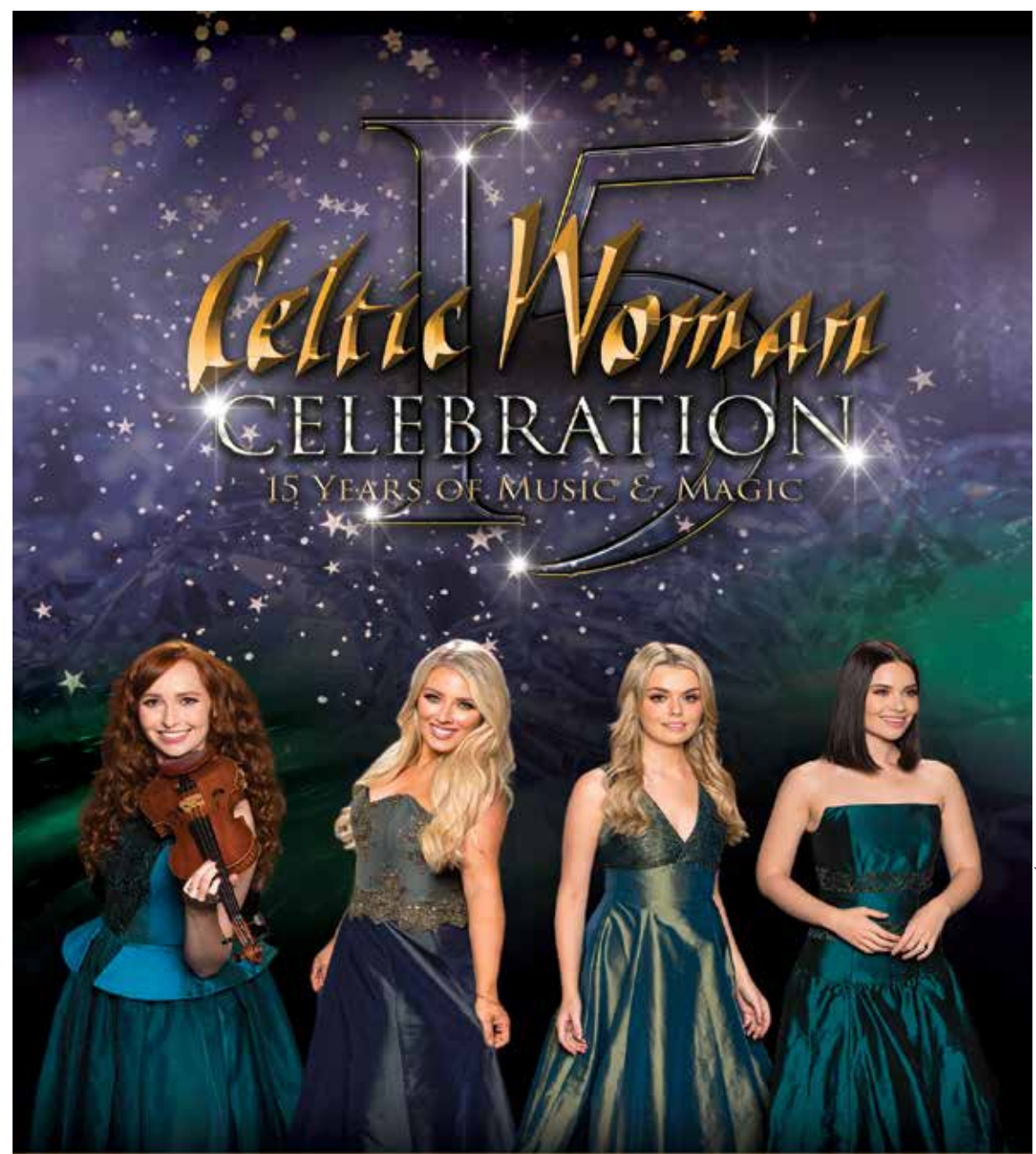
Being part of "Sojourn" – first as performer, along with Solas, and then also as music director – has been a revelation, Egan notes. "You get to know, and work with, a ton of great musicians –sometimes people you might not

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 seamuseganproject.com.



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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



Boston Mayor Marty Walsh spoke to a gathering of some 600 at the dedication of the Deer Island Irish Memorial.

Photo courtesy Bill Brett

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, 6; 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



“Ejection of Irish Tenantry”, Illustrated London News.,



“The Day After the Ejection”, Illustrated London News.

Courtesy , Getty Images

Immigration center rolls out its new brand: ‘Rian’

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 – Rian Immigrant Center – on Feb. 26.

Pronounced “Ree-Ann, the word means “path” in the Irish language.

Rian’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 Feast of St. Patrick is 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, Milchu - 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 to him to return to that country as a Christian missionary. As a result, he went to France, some say, studied 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 parts of the U.K. in the wake of Britain's divisive exit from the European Union. He also has vowed to boost regions outside the economically dominant southeast of England. He has mentioned the bridge idea several times, and claimed it would "only cost about 15 billion pounds" (\$20 billion).

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 bullets 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.

McKee was a increasingly influential journalist who had written powerfully about growing up gay in Northern Ireland and the struggles of the generation of "cease-fire babies" raised after the 1998 Good Friday peace accord. (AP)



Supporters of Paul McIntyre protest outside Londonderry Magistrates' Court, where he is appearing charged with the murder of journalist Lyra McKee, in Derry on Feb. 13, 2020. Brian Lawless/PA via 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?

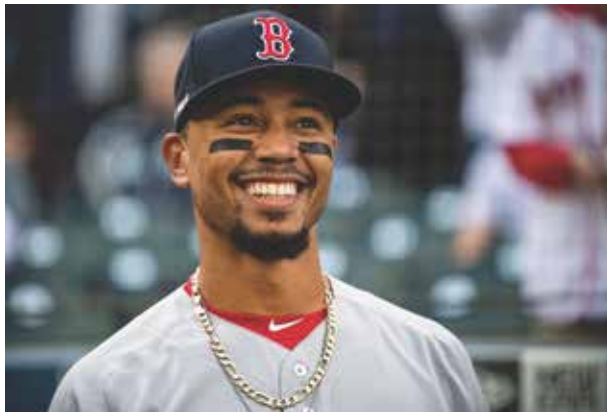
The Red Sox loss of Mookie Betts might not be the mean end of the world.

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 dealt the best lefthander in baseball, Randy Johnson, at the trading deadline rather than lose him through free agency. In 2000, without Johnson, they made the playoffs as a wild card, and in 2001, without both Johnson and A-Rod, they set the all-time record for wins. Those are the only two times in their entire history that the Mariners have appeared in the post-season.

And what of that huge contract A-Rod signed with the Rangers? After three seasons Texas decided it was too rich for their blood and started actively shopping him around. The first takers were none other than the Red Sox. They put together a package of deals in



Mookie Betts now playing on the other coast.

which Rodriguez agreed to restructure his contract, but the players union stepped in and disallowed the arrangement, claiming that it amounted to a pay cut, so the deal was dead. The Yankees then swooped in and scooped up A-Rod, complete with his baggage of PEDs and untruths that soon came to light. Rodriguez ended up as a terrible (and terribly expensive) distraction to the Yankees, and with his own reputation in tatters. Boy, did the Sox dodge a bullet on that one.

The point is that in the aftermath of the Seattle Mariners letting Alex Rodriguez walk, they thrived. The same could happen with the Red Sox in the wake of the Mookie deal; we hope, and we pray.

Exhibit B in our whistling tour is provided courtesy of my pal Tim Samway, a life-long Red Sox devotee and student of the team’s history, which I guess explains his emotional scar tissue. Tim reminded me the other day of another terrific young outfielder the Red Sox 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 Sox and had already earned the reputation of one of the greatest defensive outfielders of all time. He had just turned 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 - that is to say, she - changed him. Not only did his attitude toward Catholics change, but also, when Larry Doby became the first black player in the American League only a few months after Jackie Robinson broke in with the Brooklyn Dodgers, his personal coach and biggest booster was none other than former KKK member Tris Speaker.

In his first season with the Indians, 1916, Speaker led the American League in batting (.386), hits, doubles, and slugging percentage. But the Red Sox repeated as World Series champions. So there.

The darn graveyard is pretty big and plenty scary, but I’m still whistlin’ on my way past it. And I’m thinking that maybe, just maybe, losing Mookie Betts isn’t the end of the world after all. It sure feels like it is, though, doesn’t it?

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Online at BostonIrish.com

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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 and their 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,

Enniscoe House
Castlehill, Ballina, Co Mayo
e: mail@enniscoe.com
w: enniscoe.com

but my mother's from this area. She 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."



Enniscoe House's Susan Kellette (left) is the 12th generation owner of the property. She's pictured with her son DJ and his wife Colette, whose year old daughter Fearn represents the 14th generation of the family.

Cashel House, located in Connemara between Roundstone and Clifden.

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 DeGaulle 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 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 that 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 house or owned the property has a green finger-keen gardener in them. And back in those days, there were very little restrictions on importing and exporting plants. So the gentleman used to do a lot of dealings internationally, especially with India and Asia, and he would bring in exotic plants to see what would grow in Ireland because he knew that the climate on the west coast with the Gulf Stream was a lot warmer than the rest of Ireland. So a lot of what he brought in never made it, but a good few plants did. So we have quite a few rare plants growing here simply

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.



because he kept trying to see what he would be able to get to grow.

“He built an orchard out to the left hand side of the property and put in apple trees, plum trees, that sort of thing. 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
Cashel, Connemara, Co Galway
e: sales@cashelhouse.ie
w: cashelhouse.ie
t: +353 (095) 31001

Brian tells about the roots of the Ireland Blue Book:

“The Blue Book Association, which we’re a founding member of, is a very well-known Irish hotels association. It was one of the first and it would still be ranked as the best in Ireland. It’s very selective on the hotels and properties that can be chosen to be an individual property. That’s the whole ethos really of the association: to have similar properties of a similar standard. The people can kind of have confidence in when they’re making the bookings of the reservations.

“With the advent of booking.com and all of the online travel agencies, people have an awful lot more choice when they’re traveling in Ireland and they can now make last-minute bookings, that sort of thing. But we find that when most people travel around Ireland, they have a much better informed idea of where to go.

“The first time people come to Ireland, they generally cover the main key areas – focal points like the Cliffs of Moher or the Book of Kells. But after they’ve been here and they’ve toured, the second time they come back, they zone in on certain areas of where they want to be. And that’s where Connemara and the west of Ireland does very well, because people would want to go to the more rural, quieter areas, areas that have not been changed that much from tourism. People on their second and third visits generally graduate to do so, and we get more seasoned travelers, if you will.



“We noticed that people were coming to us from other hotels and we were hearing the same names, the same locations several times. And when we were talking to them, we would make advanced bookings. So somebody would arrive to us and they’d say, ‘Okay, we’re going to go on a bit further north. Can you recommend somewhere?’ And the hotels to the south of us were being asked the same questions and we always wanted to recommend a property similar to ourselves.

“So one of the directors in Failte Ireland at the time said, ‘You know, you guys should get together and form an association ‘cause you’re constantly dealing with yourselves.’ And we looked at it from a marketing point of view that it would be a very good thing for us to do ... There were 11 properties starting off and we were all on that same cycle that tourists used to do. And probably one of the best ways to form an association is when you’re supplying a service for a demand that is there and it’s growing. I believe there are over 50 properties within the Blue Book at the moment. And again, all on that circle route, the main circle group or key focal points.”

For more information about the Blue Book Association, see Irelands-blue-book.ie.

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



Poul nabrone Dolmen in the Burren is a must see when you're in Co. Clare.

Judy Enright photo

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.

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Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare are Ireland's top attraction.

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



Looking for active adventure while you're in Ireland? The country offers so many water sports and other activities like cycling, hill walking and much more.



Stop into almost any pub anywhere in Ireland and listen to great traditional music.

Judy Enright photos

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.

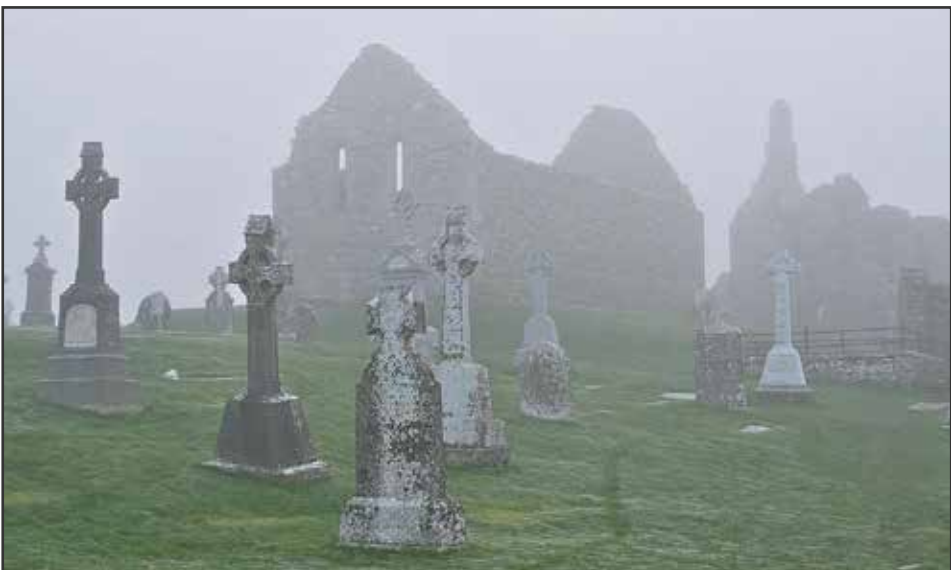
"This costly program, for birds that are neither "keystone" for their habitat nor threatened with planetary loss, seemed a fair example of the challenge to conservation in choosing which species to save.

"The column brought pertinent comment from Feargal Ó 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 – 'breedingskylark,' lists Ó 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 Ó Cuinneagáin's farm is showpiece, insists that 'the plan is not a step back in time' but a way



Visit one of many ancient monasteries like Clonmacnoise in Co. Offaly.

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 Ghiollaphadraig's program March 22-24 at beautiful Lough Inagh Lodge Hotel in Connemara, Co. Galway.

Check-in is Sun., the 22d, 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.

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Irish Honors luncheon set for Friday, Oct. 30



The 11th annual Boston Irish Honors luncheon – set for Friday, Oct. 30, 2020, at the Seaport Boston Hotel – seeks nominees for what has become the year's premier celebration of excellence in our Boston Irish community. Each year, the Boston Irish Honors convenes hundreds of leaders in business, politics, philanthropy, and the arts to celebrate individuals and families who have distinguished themselves and, in doing so, exemplify the very best of our heritage here and in Ireland.

The event was conceived by the Forry family, which founded Boston Neighborhood News, Inc., the privately owned and operated media company that has been telling the stories of Boston's Irish since 1990 through the Boston Irish Reporter newspaper and its successor publication, Boston Irish.

"Our honorees represent the best qualities of the Irish: Devotion to our fellow Bostonians; a sense of compassion for all people no matter their place of birth or station in life; and a deep connection to our common ancestral Irish homeland," said Ed Forry,

co-founder of the event and publisher of BostonIrish. "In their personal and professional lives, our honorees inspire us and our fellow citizens with their dedication to our country, to our Commonwealth, and to the neediest among us,"

This year's luncheon committee and the slate of awardees is still in formation. But we welcome nominations from our readers through Fri., May 29. Nominees may be made in three categories: business, philanthropy, and community leadership. You are invited to send nominations by email to: honors@bostonirish.com or by US Postal mail to: Boston Irish Honors, 150 Mt Vernon St, Suite 560, Dorchester, MA, 02125.

Last year's honorees included James M. Carmody, the family of Kathleen & John Drew, and Grace Cotter Regan. Past honorees have included Mayor Martin Walsh, Rev. Richard "Doc" Conway, Jim & Mary (Cahill) Judge, Senator Paul G Kirk Jr, US Sen. Ed Markey, Richard Neal, Brendan & Greg Feeney, and the Brett family.

Ambassador Burns will speak at Charitable Irish Society dinner

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 keynotespeaker 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.

Prior to that, he served for 27 years in the US State Department representing the country's interests in Egypt, Israel, Africa and Greece. He served as US Ambassador to NATO from 2001 to 2005, and subsequently as the Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, the third highest position within the State Department.

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.



Amb. Burns

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Dorchester Brewing Co. opens rooftop expansion

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



Gathering for a good time at Dorchester Brewing Co.

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.

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