

Boston Irish

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Spring 2023

BostonIrish.com

A Time to March



Celebrating on Broadway in 2017. This year's South Boston Evacuation Day/St. Patrick's Day parade is on Sun., March 19.

Chris Lovett photo

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The month when connections abound

By ED FORRY
BOSTON IRISH PUBLISHER

The month of Saint Patrick is here at last. Boston's Irish stay connected with many events throughout the year, at the Irish Cultural Centre, the Irish Pastoral Centre, the Rian Center for Immigrants, and gatherings at pubs and parishes, where we celebrate and sustain the Irish heritage. This month, there are many more places where celebrations of Irish culture are on tap. See Sean Smith's Boston comprehensive Irish Arts Calendar listings on Pages 18 and 19.



Phil Coulter entertains at the City of Derry Festival last fall.

Bostonians are 3,000 miles away and five hours behind our ancestral island, but the distances of place and time are continually shortened by new ways to keep in contact with Ireland. As the cost of telephonic connections have become affordable, many stay in touch with family via traditional phone calls and social media video chats. The computer network Skype offers rates of less than two cents a minute, and subscribers can call phones in Ireland for 400 minutes a month for \$6.99. T-Mobile offers unlimited phone calls for \$15, and other cellphone carriers offer similar prices.

Irish broadcasts can be tuned in on computers and smartphones. The daily TV newscasts are live-streamed via the RTÉ Player app, and 24-hour radio broadcasts can be heard live on the RTÉ Radio app.

One bountiful source of Ireland-produced content is the video service YouTube. I recently enjoyed a stirring Phil Coulter video recorded last October at the 2022 City of Derry International Festival. In an outdoor setting before thousands of that city's residents, Coulter performed his hauntingly beautiful anthem, "The Town I Love So Well." The song, poignant and beautiful, is even more powerful with the sight and sound of the teary-eyed townspeople joining the chorus:

"With their tanks and their guns, oh my God what have they done To the town I loved so well ...

For what's done is done and what's won is won And what's lost is lost and gone forever I can only pray for a bright, brand, new day In the town I loved so well."

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Joe Biden's finest hour



President Biden and Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv February 19. *White House photo*

as a weapon of war." But at the same time, he sent a clear message that the US and our European allies "do not seek to control or destroy Russia. The West was not plotting to attack Russia," he said. "This war was never a necessity. It's a tragedy. President Putin chose this war."

It was - to date - our president's finest hour in what has already been an impressive tenure in office. It may be too much to hope that Biden's triumphant trip might galvanize all Americans to back up a commander-in-chief who has so effectively rallied the western world to Ukraine's side. But perhaps members of his own party, at the very least, will see in their standard bearer a leader to admire and support.

Those who like to make sport of the president's speech-making and mannerisms by insinuating that he is somehow not up to his job, were dealt a large dose of reality this week. His bold visit - including a grueling, clandestine 20-hour round-trip train ride through a war zone and an eloquent, historic address a day later - exposes those critiques for what they are: an ageist slander against a good man who'll one day be regarded as a truly great president.

- Bill Forry

Off the Bench

So much violence, so many guns, with no solution in sight. How sad!

By JAMES W. DOLAN
REPORTER COLUMNIST

The deplorable proliferation of firearms in this country is beyond resolution. The cat is out of the bag, Pandora's box has been opened, and the fat lady has sung. For years now we have witnessed mass killings, and after each event, the powers that be vow to tighten restrictions on the more than 300 million guns in the country, but it's too late for background checks, red flag laws and the like to have a significant impact.

There are just too many guns and anyone who wants one can get one, if not legally then illegally. The problem is just too immense to expect that half-way measures will have any appreciable effect. If you can't buy or steal a gun, you can make one. The myth that guns make us safer is nonsense. Look at the statistics of mass shootings here compared to other countries. How we must look to the rest of the world; a "shining city on a hill" set against a background of murder and mayhem.

The "founding fathers" could never have anticipated the Second Amendment, as absurdly interpreted, would become the linchpin in the destruction of a nation founded on "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Had they known how destructive we would become, they would have added the word "grief." How violent a society we are. We consume it on television and the movies. Despite our contrived efforts to condemn and control it, we pause, shake our heads, and move on until the next time.

Guns are instruments of death and power. Larger weapons represent more power and more deaths. Nations deplore war but rivals threaten each other with

better and more lethal weapons. War is mass murder. Young people, many of whom don't understand why, kill each other on a massive scale. Innocent civilians are murdered by the thousands in bombing raids. For what? Nations resort to violence in defense of some real or imagined vital interest. Is it any wonder that armed individuals will do the same when reacting to some real or imagined provocation?

Sure, mental health issues, anger, and revenge all contribute to abusive behavior and we should strengthen efforts to address such problems before they turn violent. However, we cannot overlook guns, the most effective (and now readily available) instrument of death. How do we as a nation reverse course and severely restrict the possession of firearms? Given our history, are we so obsessed with a right to bear arms that we cannot change? Is it a sensible balancing of interests to tolerate mass mayhem so long as we, too, can be armed?

Some argue that sick or misguided people, not guns, are the problem. I disagree; as flawed human beings, we will always have the sick, misguided, and angry among us. The problem of gun violence cannot be alleviated by monitoring those with health or anger management issues. With guns so plentiful, they will always find a way to get one unless we do away with the Second Amendment as now interpreted. I doubt that will happen, and as a result, we are likely to go on lamenting the deaths of innocents.

How sad! We should be better than this.

James W. Dolan is a retired Dorchester District Court judge who now practices law.

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Happening at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum



**Free
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Families**

Celtic Bells

The Irish in Boston

Saturday, March 11, 2023

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

In honor of St. Patrick's Day, come listen to the story of Irish immigrants in Boston. Celtic Bells weaves in songs and poems of work, humor, protest, longing for home, and longing to feel at home in America. Enjoy the lively music of the fiddle, bodhran (Irish drum), banjo, flute, guitar, and bagpipes.

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.

With generous support from the Martin Richard Foundation and the Mass Cultural Council.



Columbia Point, Boston ★ 617-514-1600 ★ www.jfklibrary.org

Children 12 and under are always free. Additional student, military, senior and EBT discounts available. General admission to the Museum is \$18.

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JOIN US FOR A MORNING
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 2023

St. Patrick's Day Celebration

MARCH 17, 2023 | 8AM

NEW VENUE InterContinental Boston
510 Atlantic Avenue

Join the Irish American Partnership on this most Irish of days, and celebrate St. Patrick with keynote speaker by a member of the Irish Government, special guest appearances, music, and messages of thanks.

Register: www.irishap.org/events

Honoring our heritage - Investing in Ireland's future.



IRISH AMERICAN
PARTNERSHIP

St. Patrick's Day Festival @ The ICC

LIVE MUSIC, SONG, VENDORS & IRISH DANCE ALL DAY!

FRIDAY, MARCH 17TH, 2023

MUSIC & ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

11:00AM - VENDORS TENT & DOORS OPEN

11:00AM - PATRICK BOWLING, NATHAN GOURLEY, & ADAM HENDEY.

12:30PM - HEAVEY QUINN ACADEMY OF IRISH DANCE.

1:00PM - MEET LOU - GRANNY NANCY'S CUP OF TEA.

2:00PM - JOEY ABARTA, NATHAN GOURLEY, COLM GANNON, & ADAM HENDEY.

3:30PM - THE JACKIE O'RILEY SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCE

4:00PM - GREENE O'LEARY ACADEMY OF IRISH DANCE

4:30PM - MEET LOU - GRANNY NANCY'S CUP OF TEA - IN THE TENT.

5:00PM - OPEN TRAD SESSION LED BY NIAMH HEALY, AOIFE GRIFFIN & ADAM HENDEY.

5:30PM - THE O'SHEA CHAPLIN SCHOOL OF IRISH DANCING

7:00PM - THE HARNEY PENDER KEADY ACADEMY OF IRISH DANCE

7:00PM - SKEAF BRIDGE LIVE UNTIL 10PM!

8:00PM - GREEN ROAD - SEPERATE TICKETS

VENDORS LIST

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Join the Irish Cultural Centre for an evening of Irish Music, Song & Dance as we celebrate St. Patrick's Day and honor Declan Houton for his philanthropic work in the Greater Boston region.

Thursday March 2nd, 2023.
6pm to 8:30pm
Boston College Club,
100 Federal St., Boston, MA.

Register Online Today!
Tickets: \$75 includes an
annual silver level membership
to the Irish Cultural Centre.

GREEN ROAD

Friday, March 17th, 2023 | 8pm

& Irish Soprano
Clodagh Kinsella

Advance Purchase Tickets
 General Admission: \$40
 Members Admission: \$35
 Children 12 to 18 Years Old: \$10
 Children U12 | Free

Ceili with Comhaltas

Saturday,
March 11, 2023
2-5pm.
\$15 admission
All Welcome!

Joe Glynn in the ICC Pub at 5pm



RETURN OF THE BOSTON IRISH FESTIVAL

JUNE 17th, 2023

Nathan Carter - Fiddler
 Chloe Agnew - David Healy
 Derek Warfield And The Young Wolfetones - Irish Goods Vendors
 Irish Step Dancers - Irish Food
 Irish Drinks & More!

tickets on sale soon!

Legendary Irish hospitality helped turn anxiety into delight

In the most recent edition of Boston Irish Magazine, Associate Publisher Travel Editor Maureen Forry-Sorrell took up an issue that many families face when traveling: How to ensure that disability needs will be met along the way. Using her own family's experiences on a trip to Ireland with a special-needs child, she detailed in two chapters how attention to detail in all respects on their flight from Boston to Dublin proved essential to a smooth landing. What follows is her follow-up report on their mostly positive time in Ireland that concludes with this summary: "The sheer number of strangers who offered a helping hand was a testament to the overwhelming kindness of the people of Ireland."

Part 3

Dublin Airport

Our arrival in the early morning hours in Dublin felt like a sort of homecoming. The last time I had set foot on Irish soil was 2008, and the warm greeting we received by the Immigration officers was as good as a full hug. Chatting amicably while they reviewed our papers, we were waved through in about 10 minutes time.

We were fortunate to have had the help of Tourism Ireland in securing a vehicle for hire. Our Peugeot was roomy and had just enough room for everything – our luggage as well as Lianna's wheelchair.

A great tip for families traveling with children: Dublin Airport has a service called The Stork Exchange, which rents out car seats and boosters. Not only do they meet you at your car with your reserved seat (you need to reserve as far out from your trip as possible), but they also install it for you. To forestall the daunting experience of rolling off a plane at 8 a.m., bleary eyed after a sleepless flight, wrangling children and luggage, and having to struggle to set up a safety seat to EU specifications, we were very happy to pay the extremely reasonable fee for the Stork Exchange to handle it instead. At this time, Dublin Airport is the only airport in the country to offer the service, but I'm told they are exploring ways to expand it to Shannon Airport as well.

Not enough time for Dublin

Our hotel, another accommodation suggested to us by Tourism Ireland, was Camden Court in Dublin City Center. Within easy walking distance to Grafton St. and St. Stephen's Green, the hotel is also steps away from the Luas tram. Our biggest regret about Dublin was only planning a two-day stay. We walked around Grafton St, enjoyed the buskers, took a River Liffey cruise, and met up with family, who brought us to a well-appointed playground in Stephen's Green.

The best meal of our trip was prepared by Spitalfields Pub and Restaurant. This cozy, two-story pub in the Coombe district of Dublin is geared toward adults (the website notes its unsuitability for children under 16), and the experience left us raving. The manager, Declan Maxwell, pointed out to us the positive



Teach Nan Phaidi, the beautiful and delicious cafe at the base of Dun Aengus on Inishmore. Aaron Sorrell photos

Michelin review the restaurant posts in the window, and it is well-earned. Creative, fresh, sophisticated, and swanky, Spitalfields tops our list of out-of-the-way food destinations while in Dublin.

For a more family-friendly meal, Milano on Dawson St. had great pizza in a lively atmosphere. There were steps leading up to the restaurant (which we found to be the case throughout the trip) so a staff member helped carry Lianna's wheelchair to the top.

Saying "farewell" to Dublin, we climbed into the Peugeot and headed west, through Co. Limerick into Co. Clare.

Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

A first-stop destination for many travelers arriving in Shannon, Bunratty Folk Park is a fascinating look into Ireland's medieval past. A well-appointed castle (Note: the castle itself is in no way wheelchair accessible) and the surrounding folk park gave us a chance to stretch our legs after the long ride from Dublin. Arriving late in the day, we found the park nearly empty, save for the staff members getting ready for the evening's interactive banquet. Meandering in and out of various cottages and shops, followed by time in a wonderfully accessible playground made for a great, disability-family-friendly afternoon. Don't

forget to visit the farm animals and the fairy trail!

Doolin Ferry

Now that the movie "Banshees of Inisherin" has taken the world by storm, I'm going to predict that the ferry companies to the Aran Islands are going to see quite a windfall, and for good reason. Doolin Ferry Co. (doolinferry.com), known as the Gateway to the Cliffs of Moher and Aran Islands, operates out of Doolin, quite close to the town of Ennis, and its picturesque and colorful pastel village has become a famous site for photographers, both amateur and professional.

The overnight trip we planned to Inishmore was, sadly, thwarted by rough seas, and we were only granted passage to the island for the day. Though we were disappointed that our "glamping" adventure (aranglamping.ie) had fallen through, the Doolin Ferry staff very kindly offered us a sea-side tour of the Cliffs of Moher when we returned from our adventure on the island. The boat, we were happy to learn, was wheelchair accessible, though we decided to leave our chair on the mainland for a few short hours.

Our original plan for Inishmore was to rent bicycles with a child-sized buggy for Lianna to ride in, but since our overnight plans were curtailed, we opted instead for the ubiquitous trap and pony ride to Dun



The Forry-Sorrells. From bottom left: Aaron, Maureen, Nate and Lianna.



Doolin Ferry Co. is a great way to access not only all the Aran Islands, but a fascinating sea-view vantage point of the Cliffs of Moher.



The matriarch of the pack at Caherconnell Sheepdog Demonstrations anxiously awaits her turn to herd the flock.

Aengus. Our guide, Gerry, and his horse Jack, took us on a picture-perfect and leisurely trek along the coast. We decided against the trail walk to the top of Dun Aengus due to its difficulty for Lianna, but had a delicious lunch at Teach Nan Phaidi (facebook.com/profile.php?id=100050441933170), followed by a shopping spree at the Aran Sweater Market (aran.com) that was more than enough. 10/10, a perfect day on Inishmore.

Shortly after arriving back to the dock in Doolin, we set off again by sea for the Cliffs of Moher Tour. Doolin Ferries offers this lesser-known vantage point of the most popular tourist attraction in Ireland, which features a guided tour of the history and geology of the Cliffs. The boat featured both climate-controlled cabins as well as an outside deck, along with disability accessible seating.

**Caherconnell Stone Fort
in Co. Clare: A day for the dogs**

On initial consideration, one might see an attraction like Caherconnell Stone Fort as perhaps just another military post similar to Dun Aengus or any other of the many bronze age remnants dotting the Irish landscape. We were delighted to learn that Caherconnell offers so much more: In addition to an in-depth tour of their privately owned stone fort, they offer 3 demonstrations each day of their gorgeous Border Collies shepherding a large flock of sheep. Sounds a bit different for a vacation activity, doesn't it? But for my canine-loving family (adults and kids included), it was a marvelous and entertaining way to spend an afternoon.

Not far from Doolin, Caherconnell is a bit of a drive on local roads and the signs leading you to the fort are borderline "blink and you might miss it." Luckily, our kids in the back seats caught sight of the Border Collie signs before we could and pointed us in the right direction.

I wasn't sure that the kids would care much about the ring fort, especially considering the fact that we dropped into the gift shop prior to the tour, which is normally a surefire way to distract my souvenir-grabby children.

My 11-year-old, Nate, was rapt as our entertaining and knowledgeable guide brought us around the property, pointing out the various types of walls and what is believed to have been A Day in the Life of an average Bronze Age family. Complete with artifacts and excavation sites, it was a fascinating glimpse into a history of the land.

Accessibility-wise, the ring fort itself is tricky. The paths leading us around the grounds were stone chips and were kept very tidy. However, walking into the fort itself wouldn't be possible for wheelchair users, or anyone who wouldn't be steady on their feet. We were able to bring Lianna in with us as she's still light enough to lift over rough spots.

In all honesty, it was the promise of sheepdogs that brought us to the middle of the Burren on the windy and wild day we visited in October. We were expecting a fairly entertaining show but were not prepared for just how enjoyable and funny the demonstration was.

Witnessing the delicate dance between the dogs' natural instincts and their humans' commands was impressive and, at times, hilarious. Jess, the young pup of the group, was a favorite of ours. She certainly has the drive to be a shepherd for the flock someday but hasn't yet got her attention span in place.

Members of the group were given the opportunity to "drive" the dogs, shouting commands and moving the flock this way and that. It was a very welcome change from dealing with our family dog, who regards our instructions as mere suggestions.

For those among us who weren't prepared for the chilly wind, there was a lovely little cafe with an assortment of yummy goodies, lattes, teas, and hot chocolate where we grabbed a bunch of treats before hitting the road to Galway.

The Galmont in Galway

The entire family was enchanted with our hotel choice, the swank and modern Galmont Hotel and Spa. A short walk from Eyre Square, the location was great, though the sidewalks in Galway City can be too narrow to accommodate a wheelchair



A picture-perfect sunny day on Inishmore.

against oncoming foot traffic. The children loved the energy of Galway – the buskers, the shopping, and the McDonald's on Shop Street.

The medieval city is very difficult to navigate with a wheelchair, but, as we found along every stop in Ireland, there was always a kind stranger, or employee, more than willing to offer a hand of assistance.

Dough Bros, the famous pizza shop on Middle St., is worth the hype. It's touted as the #1 pizza in Ireland, #16 in Europe, and #37 in the WORLD, so we waited in line for quite a little while to sample the pies in this joint and then wished we could have brought some back with us to Boston. It's one more incentive to spend more than 24 hours in Galway on our next visit.

Another (great) note about Ireland and allergies. Nearly every restaurant posted the top allergens used on their menu, so we were able to reference from the window whether any given establishment was a fit for us. This is a handy accommodation that the US should adopt (our family has more than 8 allergies among us).

As anyone living with a mobile disability understands, the world is decidedly unaccommodating, whether it's a trip to the local grocery store, or a trip across the Atlantic. While we encountered our fair share of difficulties in Ireland and had to forego certain activities like castles and long hikes, we were happy to find that the legendary Irish hospitality was often enough to make our visit a pleasant experience. The sheer number of strangers who offered a helping hand was a testament to the overwhelming kindness of the people of Ireland. We will be back!

Of special note: I must compliment Delta Airlines for being more than accommodating to our special needs. Not only were we met in the airport by agents dedicated to navigating both Logan and the airport in Dublin, but the flight crews upon our aircraft were also gracious and helpful.

When my daughter experienced a seizure on the return flight from Dublin, the lead flight attendant was at our seats in a flash, summoning doctors on board and ensuring that all was okay throughout the flight. We were then met at the gate by Nancy Cohn, Delta's



Back in Boston - Delta's Nancy Cohn is pictured with Nate Sorrell, Maureen Forry-Sorrell and Lianna Sorrell.

Boston Customer Engagement Lead, who had been alerted of our situation ahead of time and welcomed us back home with open arms and treats for the kids.

Postscript

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.
Seamus Heaney

Tourism Ireland introduces Belfast Music Showcase to Boston-area travel reps

When Belfast was designated as a UNESCO City of Music, the well-known musician Gary Lightbody of Snow Patrol said, "Belfast heart beats verbally with music, it is in our DNA."

Tourism Ireland brought a group of performers from Northern Ireland to Boston on Tues., Feb. 21, for an evening of music at Boston's Langham Hotel, where Executive Vice President Allison Metcalf welcomed an audience of local travel trade representatives.

"We are delighted to have this special delegation from Northern Ireland here," she said. They "have a message to share about the unique nature of what visitors can expect when they visit Belfast. As well as the warmest of welcomes, they will find a city brimming with culture and ready to entertain you."

"From Titanic Belfast to Cave Hill and City Hall, and from the Cathedral Quarter to Queens University, Belfast is a proud and vibrant city with lots of great attractions to offer. It's through music that Belfast offers the greatest insight into what makes it tick. The UNESCO City of Music accolade is richly deserved, and



It's picture time at Tourism Ireland's evening of music for local travel trade representatives on Feb. 21.

has brought a fiery and creative spirit on show tonight through the artists who are here this week for a unique music showcase.

Among artists performing that night, who were introduced by

Tara Lynn O'Neill, the actress who plays the mom in TV's "The Derry Girls," were Emmy nominee Hannah Peele, the New Pagans, Andrea McGee, and Joshua Burnside, the BBC artist of the year

Winnie Ama. Belfast-based DJ & BBC broadcaster Kwame Daniels, and TI partners Adams & Butler, Historic Royal Palaces, Taste & Tour NI and Titanic Belfast were on hand for the event.

Things to do on the island of Ireland in 2023

It takes days, weeks really, to see the best of the greenest country in Europe, and trying to figure out what to do can be a bit overwhelming. So, save some time and check out this list of just 10 don't-miss things to do on your next trip to Ireland.

The Wild Atlantic Way

Certainly one of the must-see areas for awesome scenery on an Irish holiday, the Wild Atlantic Way is also an unspoiled adventure playground and full of sustainable activities. Hop between charming coastal villages and incredible national parks, while enjoying any kind of outdoor pursuit you can think of. Surf the water, ride horses on the beach, spot whales, climb mountains, do a spot of forest bathing, cycle greenways, walk through eons of history and much more.

Steal away to an island

For the ultimate in remote experiences, escape to the tranquil and idyllic Rathlin Island, lying six miles off County Antrim and just a quick ferry ride from the seaside town of Ballycastle in Northern Ireland. You will soon fully appreciate the magic of this wild, L-shaped and unspoiled island. Walk the car free roads. Cycle for miles in solitude, watch out for seals in the bay. Explore lighthouses, visit the bird sanctuary, soak up the fresh sea air, and sip a pint in the island's only pub.



Go green in an eco-destination

To keep your holiday carbon footprint to a minimum, head for the protected, moon-like and eco-friendly terrain of the Burren in County Clare, above. Along with the Cliffs of Moher, the Burren is part of a UNESCO Global Geopark, where sustainability, socially responsible, nature-based tourism, and excellent eco-travel experiences are the norm.

Stay in sustainable accommodation, eat locally sourced food and revel in any number of environmentally friendly activities and experiences.

Try an ultra-luxury hotel experience

Once home to the Guinness family, the 800 year-old Ashford Castle in Co. Mayo has long been the hotel that presidents, royals, and the famous choose for an iconic Irish experience. It has an exceptional reputation when it comes to luxury travel. Situated on a spectacular 350-acre estate, it's full of sumptuous rooms and suites, amazing interiors, antique furniture, fine fabrics and unique features at every turn, all underpinned by ambitious sustainability practices. The ultimate indulgent experience in the west of Ireland.

Explore a magical dark sky

Connect with the ancient past and experience a magical link between astronomy and archaeology at Northern Ireland's OM Dark Sky Park and Observatory. Fringed by Davagh Forest at the foot of the Sperrin Mountains in Co. Tyrone, the park is close to the Beaghmore Stones, a series of mysterious Neolithic stone circles. Explore the stories of the stones or go mountain biking by day, and stargaze away from light pollution by night.

Aer Lingus looking at largest-ever schedule over the Atlantic in '23

This year will see Aer Lingus's largest-ever transatlantic schedule, with 15 services from Dublin, including a new route to Cleveland in May and the return of Hartford on March 26.

Other schedule boosts will see routes to Boston, New York JFK, Chicago, and Washington DC operate twice daily during the peak summer season. Delta offers a daily year-round Boston/Dublin service on a wide body aircraft.

In other moves, Aer Lingus's Dublin to Seattle flight will become daily this year, Orlando moves to five times weekly, and a larger Airbus A330 will operate the LA service.

Some 28.1 million passengers traveled through Dublin Airport in 2022, with 180 180 routes available. The airport's administrators say that 99 percent of passengers are now getting through security in 30 minutes or less.

Transatlantic services are expanding to Shannon Airport with a daily service from Shannon to Chicago operated by United Airlines from May 26. That comes in addition to United's daily service between Shannon and Newark, which returns on April 8.

Source: Irishindependent.ie.

A couple is seen from behind, embracing on a grassy cliff. The man is wearing a black vest over a red shirt and jeans, while the woman is wearing a green raincoat and a grey beanie. They are looking out over a vast landscape that includes a body of water, distant hills, and a vibrant rainbow arching across the sky. The sky is filled with large, white clouds, and the overall atmosphere is romantic and scenic.


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Plumbing the myths, and realities, of an Gorta Mor, and why the whole story has for so long been ignored

“Those in power write the history, those who suffer write the songs.”

—Robbie O’Connell

Readers of BostonIrish know that the Great Hunger, an Gorta Mor, radically changed Ireland and its relationship with the world. Neither BostonIrish Magazine nor its readership would likely exist had the 1845-1852 catastrophe not occurred. But according to a team of Irish historians who have launched a new lecture series entitled “Rippling Effects of The Great Irish Famine,” teaching and research of the Great Famine has largely been omitted from Ireland’s primary, secondary, and university curricula, north and south of the border, until relatively recently.

The idea that the Famine has been a neglected subject was surprising to me. Reminders of that time are everywhere in Ireland: In Mullingar along the royal canal, a pair of bronzed children’s shoes acknowledges the thousands who jumped onto passing canal boats to escape Ireland. In Dublin, a life-size sculpture evokes the stark reality of desperation. In Co. Louth and in most counties, there are unmarked Famine graveyards, fields where the grazing of cattle or sheep is permitted but tillage is forbidden out of respect for the Famine dead. Poems, novels, and songs like the Fields of Athenry, Skibbereen, City of Chicago, and Kilkelly create space for the Great Hunger in an allegorical form rather than in the gut-wrenching details of history. The Great Famine still haunts Ireland and informs its world view, including its commitment to accept Ukrainian refugees.

The goal of the lecture series is to advance understanding of the Famine beyond the memorials, ballads, graveyards, and oral history by submitting the event to rigorous historical research: the origins of the cataclysm, the decisions of policy makers, the experiences of the people, and its legacy. In the process, the painstaking work of primary source research has exposed myths. It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore all the new information that researchers have uncovered but I will share a few examples of their new data and explore why the subject has been ignored, like a field left untilled.

Behold the potato, a superfood

The potato was introduced to Ireland in 1590, and by 1800 it had become the island’s staple food. Ireland’s poverty of the time is well-known: 40 percent of families lived in one-room dwellings, little more than mud huts, and 40 percent of school-age children did not have sufficient clothing to attend school or Mass. Because of this widespread poverty, it was believed that Irish people were also poorly nourished. Untrue. Even though 50 percent of the population subsisted entirely on “spuds” (a name taken from the shovel-like tool used to cultivate the tubers) and water, the Irish were very well nourished as evidenced by the rapid population growth, large families, and low infant mortality rates. The average height of Irish people was also greater and literacy rates were higher than those of their counterparts in Britain or the continent.

The potato is a superfood, loaded with carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals, the only single food source that can sustain health all by itself. With just a little milk added for vitamin A, it is a complete, albeit monotonous, diet. The average adult male in pre-famine Ireland consumed 10-12 pounds of potatoes per day (four thousand calories).

Potatoes originated in the Peruvian Andes, where over four thousand varieties protect against occasional blights that affect a single species. The Peruvians had also developed a technique to freeze-dry potatoes for extended preservation, a method unknown to Europeans. Without the knowledge of using multiple



The Famine Memorial in Dublin city.

species of potatoes to protect against specific species’ blights or the ability to preserve the food source for more than nine months, 50 percent of the Irish population’s exclusive reliance on just one type of potato, ‘the lump,’ left the Irish preparing to collect the harvest in 1845 extremely vulnerable.

An example of primary historical research that has been conducted but is undergoing a review in Ireland is ranking great famines’ impact on population numbers. The Great Irish Famine mortality rate was 12 percent, far more lethal than the next-ranked famine, in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, which had a 7 percent mortality rate. The deadliest famine of the modern era, with a 13 percent mortality rate, also occurred in Ireland in 1740-1741 (also news to me) in a disaster caused not by a potato blight, but by drought and cold weather.

Death and emigration: A huge undercounting

“One million died and one million emigrated” are the generally accepted estimates of deaths and refugees caused by the 1845-1852 Famine, but new research suggests a vast undercount. The numbers are based on the census that was conducted every 10 years. The last pre-Famine census, taken in 1841, recorded 8.2 million people on the island. In 1851, the population was 6.5 million. This ignores all the children born after 1841 and who died or left before 1851.

Historians are painstakingly reviewing baptismal records, deaths recorded by workhouses and parishes, and emigration records to find the uncounted. The population continued to fall. Some 4.2 million were left at the dawn of the 20th century. The accounting effort is complicated by the destruction of 800 years of civil administration records (including the censuses) in the fire at the Four Courts in 1922 during the Irish Civil War.

The new research challenges the truth of the conventional wisdom regarding the Famine. For example, it is generally still believed that counties with alternative food sources like oats, wheat, or fish had lower death rates. In Co. Louth, well known for its fertile land and rich fishing waters, people assumed that conditions during the famine were not as bad as in “the west,” but according to the research, the variation of death rates was 1 percent or less in all 32 counties. The National Folklore Commission in the 1930s compiled first-hand accounts from still-living famine survivors or their children. The interviews document that the hardships of workhouses, soup kitchens, forced evictions, and mass graves, were also endured in Louth.

During the famine, the press of the northern Protestant-dominated counties promoted the idea that “Superior Ulster, composed of proud people of manly self-reliance, will not stoop like the west and South.” The myth that “Superior Ulster” avoided the worst effects of the famine is not borne out by the numbers; mortality rates were similar to the rest of Ireland in all nine counties of Ulster. A mass Famine grave on the Shankill road in Belfast is as large as Skibbereen’s, but it has been hidden in plain sight because it does not support the narrative of “Superior Ulster.”

Police reports in Belfast of the time reveal cases of groups of desperate people robbing boats laden with food and other products for export. Revealingly, the thieves only stole food; all other cargo was left undisturbed.

“The Irish are suffering from an affliction of God’s providence”

The British Whig government of the time was dominated by laissez faire, free market economists, racists, and Malthusians who believed that overpopulation was the real threat to human civilization.

“The famine is a punishment from God for an idle, ungrateful, and rebellious country, an indolent and un-self-reliant people. The Irish are suffering from an affliction of God’s providence,” said Charles Trevelyan in 1847, the worst year of the Famine. He was knighted in 1848 for overseeing Famine relief.

English “doctors” were deployed to Ireland to observe the effects of the Famine. Their sketches noted the hairy faces of the dead and dying. We now know that victims of starvation, even children, will often sprout hair in strange places as the body tries desperately to preserve itself, but the “doctors” saw this as confirmation that the Irish were “a lower race, between gorillas and negroes.”

The historians believe that there are several reasons that the Great Famine has been avoided by scholars and its research underfunded in Ireland and Britain. First, survivors of a catastrophe of this scale are so traumatized that studying the cold facts can be re-traumatizing. For 20 years after the Jewish Holocaust of the 1940s, there was very little study of it. The Covid pandemic may well join the 1918 flu pandemic as modern examples of catastrophes that people prefer to not research or even discuss. The impact of the Brexit calamity is famously underreported and under-discussed in the UK. There is also a societal instinct, and a practical imperative, in Ireland to not dwell on tragedy and to “get on with it.”

(Continued on page 14)

Immigration as political issue ... Bertie's back ... a Biden run

WICKLOW - When I wrote in this space at Christmas, there were widespread protests in Ireland at the government's often hastily conceived moves to house thousands of refugees and protection seekers from Ukraine and beyond in hotels and other unused or underused facilities. The most prominent of these gatherings was in Dublin's East Wall area, but they have taken place in cities, towns, and villages across the nation.

They are ongoing; some have been quite ugly with attendees expressing racist and xenophobic sentiments. Yet it seems that plenty of objectors have undeniably legitimate concerns as to whether Ireland is able to actually provide for the newcomers in the context of a health system that is stretched to its limits and a vexed housing crisis.

Indications are emerging at this stage about what the broader reaction of the Irish people is to what we have been hearing, watching, and reading in the media on a daily basis. In short, and for the first time ever on an island historically afflicted by emigration, immigration is going to be a key political issue in the local and European elections that will occur next year and in the general election, which will be held either in late 2024 or early 2025.

Notably in this regard, Ireland is tracking the same path as its neighbors next door - the fact is that the United Kingdom's choice to leave the European Union was motivated principally by a misguided view that it would "take back control" of its borders as a consequence - and on the continent.

A recent *Sunday Independent*/Ireland Thinks poll reveals that 56 percent of the citizenry believe that too many people have been taken in during the past twelve months. Nearly 80,000 have come here, more than 50,000 from Ukraine and 25,000 or so from elsewhere. Some 20 percent of those asked now define immigration as a subject that politicians must prioritise and reckon with. In 2020, a mere 1 percent called it important.

Although the ascendant Sinn Féin's leaders are avowedly left of centre ideologically and ardently pro-immigration, 61 [percent of its supporters think that Ireland has accepted an excessive number of migrants. The reality is that many in this cohort are alienated and struggling economically; they are increasingly receptive to the messaging of the far right, especially if Sinn Féin enters government and becomes a part of the "establishment." It has been posited - correctly, in my estimation - that a majority would be aligned with the far right already in any other European country. Regrettably, and no matter how mainstream politicians pivot, there looks to be a gap in the market for malevolent forces.

...

Following his resignation and a lengthy period in the wilderness, ex-Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie

Ahern has re-joined his Fianna Fáil party as an ordinary member. Ahern is known and respected internationally for presiding over the "Celtic Tiger" boom in Ireland, for the negotiating skill he demonstrated as one of the architects of the Good Friday Agreement, and, latterly, for being a voice of experience and expertise on Brexit and the fallout therefrom.

Conversely, in the eyes of a large segment of the population at home, his achievements are eclipsed by what they deem his irresponsible management of the economy that led to a dreadful recession and the findings of the Mahon Tribunal that the explanations Ahern advanced "as to the source of substantial funds" he was in possession of were "untrue." There are tales that are the stuff of lore and derision: whip-arounds, presents, winnings on horses, as well as a claim that he, a senior politician who had been Minister for Finance, did not have a bank account. His enemies have been opining in furious Twitter posts that Ahern is a "crook" who should never be forgiven and that Fianna Fáil only proved they retain a soft spot for dishonesty by readmitting a man who should just go away.

Theirs is a pretty harsh assessment. In fairness to Bertie Ahern, the Mahon Tribunal did not conclude that he was corrupt. He asserts that he would have mounted a legal challenge to its negative findings if he had the means to do so. That said, Ahern's critics are right that some of what came to light about his financial dealings is inescapably confusing and troubling. And as Ahern has admitted, he made mistakes as Taoiseach, even if it is doubtful that any of his counterparts would have adopted a divergent policy direction when Ireland was basking in an era of unprecedented prosperity.

His legacy is complicated. But after many years outside the fold, I fully understand why Fianna Fáil would open the door to Bertie Ahern. As the protagonists in the protracted efforts to resolve the Northern Ireland protocol and other post-Brexit arrangements who routinely seek and rely upon his counsel would confirm, he has a lot to offer. Having spoken to him and seen him in action in multiple settings, I can also attest to it. He remains an impressive figure at 71.

Some speculate that this is all a precursor to an Ahern bid for President of Ireland once Michael D. Higgins completes his second term in 2025. He hasn't ruled it out. The prospect horrifies his foes. To me, this scenario is improbable in the extreme. Ireland has changed radically and rapidly since he left office in 2008. His famed political antennae are still alert. Accordingly, deep down, Bertie Ahern must recognize that a presidential campaign would be a straight uphill climb.

...

A quick word on the 2024 race for the White House, which Irish watchers of American politics are homing in on. I am one of the skeptics as to the advisability of Joe

Biden's running. For more than half a century in public life, the man from Scranton with roots in Mayo and Louth has overcome a series of obstacles and finally was elected president against the odds. Remember when he finished fifth in the New Hampshire Democratic Primary and pundits were conducting autopsies on his third failed candidacy?

He has put in a meritorious performance as commander-in-chief hard on the heels of the non-stop drama and distraction that dominated his predecessor's tenure. He pointed to his administration's successes in the State of the Union and repeatedly stated that there is more that needs to be done. Biden's was not the speech of a man intending to retire. But I concur with the observers here who, notwithstanding their grá for the "most Irish" president since Kennedy, feel that the 80 year old should pass the torch to the next generation. As they frequently say to me in the next breath, however, "Biden's not for turning." The State of the Union made that clear. Time will soon tell if this is a wise decision for him and his fellow Democrats.

Remembering Paul Donnelly

Lastly, while I love coming home to Boston, my impending brief trip in April will be tinged with sadness. I am returning for a memorial service to celebrate the remarkable life of my uncle, Paul Donnelly, a proud native of Dorchester Lower Mills and an equally proud resident of Beacon Hill since the early 1970s who died in January at 78. The two neighborhoods meant everything to him. Paul was a great football player in his youth and in college who went on to be an accomplished engineer and architect. He subsequently moved into academia, where he established himself as an inspirational teacher and world-class researcher in a distinguished career.

But to his nieces and nephews, he was Uncle Paul, who was always incredibly encouraging to us and genuinely interested in our various academic, professional, and personal endeavors. Uncle Paul also travelled regularly to Ireland and his Irish passport was among his most cherished possessions.

He was a terrific guy. My thoughts and prayers are now and will continue to be with his wonderful wife, Addy, his dedicated siblings, Louise and Brian, and his big, diverse circle of close friends, colleagues, and former students. I hope that he has been reunited with his eldest brother, my father, and his parents. It's not the best of occasions, yet it will be nice to see my family on Easter weekend and share reminiscences of Paul Donnelly, truly a man for all seasons.

Larry Donnelly is a Boston born and educated attorney, a Law Lecturer at the University of Galway and a media commentator on politics, current affairs and law in Ireland and the US. Twitter: @LarryPDonnelly



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Plumbing the myths, and realities, of an Gorta Mor, and why the whole story has for so long been ignored

(Continued from page 12)

Second, there were (and still are) political considerations. Uncovering the truth about the Famine inevitably leads to assigning culpability. The facts are a condemnation of the British response on multiple levels. While the service of the Quakers and some others is recognized as admirable, the Empire's response was late, inadequate, corrupt (famine relief money often ended up in the pockets of bad actors), it punished the victims, and it was driven by racism, greed, and disregard for human life. Writing the history of mass deaths caused by the willful incompetence and callousness of the British has political implications, even in today's fraught post-Brexit context. In short, the reason the Famine has been ignored is that it is too painful for the Irish and too shameful for the British to study.

Over the 100 years of Irish Independence, Ireland has worked to build a positive relationship with Britain. Studying the truth of the Great Irish Famine might reopen wounds. In Northern Ireland, the subject was even more radioactive after the outbreak of the Troubles. Scholars had better chances of receiving funding for Irish Famine research from American Universities than from Ireland or Britain.

The struggle against hiding history, which informs our future, continues

Just this month the British government unilaterally introduced a Troubles Legacy Bill. If it passes through Parliament, ignoring the objections of all political parties in Ireland, the US and the EU and UK government investigations into Troubles-era violence, including assassinations and collusion between Loyalist death squads and the British military, will be abandoned.

Hiding tortured history is not unique to Britain. Since the murder of George Floyd and many others,



This bronzed children's shoes monument in Mullingar is one of thirty along the "National Famine Way," which crosses six counties from Roscommon to Dublin mostly along the Royal Canal. The markers reference an event in 1847 when evicted farmers and their families marched from their farms along the canal to Dublin, bound for Liverpool. Some died along the way and sometimes people jumped onto passing canal boats.

opponents of teaching the basics of US history in regard to slavery are attempting to bury history in an unmarked grave. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis's "Stop WOKE Act" bans teaching that racism played a role in the creation of the United States and that the lingering impacts of racism and slavery still inform American life. Professors in African American Studies programs in Florida's public universities have lost funding. In contrast, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law the creation of the first in the nation "Reparations Task Force" in 2020. Its recommendations for compensation to the descendants of enslaved black people are due in July. The fight for history and how it informs our future, continues.

There is a danger that the study of history becomes nothing more than a nurturing of grievances, score-settling, and a perpetuation of divisions, but, fundamentally, people deserve the truth. As with the Holocaust, we should "never forget" the past. We should do our best to learn from it. California's example shows that confronting the truth can lead to progress.

The expanding field of Famine Studies suggests that in 2023, Ireland is confident and secure enough in itself to discover what really happened to her people in the 19th and the 20th centuries. There is much more work to do. America, too, should continue to examine all of our history, the good, the bad, and the ugly, to build a future in which everyone, including Native Americans, African Americans, women, and immigrants, can flourish in solidarity.

The ongoing lecture series discussed above is available to all at armaghbanbridgecertain.gov.uk/famine. Upcoming sessions will focus on the role of women during the Famine, and the experience of survivors who later fought in the US Civil War.

Jim Brett heads presidential panel fighting for people with disabilities

BY ED FORRY
BOSTON IRISH PUBLISHER

When President Biden named Jim Brett last year to chair the Presidential Committee for People with Disabilities, the appointment continued a commitment that Brett has been living with for most of his life.

That dedication is rooted in his love for his brother Jack, the first-born Brett sibling who was disabled as an infant. In an interview with Boston Irish Magazine, Brett said that he pledged to their mother that he would always look after his eldest brother, and be an advocate for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"He was the oldest in the family, and I was the youngest, so we were very, very close," he said. "And I was the last in my family to get married. So, we lived together on Grant Street with my mother. When she passed in 1981, he lived with me for a short period of time. And then he went through the state system for housing, and eventually wound up in a beautiful group home in Scituate. So I always had said to my mother - you know, she worried about her son - I said the whole family would take care of him, which we did."

"I made a commitment that I would use my voice to be an advocate for people like my brother who had nothing, no services. When he was born in 1934,

they would take people like him and say to the mother, 'We'll, put him in an institution, put a roof over his head, three meals a day. And, not to worry about your son because he is not going to live long.'

"And here's my mother, with a sixth-grade education coming from Sligo saying to the doctor, 'He's coming home and we're going to have more children. They're going to be proud of his life, and he's going to be part of their lives.' And the doctor told my mother, 'You shouldn't have more children because it's a very difficult pregnancy. If I put your son in an institution, the burden will be lifted.' She just said, 'There's no burden to him. You know, I'm going to have more children,' and then she had five other kids."

"I told my mother, If I run for office, I'll be a voice for people like my brother who had no one advocating for him. So, I spent my career in the Legislature advocating for services of people with disabilities, intellectual, developmental."

The Presidential Committee has 21 members from across the country. Brett was first appointed as a member by George W. Bush in 2004, and later served under President Obama, including a previous term as chair from 2011 to 2013.

He described his brother Jack as living with an intellectual disability: "He had

an IQ of maybe 35, so as a practical matter, he could talk, he could walk, he could clothe himself, but he couldn't hold a job. He couldn't add. He'd get somewhat confused if different colors appeared. I mean he had his limits. And that's why someone like him would not be employable because he wouldn't know the time of the day to report to work, wouldn't know how to get there."

"And for someone like him, he either stayed home or - at the time in the 30s and 40s, they had institutions, or back in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, they had what they call workshops. But for people like my brother who couldn't function in an everyday job, the work in these shops was piecemeal, with some type of compensation. It was basically something to get him to be out of the house and be with other people, but it wasn't a job because he couldn't hold a job." Jack Brett lived until the age of 77, passing away in 2010, but the family's support was inspiration for Brett's work on the committee.

"It inspires me to remember that there are an awful lot of people like my brother who have no one advocating for them; many are sitting at home."

"There is a major discrimination out there when it comes to people with disabilities; they're not treated equally. So, for the last ten years, I've been working with dental schools, urging them to



Jim Brett with Ireland's Ambassador to the US Geraldine Byrne Nason.

adopt at least one new course to diagnose and treat people with disabilities. It's been a battle, but it's something that I'm proud of and it has been accomplished. If they do go to a dentist, they may not have dental insurance, they may be on Mass Health, which doesn't reimburse enough for the dental costs."

"Beyond that, there is major discrimination on how people with disabilities are treated in healthcare, transportation, housing. Those are issues that I've been working on for 30, 40 years."

Brett invites healthcare workers willing to help to reach out personally to him: "I will get them in touch with other people who are involved in this movement. I have never seen a class of individuals discriminated against as much as people with disabilities are."

Jim Brett is president and CEO of the New England Council, a non-partisan alliance of businesses, academic and health institutions, and public and private organizations throughout New England. Phone: (617) 723-4009

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New director aims to keep Rian Immigrant Center hewing pathways through difficulties for its clients

By SETH DANIEL

When South Boston's Jacob Bombard reached a crossroads in his career path, the view from his former office at a South Boston's human services organization brought him full circle and reassured him that a career dedicated to helping people was still the right way for him to go.

"I was working at the Labouré Center and they built a new building and the building that got knocked down was the building where I was born – and my office view was the same view I remembered looking out on as a kid," recalled Bombard, who grew up in Southie's D Street housing development. "Looking out the window just made it seem like everything was pointing me to human services."

That epiphany has led him to the Beacon Hill-based Rian Immigrant Center where, at 38, he is closing in on 60 days as the storied organization's new executive director, succeeding long-time director Ronnie Millar.

"I knew Rian was a fantastic organization to go into, and I had been working directly with refugee and immigrant populations at Labouré (a place he had attended as a child)," Bombard said in an interview with Boston Irish Magazine. I felt that Rian's mission made it for me not just a career move from Labouré to Rian, but, rather, a moral imperative to continue this work."

Bombard spent most of his early years trying to get out of the D Street neighborhood, which he did when he left for the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

"In all honesty, when I was young, all I wanted to do was go away to stay out of trouble, and it worked. But once I did get out, all I wanted to do was get back to the neighborhood."



Rian Immigrant Center's new executive director, Jacob Bombard, comes to the organization with a wealth of experience and a familiarity with the organization after working in state government and human services. Photo courtesy Rian

After graduating during the Great Recession in the early 2010s, Bombard faced the world with few good prospects. He worked three jobs for a while, and at 22, he changed course and ran for a vacant state representative seat in South Boston.

"I knew I was going to get whipped, but I figured if I ran, I could tell the truth 100 percent of the time," he said. "I did that, talking all the time very candidly about the issues and concerns facing me and my friends."

Though he did get "whipped" in the race, the eventual winner – now state Sen. Nick Collins – brought Bombard onto his staff at the State House. That eventually opened a door for him to work in the office of former state Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry of Dorchester. The foray into state government and the State House was a great experience, he said, but when a job at the Labouré Center became available, he felt compelled to

move that direction.

"I wanted to get into something where I could continue doing all the helping, but without all the yelling," he said jokingly.

He worked as a deputy director at Labouré, earning a promotion to vice president of data analytics under the Catholic Charities umbrella. When the Rian post opened, he knew it was a good fit because he had worked with the organization when it was the Irish International Immigration Center doing legal and "know your rights" clinics in Mattapan for the Haitian community.

Now, in serving as the executive director of the organization known as the Rian Immigrant Center, he said he has been happy working to serve immigrant communities from around the world with their different needs.

In his first few weeks, he has used the name 'Rian' as his guiding light. "Rian is an Irish word that means 'pathway,' or, more specifically, a pathway that is hewn through the forest," he said. "We see ourselves that way at Rian – as a group hewing ourselves through the dense and complicated immigration process for our clients."

"Rian continues to be active in helping the Irish immigrant community, but we are always making sure all of our immigrant and refugee families know the Center is there for them as well."

He said most of the organization's clients come from Boston's neighborhoods, particularly Dorchester, Mattapan, and East Boston. Meanwhile, they also have an office in Belfast to recruit and keep interest in their K-1 worker and cultural exchange programs in Ireland. That program remains successful because the center has built strong relationships with universities and immigration centers in Ireland. The cultural exchange program

is one Bombard said it is even more valuable these days with the world being more interconnected, but sometimes also more adversarial.

"We're looking for people in Ireland who want to try something new and want a different experience and a cultural exchange," he said. "Cultural exchanges are great for learning and for economic opportunities, but at the end of the day, cultural exchanges stop wars."

Right now, though, Bombard said he's still learning the organization and meeting with its 35 employees and trying to make sure the hard work of his predecessors is retained.

"The legacy of my predecessor, Ronnie Millar, is really daunting," he said, "as is the legacy of Sister Lena Deevy before Ronnie. The organization has been around more than 30 years and stands out as a beacon of excellence among non-profit peers. I've been through leadership transitions in previous roles, and I can attest to the delicate nature of these times. My only goal right now is to maintain the time and sweat equity Ronnie put into Rian for well over a decade."

Rian's legal services include free legal consultations to over 2,200 immigrants, as well as full case representation before USCIS for more than 600 families. Its education services provide timely and responsive learning opportunities for close to 300 students who gain English language fluency, technology skills and employment opportunities that lead to sustainable living. Rian's Resource & Support Services serve 350 immigrants and refugees with counseling and case management.

Seth Daniel is the news editor of the Dorchester Reporter.

Obtaining a US passport after Naturalization

Q: I recently became a US citizen through naturalization and want to obtain a passport to travel. How do I go about acquiring one, and what if I have a family situation back home that requires me to travel on short notice?

A: While USCIS gives you a Certificate of Naturalization to prove your US citizenship after you naturalize, that document does not permit you to travel. You must obtain a US passport through the State Department, and for first time applicants, you must apply in-person at a passport acceptance facility, usually your nearby US Postal Service office.

Logistically, the passport application is relatively straightforward. You must fill out the form (DS-11); make a photocopy of your Certificate of Naturalization as proof of your citizenship; and a photocopy of proof of identification, which can be a valid foreign passport, or valid driver's license. The passport application fee for an adult currently costs \$130, and you must pay a separate \$35 fee for them to execute your request. These fees should be paid separately by check or by money order payable to the U.S. Department of State. You will bring all of these materials, along with the original documents and a passport-style photograph of yourself to the location where you will submit your application.



Q & A

The easiest place to apply for your passport is your local US Post Office. The Post Office requires you to schedule an appointment, which you can do online here: <https://www.usps.com/international/passports.htm>. Some post offices will also take your photo for you at the time of the appointments, but you should check to ensure that you do not need to get one ahead of time.

According to the State Department, routine processing times require six to nine weeks for them to mail you the passport. However, you can pay an additional \$60 for them to expedite the processing such that it will take between three to five weeks. These estimates do not include mailing times, so in actuality your passport is likely to take between nine to eleven weeks, our four to six weeks if expedited.

What about for individuals with pressing travel needs, for example a family member suddenly suffers a terrible accident? In these circumstances where you have urgent international travel within fourteen days, you must call 1-877-487-2778 to schedule an appointment at the Boston Passport Agency. The State Department offers two types of appointments: Life-or-Death Emergency Service and Urgent Travel Service.

If you need your foreign passport to return to your home country, you lack any valid passports, including from your country of birth, and you urgently need to leave the US and return at a later date, then you should consult the website of your country's department of foreign affairs, its embassy, or its consulate in the US. Those representatives will be able to provide additional information on emergency passport issuance. Irish citizens can contact the Consulate-General of Ireland, Boston at 617-267-9330 or www.consulategeneralofirelandandboston.org.

Disclaimer: These articles are published to inform the general public, not to advise in individual cases. All law, including immigration law, is always subject to change. If you seek legal advice you can contact Rian's immigration legal staff at 617-984-6542.

Julia's interest in Human Resources drew her back to the US with new plans

Rian's J-1 visa program made it possible for Julia to return to California, and to enter a new phase of her professional and personal life in Los Angeles. There she had the opportunity to attend the University of California (UC) Santa Barbara, where she completed a study-abroad experience while working toward her bachelor's in sociology. Her learning journey took her back to Ireland, where she completed her bachelor's degree and earned a master's in Human Resources from University College Dublin (UCD).

Today, Julia's current internship at Vytology Wellness supports her learnings and HR expertise from her time at UCD.

She shared that Rian's J-1 visa provided an excellent opportunity for her to improve her people and cultural skills. She applied for the visa last year while working at home with the hopes of using the training opportunity to gain



Cavorting at Vytology Wellness, where Julia is interning.

Vytology photo

more professional experience. Through her internship, Julia is hoping to gain more experience as an HR professional in an American company.

She is having a tremendous experience at Vytology Wellness. She enjoys working in person and meeting her colleagues, who have a variety of skills and backgrounds. In particular, she relishes learning from her

supervisor, who, she says, "has extensive knowledge in the people and culture field." Julia had so many good things to say about her internship experience at Vytology, including going in every day, even though it is not required, thanks to wonderful colleagues, a new office, and a wonderful view.

She loves Los Angeles, especially the sunny weather,

and spends her weekends with her friends. One of them is someone she met during her study abroad at UC Santa Barbara and he has introduced her to plenty of other people. Julia says she has fantastic housemates, whose social circle adds to her community of amazing people. She has also met and stayed connected with two J-1 participants also on Rian's program.

Julia intends to travel as much as she can in the upcoming year. One of her friends is a DJ and she has had the opportunity to attend and support him at his shows. She expressed her excitement about an upcoming visit of her family and plans to travel with them to places like Las Vegas, Joshua Tree, San Francisco, and the Grand Canyon.

As to Los Angeles, Julia did share that it is a city centered around cars, and she does not have one. She is lucky that her friends have been willing to

help her get around the city, if needed. And she is fortunate in that she can take the bus to work and back from her house. She advised people not to be afraid to travel and to enjoy themselves wherever they go in America, regardless of the fact that if Los Angeles has a lower Irish population than New York City or Boston.

To prospective J-1s, Julia suggests using the Los Angeles Facebook housing group to find roommates. She also provides advice to people who have J-1 visas. "Be open to anything and be flexible. Don't close yourself off to experiences".

Though Julia is not rushing to return to Dublin, she has been keeping in contact with her colleagues and friends at home in Dublin. Her hope is to take her learnings from Vytology Wellness with her back to Dublin, where she aspires to further her career as a Human Resource professional.

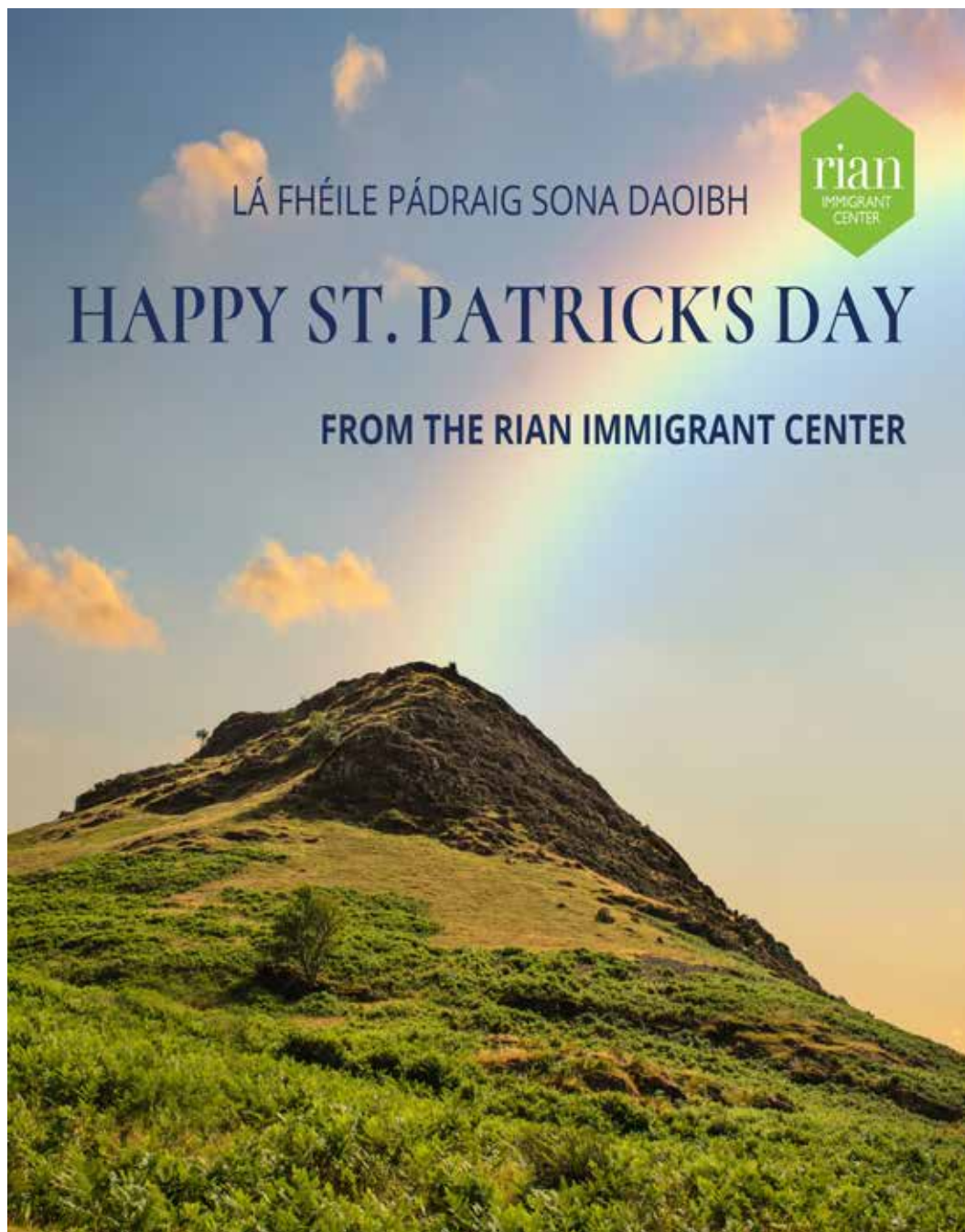
See you at the St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 19



Flashback to the 2019 St. Patrick's Day parade

Our Irish Outreach team is looking forward to being in the middle of the action at this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade in South Boston on March 19! We are excited to be hosting a Rian resource table at the parade for the first time ever! We look forward to chatting to folks and telling them all about Rian's programs and services. Please swing by to say hello if you are in the area.

The exact location of our table is yet to be determined. Keep an eye on our Irish Outreach Facebook page for up-to-date details: **Irish Outreach & Support Services- Rian Immigrant Center**. Hope to see you there!



By SEAN SMITH
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

A look at upcoming Irish/Celtic (and Celtic-related) music events in Greater Boston – and yes, there are rather a lot.

•The annual “**St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn**” production will be on stage at four locations this year: Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport (March 15); Groton Hill Music Center (March 16); Sanders Theatre in Cambridge, MA (March 18, two shows); and Cabot Theatre in Beverly (March 19). The show is similar to its “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” cousin, with plenty of music, dance, and songs from Irish/Celtic strains, as well as recitations and general warmth and wit. So far, performers include **Nuala Kennedy** (flute, whistle, vocals), **Eamon O’Leary** (guitar, bouzouki, vocals), **Kevin Burke** (fiddle), **Katie McNally** (fiddle) and **Neil Pearlman** (keyboards). Inevitably, there will be attention and concern regarding the health of “Sojourn” founder and guiding spirit **Brian O’Donovan**, but at “Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” the cast, crew, and community displayed an overwhelming level of support and caring that gave the whole thing an extra lift – and there’s every reason to think the same thing can happen again.

Details and updates at celticsojournlive.com

•Before “Celtic Sojourn” comes to The Cabot, the theater will be host to Canadian Celtic music power couple **Natalie MacMaster** and **Donnell Leahy** on March 2 at 8 p.m., a show that was rescheduled from earlier. Representing the union of two legendary family music traditions, fiddlers and step dancers MacMaster (native of Cape Breton) and Leahy (Ontario) have now one of their very own: Their children typically travel with them on tour and join the pair during their concerts of powerful, up-tempo instrumentals as well as intimate, heartfelt melodies. MacMaster and Leahy have earned numerous honors, including JUNO and East Coast Music Awards, and have starred in their own family Christmas special.

Tickets, info at thecabot.org

•Another “Celtic Sojourn” venue, the Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport, will present three additional Celtic music events this month, starting with the **Seamus Egan Project** on March 5 at 7 p.m. It’s the most recent venture of the Solas co-founder, a master of multiple instruments and an esteemed composer and arranger, as well as interpreter of traditional music and original music with traditional elements. For his Project, Egan gathers assorted musical friends and acquaintances to perform his original works, which were highlighted on his 2020 album “Early Bright.” Joining Egan (flute, whistle, banjo, guitar, mandolin) here will be Boston-area fiddler Jenna Moynihan, guitarist Kyle Sanna, and bouzouki/harmonium player Owen Marshall.

On March 10, Shalin Liu’s “Upstairs on Main” series hosts a concert and ceili by Cape Ann singer **Michael O’Leary** with friends **Bob and Jen Strom** (guitar, fiddle, vocals) and **Steve Levy** (tenor banjo, mandolin, bouzouki, guitar). O’Leary is a singer of Irish, Scottish, and maritime ballads and songs who has appeared at BCMFest, Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival, Rockport Celtic Festival, Irish Connections Festival, New England Folk Festival, and other events and venues in New England. He also organizes music cruises in Gloucester Harbor and sessions on the North Shore. In 2003, O’Leary was co-recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council Traditional Arts Apprenticeship grant that enabled him to study the traditional Irish sean-nos singing style from Bridget Fitzgerald.

Donegal band **Altan** also will be in this month’s line-up. See just below.

Go to rockportmusic.org for tickets and information.

•Naturally, the Burren Backroom series will do its part in contributing to March merriment, as **Dervish** pops in on March 8 in for shows at 6 and 8:30 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, and received a BBC Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019. 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.

Another groundbreaking and well-respected band, **Altan**, comes to the Backroom on March 28 at 7:30 p.m. as part of a swing through Massachusetts that will include stops at the Center for Arts in Natick on March 24 (natickarts.org) and Shalin-Liu Performance Center on March 25 (rockportmusic.org). A foremost exponent of the Donegal tradition, Altan – Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (fiddle, vocals), Martin Tourish (accordion), Ciarán Curran (bouzouki), and guitarists Mark Kelly and Dáithí Sproule – also are adept at making connections to music of other cultures and genres. The band’s most recent album, “The Gap of Dreams” (2018), celebrates its birthplace and the valuable role of music, songs, dance, and stories played in helping past generations cope with the demands of rural life, as well as famine, conflict, and emigration.

The following night, March 29 at 7:30 p.m., will be Celtic-American roots band **RUNA**, which fuses Irish and Scottish music with Americana/roots, adding harmonies, rhythms and tints of jazz, bluegrass, flamenco and blues. The quintet of Shannon Lambert-Ryan (vocals, bodhran, step-dancing), Fionán de Barra (guitar), Cheryl Prashker (percussion), Jake James (fiddle), and Tom Fitzgerald (fiddle, mandolin) has a distinguished record of achievement in its nearly decade-and-a-half history, earning honors in the Irish Music Awards and Independent Music Awards. In 2020, they extended their artistic reach with an album of seasonal music, “The Tide of Winter.”

The event to end all events at the Burren during March is, of course, the St. Patrick’s Day Variety Dinner Show, helmed by owners **Tommy McCarthy** and **Louise Costello**, and with a bevy of special guests like Robert Elliott, Rose McCarthy, Padder Giles, Seamus Noonan, and an Irish step dancer or two (or more). The show runs March 17, 18 and 19 at various times.

For tickets and other information, see burren.com/music.html.

•Not exactly a quiet evening is in store at Medford’s Chevalier Theatre on March 18: **Gaelic Storm** and **The High Kings** play a double bill beginning at 8 p.m.

Gaelic Storm is, of course, “that band from ‘Titanic,’” but they’ve gone well beyond that cinematic moment, having built a solid and loyal fan base through some 25 years of constant touring, the release of more than a dozen albums, and in particular their crowd-rousing mix of Celtic, country, and rock/pop. Greater Boston native Natalya Kay is the group’s new fiddler (since last year), joining co-founders Patrick Murphy (accordion, bodhran, harmonica, lead vocals) and Steve Twigger (guitar, bouzouki, lead vocals) as well as long-serving members Ryan Lacey (percussion, vocals) and Pete Purvis (Highland bagpipes, uilleann pipes, whistle). Gaelic Storm has appeared on the same bill with such acts as the Zac Brown Band, the Goo Goo Dolls, Emmylou Harris, and Lyle Lovett, and at various events and venues including the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, and Milwaukee’s Summerfest. Oh, and their song “Scalliwag” was featured on the World music channel in the expansion pack for “The Sims 2” – in “Simlish.”

The very model of a 21st-century Irish ballad group, **The High Kings** derive their sound from the classic style that swept into popularity during the 1950s and ’60s through such bands as the Clancy Brothers and The Dubliners. Vocalists and musicians Finbarr Clancy, Darren Holden, Brian Dunphy, and Paul O’Brien have toured extensively throughout the US and Europe,

Boston Irish Arts & Entertainment March



Above, Michael O’Leary (right), Steve Levy, and Bob and Jen Strom on “Upstairs on Main” series. Sean Smith photo. Below, Nuala Kennedy performing at Celtic Sojourn.”



Arts Calendar n 2023



Strom are at the Shalin Liu Performance Center's "Upstairs" is among the performers in this year's "St. Patrick's Day



recorded five studio albums and four live albums (including 2020's "Home from Home Live"), and released two live DVDs, combining modern songs in the folk idiom – and from other genres – with some of the benchmark ballad repertoire.

Go to chevaliertheatre.com.

•Among the month's highlights at Club Passim will be appearances by Irish singer-songwriter **Karan Casey** (March 5) and New England fiddler-vocalist **Lissa Scheckenburger**, both of whom have brand new albums out. You can read interviews with them elsewhere in this issue.

Coming to Club Passim on March 30 at 7 p.m. will be one of the most influential purveyors of modern Scandinavian music, **Väsen**, whose work has made fans of many Celtic musicians and listeners. As teenagers, Olov Johansson (nyckelharpa) and Mikael Marin (viola) would visit with older musicians in Sweden's Uppland region, who passed along their knowledge and love of Swedish folk music. The pair later joined forces with Roger Tallroth, whose innovative 12-string guitar accompaniment brought a new dimension to the traditional repertoire: components of rock, jazz, and classical. Over time, the trio integrated its own tunes into the mix, while collaborating and performing with musicians from around the world. Tallroth left the band in 2020 to pursue other musical projects, but Johansson and Marin have continued on – in fact, they're releasing their second album as a duo, "Melliken," this spring.

Tickets available through passim.org.

•Boston College's Gaelic Root series will feature a rare US appearance on March 12 by **Sliabh Notes** (Matt Cranitch, fiddle; Donal Murphy, accordion; Tommy O'Sullivan, guitar, vocals), which showcases the distinctive Sliabh Luachra tradition and in particular its hell-for-leather slides and polkas. Each member of the trio – marking its 25th anniversary – has impressive resumé: In addition to his masterful solo work, Cranitch has been part of bands such as Na Fili and a duo with accordionist Jackie Daly; Murphy is a founding member of the popular trad/fusion group Four Men and a Dog; O'Sullivan has recorded two solo albums and another with renowned uilleann piper Paddy Keenan. The show will be at 6:30 p.m. in Gasson Hall on BC's main campus.

The Kane Sisters, Liz and Yvonne, will play at BC on March 23 at 6:30 p.m. at Connolly House (300 Hammond Street). The Connemara natives originally toured with accordionist Sharon Shannon's band The Woodchoppers, and went on to build a following of their own with three acclaimed albums, "The Well-Tempered Bow," "Under the Diamond" and "Side by Side," showcasing their highly developed unison fiddle playing and Sligo/East Galway influence. Their newest album, released last year, is a tribute to the celebrated, and enigmatic, East Galway fiddler Paddy Fahey.

Gaelic Roots events are free and open to the public. Go to bc.edu/irish/events for details.

•A locus for the area's Cape Breton community, the Canadian American Club in Watertown is often a venue for other kinds of Celtic music, and on March 16 it will be the setting for a 7:30 p.m. concert by **Open the Door for Three**, sponsored by the Boston Uilleann Pipers Club (which runs a terrific monthly session at the Can-Am). Highly accomplished Irish traditional music performers, Maine-based spouses Liz Knowles (fiddle) and Kieran O'Hare (uilleann pipes, flute, whistle) and Irish-born Chicagoan Pat Broaders (bouzouki, vocals) also are known for their astute musical scholarship, with a penchant for digging through print or audio sources to find often rare or obscure gems from Ireland, Scotland, and elsewhere. Their appearances range from Carnegie Hall to L'Olympia in Paris, as well as Shanghai, São Paulo, The Kennedy Center's Ireland 100 festival, the Celtic Colours festival in Cape Breton, Milwaukee Irish Festival, and in The Masters of Tradition series in Cork. Locally, they've played at such events and venues as Féile Cheoil Boston, "St. Patrick's Day Celtic

Sojourn," and Boston College's Gaelic Roots series.

Go the Boston Uilleann Pipers Club Facebook page at facebook.com/BostonUPC for concert information.

•City Winery Boston will present Canada's **Enter the Haggis** on March 12 at 7 p.m. Well into its third decade, "ETH" has brought together a prodigious – even quirky – blend of rock, fusion, bluegrass, traditional Celtic fare, agitpop, folk, and other strains. Recent years have seen the band add an extra dimension and energy source in the persons of fiddler Rose Baldino and bass guitarist Caroline Browning – also known as two-thirds of the House of Hamill – joining Craig Downie, bagpipes, guitar, keyboards, whistle; Brian Buchanan, fiddle, guitar, mandolin, accordion; Trevor Lewington, guitar, mandolin, keyboards; and Bruce McCarthy, drums. From head-banging, arena-friendly Celtic rock to more nuanced, lyrical, indie-type offerings, ETH combines a versatile repertoire with sociopolitical conviction – all of which is in evidence on their most recent album, "The Archer's Parade," which they released at the very beginning of the pandemic.

Transcendent Quebecois band **Le Vent du Nord** will perform on March 29 at 7:30 p.m., in association with Global Arts Live. Throughout its two-plus decades, the band (Nicolas Boulerice, hurdy gurdy; Oliver Demers, fiddle; Simon Beaudry, guitar, bouzouki; Andre Bruent, fiddle; and Rejean Brunet, accordion, bass) has continually shown vitality and inventiveness in incorporating contemporary material – some of it their own compositions – alongside the traditional, and with an awareness of global influences. They've also broadened their already considerable appeal through various projects, such as "Le Vent du Nord Symphonique" – collaborations with the Portland Symphony and Orchestre Symphonique de Québec – and involvement in the annual "La veillée de l'avant-veille" year-end event in Montreal. Not surprisingly, the band has a bushel of honors and nominations from, among others, the Juno Awards, Canadian Folk Music Awards and North American Folk Music & Dance Association.

More at citywinery.com/boston.

•As you might guess, the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston in Canton has a marathon St. Patrick's Day in store, beginning at 11 a.m., featuring a number of area musicians such as **Joey Abarta, Nathan Gourley, Colm Gannon, Niamh Healy, Patrick Bowling, Adam Hendy, and Skeaf Bridge**, along with **Jackie O'Riley Traditional Irish Dance, Greene-O'Leary School of Irish Dance, O'Shea Chaplin Academy of Irish Dance, HPK Academy of Irish Dance** and others.

There's also an 8 p.m. concert with the band **Green Road** and soprano **Clodagh Kinsella**, all with Co. Wexford connections. Green Road combines Irish folk and ballad standards with a country and bluegrass tint, from "Galway Shawl" and "Leaving of Liverpool" to "Only Our Rivers Run Free" to "Sonny's Dream" – a celebration of "the connections between folk music at home and abroad," as they say. Its members (P.J. Sinnott, lead vocals, five-string banjo; Jon Reville, mandolin, tenor banjo; Tony McCabe, bass, vocals; Ned Wall, uilleann pipes, low whistles; Fergal O'Hanlon, guitar, vocals) boast extensive experience in Ireland's pubs and clubs, sessions and fleadh, and theater and TV performances.

Kinsella performs a repertoire of well-known Irish American concert hall classics by the likes of John McCormack and Frank Patterson, but that only covers part of her portfolio. A violinist and pianist as well as a singer, she attended the Royal Irish Academy of Music and has given solo performances of such works as Mozart's "Vesperae solennes de confessore," Haydn's "Stabat Mater," and Handel's "Messiah." She has also been part of Ensemble Dagda, regarded as one of Ireland's most vibrant "HIPster" (Historically Informed Performance) ensembles, bringing playful, engaging arrangements to lesser-heard works of 17th-century music.

For event and ticket information, see irishculture.org.

New album, US tour golden moments for Karan Casey

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Karan Casey admits it: She was nervous.

Yes, she's been performing for decades in front of audiences big and small, in her native Ireland, the UK, the US and many other places. But at January's Celtic Connections in Glasgow – one of the premier Celtic music events in the world – she was about to unveil a brand new song of hers, one unlike any other she'd written, let alone sung; she had recorded it for her brand new album, "Nine Apples of Gold," but hadn't yet performed it in public.

"I Live in a Country" is no sweet lullaby, no tender love song. It's meant to be angry and sounds it, with a persistent drum rhythm and haunting keyboard backdrop throughout. The lyrics, mostly spoken – Pauline Scanlon joins her on the vocals – are a no-holds-barred denunciation of the wrongs perpetrated against Irish women down through time ("We are the daughters of the witches you could not burn for centuries/We are the daughters of the Magdalene laundries/When you had us down upon our knees/We are the daughters of the mother and baby homes/Where you did what you pleased"), as well as an affirmation of women's resilience in spite of it all – and a declaration, punctuated by an expletive, that it is past time for women to be patient and hold their collective tongue: "Some days I want revenge but most I fight for equality."

Casey hadn't intended to present "I Live in a Country" at Celtic Connections. But then Niamh Dunne, her fiddler and co-vocalist for the event, urged her to do it, with Dunne taking Scanlon's part. Casey agreed.

The reaction from the audience, recalls Casey, "was unbelievable. Completely different than what I expected. I felt such a release."

She continues: "I had worried that people might focus more on the anger, and the swear word, in the song than on *why* the anger is there, and why that word is used. Women, after all, have always been told that we 'have to be nice' – especially women who are singers and musicians. I think of women like Nina Simone, who didn't stay silent, who didn't just 'be nice,' but showed that it's OK for a woman to be angry and express it. I guess it took me longer."

Casey will formally introduce her Boston-area following to "I Live in a Country" and the rest of the new album at Harvard Square's Club Passim on March 5 at 8 p.m., where she'll be accompanied by fiddler Sheila Falls, the director of Irish music programs at Boston College (including its Gaelic Roots series), and guitarist Matt Heaton.

By now, anyone familiar with Casey's body of work knows that she has multiple interests that go beyond music – and as for music, well, she's had a lot going on there as well, going back to her foray as co-founder and lead singer for groundbreaking Irish-American band Solas and winding through a solo career that's seen her show her chops in jazz,



Karan Casey's "Golden Apples" tour comes to Cambridge on March 5.

rock and pop as well as traditional and contemporary folk. And then there's her trajectory as a songwriter of depth and a 360-degree circle of vision to boot, as "Nine Apples of Gold" demonstrates; multi-instrumentalist Sean Óg Graham – who, along with Dunne, is a member of the quintet Beoga – is co-author with Casey of five of the 10 songs on the album, "I Live in a Country" among them.

Casey is not one to compartmentalize her art from her emotional and spiritual side, often using one to inform the other, and her various activities and projects also seem to play off one another as well. Her 2008 album, "Ships in the Forest," for example, spoke to what she saw as an unresolved grief about Ireland's past traumas and injustices, and the continuing revelations and controversies such as the Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes have been much on her mind.

All this, along with her advocacy for gender balance in the production, performance, promotion and development of Irish folk and traditional music, notably by her championing of the FairPlé (Fair Play) campaign – which sparked a wider conversation about sexual harassment and assault in Irish music circles – led her to consider the marginalization of women in a wider context of Irish society and history. She gave expression to these ruminations in her stage show, "I Walked Into My Head," that she premiered at the Kilkenny Arts Festival last year, part song-poem and part music performance – from which some material wound up on "Nine Apples of Gold."

If that isn't enough, she's been in the process of researching and writing a book about her great-grandmother, Agnes O'Dwyer, who was part of the Cumann na mBan, a revolutionary group of Irish women in the early 1900s – and, of course, this project also has stoked her contemplations on history, personal, familial and large-scale.

But "Nine Apples of Gold" is not so much about conflict or hardship as it is about how we, as humans, respond to it – or anything in the realm of human experience, for that matter, says Casey.

"I've always felt songs sing what we can't say. In these songs, I'm talking about how we heal, how we join together to overcome that which oppresses us or

makes our lives difficult, how we can renew ourselves. A big part of that is opening ourselves up to our own insecurities, and for myself I found healing in the natural world, leaning into things that perhaps we can't quite understand or explain – being strong, being defiant but also allowing yourself to be open, even vulnerable."

The title track, which opens the album, encapsulates all that: Casey drew inspiration from the legend of *Tonn Chliona*, a supernatural woman from Glandore said to have three songbirds who ate apples from an otherworldly tree and whose singing could cure all illness; her powers caused an uproar, but Chliona changed into a wren to escape the men who set out to kill her. The song, set to a gentle melody and 3/4 time, describes Chliona's good works – putting bread "in the hands of the hungry and tired," and "loving with all her might" – and the chorus offers a benediction: "Hear the music how it heals." At the end, there's a recording of songbirds from Portglenone Forest in Antrim, courtesy of Graham (one of numerous contributions he makes to the album).

"I loved the magic in this story and thought a lot about how women carry tunes and songs and dance and bring so much healing to the world," says Casey, who provides piano accompaniment on the track.

"Daughter Dear" exemplifies the influence of traditional song idioms from on Casey, in this case a mother-daughter conversation from the grave, all tenderness and regret ("What is it you wish to whisper/In my small round ear/Mama my dear?"), accentuated by Rioghnach Connolly's harmony vocals and more fine piano from Casey. "Return to the Wild" also has references to the folk song lyric tradition ("Do you hear the ships sail in the forest/Do you hear the strawberries grow in the salt sea") in its extolling of the natural world's virtues, and there's a bit of folk wisdom, too: "If you let sorrow come in on you/He will come and stay/He will sit down to wine and dine/And he won't go away."

"The Weeping Time" shifts not only mood and tone but sense of place, as Casey evokes the story of the Gullah Geechee people from the coastal areas and the sea islands of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, who have strived to maintain their African heritage and culture. Graham's finger-picked acoustic guitar gives the

song an appropriately American South flavor, and the lyrics convey history and legacy: "Time steps onto the train/Time with her dominant refrain/How many drowned/How many survived/How many were caught again/If the water could weep/If the dogs could speak."

Solidarity and camaraderie fire country-rockish "Sister I Am Here for You," driven by Graham's acoustic and electric guitars and John McCullough's keyboards, and most of all, Dunne's backing vocals on the chorus and the proclamational ending: "Deep down in our bone we know times are going to change." Casey is quick to credit Graham for the song's musical character, which came from listening to some of recent Grammy winner Bonnie Raitt's discography.

"Sean and Niamh both have been such a pleasure to work with," says Casey. "We have quite a bit in common: We like a lot of the same things, and we come from the tradition, so there are a lot of places where we overlap. But, being 15, 17 years younger than me, they have fresh ears and fresh perspectives, and I like having that dynamic when we collaborate."

Casey's rendition of the album's lone traditional song, the much-covered "The Rocks of Bawn," is a revelation. As a "come-all-ye," there is an implicit sense of shared struggle and fellowship to it, but also an undertone of melancholy resignation ("I'm afraid you'll never be able to plough the Rocks of Bawn"), underscored by Graham's spare, bright guitar.

Having gone through a spectrum of emotions on the album's first nine tracks, Casey sews it all together with "I Thank My Lucky Stars," an affirmation, and appreciation, for the things we have in front of us – whether birds, trees and sunlight – and inside us, including music and even "sorrows left unsaid." So perhaps it's not surprising that she dedicates the song to daughters Maureen and Áine (the latter of whom conceived of and performed in a dance piece for the "Nine Apples of Gold" video).

Having previewed a few selections from "Nine Apples of Gold" during her US tour last September, Casey looks forward to bringing out all the new material, and some of the old, during the 13-city tour – including the stop in Boston – in March.

"You can get so much energy back from performing," says Casey. "It's great to be at the stage where you just enjoy yourself being out there. If you really care about what you do, if you really want to be good, playing music for a living can be overwhelming at times. But when you're actually in front of people, that's when good things can happen: I think of music as an in-between time and space where we can talk about difficult and thorny subjects; we can put these subjects into the room in an easier way, through the words and melody of a song."

Tickets and other information for Casey's March 5 show at Club Passim is available at passim.org. For more about Casey and "Nine Apples of Gold," see www.karencasey.com.

Gourley and Feddersen are tuned into fiddle's different sounds

By SEAN SMITH
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

There are fiddle duet albums, and then there are magnum opus-level fiddle duet albums.

On "Brightly or Darkly," the second recording by Boston-area musicians Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen, their fiddles sync up together, sometimes harmonize, play off one another, even seem to challenge or occasionally – thanks to the use of non-standard tunings – growl at one another, as the duo performs various jigs, reels, hornpipes and other tunes from the Irish tradition (Feddersen and Gourley each have a solo track).

It makes for a thoroughly entrancing listening experience. The basic connectivity between the two, with their sheer expressiveness on the fiddle, is so enthralling in and of itself. Their choice of material and the way they sort it into specific medleys is similarly astute. The crowning touch is their exploration of a fiddle world beyond the instrument's tried-and-true D (GDAE) tuning; on various tracks, they tune their fiddles to B, B-flat, C-sharp, E-flat, F-sharp and G-sharp. This brings out a markedly different quality to their instruments, and therefore, the tunes they play.

On "The Maids of Mitchelstown/Cal-laghan" and the latter part of "Morning Thrush/Spike Island Lasses" reel sets, for example – both in B – the lower strings of the fiddle have a strikingly gritty sound to them that drives the rhythm quite compellingly. For "Collier's/The Bucks of Oranmore," Gourley plays in F-sharp to Feddersen's C-sharp, and you've never quite heard "The Bucks" (the reel that, as Seamus Ennis once said, can't be followed by anything else, according to the sleeve notes) this way before. And listen to the harmonies on the set of polkas ("Allistrum's/Ned Kelly's"), played in E-flat, or the tonality G-sharp brings to the jigs "I Ne'er Shall Wear Her/Hardiman's Fancy."

But the different tunings shouldn't be regarded as some gimmick: Rather, they enhance the exceptional individual abilities of Feddersen and Gourley, and their rapport with one another.

Gourley, incidentally, also contributes guitar and bouzouki accompaniment on the album, to a particularly lovely effect on the waltz (played in B) "Humours of Glynn."

Released during the past year, "Brightly or Darkly" is the long-awaited follow-up to "Life Is All Checkered" (both album titles come from a Thomas Moore poem), which Gourley and Feddersen put out in early 2015, roughly two years after they had moved to Boston within several months of one another – Gourley from suburban Minneapolis, Feddersen from New York City – although their paths had already crossed at various musical gatherings.

By the time "Life" was released, both

had settled very comfortably into the area Irish music scene, and become a constant presence at sessions as well as performance venues and events. That trend has continued for Gourley and Feddersen, from hosting sessions at the Burren and the Brendan Behan Pub to appearing at BCMFest, Club Passim, the Burren Backroom series and "A St. Patrick's Day Celtic Sojourn"; in addition to playing as a duo, they're part of the quartet Ship in the Clouds. And they've branched out into individual ventures: Gourley with uilleann piper Joey Abarta as the duo Copley Street, Feddersen with old-timey trio Wooden Nickels.

The two make a point of lauding the Boston Irish music community in the "Brightly or Darkly" sleeve notes, and also cite local references among some of the tunes: "Pride of Roxbury," associated with the renowned Boston fiddler Paddy Cronin; "Hardiman's Fancy," a favorite of another area legend, accordionist Joe Derrane; "Galway to Dublin," a quite entertaining version of which was recorded by Dan Sullivan's Shamrock Band, a popular Boston ensemble in the 1920s and '30s.

Feddersen and Gourley recently reflected on the process of recording "Brightly or Darkly" and their time in Boston, among other topics.

You recorded "Life Is All Checkered" in 2014/2015. What do you feel you learned from the experience of planning and putting it together?

Feddersen: For "Life Is All Checkered," we recorded in Dimension Sound, which was a very different process. We rehearsed and recorded everything ahead of time and had a plan going in, only did a few takes of each track.

For "Brightly or Darkly," we recorded in Nathan's studio. We had basically unlimited time. The upside was we were more comfortable to play around with the tunes and do as many takes as we wanted.

The downside is it took almost three years to record all the tracks!

Gourley: Making albums has been an iterative process for me. After "Life Is All Checkered," Laura said she'd like us to explore alternate fiddle tunings. We recorded "Wooden Nickels" – Laura's project with Owen Marshall and Joel Wennerstrom – in my home studio, partially to try and cultivate a relaxed and experimental environment. "Ship in the Clouds" [released in 2020] was my first time playing guitar for a whole album. For me, these three projects laid a lot of the groundwork and were a chance to try out various things that went into "Brightly or Darkly."

You made these recordings for "Brightly or Darkly" over a period from 2018-21. Was this a case of starting out with the intent of making an album, only to have the pandemic interfere with the plan? Or was it always a play-it-as-it-goes project?



Laura Feddersen and Nathan Gourley experimented with alternate fiddle tunings on "Brightly or Darkly."
Sean Smith photo

Gourley: It was always an album for me. One downside to a home studio is there's less scheduling pressure, and the experimental nature of the alternate tunings we used led to a fairly lengthy initial period of exploration. When the pandemic removed most gigs and social events from our calendars, we found ourselves with more time to work on the album.

Feddersen: Another benefit of recording at home was that the process was not really affected by the pandemic. That said, the anxiety and logistics of those times was a general drain on energy, so it probably did slow us down somewhat.

You've mentioned the different tunings you used: Is this an aspect of fiddling that's fairly new for you? What do you like about the different tunings?

Feddersen: Having grown up in Indiana, I've heard and played quite a bit of American old time music. All the tunings we're using would be quite common in that tradition. In Irish music it's also not uncommon to tune the fiddle a bit higher or lower to match the tuning of a set of B pipes or an E-flat concertina. We like playing with them because they often change the fingerings or resonance just slightly, encouraging different ornamentation, chords, or bowing patterns. It's an easy way to get a fresh perspective on a tune.

Gourley: Before 2018, I had only tried a couple experiments in alternate tunings, like playing "The Foxhunters" reel in AEAE as James Kelly did on "Traditional Music of Ireland." When Laura, with a background in old-time music where alternate tunings are commonly used, suggested we try some out, I was initially reluctant but after a bit of experimentation I grew to really love the effect – high bass especially, where the lowest string is tuned up a whole step, has a way of adding resonance and new chordal possibilities without detracting from the melody.

"Life Is All Checkered" came pretty early in your Boston residency, though of course you were making plenty of connections in the local Irish music scene. In the notes for "Brightly or Darkly," you make mention of being inspired by Boston musicians, present and past. What have been some foundational experiences for you both

(together and individually) in terms of the music here?

Feddersen: Coming to Boston, we found a strong community of musicians already established here. I was living in New York at the time and would come up to visit – I always had a great time going to house concerts at Lisa and John Coyne's place and sessions at the Brendan Behan Pub, so I knew when I moved here there would be no shortage of music.

I hope the new generation of musicians who've been coming to town recently are feeling that same welcoming energy.

Gourley: There have been so many that it's hard to know where to start: house concerts and parties at the Coyne's house; Tuesday nights at the Druid with Joey Abarta, Tina Lech, Teddy Davis, and George Keith; Brian O'Donovan's Wednesday night concerts at the Burren Backroom. Also, Saturday afternoons at the Behan with Cara Frankowicz, John Coyne, and James Hamilton. Saturday nights at the Burren with Helena Delaney and Sean Clohessy. Sunday afternoons at the Burren with John Gannon. The list goes on and on, and one of the things I've always appreciated about Boston is the frequency of musicians moving here or coming through on tour.

Over the past year or so, we've seen the return of live, in-person music events returning, especially sessions. Do you get a sense of normalcy? Or are people still kind of feeling their way forward in the Irish music scene, here in Boston or elsewhere?

Feddersen: To me it feels like all is back to normal. In Boston, there are a lot more sessions now than there were before the pandemic.

Gourley: I think we're all feeling our way forward on a number of fronts. Boston's weekly sessions have been going strong, and we've been lucky with the timing of some trips and concerts, but these are uncertain times. A large part of what drew me to Irish music was the social aspect, so it's all the more important to appreciate opportunities to be together safely when they present themselves.

For more about Gourley and Feddersen and their recordings, go to nathanandlauramusic.com

Boston's Theater Scene Remains Vital

Here's what's onstage this spring

By R. J. DONOVAN
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

"Dancing at Lughnasa" March 3 - 19, Arlington Friends of the Drama

It's late summer of 1936 in the Donegal home of the Mundy family. The five eclectic, unmarried sisters come alive with the arrival of their first radio. The house is suddenly filled with music and dancing. These strong Irish Catholic women are not afraid to confront one another, yet they always have each other's backs. Brian Friel's touching memory play details the family's life on the Irish countryside when the tide turns and a bitter challenge must be faced. afdtheatre.org.



Laura Benanti
In concert

"An Evening with Laura Benanti" March 10 - 11, Umbrella Arts Center

Tony Award-winning stage and screen star Laura Benanti is a celebrated stage and screen actress hailed by *The New York Times* for her effortless vocals. Appearing in concert for two nights only, Ms. Benanti has starred in such Broadway shows as *"Into the Woods,"* *"Nine"* (opposite Antonio Banderas), *"Gypsy"* (Tony Award), *"She Loves Me,"* and *"My Fair Lady."* theumbrellaarts.org.



Ciaran Sheehan stars in Reagle's *"Ceol Agus Craic: A St. Patrick's Day Celebration."*

"Ceol Agus Craic: A St. Patrick's Day Celebration" March 11 - 12, Reagle Music Theatre

Reagle's *St. Patrick's Day salute* will deliver all the good fortune you need! This year's revue stars Reagle favorite, Broadway's acclaimed Ciarán Sheehan (*"Phantom of the Opera"*), and his critically acclaimed musicians and

friends from Galway and beyond. From *"The Wild Rover"* to *"Danny Boy"* and *"Galway Bay,"* this celebration of Irish culture, music and dance will feature showstopping Irish Step dances from The Harney Academy, plus Irish classics performed by some of Reagle's most beloved artists. It's a true pot of gold! reaglemusictheatre.org.



"The Secret Garden."

"The Secret Garden" March 17 - April 2, Company Theatre

A young orphaned Mary Lennox travels from India to England in 1910 to live with her reclusive Uncle. She feels neglected and alone. Ultimately, a brooding English manor, a coveted garden, and the healing power of hope come to change the course of an entire village as Francis Hodgson Burnett's novel is brought to life in this captivating Broadway musical. companytheatre.com.



Montego Glover, the Witch in *"Into The Woods."*
Matthew Murphy &
Evan Zimmerman photo

"Into The Woods" March 21 - April 2, Emerson Colonial

What comes after Happily Ever After? What happens if you actually get your wish?

"Into The Woods" explores that and more as it weaves together several fairy tales, sometimes to startling conclusions. This charming production of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's Tony-winning triumph comes to Boston straight from its New York run, featuring Montego Glover (The Witch), Stephanie J. Block (The Baker's Wife), Sebastian Arcelus (The Baker) and Gavin Creel (Cinderella's Prince/The Wolf) - all reprising their Broadway roles. Boston's own Sam Simahk is also a member of the cast. emersoncolonialtheatre.com.

Note: Block and Arcelus will appear the first week only. Additional casting will be announced.

"The Crucible" March 29 - April 2, Hanover Theatre

Widely considered one of America's greatest plays, Arthur Miller's *"The Crucible"* dramatizes the Salem witch trials of the late 1600s. Miller originally wrote the piece in response to the McCarthy-era communist "witch hunt" that gripped the United States in the 1950s. The themes and emotions clearly resonate in today's world. Director Livy Scanlon is assembling an experimental staged reading for Hanover Theatre Rep featuring an all-female cast. Audiences are invited to stay for post-show dialogues with members of the community and creative team. thehanovertheatre.org.

"Sister Act" April 7 - May 14, Lyric Stage Company of Boston

After witnessing a murder, free spirited, disco diva Deloris Van Cartier finds herself hiding out in the stately convent of The Queen of Angels Cathedral. With thugs in the shadows, at odds with a rigid Mother Superior, and facing a totally foreign and very strict lifestyle, Deloris (now Sister Mary Clarence) finds divine intervention as she brings the church choir from dour to dazzling by adding her signature musical pizzazz. Raise your voice for a divine, feel-good show! lyricstage.com.



Madeline Powell is Eliza Doolittle in *"My Fair Lady."*
Jeremy Daniel photo

"My Fair Lady" April 18 - 30, Boston Opera House

Esteemed Bartlett Sher directs this luminous Lincoln Center production of the Lerner & Loewe classic. Boasting such songs as *"I Could Have Danced All Night,"* *"The Rain in Spain,"* and *"On the Street Where You Live,"* *"My Fair Lady"* tells the story of Eliza Doolittle, a young Cockney flower seller, and Henry Higgins, a pompous linguistics professor who's determined to transform her into his idea of a "proper lady." But in the end, who's really been

transformed? It'll be lovely to find out. boston.broadway.com.



The cast of *"Angels in America."*
Photo: Central Square Theater

"Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part 1: Millennium Approaches" April 20 - May 21, Central Square Theatre

A modern masterpiece, Tony Kushner's *"Angels in America"* careens from New York City to Heaven and back in the midst of the 1980s AIDS crisis and Ronald Reagan's administration. A brilliant exploration of human connection mixing real-life and fictional characters, this epic tale will be brought to life via Bedlam Artistic Director Eric Tucker's signature, pared-down approach. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, *"Angels in America"* is still fiercely hopeful today. centralsquaretheater.org.



John Kuntz, Abriel Coleman, Mary Callanan and Liesie Kelly in *"The Prom."*
Photo credit: Nile Scott Studios

"The Prom" May 5 - June 3, Speakeasy Stage Company

Emma didn't set out to be the face of a movement; she just wanted to take her girlfriend to their high school prom. But just when it seems she might win over the hesitant PTA, four bumbling, self-obsessed Broadway has-beens in search of misguided relevance barge into Edgewater, Indiana, to put a spotlight on the issue - and themselves. As the worlds of Broadway and Main Street America collide, the courage of one girl reminds us that love unites us all. This smart, heartwarming show won the 2019 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Musical. So grab your corsage! speakeasystage.com.

Her new album is ‘Falling Forward,’ but Schneckenburger is happy to look back

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Her stay in the Boston area was a relatively brief one, but the area’s folk/traditional music scene made an impression on Vermont fiddler-vocalist Lissa Schneckenburger, and she returned the favor.

The Maine native came to town in the late 1990s as a student in New England Conservatory, and spent quite a bit of time in local sessions and contra dances, and a number of collaborations as well. Besides fronting her own band, she was part of Boston-based fiddle ensemble Childsplay, the much-loved quartet Halali – along with fellow fiddlers Hanneke Cassel and Laura Cortese and guitarist Flynn Cohen – the duo Phantom Power with pianist Bruce Rosen, and joined in with the Boston Scottish Fiddle Club. Schneckenburger appeared at BCMFest (and also created the original festival banner), New England Folk Festival Association and Club Passim – which is where she’ll be returning on March 7 at 7 p.m.; her Boston-area performances have also included opening for Judy Collins at Symphony Hall and Richard Thompson at Sanders Theatre.

Schneckenburger moved away in 2004, but not before creating a considerable appreciation among folk/trad aficionados for the versatility of her New England-nourished fiddling that enabled her to fit snugly in different musical settings, from Irish pub sessions to Scottish country dance events to Cape Breton ceilidhs, as well as contra dance halls. Her self-assured singing – whether a traditional ballad, a contemporary folk composition or a pop song (including “You Don’t Mess Around with Jim” and “Crimson and Clover,” which were on her 2013 album “Covers”) – created even more appeal, and over time, so did her songwriting, particularly on “Thunder in My Arms,” her 2019 release comprising all original pieces inspired by her experiences as a foster and adoptive parent.

Her March 7 show at Club Passim (see passim.org for ticket info) will serve as the launch for Schneckenburger’s newest album, “Falling Forward,” which spotlights her own fiddle tunes and a pair of traditional songs, “Cruel Mother” and “Benjamin Deane.” The titular track has a swooping Scandinavian character to it – aided by harmony fiddle and accordion – while “The Ranch” moves along to an unusual, and fascinating, cadence; there’s also a sprightly jig/reel combo, “Sorry for the Divots/For Grada,” and an epic set that begins with a rather dark traditional Scottish tune and builds to a momentous, climactic jig with duet fiddles over a pulsating piano (the track is titled “The Scolding Wives of Abertaff/Were Totally Justified/Using Their Leadership Skills to Get [expletive] Done”). No lack of contrasts here.

Schneckenburger recently offered some thoughts about the new album and the good old days in Boston.



Lissa Schneckenburger will mark the release of her new album on March 7 at Club Passim

Are the tunes on “Falling Forward” mostly recent compositions, or do they go a ways back?

Schneckenburger: Some of each. There are a couple of tunes that I wrote a long time ago, but never managed to find a place for on previous albums – like “The Ranch” or “For Grada” – some music that was written at the start of the pandemic – like “Susan’s Garden March” – and some written within the last year or so, like “For the Millions.”

Do you feel like your tune-writing has changed over time?

Schneckenburger: I think the biggest change in my tune- and song-writing is that now I consider it to be part of my job. I used to write music every once in a while when I felt inspired, or when I didn’t have anything else that I needed to practice. These days, I am more aware that a person can practice writing music much in the same way that they can practice playing music, and the more you practice something the better you are at it. I’m also more willing to work on tunes and edit them if there is a spot that doesn’t seem quite right, while in the past I either loved a tune and kept it or hated it and forgot about it.

You did a string of albums that were built around a theme/concept: “Song,” “Dance,” “Covers” and “Thunder in My Arms.” Do you see “Falling Forward” in that same light, or instead having several different aspects to it?

Schneckenburger: Yes, I love a good theme – theme albums, theme parties, themed playlists, you name it! The theme for “Falling Forward” is original fiddle tunes, of course, although I do deviate from that once or twice in a way that I hope is complementary to the overall listening experience. The truth is, I’m constantly writing new tunes, but it was hard to find a fitting place to put them on my previous concept albums. Some of

these tunes have been patiently waiting in the wings for years, and now it’s finally their turn to shine.

You have a different supporting cast for “Falling Forward” than for most of your previous recordings, among them Katie McNally – who’s also the producer – on harmony fiddle, someone very well-known in Greater Boston. How did this particular ensemble come together?

Schneckenburger: The studio ensemble for this album came out of a brainstorm. I wrote down everyone on my fantasy trad music team, and these folks were at the top of the list. When I brought Katie on board as producer, we talked about musicians and instrumentation and were pretty much aligned from the start, in terms of who we wanted to ask to record with us. I feel really excited and honored to have made an album with such an all-star team.

Besides Katie, there’s Natalie Haas (cello), who many people know from her duo with fiddler Alasdair Fraser; Rachel Aucoin (piano) has played with fiddler Laura Risk and many Quebecois musicians; Karen Tweed (piano accordion) has been part of bands like The Poozies and SWAP, and toured with Irish piper and singer Christy O’Leary; Mali Obomsawin (double bass) co-founded the folk-rock trio Lula Wiles, but also is very active in promoting Wabanaki music, art and culture.

It’s about 20 years since you left Boston, right? What are your dominant music-related memories of living in Boston? What impact did it all have on you?

Schneckenburger: I just had to double-check the math, but yes, I left Boston to move to New York in 2004, and then moved from New York to Vermont in 2006, so it’s been a while. I have so many amazing musical memories of when I

lived in Boston, I could definitely write a book, although I won’t, because I know it’s already been done a few times – at the very least, I should make a photo montage and post it on Instagram.

Boston was the perfect place to be a young college student studying music, there were so many opportunities to learn, to listen, to get inspired, and to get motivated. I loved having so many friends from fiddle camps that I went to as a teenager, now suddenly all living in the same city as I was: people like Hanneke Cassel, Laura Cortese, Casey Dreissen, April Verch, and so many more. That meant that there were plenty of jam sessions and parties where we could play and get ideas from each other.

There were always great concerts to go to and I was constantly collecting new ideas about music and performing. My life definitely changed when I went to see SWAP or Danu, or Chris Wood and Andy Cutting at Johnny D’s, or Annbjorg Lien at the Somerville Theater, or Tommy Peoples at the back room of the Burren. I volunteered as an usher at concerts for Kate Rusby and Childsplay (before I was ever in the band). Living in Boston had a huge impact on my life and music, and it still does today for myself and many other musicians. I may not stay up until 2 a.m. playing tunes any more – now that I’m a parent, I’m in favor of a more relaxed Sunday brunch jam session – but my time in Boston helped me forge lasting friendships and musical memories.

It’s also really special as one of the only places in the country where a traditional musician can work full time teaching, leading sessions, playing concerts, etc., without having to travel or tour. There are lots of amazing places in the world, but Boston is one of the few that can support and sustain a group of trad musicians, for which I am extremely thankful. Good job Boston, keep it up!

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literature, language and the history of Ireland, and to raise awareness of the contributions
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Éire Society to honor Globe columnist Cullen with its Gold Medal

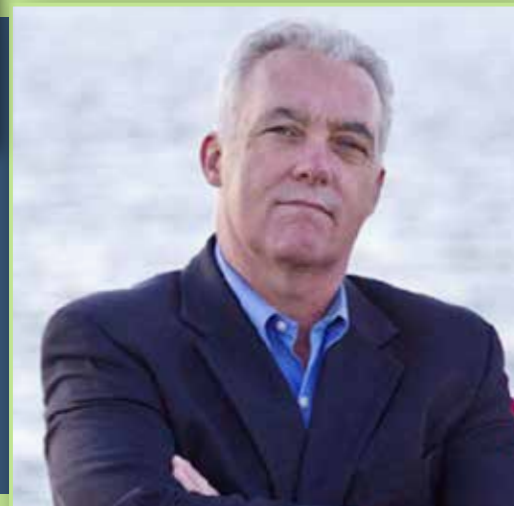
Citing Kevin Cullen, a columnist with the Boston Globe, for his decades-long coverage of events on the island of Ireland, especially in the North during troubled times and as the 1998 Good Friday Agreement came to pass, the Éire Society of Boston will award him its Gold Medal at a dinner and award ceremony on Sat., April 22, at 6 p.m. at the Seaport Boston Hotel.

An invitation to join the Society

The Éire Society is one of Boston's oldest Irish organizations. We promote knowledge of Irish culture through the encouragement of study in the arts, sciences, literature, language and history of Ireland; the contributions to civilization made by the Irish and those of Irish ancestry; networking between all Irish and Americans; and raising awareness of the actions made by the Irish for the advancement of American ideals. The Society is a non-political and non-sectarian organization, which throughout its history has welcomed people who share its concerns, regardless of their race, religion or ethnicity. We are a diverse mix of individuals of all ages and backgrounds, both American and Irish-born. You are invited to become a member and join our spirited community! We offer special events to promote appreciation and knowledge of Irish culture, arts, sciences, literature, language, music and history. Annually in spring, a person who exemplifies the best in Irish culture and achievement is honored at the elegant Gold Medal Banquet. Membership connects you with others who appreciate Irish culture, and is open to anyone who shares in the organization's ideals. Members receive regular e-mail announcements keeping you abreast of local, regional and international happenings, and invitations to special events and discounted admission for selected programs.

The 2022-2023 Membership Levels/ Annual Dues are: Student \$20 Individual \$50 Household/ Couple \$75 Sponsor \$250. Please apply at Eiresociety.org/membership

The Éire Society of Boston
2023 Gold Medal Dinner & Award Ceremony
Saturday, April 22, 2023
6pm
Seaport Boston Hotel



Honoring Gold Medal Award Recipient Kevin Cullen, columnist for the Boston Globe. He was the former Dublin Bureau Chief covering Northern Ireland for more than a quarter century and was the only fulltime reporter for an American newspaper based in Ireland during the peace process that culminated in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Join us for a lively evening in honor of Kevin Cullen!

For more information, contact Gold Medal Dinner Committee Members:

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

call Paul Doyle at (781) 924-1065

Tickets are \$250.00 per person

eiresociety.org

Photo shoot: The 20th BCMFest (Boston Celtic Music Fest)

BCMFest (Boston Celtic Music Fest) marked its 20th anniversary Jan. 12-15 with an array of sold-out events at Club Passim and The Sinclair in Harvard Square, and the Crystal

Ballroom in Somerville's Davis Square; the festival also held participatory workshops and sessions at First Parish Cambridge. It was the first time since 2020 that BCMFest

had held an in-person festival; plans are underway for the one-day Summer BCMFest.

Sean Smith photos



Loud Weather (L-R Elias Alexander, Alasdair White, Neil Pearlman, Eamon Sefton and Anna Colliton) performed at The Sinclair as part of BCMFest 2023.



Kat Wallace and Ben Roberts (in foreground) headed up a beginner-level music session at First Parish Cambridge during the "Dayfest" portion of BCMFest 2023

BCMFest held its Boston Urban Ceilidh at the Crystal Ballroom in Somerville. Among the bands providing music was the Medford All-Star Ceili Band with (L-R) Sean Clohessy, John Coyne, Helena Delaney, George Keith, Tina Lech, Ted Davis and Tara Lynch.



‘For everyone who was there and didn’t come back home’

A new guided-missile destroyer will honor Medal of Honor Recipient Capt. Thomas G. Kelley

By PETER F. STEVENS
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

“It is a tremendous honor, and I am truly humbled...”

The modest words are those of Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Captain (ret.) Thomas Gunning Kelley, a Dorchester native whose courage and devotion under fire in Vietnam have now earned him another well-deserved plaudit. In January, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced that the guided-missile destroyer DDG-140 will be named for Captain Kelley.

Thomas Gunning Kelley was born on May 13, 1939, the son of Boston school teacher John Basil Kelley and Elizabeth Kelley, who had thirteen children and made their home in Codman Square before moving to West Roxbury a year or two after Thomas’s birth. He went on to graduate from Boston College High School, Class of 1956, and from the College of the Holy Cross, Class of 1960.

Shortly after Holy Cross, Kelley enlisted in the Navy in Boston, earned a lieutenant’s commission, and was eventually named commander of River Assault Division 152, part of the Mobile Riverine Force. On June 15, 1969, he was ordered to lead eight boats on a mission to remove an American infantry company from a bank of the Ong Muong Canal, in Kien Hoa Province, South Vietnam. Heavy fire from the Viet Cong raked the flotilla from the opposite bank, and when one of Kelley’s vessels could not raise its loading ramp to pull away, Kelley positioned his own craft between his command and the Viet Cong. Then, as he was ordering his other boats to form a defense line around the disabled vessel, a rocket slammed into his boat. Despite severe wounds from shrapnel in his face and on his head, Kelley, though

unable to stand or speak clearly, issued orders to his command with the help of one of his men and remained in charge while the crippled craft was repaired and his boats churned away to safety, their mission achieved. He suffered the loss of an eye among his other wounds.

According to his Medal of Honor citation, “Lt. Comdr. Kelley’s brilliant leadership, bold initiative, and resolute determination served to inspire his men and provide the impetus needed to carry out the mission. ... His extraordinary courage under fire, and his selfless devotion to duty sustain and enhance the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.”

Despite his injuries, Kelley requested to stay on active duty and retired from the Navy in 1990 with the rank of captain. He continued his commitment to service from 2003 to 2011 as Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services. Now 83, he and his wife, Joan, reside in Somerville today. They travel often to visit his son, three daughters, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Recently, Capt. Kelley spoke with *Boston Irish Magazine*. Following are excerpts from that conversation:

Q. *What was your reaction at the news that the Navy was naming a destroyer after you?*

A. I was overwhelmed. It was a thrill for my family. I wasn’t sure it would happen. I was in the running three years ago, but things can change when a new administration and Secretary [of the Navy] come in.

Q. *How would you describe your Boston upbringing?*

A. We lived briefly in Dorchester, and my brother, John, who later became a long-time teacher at Boston Latin, and



Captain Thomas G. Kelley and his medals.

I were raised in West Roxbury. I went to Blessed Sacrament School in Jamaica Plain—there were no Catholic schools then in West Roxbury.

Q. *What was the the impact of BC High and Holy Cross on you?*

A. The Jesuit education definitely shaped me and so many of my classmates. All my life, I’ve strived to live the Jesuit mantra of serving others. The fathers sure ran a taut ship. They instilled discipline, loyalty, and so much more in us. I remember Father Charles McCoy, a tough ex-Marine and football coach. Once when a kid was mouthing off to someone, Father McCoy picked up an eraser and beamed the guy. “Sit down, Red,” Father McCoy said. The kid sat down. That was a different era.

At Holy Cross, I studied economics. It was a great education. I wanted to join ROTC there, but couldn’t get in because of my eyesight—I had worn glasses since I was four.

Q. *With a major in economics, what compelled you to enlist in the Navy?*

A. Well, when I graduated, I was lucky that I could pass the Navy’s surface warfare eyesight requirements, so I was accepted as an Officer Candidate.

I’d actually wanted to join the Navy since I was a kid, and it was because of

my family’s annual summers in Maine, in Bar Harbor and Northeast Harbor. I still go there. When I was six, we saw the battleship U.S.S. Missouri there, and I was so impressed. I just knew that’s the career I wanted. We spent a lot of time sailing off Maine, and I just loved it.

My dad had a summertime job in Northeast Harbor as manager of a high-end hotel named the Kimball. It’s no longer there. I worked at the Kimball as a room-service waiter, and JFK came to the hotel while recovering from back surgery. I brought him breakfast every morning. I was in awe, as most Boston Irish were at that time. We had another Kennedy connection—in Dorchester: Rose Kennedy was my mom’s Confirmation sponsor.

Q. *In 1998, after your retirement from the Navy, you took a position at the Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services. How did that come about?*

A. Tom Hudner, a fellow Medal of Honor recipient and a Massachusetts guy, brought me in there when he was Secretary of the Department, and when he left in 2003, he persuaded [Gov.] Paul Cellucci to appoint me to the post. I served until my retirement in 2010.

Q. *What were some of the challenges as Secretary?*

A. After 9/11, we had a whole new cohort of vets, post-Vietnam, as well as Korea and even World War II. All of a sudden there were veterans dealing with back-to-back deployments, Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and so many other issues. We focused on them and their families. As the veteran suicide rate rose, we worked to address it. A young local Marine named James Crosby, who fought and was wounded in Iraq, founded the SAVE Program, a 24/7 operation that has been hugely effective in helping vets dealing with potential suicide, drugs, alcohol, and so many other issues. We also had to deal with the many more women veterans facing these problems.

Q. *What about your Medal of Honor is most meaningful to you?*

A. Sixty-four of us are living today. All of us wear it not for ourselves, but for everyone who was there and didn’t come back home.



An image of the destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71) shows what Capt. Kelley’s ship looks like.

BAE Systems via AP photo

Dick Flavin, bard of Red Sox lore, Pilot columnist, dies at 86

Richard Patrick "Dick" Flavin of Quincy, a man familiar to Massachusetts and New England from his many years of broadcast, print, and lecture commentaries on events of the day, including sports, died on Dec. 28, 2022. He was 86.

Mr. Flavin was born in Boston, but grew up in the Merrymount section of Quincy, one of the four children of the late James and Helen (Donovan) Flavin. He was a graduate of Archbishop Williams High School in Braintree and Stonehill College in Easton.

After a brief stint at his family's real estate business, Flavin and Flavin Realty, a profession for which, by his own admission, he was ill-suited, he found his calling in politics. He became the press spokesman for the Massachusetts State Democratic Committee in 1963 and later worked as a speechwriter for several Democratic politicians.

In 1970, Mr. Flavin left politics for reporting. He became political editor and reporter for WNAC-TV in Boston before moving to WBZ-TV in 1973, where he spent 14 years as a political commentator and social satirist. It was during this time that he was named one of Boston's 10 outstanding young leaders by the Boston Junior Chamber of Commerce and was presented the Stonehill College Outstanding Alumnus Award.

In 1987, Mr. Flavin left television to devote all his time on the lecture circuit. His speaking career took him all over the United States during which time he raised untold sums for charities by volunteering his services as an emcee. He loved giving back to the community and was generous with his time. Among the charities closest to his heart were The Jimmy Fund, and The Genesis Foundation for Children, with the John Havlicek Celebrity Fishing Tournament a favorite annual event).

In 2001, Mr. Flavin took the road trip of a lifetime when he drove two Red Sox greats, Dom DiMaggio and Johnny Pesky, from Massachusetts to Florida to "say good-bye" to a gravely ill Ted Williams, for whom Mr. Flavin, self-proclaimed "rhymers," rewrote "Casey at the Bat," turning it into "Teddy at the Bat." (He made sure to tweak the ending so Teddy didn't disappoint the fans, a la Casey.)

When they arrived in Florida, in what he believed would be a one-time performance, Flavin recited the poem in front of the three baseball greats. It must have



Dick Flavin, fan, raconteur, man about town.

been a hit as word of the reconfigured poem made its way back to Boston. He was asked to reprise the recitation at Fenway Park during a Red Sox memorial for Williams. He went on to perform it all over the country, including at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, and with the Boston Pops Orchestra at Boston's Symphony Hall.

David Halberstam, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author, wrote a book about the adventure called "The Teammates." Later, ESPN produced it as a documentary narrated by Mr. Flavin.

Mr. Flavin also found the time to strut his stuff as a playwright, authoring "According to Tip," a salute to the late Massachusetts politician and speaker of the US House for five consecutive Congresses.

In proof that dreams really do come true, Mr. Flavin was named Poet Laureate of the Boston Red Sox and, in an appointment he treasured, the Voice of Fenway Park, as he served as the day-game announcer at Fenway Park for five seasons, beginning in 2013. In 2015, he released a collection of his poems entitled "Red Sox Rhymes: Verses and Curses." The book, published by William Morrow, was a New York Times sports bestseller.

Mr. Flavin was diagnosed with throat cancer, a difficult blow for a man who made his living giving speeches. But like other obstacles he encountered

in his lifetime, cancer was no match for his strong spirit - the man had lots more to say!

More recently, he published a weekly blog "Musings by Dick Flavin." It featured "whatever thoughts he might have at any particular time about any particular subject" and is available at dickflavin.com. He was a weekly contributor to The Pilot, the oldest Catholic newspaper in the country, and an occasional contributor to the Dorchester Reporter and to the Boston Irish Reporter (now the website BostonIrish.com).

Lest you think otherwise, Mr. Flavin pursued hobbies that did not include the Red Sox. He was an avid jogger, sailor, and fisherman, a history buff, a voracious reader, a cinephile, and pretty darn good at a crossword puzzle.

He was loved by all who knew him. His family most of all. He leaves two daughters: Leslie, her husband Rich and their two children, Bitsy and Duke McCarthy, of Los Gatos, California; and Meredith Flavin, her husband, Alan Frank, and their daughter Helena, of Carlsbad, California. Also, his little sister, Marilyn (Flavin) Colman. He was predeceased by his sister, Marguerite Flavin, and his brother, Father James J. Flavin, OMI.

This obituary was first published in The Pilot on Jan. 6, 2023. It was written by Mr. Flavin's daughter, Leslie Flavin McCarthy, with inserts from the staff of Boston Irish.

THE SKINNY ON ME

Here's the skinny on this Flavin guy,
The one who writes the posey.
He's Mrs. Flavin's youngest boy
She loved him head to toesy.

His commentaries on TV
Gave politicians hives.
The set designers way back then
Were Currier and Ives.

He skewered parties equally,
Republicans and Demmies.
And got away with so much
That he won seven Emmys.

He wrote a play on Tip O'Neill,
Revealing and quite funny.
It brought him fame and some acclaim
And everything but money.

He writes ditties on the Red Sox
Their victories and losses.
He'll even rhyme from time to time
To tweak the BoSox bosses.

He'll give a speech in your hometown.
He'll do the speaking tour.
Truth is, if it comes to that,
He'll go door to door.

He's fooled some folks some of the time
By doing all that stuff.
And that, he's very pleased to say,
Seems to be quite enough.

Dick Flavin c. 2009

DEATH NOTICE

Shaun Folan, city parks worker, Galway native

Shaun Folan, a Galway native and West Roxbury resident, passed away on Jan. 30, 2023. An employee of Boston's Parks Department and a dedicated member of the Irish Social Club, he was the husband of Theresa (Hallaren), father of Seamus M. Folan, the son of Nora (Barrett) and the late Mairtin Folan, and brother of the late Mary Conroy.

Following a funeral Mass in St. Theresa Church in West Roxbury, he was laid to rest in Co. Galway, Ireland.

Please come and celebrate

Dorchester's Fourteenth Annual St. Patrick's Day Brunch

Saturday, March 18, 2023, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

St. Teresa of Calcutta Parish Hall
800 Columbia Road, Dorchester

2020 Dorchester Hall of Fame Inductees

Connie Sullivan - In Memoriam
Father John Unmi Father Joe White

2023 Dorchester Hall of Fame Inductees

Superintendent Nora Baston, Boston Police Department
Senator Nick Collins

Master of Ceremonies

Dan Rea

All proceeds to benefit Mary Ann Brett Food Pantry

Co-Chairs: Dr. Larry Ronan and Jim Brett

‘The Quiet Girl’ premieres scheduled at 11 New England theaters in March

“The Quiet Girl,” an Irish-language film that has been nominated for ‘Best International Film Feature’ at the upcoming Oscar Awards on March 12, was filmed in Counties Meath and Dublin. The movie offers a quiet meditation on rural country life in Ireland and beautifully captures

the nuances of farm life and small towns. The Irish language dimension of the film captures the essence of Ireland and its longstanding traditions of culture and heritage. “The Quiet Girl” will be screened on March 3 at Coolidge Corner Theatre Brookline and at the

Landmark Kendall Square Cinema Cambridge. Other Massachusetts sites include the Cape Cinema in Dennis and the Amherst Cinema Arts Center on March 10 and Images Cinema in Williamstown on March 17.



“The Quiet Girl” has been nominated for ‘Best International Film Feature’ at the upcoming Oscar Awards on March 12.



ICC taps McDermott

The Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston has named former Boston City Councillor from Allston-Brighton Jerry McDermott, above, its new executive director. He has 30 years of experience in the public, non-profit and private sectors, including staff roles with former US Sen. Scott Brown and with the administration of former Gov. Charlie Baker, who appointed him as acting sheriff of Norfolk County to complete the term of Michael Bellotti.

A lesson that history has handed to us: Adversity unlocks compassion, resilience

Letter to the Editor:

As an Irish person who has adopted the United States as his home away from home, I am probably more in tune with the echoes of our collective national history than I might have been had I never left. The global impact of wave after wave of emigration from that small island on the Atlantic’s western edge has been truly immense. One can only really appreciate our disproportionate influence on the wider world by visiting, living, and working abroad. But we should never forget how this came to be. Chances are, had the Irish not been repressed for centuries and forced to leave in the millions by starvation and poverty, things would

look very different today.

All of that suffering and loss is built into our DNA. But so, too, is the resilience, strength, and compassion that comes with adversity. Irish Americans have been among the most generous people in the world when it comes to supporting others who are experiencing similar challenges to those of our own forbears. Almost subconsciously, we can identify and empathize with those who are oppressed, hungry, or displaced from their homes. Sadly, in today’s world – from those who survived the 7.8 magnitude Turkey-Syria earthquake to those still internally displaced by conflict in Ukraine – they are not in short supply.

There are solutions, and my organization, Concern Worldwide US, is one of a number of Irish-founded aid agencies providing emergency relief and helping millions of people in some of the most fragile regions of the world. Concern deliberately seeks out the hardest-to-reach and most neglected communities, in part because we have that historic understanding of what it means to be forgotten and left behind. Dominic MacSorley is CEO of Concern Worldwide, Ireland’s largest international humanitarian and development organization that operates in 24 of the world’s poorest countries.

Dominic MacSorley

THE CELTIC CONNECTION

ALPHA-1 FOUNDATION

Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day and Irish Heritage with friends and family to benefit Alpha-1 research and programs! Enjoy a traditional Irish dinner with live music by “Hogan’s Goat”, Irish Step Dancers, and an interactive silent auction! Join us in recognizing this year’s recipients of the 2023 “Shillelagh” award.

Saturday, March 1, 2023
7:00 pm- 11:00 pm
Boston Marriott Newton

2345 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, MA 02466
To purchase tickets, visit: <http://bidpal.net/celticconnection2023>
To request sponsorship information please contact, Angela McBride at amcbride@alpha1.org
Remember, no need to be Irish to celebrate and enjoy the fun!

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Charitable Irish Society to mark its 286th by honoring Consul General Laoise Moore

St. Patrick's Day at Seaport Hotel

By CATHERINE B. SHANNON
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

The Charitable Irish Society is resuming its traditional St. Patrick's Day celebration on March 17 with a cocktail reception at the Seaport Hotel from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. The society will present a special honor to Consul General Laoise Moore in recognition of her steadfast efforts and success in keeping vibrant links and cooperation between the Consulate and many Irish organizations in Boston, and throughout New England despite the recent pandemic.

March 17th will mark 286 years since 26 men of Ulster birth or ancestry held the first St. Patrick's Day celebration in colonial Boston and formed the Charitable Irish Society, making it the oldest Irish society in the Americas. Its stated purpose was to provide relief to fellow Irishmen and women whose circumstances were reduced by "sickness, shipwreck and other accidental misfortunes."

The society also strove to cultivate a spirit of unity and harmony among all area Irishmen and to advance the social and cultural interests of the Irish people. For the past 286 years, the Society has remained true to its motto of "With Good Will Doing Service" and has preserved strong links between its ancestral land and its American homeland.

Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, the Charitable Irish Society held St. Patrick's Day celebrations every year except for a lapse during the American War of Independence and in 1880, when the West of Ireland was again facing a serious food crisis. The planned dinner that year was cancelled and the anticipated \$1,000 in proceeds was sent

to Ireland for relief of the poor.

Although the recent pandemic prevented the society's usual St. Patrick's Day Dinners, it did not interrupt the society's work of providing relief to needy Irish and non-Irish immigrants through our Silver Key program. Over this period, 45 grants amounting to \$38,224 were made to individuals or organizations, enabling recent immigrants to obtain medical care, food, clothing and shelter, and the resources to apply for visas or work permits.

Working often in collaboration with the Irish Pastoral Centre, the Rian Immigrant Center, and other immigrant advocacy groups, the society takes pride in its ability to respond very quickly to immigrants facing emergency situations. In recent years, the society has extended its remit to non-Irish immigrants who face challenges similar to what Irish immigrants faced in the past. Thus, in addition to Irish immigrants, grants have been made to people from Afghanistan, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iraq, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

The Charitable Irish Society has a distinguished history in terms of its members and their involvement in major political, economic and social developments for almost three centuries.

Numerous members were involved in the American Revolution, fought for the Union during the Civil War, and served in both World War I and World War II. (In 1943, more than 65 members were in active service in Europe, the Pacific and Africa.) Andrew Carney and Patrick Donahoe took leading roles in organizing Irish Famine relief during An Gorta Mor in the 1840s, and, later,

John Boyle O'Reilly, Patrick Collins, and Thomas Flatley raised funds to combat the return of famine and evictions in the West of Ireland in 1879-1880.

Many esteemed Massachusetts politicians have been members, including Governors Leverett Saltonstall, Maurice J. Tobin, David I. Walsh, James M. Curley, and US Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. American presidents who have addressed the society include Andrew Jackson, William H. Taft, Calvin Coolidge, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and future President John F. Kennedy, a member of the society. The society supported the cause of Irish independence in the early 20th century and was at the forefront of Boston Irish organizations in advocating for a peaceful resolution of the Northern Irish conflict, as shown in its support for Nobel Peace Laureate John Hume, whose vision was realized in the Good Friday Agreement whose 25th anniversary we celebrate this year.

The Charitable Irish Society is a volunteer organization. It welcomes



Consul General of Ireland to New England Laoise Moore will be feted on St. Patrick's Day.

new and especially younger members who share our commitment to render assistance to immigrants in need and our love and appreciation of our Irish heritage and our vibrant links with contemporary Ireland.

The March 17 event will include musical performances by the Boston College Heightsmen and the Laurel Martin trio. The Charitable Irish Society welcomes members of other organizations to attend this event. Individual tickets are \$75 and \$50 for students. Reservations can be made via our website, charitableirishsociety.org.

Catherine B. Shannon is a past president of the Charitable Irish Society.



The ICC's Aoife Griffin, left, Middlesex County District Attorney Marian T. Ryan, and ICC's President Martina Curtin. Photo courtesy of ICCNE



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WRENTHAM MASSACHUSETTS

ICCGB celebrates St. Brigid's Day

The Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston, in collaboration with the Consulate General of Ireland Boston, hosted the inaugural St. Brigid's Day celebrations on Wed., Feb. 1, at the Westin Copley Place in Boston. The evening event was sponsored by Invest Northern Ireland - Americas.

St. Brigid's Day, Lá Fhéile Bríde, is Ireland's annual celebration of the creativity and achievements of Irish women, in the arts, science, business, politics, and countless other fields.

Guest speakers included District Attorney of Middlesex Marian T. Ryan and Consul General of Ireland, Dr. Laoise Moore.

The evening also included the official launch of the 2023 Rose of Tralee with 2019's international Rose of Tralee Sinead Flanagan and 1985's international Rose of Tralee Chief of Police Helena Rafferty from Canton, Massachusetts.

1737



2023

The President and Board of Directors
of
The Charitable Irish Society

Cordially invite you to attend the
286th Anniversary of the Founding of the Society

"The Day We Celebrate"

Cocktail Reception

Honoring the Consul General of Ireland

Laoise Moore

*Representatives of Boston, Ireland, and the Commonwealth,
and esteemed members of society in attendance*

**Seaport Boston Hotel
One Seaport Lane
Boston, Massachusetts**

St. Patrick's Day, Friday, March 17, 2023

Musicians

The Heightsmen

Kathleen Guilday, Irish harp • Mark Roberts, flute • Laurel Martin, fiddle

5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**\$75 per person
\$50 per student**

**RSVP March 10, 2023 to
<https://charitableirishsociety.org/>
(617) 327-4876**

A Boston homecoming for ‘Irish’ Freddie Roach

He’s prepping Cork’s Callum ‘King’ Walsh for 10-rounder vs. Spain’s Ruiz on March 16

BY BRIAN WRIGHT O’CONNOR
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

When legendary boxing trainer Freddie Roach first stepped into the ring to fight professionally, he was known as “Irish” Freddie Roach and wore green trunks that his mother had sewed. Close to 40 years later, the storied cornerman returns to Boston after a long absence for an Irish homecoming with a young undefeated boxer – from Ireland, of course – looking for his sixth victory as a super welterweight.

Between the pandemic, running his Wild Card gym in California, and global travel with his stable of boxers and mixed martial arts champions, the Massachusetts-born and bred Hall of Fame trainer is looking forward to reuniting with friends and families along the River Charles over the week of St. Patrick’s Day.

“I’m very excited to be going home – it’s been five years,” said Roach, 62, from his boxing gym at Hollywood and Vine. But, he added, he’s more excited for his latest prospect, Callum “King” Walsh.

The 21-year-old Cork youngster, 5-0 so far with four knockouts under Freddie’s tutelage, is facing Leonardo DiStefano Ruiz from Spain (10-1, with 9 KO’s) in a 10-round main event March 16 at Boston University’s Agganis Arena.

“Callum told me it’s the dream of all Irish fighters to fight in Boston,” said Roach, “the Irish capital of the United States. I’m just glad Callum’s event is on the night before St. Patrick’s Day. There will be enough fights in Boston on the day itself!”

Roach’s experience with Irish boxers includes working with Dublin’s Stevie “Celtic Warrior” Collins, who won the World Boxing Organization middleweight and super-middleweight titles; and bantamweight Wayne McCullough from Belfast, the first Northern Ireland boxer to win a World Boxing Council title.

Current world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury, the son of Irish Traveler parents from Galway and Belfast, also trained in Roach’s gym. Roach has coached 27 world champions so far, most notably eight-division titlist Manny Pacquiao, five-time champ Miguel Cotto, light welterweight champion Amir Khan, and MMA title-holder George St-Pierre.

Collins and McCullough “worked hard and were great students,” said Roach. “Even though they were veterans when they started working with me, they were eager to learn new things and they worked on those things diligently. I have to think that their success inspired Irish kids to go to the gyms and give boxing a try.”

Roach’s own style as a boxer was first forged in brawls as a kid growing up in Dedham – the tough east side of town, not the Charles River estates due west – after moving from leafier Hanson to the veterans projects up against the

Boston line. His older brothers, who had their own careers as professional boxers, pulled him into some 300 street fights, by his own estimate.

“Once we moved to Dedham, I seemed to see a lot more Irish families in the neighborhood,” he said. “My brothers and I were naturally competitive with each other so of course we were always mixing it up and making trouble with each other. We fought with each other and in the streets against the kids. In the streets, we always had each other’s back.”

But once the ring replaced the streets, Roach left brawling – most of it, anyway – behind. “The more time I spent in the gym, the less time I had to get in trouble. The harder I worked, the more I achieved. It felt good.”

Roach’s father Paul, who started the family in Dorchester, after marrying Barbara Ann Morrison from Roxbury, trained three of their seven children – Freddie, Joey, and Pepper – in the ring while working as an arborist, a profession Freddie took up as well after graduating from the Norfolk County Agricultural School. He first fight came at age six and first tournament at eight. Freddie dominated opponents in amateur bouts in New England as a lightweight and turned pro at age 18.

“My father lived through us,” Freddie told one interviewer. “He was a fighter. He wanted us to be fighters. It was part of life in the Roach household.”

Barbara was not just a ringside rooster. From a tough Dublin family who passed through St. Peter’s Bay in Prince Edward’s Island before landing in Boston, she was the first woman boxing judge in New England and, like her son, was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

After Freddie turned pro, Eddie Futch, who trained four of the five boxers who defeated Muhammad Ali, became his trainer. Freddie went 26-1 before appearing in Boston Garden on a 1982 card that included all three of



A boxer with his mentor prepping for the next big bout.

Mike Stiles, 360 Promotions photos

the “Fighting Roach Brothers.” Joey and Pepper won, but Freddie lost a unanimous decision in the main event to Rafael Lopez.

A crowd-pleasing fighter who would take one punch to give two, Freddie fought for four more years – against Futch’s advice – and retired at age 26 after losing five of his last six fights. His largest purse never exceeded \$8,000.

So he went back to climbing trees full-time. But the fight game still drew him in. With \$250 in cash from felling a Dedham oak, he bought a ticket to Las Vegas, where he worked as a telemarketer and busboy before landing an unpaid gig as an assistant to Eddie Futch.

It was a match made in fisticuffs heaven.

“Mr. Futch was a complete trainer. He knew how to develop a strategy for a fight, he kept an eye on every fighter, even when they weren’t in the gym. He knew who was doing his roadwork and staying in at night. He was just good at all aspects of training a fighter,” said Roach.

Though he hadn’t taken Futch’s advice to retire from the ring earlier, Freddie listened to everything Eddie imparted about being an elite cornerman. “He taught me to fight like a professional, transforming me from a fighter to a

boxer. He taught me skills,” said Roach.

“The one thing I noticed early and picked up on was that in the ring corner or on the gym floor, Mr. Futch always spoke in a low tone. He never yelled. It forced you to focus on what he was saying and listen hard because everything he said was important and you didn’t want to miss it. The other thing I learned from Mr. Futch was to be spare in the instructions you give in the corner between rounds. You only have one minute so make on or two points to the fighter and drill it in.”

Boston has produced a number of Irish champions – John L. Sullivan’s reign as the bare-knuckle titlist topping them all – but Roach doesn’t hesitate in naming the greatest he’s seen.

“Boston has a great Irish boxing heritage, but I’m going to go with the one I saw fight in person, and that’s Micky Ward,” he said, naming the Lowell champion whose story was featured in the Oscar-winning film “The Fighter.”

“I know he’s best known for his terrific trilogy with Arturo Gatti, but I’m also thinking about his knockout victories of Shea Neary, Steve Quinonez, Genato Andujar, Carlos Brandi, and Alfonso Sanchez. Micky was a helluva fighter.”

Looking back on his own zig-zag journey to the top of the fighting game – and his courageous battle with Parkinson’s Disease – Roach said he owns his mistakes and hopes he has learned from them, and that his own example can teach others.

“Life is a great teacher. Yes, we all make mistakes, but it’s what you do with that experience that makes or breaks you,” he said. “For me, boxing gave me a lot of life-learning lessons. Work hard, listen to your trainer, and follow the rules and you will naturally improve. The results will be obvious. A loss would not be the worst thing if you did your best in preparation.

“Boxing taught me discipline and respect – respect for the sport, my opponent, and my trainers. Find something you love to do and do your best at it and nine times out of ten you will develop self-respect and be happier.

“Focus on that and it’s easier to ignore the elements and people you should avoid.”



Callum “King” Walsh pounds the bag in anticipation of his fight against Leonardo DiStefano Ruiz from Spain on March 16 at Boston University’s Agganis Arena.

Walsh begins NHL union job this month

BY GINTAUTAS DUMCIUS
REPORTER STAFF

Marty Walsh is expected to start his new job as executive director of the National Hockey League Players' Association in mid-March, the union said in a statement last week.

Walsh, Boston's mayor between 2014 and 2021 and before that a local lawmaker and labor leader, is the first Cabinet member to leave the Biden White House. While continuing to live in Dorchester's Lower Mills neighborhood, he has served as President Biden's secretary of labor since March 2021.

Walsh, 55, has been quiet about taking the job since it was first reported weeks ago in a hockey news outlet. Reports indicate he'll be earning an annual salary of more than \$3 million.

Last Thursday, the Toronto-based players union released this statement on his behalf: "My years of experience in the labor movement and in public life has taught me that the job is never about me. It's about us. It's about the people we serve. So, I look forward to working with players and the NHLPA staff to make the NHLPA the best and most effective team we can be to advance and protect the interests of our players and their families."

The union's executive board unanimously voted to appoint Walsh as head of the union, ending a nine-month search to replace Don Fehr, who has held the job since December 2010.

"Marty is a proven leader with a strong union background," Kyle Okposo, a member of the search committee and a Buffalo Sabres player, said in a separate statement. "His energy and ability to connect with players were immediately evident to the search committee."

The other members of the search committee included players Ian Cole of Tampa Bay Lightning, Mattias Ekholm of the Nashville Predators, Justin Faulk of the St. Louis Blues, Sam Gagner and Nate Schmidt of the Winnipeg Jets, Zach Hyman of the Edmonton Oilers, Kevin Shattenkirk of the Anaheim Ducks, Jacob Trouba of the New York Rangers, and James van Riemsdyk of the Philadelphia Flyers.

After reports of Walsh's move first surfaced several weeks ago, Dorchester residents and hockey fans wished him well.

"Things are changing in athletics now and it's such a business as well as it is entertainment, they'll need his labor expertise to navigate those changes," said Shaun O'Sullivan, a board member of Dorchester Youth



Marty Walsh and Joe Biden in the Seaport in 2019.
Image via Boston Mayor's Office archives

Hockey (DYH). "All of his traits and characteristics and the way he handles himself, it's nice seeing someone like that have this kind of opportunity."

Added Tim Rogers, DYH's secretary: "With him moving on to the NHLPA, and with Dorchester being a well-known hockey town, we're sure it will create some wonderful opportunities for our program and other programs throughout the city. When a Dorchester native makes it to that level, you can guarantee they are going to give back to where they came from."

Seth Daniel contributed to this report.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE SCHEDULES March 2023

Sat., March 11

Cape Cod - Yarmouth, MA - 11 a.m., 508-362-7239, capecodstpatriksparade.com...Newport, RI - 11 a.m., 401-846-5081, NewportIrish.com.

Sun., March 12

Worcester-Noon, 508-753-7197...Warwick, RI-1 p.m.

March 16-19

Dublin Parade - March 17, noon. ... Dublin Ireland Festival - March 16-19; stpatricksfestival.ie.

Sat., March 18

Providence-Noon, providencestpatricksparade.org.

Sun., March 19

South Boston - 1 p.m., 617 268-7955 ... Abington - 1 p.m., 781-878-1570 or 781-878-7785 ... Holyoke - 1:10 a.m., 413-533-1700 ... Scituate - 1 p.m., 781-545-6671 ... Manchester, NH - Noon, saintpatsnh.com.

Compiled by Boston Irish Tourism Association (irishmas-sachusetts.com).



A pipes and drum band marches in the St. Patrick's Day parade in South Boston in 2019.

Chris Lovett photo

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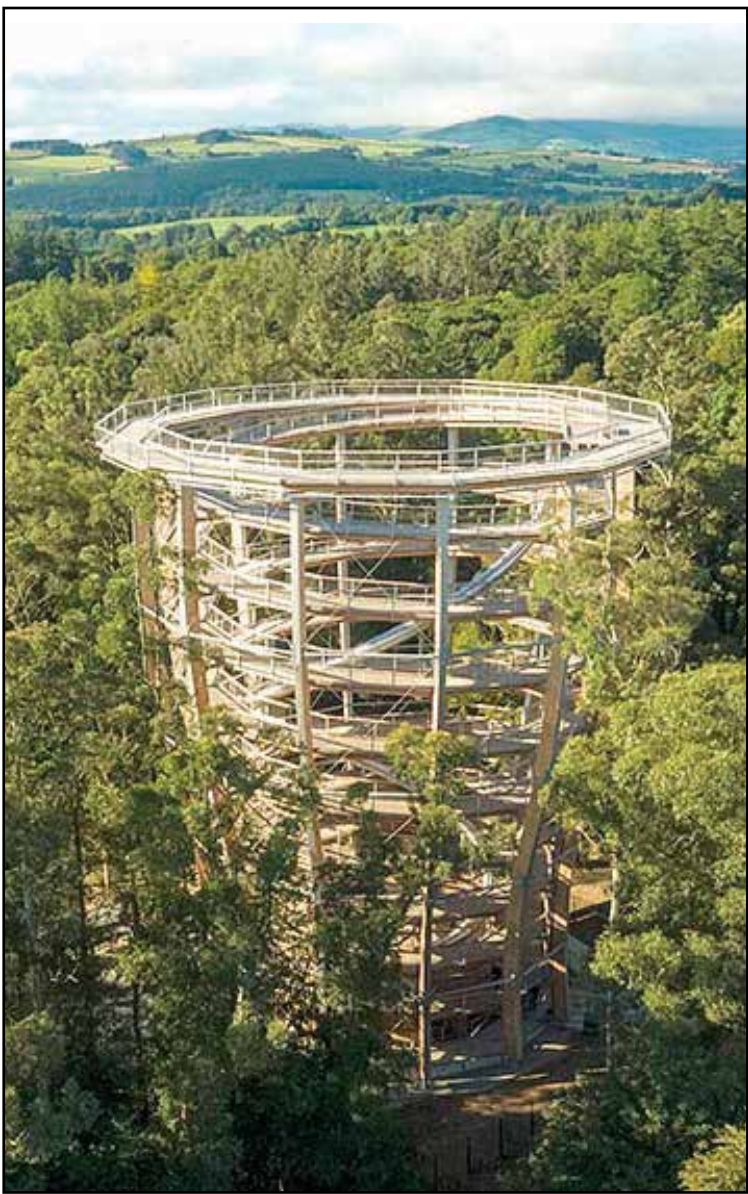
A few of old Ireland's 'new looks' for visitors

• There's the amazing new treetop walk Beyond the Trees Avondale in Co. Wicklow, at right. Nominated by National Geographic in their 'Best of the World for 2023' list of extraordinary destinations, the magazine praises Wicklow for being "crammed with mountain trails for hikers

and bikers, stately Palladian mansions, wild waterfalls, and an underrated coast".

• A trip to the Patrick Kavanagh Centre is a must for all lovers of Irish poetry. Kavanagh, who wrote the famous poem 'On Raglan Road', was born in Inniskeen in Co. Monaghan.

A major refurbishment of the centre has brought new displays and memory boxes containing personal effects, as well as touch screens and a new event space. A self-guided Kavanagh Trail identifies key landmarks linked to the great man's poetry, and there is a new Raglan Road Tea Room.



• Starting this month, travelers to the prehistoric passage tombs at Knowth in County Meath will be welcomed with a newly enhanced experience. This major repository of megalithic art, which makes up part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, contains more than half of the known

megalithic art in Europe in one location. The new Knowth visitor hub is a continuation of the upgrade to the whole Brú na Bóinne visitor experience and offers a large digital exhibition exploring the rock art of Knowth and accompanied by engaging interactives and audio visuals. IRELAND.COM



St. Patrick's Party!

Join Boston's Liveliest Irish Network For Our Annual St. Patrick's Day Party!
A Night of Music, Song, Dancing & Craic You Don't Want to Miss Out On!

Wednesday, March 2nd, 2023.
Doors Open at 6pm
The Harvard Club of Boston,
1374 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215

BUY NOW



**Celebrate with us Wednesday, March 15
at the Harvard Club of Boston**

At Irish Network Boston, we are driven by a single goal; to connect Ireland with all those who are interested in its people, culture and history. We strive to build productive relationships and make a positive impact with all of our pursuits.

irishnetworkboston.com



Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA Division Eight

Ancient Order of Hibernians

Lawrence, Massachusetts

152 Years of Dedication to Religion, Heritage, Charity and Community"

Irish Heritage Month March 2023

Lawrence, Massachusetts

Preserving and Fostering our Heritage and Culture

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 -

IRISH FLAG RAISING Across from City Hall – Common St. @11 a.m.

Saturday, March 4, 2023 –

151st SAINT PATRICK'S DAY BANQUET AND DANCE at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA. Traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner with dancing to the Silver Spears Irish Show Band 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 5, 2023 -

30th ANNUAL CLADDAGH PUB 4 MILE Classic ROAD RACE - 11 am, 399 Canal Street, Lawrence, MA (rain or shine) - For more information contact 978 376 8289. This race is part of the Wild Rover Series.

Sunday, March 5, 2023 -

OPENING of the EXHIBIT "Dublin 1916: A Look Back in Time" – at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Sunday, March 5, 2023 –

LECTURE by local Author, JOHN DESMOND, on his book, "THE BLACK THORN" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA @ 1 pm Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 -

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 – 7:00 pm Claddagh Pub, 399 Canal Street, Lawrence MA. Friday, March 10, 2023 – 52nd ANNUAL SAINT PATRICK'S DAY LUNCHEON at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover 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

Sunday, March 12, 2023 –

WHITE FUND LECTURE – with PETER F. STEVENS – Mr. Stevens will discuss his book, "THE VOYAGE OF THE CATALPA" - at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St., Lawrence, MA @ 1 pm (FREE) - Handicap Accessible

Friday, March 17, 2022 –

OPEN HOUSE – Music all day long at the Claddagh Pub and Restaurant, 399 Canal St, Lawrence, MA for further information call 978 688-8337

Sunday, March 19, 2023 –

LECTURE by Author, JOHN CASHMAN. Mr. Cashman will discuss his book, "AN IRISH IMMIGRANTS STORY" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA @ 1 pm Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Saturday, March 25, 2023 -

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

Sunday, March 26, 2023 –

DEDICATION OF THE IRISH COLLECTION - Lawrence Public Library @ 1 pm on the Second Floor of the Lawrence Public Library, 51 Lawrence Street, Lawrence, MA (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

Sunday, March 26, 2023 -

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

Tuesday, March 28, 2023:

EXHIBIT CLOSES "Dublin 1916: A Look Back in Time" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

The Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA Division Eight AOH was founded on November 5, 1871. The Division yearly hosts numerous social events and activities, and has scholarship opportunities for the children of members, and in some cases grandchildren of members on the high school and college level, including a scholarship for study in Ireland. Division 8 meets at the Claddagh Pub, 399 Canal St in Lawrence on the second Wednesday of the month. For information on AOH Membership please write to: Division 8 AOH Organizer, PO Box 1407, Lawrence, MA

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

Irish Heritage Month 2023 is supported in part by a grant from the Lawrence Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



Once a year,
the world celebrates Ireland.
We do it every day!



Happy St. Patrick's Day
from Aer Lingus

Aer Lingus 