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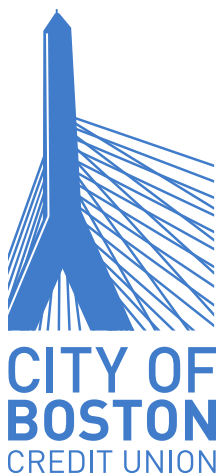
Summer 2020

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IT'S ZOOM TIME IN IRISH MUSIC CIRCLES – The sessions have become solos during this extraordinary pandemic. Boston Irish's Sean Smith takes stock of the scene, and asks what the revival will look like. Page 14.

Painting created for Boston Irish by Vincent Crotty



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Housing visionary, philanthropist, trusted mentor

Joseph E. Corcoran, a Dorchester native, devoted philanthropist, and developer who transformed the Columbia Point peninsula, died on Wed., June 3 of heart failure. He was 84.

By ED FORRY

I first met Joe Corcoran in the summer of 1966 when I was working as a letter carrier for the US Post Office. I was delivering mail on Elmer Road, where he lived, and he had posted a lawn sign for his candidacy for political office.

There was a smattering of Corcoran for State Representatives signs on neighboring properties and it looked for sure like he could win and become a Ward 16 legislator. But Joe's roots were across town—in Uphams Corner, which was, and, is Ward 13. The winner that year was a Ward 16 native, John Finnegan. Joe lost by a handful of votes. And that ended his political career.

In a now-legendary "road not taken" moment, he changed direction and, with two partners, founded a development company, Corcoran, Mullins, Jennison, with the aim of building and providing decent housing. One of CMJ's early projects was to build senior housing under a program called "turnkey," in which a private developer would construct housing units and then turn it over to the City of Boston's housing agency.

Corcoran's firm built senior housing on Dot Ave in Lower Mills and on Washington Street next to the Dorchester YMCA in Codman Square. He was chairman of the advisory board of the local Y at that time and he engineered the sale to the city of an unused parcel of land owned by the Y to build the much-needed housing. The strategy brought significant revenue to the Y, and new places to live for dozens of seniors.

In 1975, I was interested in publishing a newspaper and learned that a weekly paper in South Boston—the Tribune—was for sale. I sought Joe's advice.

"How much do they want?" he asked. \$25,000, I said.

"What do you get for that?" he asked. I said I would get to go into the newspaper business. "Yeah," he said, "but what else do you get? Do you get receivables? Do you get any property? Is there a lease?"

"What are receivables?" I asked. "And there's no real estate, and the paper is printed by a third-party."

Joe said, "Well, if you buy it, what are you really buying?"

I told him I would get the right to call myself the publisher of the South Boston Tribune, and on day one, try to sell enough ads to make a living. I think I was expecting that Joe would say something like "We'll back you, kid, to do what you want to do."

But instead, he said this: "You know what, if you're going to spend \$25,000 of your own money to publish a newspaper, instead of paying somebody else for just the name, you maybe should take that money and start your own."

I admit to having been disappointed with that answer, but it probably was the best advice anybody ever extended to me about my long-time hope, my dream, really, of publishing a neighborhood newspaper.

Back then, in the late 1970s, I worked at the former Dorchester Savings Bank and they had several offices in the community. One was a small branch in a moribund retail complex called the Bayside Mall that served the Columbia Point housing project. That small office and a Chinese food takeout place were the only two tenants remaining at Bayside.

Joe used to tell me: "Ed, make sure you never let them close that branch because

that's going to be very valuable property someday. We're going to re-develop the housing project into something that will be a wonderful venue."

Joe had a vision for creating mixed income housing and he pioneered it with partners Joe Mullins and Gary Jenison at Columbia Point. It took them years to put together a very complicated development team. But when they did, they turned the peninsula totally around.

Meanwhile, back at the bank, I passed his advice to senior management. The treasurer of the bank was a real swashbuckler who thought he knew much better than Corcoran. I will never forget his final word about reclaiming the housing project: "You tell Joe Corcoran that people like me don't want to live anywhere near people like them. It will never work, mixing races and mixing incomes in housing."

That man—the bank treasurer—returned each evening to his home on the South Shore, played golf at the Cohasset Country Club, and mingled with people like himself.

The bank quit its Bayside site a year or two before CMJ struck the bargain to build quality decent housing in the forlorn project. The development, now called Harbor Point, became a national model of successful mixed-income housing.

A couple of years later, the bank failed and our Cohasset-bunkered banker was out of a job.

Joe Corcoran was a visionary who never lost sight of what was good and needed in his business practices, and he developed marvelous housing opportunities across the breath of Dorchester, from Keystone apartments in Neponset to the Auckland Street apartments on the side of Savin Hill. And, of course, the wonderful Harbor Point complex on Columbia Point. None of those units



Joseph E. Corcoran

would be here today we're it not for the commitment and the vision of man named Joseph E. Corcoran.

His long-ago advice that helped steer me to at long last publishing community newspapers came around again two decades ago, when we moved our quarters to the office building he had developed at Bayside.

For the past 20 years, he has been the landlord of the *Reporter* newspapers. I would sometimes see him on the elevator or in the corridors of the building, and we would stop and chat. Those chance connections always made it a good day for me.

Joe Corcoran passed away last week at his home surrounded by family—his children, grandchildren, and great grandchild. He was a Dorchester original and always committed to his home neighborhood. He did wondrous things for our community.

He is best described as mild-mannered, a true gentle man. And most especially for me, a mentor, an advisor, and a dear friend. He fulfilled the mantra of the Jesuits who taught him at BC High and Boston College to be "A Man for Others." That's way he lived his life, and the way he is. Or sadly, that's the way he was.

I will miss him dearly.

Ed Forry and his late wife Mary Casey Forry co-founded *The Boston Irish Reporter* in 1990.

BOSTON IRISH

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If your organization has a current message about your future plans for activities & meetings, we welcome hearing about it for inclusion in our news pages.

Boston Irish is the only print edition of Irish news & commentary in continuous circulation in Greater Boston for more than three decades!

We continue to maintain a robust digital website (BostonIrish.com) & news alerts for daily & breaking news, and we continue to print a quarterly edition to serve that large number of our readers who prefer to stay connected by holding in their hands and reading local Irish news in printed issues.

In the midst of the current pandemic, many local Irish organizations continue to seek new & innovative ways to keep their members connected. **If there is any way our publications can help spread your news, please let me know.**

Thanks for any assist you can give us, and I hope that you, your family and everyone in your organization will remain safe and in good health in these troubled times.

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SAVE THE DATE!



11th annual

Boston Irish Honors Luncheon

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‘A Time of Change’ – The Irish Cultural Centre names Martina Curtin its first woman president

BY PETER F. STEVENS
BOSTON IRISH STAFF

It's official, and unanimous: The Irish Cultural Centre has elected Martina Curtin as its new Board President. For the first time, a woman will lead the ICC. Of her qualifications, leadership skills, and business acumen, there is no doubt.

She succeeds outgoing President Seamus Mulligan, who has forged great progress for the ICC during his three years at the organization's helm. He will remain an integral voice on the board in his new role as President Emeritus.

Curtin is the founder and guiding force of CHC Home Care, Inc., a Boston home-care agency whose mission is to allow clients to remain in their homes while receiving skilled medical care. The oldest of eleven children who grew up on a farm in Co. Clare, she embraced the tenets of home health care early in

her life. "There was no room for error growing up with ten siblings," she notes, "and it was always get up and get on with it, as my husband, Craig [Carlson], says, 'in my direct but nice way.'"

Some 20 years ago, she emigrated to the US to work in the field of health care. In 2009 she founded Curtin Home Health Care in Boston's Back Bay. She had identified a need for patients and their families for better options at home. "I saw the mistakes that other agencies made, and I knew I could do this better.... You meet families at their most vulnerable time. Their loved one is sick, and they're going in 100 directions, and they just don't know what to do."

With the help of her husband, she has grown her agency with an ever-increasing staff of basic personal-care assistants, registered nurses and end-of-life-care specialists.

Curtin has maintained a passion for

all things Irish, as well as becoming a major force in local charitable endeavors. A member of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and Irish Network Boston, she and her husband reside in the Back Bay.

"I am very excited to be the first female president of the ICC," he said, "and I look forward to continuing the tradition of organization and promoting Irish sporting, social, and educational events."

Said Steve Burke, executive director of the ICC: "I would first like to thank Seamus for his dedicated service to the to the Cultural Centre.... I am delighted that Martina was elected as his successor and look forward to working closely with her.... Her election as the first female President of the ICC, particularly during this time of change, speaks to the ICC's commitment to diversity and inclusion..."



Martina Curtin
Home care agency executive

Curtin believes that "goals are achieved through hard work, high standards, and surrounding yourself with good people." Her proven record of doing just that does bode well for her in her new role in Canton.

BC selects Robert Savage to head Irish Studies Program

Robert Savage, whose research, teaching, and administrative leadership has bolstered Boston College's renowned Irish Studies Program for more than two decades, has been named interim director of the program, the University announced earlier this month.

A faculty member in the History Department, Savage served as the program's associate director from 1995-2003, and co-director from 2003-2010 with Associate Professor of English Marjorie Howes.

The BC Irish Studies Program was created in 1978 and is widely acknowledged as one of the international leaders in the field. Headquartered in Connolly House on BC's Chestnut Hill Campus, the program explores the history, culture, literature, music, and art of Ireland through undergraduate and graduate study, faculty research, scholarly conferences, publications, lectures, concerts, and other events.

Irish Studies also has developed fruitful partnerships with the University's John J. Burns Library, which has an outstanding collection of Irish books and manuscripts, and the McMullen Museum of Art, with which it has collaborated on Irish-related exhibitions.

Other features of BC Irish Studies include its Visiting Scholar in Irish Studies program, a cooperative venture with Burns Library that brings notable contributors to Irish cultural and intellectual life to BC for a semester or academic year to teach, lecture, and undertake research; Gaelic Roots, a concert series that spotlights outstanding performers in Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton, and other Gaelic music and dance; and Dublin-based Boston College Ireland, which serves BC students, alumni, faculty, and partners in various academic, professional, and networking capacities.

Savage, who holds bachelor's and

doctoral degrees from Boston College, said he sees an opportunity for Irish Studies to expand its partnerships and collaborations within the University, as well as beyond it.

"I want Irish Studies to engage with other departments and programs at BC," he said. "There are many common areas of interest that could provide the basis for interdisciplinary teaching, research, and other activities, such as issues of diaspora, justice, inequality, and borders. I'm very eager, as are my colleagues in Irish Studies, to work with faculty and students across the University. In particular, we seek to improve and update our outreach to undergraduate students; they are our real constituents."

"At the same time, we look forward to continuing our long, successful associations with Burns Library and the McMullen Museum, and affirming relationships with our many friends and supporters in the US, Ireland, and elsewhere."

"I am looking forward to working with Rob," said Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences Dean Gregory Kalscheur, S.J. "His years of experience with the Irish Studies Program as associate director and co-director, his gifts as an innovative and collaborative teacher, and his outstanding record as a scholar of the social and cultural history of modern Ireland all make him well suited to continuing the work of strengthening Irish Studies as a dynamic interdisciplinary program at the heart of intellectual life at Boston College. I am grateful to Rob for taking on this role as we look toward the new academic year."

Savage is an expert in Irish political, social, and cultural history whose research centers on change in Irish society, Anglo-Irish relations, "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland, and the history of film and the broadcast media



Robert Savage
Hopes for wide engagement

in Ireland and Britain. He has published five books including "The BBC's Irish Troubles: Television, Conflict and Northern Ireland"... "A Loss of Innocence? Television and Irish Society 1960-1972" (winner of the 2010 James S. Donnelly, Sr. Prize for Best Book in History and Social Sciences)... "Sean Lemass: A Biography" ... "Irish Television: the Political and Social Origins" ... and "Ireland in the New Century, Politics, Identity and Culture," for which he was editor and a contributing author. He is working on a new book about Margaret Thatcher's 1988 decision to institute restrictions on broadcasting in response to coverage of British policies in Northern Ireland.

In 1999, he was appointed by Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern to a commission tasked with establishing a national music archive in Ireland. The following year, he coordinated an interdisciplinary conference in Washington, DC, to explore the Irish experience at home and abroad, held as part of a major festival of Irish art and culture.

Information for this article was provided by the Boston College Office of University Communications.

Éire Society welcomes three to its board

The Éire Society of Boston held its annual meeting on Sat., June 27, via Zoom, led by President Mimi McNealy Langenderfer, PhD, who welcomed three new board members: the Irish pub musician Patrick Gavin Butler; Brian Frykenberg, PhD, coordinator of the "Boston and the Irish Language: Fifty Years of Cultural Connection in Oral History," a project sponsored by Cumann na Gaelige i mBoston; and the Irish playwright Ronán Noone whose "The Smuggler" performed recently at Boston University won the Best Playwright award last year at the 1st Irish Festival of New York, 2019.

The full board includes President Langenderfer, First Vice President Ann Connolly Tolkoff, Second Vice President Paul Doyle, Treasurer John Mara, Recording/Corresponding Secretary William Smith, Membership Secretary Mary Ellen Mulligan and Directors Christian Dupont, PhD, Barbara Smith Fitzgerald, Tadhg Malone, Michael D. Hanify and Maire Concannon.

While our year of cultural engagements promoting knowledge of Irish culture through the encouragement of study in the arts, sciences, literature, language, and history of Ireland was pre-empted by the pandemic, we shifted focus to support our mandate to raise awareness of the actions made by the Irish for the advancement of American ideals. To this end, while we are not historically a direct donation organization, we allocated a total of \$15,000 to the Boston Resiliency Fund, the Irish Pastoral Centre, and the Irish Cultural Center in Canton to support our partners who are on the front line working directly with affected communities.

Logic and real politick prevail: We have a new Taoiseach

Who has a tough and thankless job on his hands

BY LARRY DONNELLY
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

WICKLOW, Ireland – In many ways, everything has changed utterly since I wrote about February’s general election here in Ireland in the inaugural edition of *Boston Irish*. A global pandemic, the likes of which have not been seen in a century, struck – and both Ireland and the United States have been in various stages of “lockdown” ever since. But then, the most pressing issue for the Irish people was when we would get a new government and what it would look like.

Of course, the coronavirus has made the most inveterate of political junkies take a step back and prioritize public health in an overarching sense and the well-being of family and friends at an individual level. If anything, this profound human tragedy has made us realize what we have and, trite as it may be to say, what truly matters in our fragile existences.

In this milieu, it is no shock that the process of forming a government took a back seat for Irish politicians and in the national mindset. Observers of European politics may disagree in light of the norm in some countries on the continent, yet it has been extremely protracted.

To recap, the outcome of February’s general election took the commentariat by surprise. The two big beasts of Irish politics, the similarly centrist Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, garnered 38 and 35 seats respectively, but Sinn Féin had a hugely impressive showing.

The long ostracized, left-wing party managed to get 37 of its 42 candidates over the line and into the 33rd Dáil Éireann (Irish parliament), which is

comprised of 160 TDs (equivalent of MPs). Moreover, owing mainly to the increasing centrality of climate change in contemporary political discourse, the Green Party also had an unprecedented election; 12 of its standard bearers won seats.

Much and all as life is different than it was a few months ago, the key question stayed the same: How do those who were chosen by the people to represent them get to a workable majority? Because Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael emphatically ruled out doing business with Sinn Féin from an early stage, there were just two realistic options: a theretofore unthinkable coalition between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, together with the Greens, or a second general election.

Even as the focus was appropriately on the fallout from Covid-19, negotiations continued in private, and journalists were kept busy following the various twists and turns, advances and drifts that flowed from the talks. Three subplots emerged – one from each party – that complicated matters.

First, Fine Gael, the incumbent party of government, saw its standing in the polls skyrocket after the people cast quite a negative judgment on it in February. President Trump aside, this is consistent with the way electorates around the world have rallied to their leaders in this fraught period. A mid-June opinion survey indicates that its support is up by roughly 17 percent since the election and that An Taoiseach (Irish prime minister) Leo Varadkar had a jaw-dropping 75 percent personal satisfaction rating.

Second, Fianna Fáil simultaneously plummeted and appears now to have a core of support that is somewhere in the mid-teens. This brought simmering

unease with its leader, Micheál Martin, to the boil with quiet and not so quiet calls for him to go.

Martin’s internal foes alleged that his primary objective was to ensure that he would not go down as the party’s sole chief to not become Taoiseach and that he has accordingly ignored the existential threat that coalition with the old enemy, Fine Gael, poses to its future. They contend that only one of them will emerge ultimately from the coalition, and that it won’t be Fianna Fáil.

Third, the gulf between the Green Party’s pragmatic and purist factions has been laid bare for all to see. When the party was previously part of a coalition government, from 2007-2011, it achieved little and suffered greatly. As a consequence, its members, two-thirds of whom must agree to re-enter government in 2020, are rightly cautious at present.

And there have been sideshows. The party’s deputy leader, Catherine Martin, announced that she would mount a challenge to the long-time Green number one, Eamon Ryan. Putting aside the reality that it is strange to seek to depose Ryan after the party’s best ever election result, the timing – while Martin herself was negotiating a programme for government with putative coalition partners – is totally bizarre.

Ryan did not help his cause with predominantly hard-left critics by repeating the n-word in a Dáil speech in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. Although he was directly quoting an *Irish Times* piece written by a young black man who described how hurtful and dehumanizing the term is, was arguing for greater opportunity for people of color in Ireland, and has always been a passionate advocate of

equality for all, it was an own goal.

So where did that leave us? The parties had to approve the program for government their representatives tentatively agreed to. It was practically a dead cert that Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil would do so. And they did. For them, unlike the Greens, a simple majority thumbs up sufficed. Despite the fact that Green negotiators extracted an awful lot of concessions in the program from the two larger entities and the near certainty that the Irish people would not reward them for ducking what is widely deemed their responsibility to step up to the plate, prominent members objected vociferously.

In the end, logic, real politick, and a concerted push on behalf of Eamon Ryan triumphed by a bigger than expected margin over ideological rigidity and rather naïve idealism. We have a government. Micheál Martin is the new Taoiseach. His address at the close of a socially distanced Dáil sitting in Dublin’s convention centre was strong and moving, particularly when he paid homage to his family and community in Cork. Martin is a thoroughly decent and sincere person and politician. He has a tough and thankless job on his hands now, though.

The chattering classes are already turning their gaze to the dynamics of this historic arrangement and to how long it can endure. But making any predictions in this regard is unwise. It’s a funny old game, politics.

Larry Donnelly is a Boston-born attorney, a Law Lecturer at the National University of Ireland, Galway and a regular media contributor on politics, law and current affairs in Ireland and the US. Follow him on Twitter at @LarryPDonnelly.

Ireland has a government

Fianna Fail’s Martin will lead coalition

BY DANICA KIRKA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Centrist politician Micheál Martin is Ireland’s new prime minister, a post he gained by fusing two longtime rival parties into a coalition four months after an election that upended the status quo.

The deal, set on June 27, will see Martin’s Fianna Fail govern with Fine Gael – the party of outgoing leader Leo Varadkar – and with the smaller Green Party. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, bitter opponents whose roots lie in opposing sides of the civil war in the early 1920s that followed Ireland’s independence from the United Kingdom, have never before formed a government together.

“I believe civil war politics ended a long time ago in our country, but today civil war politics ends in our parliament,” said Varadkar, who became

Ireland’s youngest, and first gay, prime minister three years ago. “Two great parties coming together with another great party, the Green Party, to offer what this country needs, a stable government for the betterment of our country and for the betterment of our world.”

The Dail, the lower house of Ireland’s parliament, elected Martin by a vote of 93-63, with three abstentions. Martin later met with Irish President Michael D Higgins to receive his seal of office. Under the plan approved by the parties’ memberships, Martin became Taoiseach, or prime minister. He will serve until the end of 2022 and then hand the job back to Varadkar.

The left-wing nationalist party Sinn Féin was shut out of the new government despite an electoral breakthrough that saw it win the largest share of the votes in February’s election. Despite



Leo Varadkar (Fine Gael) Micheál Martin (Fianna Fail) Eamon Ryan (Green Party)

coming out ahead, Sinn Féin was unable to assemble enough support to govern.

The two centrist parties have long shunned Sinn Féin because of its historic links to the Irish Republican Army and decades of violence in Northern Ireland. But in protracted negotiations further complicated by the COVID-19 outbreak, the two rivals opted for unity. Sinn Féin President Mary Lou Mc-

Donald said Fianna Fail and Fine Gael conspired to exclude her party and the voices of more than half a million people who voted for her party. She called the coalition a “marriage of convenience. Faced with the prospect of losing their grip on power, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have circled the wagons,” McDonald said.

Dublin protesters marched, took a knee to honor George Floyd

By TIM KIRK
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

DUBLIN – A march in the Irish capital on June 1 in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and the oppressed in America included a journey past Dublin monuments and landmarks that evoked history and the connection between Ireland and America. As I joined the masked and determined crowd on O’Connell Street, one t-shirt slogan caught my eye: More Blacks, More Dogs, More Irish, a satiric reference to signs posted in UK shop windows after World War II: No Blacks, No Dogs, No Irish.

The announced gathering point was the Spire, a soaring needle in the center of Dublin. It was once the location of Nelson’s Column, built in 1805 celebrating the admiral’s victory at Trafalgar. He glared down on Dublin’s onetime British subjects for generations. Nelson himself had died in the battle.

In 1966, as the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising approached, an Irish republican placed a bomb at the top of Nelson’s column just as visiting hours were ending, but because of ‘the damp,’ the bomb fizzled. The man went back the next day with another bomb and this time it worked, blowing half the column off, leaving an ugly stump. The column and the British domination that it represented were not missed, so the Irish government removed the stump. President Eamon DeValera suggested a headline to the Irish press: “British Admiral Leaves Dublin by Air.” They found Nelson’s head, which luckily had not fallen on anyone. and, after many adventures, it ended up in the library on Pearse Street and is rarely seen. Debate on what to put in Nelson’s place on the boulevard went on for decades, and finally, in 2003, the soaring spire was installed.

The initial cluster of BLM protesters centered between the Spire and the statue of Jim Larkin, the ‘voice of labor’ who led the 1913 Dublin tramway strike against “Murder Murphy,” the publishing magnate who also owned the tram system and mercilessly crushed Larkin’s strike. Born in a Liverpool slum to Irish parents, Larkin later was a labor organizer of the Wobblies in America, starting in 1914. He was imprisoned in the first “Red Scare,” then pardoned and deported back to Ireland by Al Smith in 1923. Larkin’s most famous quote was: “The great appear great because we are on our knees: Let us rise.”

The strike was defeated but the seeds of his Dublin action sprouted three years later. Across the street from the Larkin statue is the General Post Office, where in 1916 the Irish Republic was proclaimed for the first time, the republican flag raised, equal rights for Irishmen and Irishwomen declared, blood shed, and the rosary prayed at night with the assistance of a Capuchin Friar who would sneak in over the battle lines after the shooting had stopped to anoint the dying. Six Days later, with the city center in ruins, Padraig Pearse surrendered at the GPO, ceremonially handing over his sword to British General John Maxwell. By executing the signatories



Marchers make their point at the rally in Dublin on June 1.

RTE image

to the proclamation, Maxwell strewed the seeds of further rebellion across the island that culminated in the war of independence, a partitioned Ireland, and a civil war.

As the protest between the Spire and the statue of Jim Larkin set off, there were a surprising number of African Irish, a smattering of French-speaking West Africans among them, leading the sizable crowd – reports indicated 5,000. Chants resounded: “Black lives matter” ... “I can’t breathe” ... and call-and-response chants like: “Say his name!” “George Floyd!” ... “What do we want? Justice!” ... “When do we want it? Now!” One sign read “We don’t assassinate presidents like we used to.”

There were baseball hats from Boston, New York, Chicago, L.A., and San Francisco. The baseball diaspora. I saw my friend Gerry in the crowd. COVID-19 masks were everywhere, many with the slogan “I can’t breathe” scrawled across the front of the mask. The Gardai were helpful and courteous to the protesters, sometimes sharing a laugh. The Irish Guards were not the police being protested yesterday. They are in Minneapolis, L.A., Chicago, and New York where cousins and siblings live and send baseball caps to their loved ones “back home.” This gathering was about solidarity.

The crowd began to move south down O’Connell Street, passing the enormous statue of Daniel O’Connell, “the great Liberator” who used politics, rhetoric, and legal expertise to fight for Catholic emancipation for his people all his life, culminating in 1829 when many but not all restrictions on Catholics were lifted. O’Connell later formed a deep and unlikely friendship with Frederick Douglass after Douglass’s New Bedford-based Quaker friends who had paid for his manumission correctly judged that getting Douglass out of the USA and over to Ireland in 1845 was the only way to ensure he would avoid recapture by the slave catchers. In fact “Slave patrols” and “Indian patrols” are the origin story of policing in America. From New England to the Carolinas to the west and throughout the country, the history of policing is enmeshed in slavery and the dispossession of the native peoples. After living in Ireland among the Irish and learning their history of oppression and experiencing Irish culture, Douglass referred to the Irish people as the “White Negro.”

O’Connell’s devotion to his Catholic faith was so fervent that in 1847, late in

his life with his health deteriorating, he attempted a pilgrimage to Rome. He died in Genoa, but he had left specific instructions that his heart be removed from his body and delivered by hand to Rome. His work to advance freedom, justice, and equality was also passed along.

We marched across the River Liffey on O’Connell bridge where in 1963 John F. Kennedy’s motorcade was greeted by throngs of admirers. Despite his chronic back pain, Kennedy, overwhelmed by the crowds of Irish all over Dublin, stood in the open car for the entire tour steadied by a cross bar, as DeValera sat beside him. People say it was as if the entire island came to cheer the president with a hero’s welcome. Five months later, he was murdered.

But this day was about the death of George Floyd. His methodical and cold-blooded murder by a uniformed police officer has been called a lynching, but to me it seemed worse than that. It is true that the KKK were often policemen and judges, but even they knew that extra judicial executions were illegal as well as wrong, so they should probably wear a face covering hood. This officer was not hiding his identity, was not hurried, under duress, or panicked, as most white officers claim when they kill a black man in America.

A painting of George Floyd’s likeness was hoisted above the crowd of marchers and we marched on. The call and response of the forward flowing protest continued: Say his name! GEORGE FLOYD!! Say his name! GEORGE FLOYD! SAY HIS NAME! GEORGE FLOYD! Hearing his name over and over again affected the emotions of the marchers. Tears were shed for a man none of us knew. His murder has laid bare the endemic and systemic racism in the United States and the broken, sclerotic politics that has been unable to deliver real reform or results. The government has lost the consent of the governed. Even Barack Obama could not deliver the change he had promised once US Sen. Mitch McConnell devoted himself to pure obstruction.

We went down D’Olier street, turned right at College Green in sight of what used to be an enormous equestrian statue of William of Orange on Dame Street. The statue of the man most despised by Catholics and nationalists was finally removed in 1938 after it had been bombed and severely damaged several times. The scars of a disputed history.

We proceeded past Trinity College along Nassau Street up Kildare, and

took a left at St. Stephens Green, another site of bloody sacrifice in 1916 where rebels dug entrenched positions in the park, but took heavy losses from British gatling guns. Weapons from World War 1 battlefields, they were mounted on the roofs of their Officers Club and the Shelbourne Hotel, raining hell on the rebels. We headed down Merrion Row, and Baggot Street lower. It was about this time that I realized I should have worn better shoes, but it was a sunny, fine day and I confirmed with another marcher where we were headed. Down Pembroke, we were greeted by observers on both sides of the road as if we were a parade on the way to the US embassy.

We arrived at the embassy, which was built between 1962 and 1964 in Ballsbridge, a leafy, beautiful, and expensive neighborhood. The chants continued. The bullhorn was not very effective for the speakers who were held up on shoulders. It did not matter. A musician went to his car to get an amp and microphone. That worked better. “Solidarity with our American brothers and sisters!” “Justice for black and brown people everywhere!” “Say his Name!” “George Floyd.” ... “What do we want? Justice!” ... “When do we want it? Now!” The chants of thousands reverberated down the quiet leafy streets. En masse, protesters took a knee in honor of George Floyd.

In August 1927, cities around America and around the world protested the sham trial and executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. The apology proclamation from Gov. Michael Dukakis in 1977 did not exonerate them, but we all know they were innocent. “Two good men a long time gone, Sacco and Vanzetti are gone,” sings Christy Moore to this day.

When we were growing up in Boston in the ‘70s and ‘80s, we knew who Bobby Sands was. In 1981, my brother carefully cut newspaper clippings of all the hunger strikers and hung the pictures and stories on the wall. Ireland is returning the favor to us now, standing in solidarity with their cousins, brothers, and sisters who resist injustice in Boston, New York, Chicago and beyond with the words of one of the simple chants at the embassy:

“This is not okay! This is not okay! This is not okay!”

Was the Trump-appointed ambassador behind the walls listening? The president is not listening and does not care. It is up to the descendants of the people Frederick Douglass called the “White Negro” to stand with their black and brown countrymen and women and keep trying to make things better. We must, in the words of Samuel Beckett: “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again, Fail again. Fail better.”

George Floyd was not a revolutionary, an anarchist, a campaigner, a reformer, a union organizer, a politician, or a hunger striker. He was not trying to change the world; he was just trying to live his life. But his murder has sparked the fight for justice.

Tim Kirk, a software professional, left Needham, Massachusetts, last December and settled permanently in Dublin.

Irish community organizations in Boston step up in a big way during the pandemic

By SHANE CAFFREY

While Boston has long been a place of refuge and sanctuary for Irish emigrants, it is also a place where the Irish have thrived, prospered, and become an integral part of the fabric of this great city.

In times gone by, when the going got tough, this community would come together to support one another, and offer a helping hand to those in need. The Charitable Irish Society, founded in the city in 1737, is the oldest Irish society in the Americas, and is still going strong. Today as we work to confront the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, our community organizations are once again providing vital services throughout the Boston area.

In response to the crisis, the Rian Immigrant Center and 10 other partner organizations came together to form the Boston Immigrant COVID-19 Collaborative (BICC). The City of Boston appointed the Rian Immigrant Center (formerly known as the Irish International Immigrant Center) to coordinate this group. Many immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, lost their jobs and have little-to-no access to benefits or healthcare.

Ronnie Millar, Executive Director, Rian Immigrant Center told us: "When the crisis hit, we immediately pivoted our services to address the urgent needs of our immigrant families. We are deeply grateful to the Irish Government for their support for Irish immigrants who



have been severely impacted by the Covid crisis."

The Irish Pastoral Centre, based in Dorchester, lies at the very heart of Irish community life in Boston. Despite all of the difficulties the past months have posed, the IPC continue to provide services, which range from supports for the elderly, immigration advice, as well as welfare and counselling supports.

"We have not been stopped in our commitment to our community. We continue to reach out to our seniors via phone calls, and we assist them in anything they need, from supermarket shopping to prescription collections," said IPC Executive Director, Peggy Davis-Mullen, who added: "The IPC has distributed close to \$50,000 since April

to those most in need and has helped in other ways, too, providing counselling and creating a stockpile of essential household goods for those most in need. Through this difficult time, the IPC has remained the light in the darkness, the candle shining in the window for the people we serve, and the IPC will continue as we have always done to welcome the stranger among us."

The latest IPC Newsletter concluded by capturing the essence of what the Irish community organizations in Boston are working so hard to achieve as we come together to hold each other up during challenging times:

"It is at times like these that the true spirit of Irish people shines through and our sense of community is strong. It is



Shane Caffrey: "The IPC will continue as we have always done to welcome the stranger among us."

really encouraging and heartwarming when people get together to help one another and shows that most people have not forgotten where they came from.

"As the old Irish saying goes: "Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine." "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."

Shane Caffrey is Vice Consul at the Consulate General of Ireland in Boston.

Charitable Irish Society decries the 'violence against Black Americans'

John D. Warner, Jr., president of the Charitable Irish Society of Boston, has "respectfully" issued the following statement:

"On behalf of the Board of the Charitable Irish Society of Boston, I write today with profound sadness and a feeling of inadequacy in the face of the senseless death of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless others over our nation's history. As we battle a global pandemic, we know the specific actions we should take to keep ourselves and those around us safe. However, when violence towards Black Americans continues, what are we called to do?

"Our mission urges us to treat each other with respect and compassion and to live with integrity. The Charitable Irish Society of Boston stands in support of each member of our community and beyond and will continue to serve immigrants from around the world, regardless of race. Our shared faiths call for us to be a people of justice.

"While many of us do not understand living as a Black person in this country, I do respect and share in the sorrow, fear, and anger that we see. I ask that



The Charitable Irish Society was founded in Boston in 1737 Irish immigrants who had successfully made that city their home to assist other newly arrived Irish immigrants in settling in and assimilating into a new city and new country.

we join in examining our lives and actions, to find the ways in which our voices, individually and collectively, can bring about positive, constructive, and peaceful change to our world."

Consul General reiterates caution to Irish citizens against non-essential travel

Despite a worldwide disruption in air travel caused by the pandemic, Boston's Logan Airport has sustained its role as a "Gateway City" for passengers to and from Ireland. Although Aer Lingus canceled its Shannon route, a reduced schedule of five flights to Dublin have continued throughout the slowdown.

"Aer Lingus currently have 5 flights a week from Boston to Dublin and I'm not aware of any plans to change that," Ireland's Consul General to Boston Laoise Moore told Boston Irish in mid-June. "They are also operating flights to Dublin from New York (JFK) and Chicago."

During a teleconference sponsored by the Consulate, Moore said that she wanted to "touch on the travel status between Ireland and the US in both directions, but from a very practical point of view, the Irish government is still recommending Irish citizens not to undertake travel, unless it's essential. "This is not just to the US - it's around the world, because there is a pandemic. The Irish government doesn't have any restrictions on travel for people coming into the country. For example, US citizens can still travel

to Ireland, Irish people can still travel to Ireland, but anybody entering the country from abroad has to isolate for two weeks and it's mandatory. "And if you were to fly into Ireland, you would be asked for your contact details, and people will call you to check that you are isolating. We recognize it's quite an onerous requirement, but it is for the health and safety of people. So just be aware that that restriction is also in place, of course, from the other direction: The US government has placed a ban on travel from most of Europe, which includes Ireland. "And what it means is that people traveling from Ireland to the US unless they are US citizens or green card holders, or essentially their immediate family, they will not be able to travel to the US at this time. And that's a restriction that is imposed by the US government, which the Irish government would like to see it lifted because we recognize it causes hardship for people. But it's something that is ultimately a decision for the country."

- ED FORRY

A time to dream? Let's check out Ireland's castle hotels

By JUDY ENRIGHT
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

At the moment, we are in isolation because of COVID-19, but this virus can't stop us from dreaming. In fact, this is a perfect time to sit down and dream up your next adventure in Ireland.

CASTLE HOTELS

Some say a hotel is just a place to spend the night. But anyone who has traveled knows that a hotel can be so much more.

Take a look, for instance, at Ireland's many castle hotels where you can experience an evening – or more – of royal treatment. These hotels are fun and interesting, and their staff are eager to serve and share the property's history.

Most castle hotels – and other hotels – are currently closed but have announced plans to reopen July 20.

ASHFORD CASTLE

This 800-year-old castle hotel has won more than a few awards. In addition to being named a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World, Ashford is the first Forbes five-star hotel and was once the home of the Guinness family of brewing fame.

The castle's sitting rooms and bedrooms are exquisitely and tastefully decorated, the cuisine is outstanding, and guests can enjoy an assortment of activities on the estate and then relax at the state-of-the-art spa.

Ashford is one of 17 four- and five-star boutique hotels in the UK, Ireland, South Africa, Switzerland and the US that are owned by Red Carnation Company whose founder and president is Beatrice Tollman. The family-run company has been in the hospitality business for more than 100 years and knows how to do it right. She is credited with designing and implementing many of Ashford's extra touches.

Manager Niall Rochford says on the castle's website that "knowing when to change our practices to keep pace with the world around us has been vital to our success. The well-being of our guests always been, and always will be, our primary concern."

He added that every member of the Ashford team has been trained in safety, sanitation, and physical distancing, with more extensive instruction for the housekeeping staff and those who have direct contact with guests.

Public areas of the hotel will be reconfigured, he said, and adjusted to allow for physical distancing wherever possible, and all guests will be advised to social distance.

Rochford invited those with questions – and those who want help with a future reservation – to email him directly at nrochford@ashfordcastle.com.

LOUGH RYNN

Head over to Mohill, Co. Leitrim, and you will find 4-star Lough Rynn Castle Hotel where elegance and old-world charm blend seamlessly with modern day conveniences. The castle was formerly the home of the Clements family and Lord Leitrim and stands on 300-acres of magnificent grounds with walled gardens and activities aplenty.



Dromoland Castle in Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare, is a lovely place to stay, especially when you fly in or out of Shannon Airport.



Visitors to the west of Ireland can enjoy a vigorous climb to the top of Croagh Patrick passing this statue of St. Patrick on the way up. *Judy Enright photos*

This charming property was the site of a wedding I attended recently and you couldn't choose a more elegant location. Guests stayed in self-catering cottages or in the castle proper. My modern bedroom was in a turret, an experience evocative of life in another era. The breakfast buffet was plentiful and the dinners were excellent.

The hotel is currently developing enhanced operating procedures for the safety of guests and staff. Management is working with the Irish Hotel Feder-

ation and the tourist board to establish a comprehensive reopening plan for July 20.

For more information. Email enquiries@loughrynn.ie

DROMOLAND CASTLE

Probably the castle hotel best known to Boston travelers is Dromoland Castle in Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare, just minutes from Shannon Airport.

Dromoland is described as "a well-being oasis surrounded by the purest countryside, private, peaceful and pic-

Tiara sets up 'Journey Home' virtual parley

Introducing the Celtic Connections Conference, July 31-Aug. 31, 2020 – Join us on a virtual "Journey Home" and learn more about researching your Celtic family history. Twenty five lectures from renowned genealogists, including: Fiona Fitzsimons, Maurice Gleeson, John Grenham, and Chris Paton plus seven outstanding US genealogy experts. Speakers will address multiple topics and interests. See the complete program listing at our website, celtic-connections.org/ccc_program.html.

tions.org/ccc_program.html.

Lectures will be available for registrants to view online in their own time for a month. Nine live chats with lecturers will also be scheduled during the month. Registration cost is \$99 (USD).

Registration is open at our website.

The conference is being co-sponsored by TIARA (The Irish Ancestral Research Association; tiara.ie) and IGS (Irish Genealogical Society International).

turesque. We are a luxurious hideaway, where everyone, from children to adults, receives the warmest of welcomes."

Because of coronavirus concerns, management says some changes to procedure have been made to ensure safety and comfort for all.

The Dromoland reservations team is available for questions or concerns regarding personal preferences, including levels of service and interaction with staff. Contactless services will be available in all areas of the hotel and all guests and staff will have their temperatures taken upon arrival. "Standard protocols will be followed for anyone with a temperature above 38C." Face masks, disinfectant sanitizers, disposable gloves, and aprons will be available to guests.

The staff have been trained in COVID-19 prevention and control measures and government guidelines will be constantly monitored. Social distancing measures include reduced restaurant and bar capacities and counter screening. Reorganization of seating areas and new reservation procedures are in place for all lounge, dining, and leisure areas.

Bedroom cleaning procedures have been revised and all soft furnishings, telephones, bedside lockers, pillow protectors, bins and light switches are disinfected. Guest linen is laundered to strict guidelines and the spa has been updated.

Leisure facilities at Dromoland including golf, pool and gym areas were revised to ensure social distancing. Reservations will now be limited at those facilities.

Managing Director Mark Nolan said on Dromoland's website that "our health and safety policies will continually be adapted to the latest recommendations and requirements set out by the Irish Government and The World Health Organization. The health and wellbeing of our guests and colleagues will always be number one, so please be assured that we are always doing everything possible to ensure your and their safety and comfort. We are already looking forward to welcoming you soon and promise you that we will do everything we can to make your visit as safe, beautiful, and relaxing as possible."

The hotel's cancellation policy has also been amended from seven days to 48 hours and reservations manager Blán Sexton (email, blan.sexton@dromoland.ie) will be available to discuss options. And there is a Liaison Officer, Lauren Cusack, available for all inquiries. Her email address is Lauren.cusack@dromoland.ie and she is closely monitoring reports and news outlets to deliver current information on a regular basis.

STAY SAFE AND DREAM

We hope these suggestions will give our readers some food for thought and add to their travel dreams. When you travel, you should have as much fun as possible and try as many different experiences as you can. Enjoy all that Ireland and its castle hotels have to offer.

As venues begin to reopen, fitting a session event into a small space like the one pictured here while observing six-foot social distancing will allow for 22 single seats out of an original capacity of 132 seats.

Image courtesy of the National Independent Venue Association.



‘With resolve, we’ll put things back together’

Boston Irish’s Celtic music and dance columnist Sean Smith has continued to send out his dispatches through the months of the viral crisis. He writes: “The music scene may have come crashing down, but not the determined, resolute community that built and sustained it in the first place. Putting things back together will take a long time, and require revising some assumptions and expectations as to what a ‘scene’ should encompass, and how its moving parts operate. There will be frustrations, setbacks, and occasional curse words. So best of luck to everyone involved in the great rebirth – musicians, singers, dancers, organizers, promoters and, obviously, the people who sit, watch, and listen. I look forward to raising a pint with you, whether over a table or a livestream feed.”



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Aidan Rooney in a Country Churchyard

By THOMAS O'GRADY
SPECIAL TO THE BIR

In 1938, the year before he died, pre-eminent Irish poet William Butler Yeats spelled out in his valedictory poem "Under Ben Bulbin" explicit instructions for the epitaph he wished to have cut into the slab of local limestone that would mark his grave:

*Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by.*

Ironically, given that his intention was to turn on its head the Roman entreaty of *Sta viator*—"Halt, traveler"—commonly found on roadside graves in old Italy, Yeats's stoic directive has become a summons to his legion of admiring readers and other literary tourists to do just the opposite of what he commanded. Located in Drumcliff churchyard in County Sligo, his grave is probably the most frequently visited in all of Ireland. A couple of years ago I made the pilgrimage there myself . . . and not for the first time.

Will the grave of Seamus Heaney, the only other Irish poet whose popularity and name recognition rival Yeats's, likewise become a must-see tourist site? Born in 1939, the year that Yeats died, Heaney emerged as a promising poet in the mid-1960s then rose to prominence in the 1970s and to fame in the '80s. In 1995 he was awarded, like Yeats before him, the Nobel Prize for literature, the judges honoring him for his "works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past." He died in late August of 2013 and was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in his home village of Bellaghy in south County Derry. Thanks to the opening in 2016 of The Homeplace, a former Royal Ulster Constabulary police station in Bellaghy converted into an arts centre dedicated to his writing and his life, Heaney's final resting place may indeed become a destination. I visited his grave in 2016 to pay my respects to a writer and a man whom I have admired greatly since first encountering his poetry in 1978, before he had become "famous Seamus."

I was reminded of that visit recently when I read a particularly fine poem included in *Go There* (MadHat Press), a rich new volume by County Monaghan native Aidan Rooney. The author of two previous books of poems, *Day Release* (2000) and *Tightrope* (2007), Rooney is a longtime resident of Massachusetts, where he teaches at Thayer Academy in Braintree. An unabashed admirer of Heaney, Rooney not only traveled to Dublin for his funeral but also followed his funeral cortege northward to Bellaghy for his interment. His experience in the cemetery prompted a poem that he titled simply "In a Country Churchyard."

For seasoned readers of poetry, that title will call to mind Thomas Gray's iconic "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" from 1751, a somber meditation on human mortality. "The curfew tolls



the knell of parting day," Gray intones in the opening stanza, "The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea, / The plowman homeward plods his weary way, / And leaves the world to darkness and to me." As Heaney's friend and fellow Nobel Laureate Czeslaw Milosz once wrote in a poem, "One clear stanza can take more weight / Than a whole wagon of elaborate prose." Composed not in Gray's precisely measured and strictly rhymed quatrains (32 of them, no less) but in four supple blank verse six-line stanzas, Rooney's poem is likewise built to carry its thematic weight, and it is built to last.

While dedicated to the memory of Seamus Heaney, Rooney's poem actually has at its focal center the aging unnamed gravedigger in St. Mary's cemetery whose son, also a gravedigger, confides in the poet that Heaney's burial will be his father's last day on the job: "We want him to go out on a high note," the son explains. But this is unbeknownst to the father: "We haven't told him yet, the son disclosed, / but will when all the fuss is over." The attuned reader might recognize that Rooney himself is recognizing common ground (as it were) between the recently deceased poet and the elder gravedigger. This is hinted at in the first stanza when, describing how the younger gravedigger stood with "his right foot on the left lug of a spade," Rooney makes a deft allusion via that word "lug" to Heaney's most famous poem, "Digging," the first poem in his first volume of poems, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966). In that poem of succession from father to son, Heaney remembers with a precise eye how adeptly his "old man" handled a spade to dig potatoes

on the family farm: "The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft / Against the inside of the knee was levered firmly." Rooney's Heaney-esque deploying of the Ulster dialect word "fornest" in the second stanza—in this context meaning "alongside" or "near"—offers another linguistic link between the poet and the senior gravedigger: "His father sat fornest the opened plot, / on a stone wall the sun going down lit up."

By the third stanza, Rooney becomes more explicit in equating the two men when, suddenly seeing the father from the perspective of the son who will carry on the family operation of helping to bury the dead, he casts the soon-to-be-retired gravedigger as a stand-in for Heaney:

His father's hair, as the poet's used to, glowed
in a sudden, sideways burst of sunshine.
Magnesium burning. And would not let up
no matter the light. Or the light dying.

To his credit, however, Rooney resists any temptation to follow Heaney's lead, which famously involved transforming the farm implements of his forefathers—the spade for digging spuds, the sleán for cutting turf—into a metaphor: "Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it." (Yeats used a similar trope in his poem "Pardon, old fathers," apologizing that "I have nothing but a book, / Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine.")

Rooney's poem ends instead with a striking description of how the son fills in the poet's grave by tipping from a

mechanized digger's bucket a load of shingle scooped and transported from Lough Neagh, which figures so prominently in Heaney's poetry. (Aptly, with a surface area of more than 150 square miles, Lough Neagh touches on five of the six counties of Heaney's native Northern Ireland.) The gravel cascading "like the wall of a waterfall," the speaker in the poem—ostensibly Rooney himself—watches the son as "He watched his father through its thinning veil / get up to get the shovel and the rake." Still unaware that this will be his final burial, unaware of "the sun going down" on his undertaking, on "the light dying" on his shock of white hair, the older man persists, as did Heaney with his pen, in taking up the trusty tools of his trade.

In mid-August of 2015, a little less than two years after Seamus Heaney's death, the wooden cross that temporarily marked his grave was replaced by a simple headstone of Kilkenny blue limestone inscribed with words from his poem "The Gravel Walks": WALK ON AIR AGAINST YOUR BETTER JUDGEMENT. Heaney once explained that line in an interview: "My poetry on the whole was earth-hugging, but then I began to look up rather than keep down. I think it had to do with a sense that the marvellous was as permissible as the matter-of-fact in poetry." Less a directive than an invitation, his epitaph may prove as much of a summons to readers to visit Bellaghy as Yeats's is to visit Drumcliff. And a summons to visit his poetry as well.

Thomas O'Grady recently retired after 35 years as Director of Irish Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Reflections on coping with COVID-19

By Sr. LENA DEEVY

DUBLIN – With the easing of some coronavirus restrictions this week, I felt a new sense of freedom and relief. The lockdown here in Ireland started shortly after an unusual St Patrick's Day – no celebrations, churches closed, no sports, and over 70s could not leave their homes. What a shock to realize that this 'cocooning' applied to me! As a very active senior, the thought of being a 'vulnerable elder' never occurred to me. However, my birth certificate confirms 1942 as the year of my birth! So, I took on board seriously the constraints, knowing they protect both myself and others.

Cocooning has its challenges – but we do adapt! Our social lives have moved to the virtual world. We're not out and about, so we don't bump into people and stop for a chat. We can't pop into neighbors to say hello. An important part of my day is keeping in touch with loved ones by phone, mail and online and supporting each other in this difficult time. I've replaced my gym visits with a 15-minute video for seniors! And I'm also tackling a 'major' job forever on my 'to do' list: downsizing old files and shredding what's no longer of use. It's boring, but it's great!

Indeed, cocooning is a very small price to pay when I think of our most vulnerable, who may not have the resources to apply the COVID

prevention rules... and I'm haunted by the scenes I witnessed on my recent visit to Chios, Greece. Thousands of men, women, and children, including babies, huddled together in makeshift tents due to extreme overcrowding in the camps. A camp built to house 1,000 had approximately 7,000 residents. I was so grateful I got home in time before the coronavirus emerged – but I just can't imagine what will happen as it spreads... The courage, compassion, and perseverance of the volunteers there continues to inspire me.

I think of all who have lost loved ones during this pandemic. A friend of mine, Brendan, lost his battle with COVID-19 in April. Bernie, his wife of 56 years, was utterly devastated. When he contracted the virus and had to enter isolation, Bernie and their children could no longer sit with him. Not only were they broken-hearted that they could not be with him in his last days, but they also suffered the further pain and loneliness of not being able to gather with friends and family to grieve their loss.

Each of us has experienced a loss of some kind in this time – some more than others. Many of us have lost the rituals, routines, hobbies, and habits that bring meaning to our lives, and that we often take for granted. My neighbor John is a typical example – an active, resourceful man in his early 70s. GAA is his passion – his second family! His year is usually

punctuated by sports events – weekly matches and trainings, enjoying the 'banter' with the other lads. And now, the whole structure of his social life is gone.

But amidst all the loss and upheaval of this pandemic, I'm inspired by the revival of a spirit of generosity, sharing, innovation, care, and concern; not to leave out the incredible work and dedication of our first responders and frontline staff. And now that I can return to my morning walks in my local park, I'm inspired by the cycles of nature, especially spring with its new beginnings. On this May morning, the park is at its best: The sun is shining, the air is fresh and warm, the wetlands and beautiful wildflowers are thriving. The lines by W.H. Davis come to me: *'What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare...'* Wandering through each section of the park, I notice so many signs of new life and growth – fresh green leaves on the trees; the swans and ducks protecting their young.

As we deal with the isolation, uncertainty, and grief of this pandemic – our connection as a global society and the increasing destruction of eco-systems leading to conflict, famine, displacement of peoples in the world's most vulnerable societies – leaves me with many questions. I've joined an online group to reflect on Pope Francis's encyclical "Laudato Si," on caring for our common home. A new insight came



Sr. Lena Deevy: I'm inspired by the revival of a spirit of generosity, sharing, innovation, care, and concern; not to leave out the incredible work and dedication of our first responders and frontline staff.

to me – if the air feels so fresh after eight weeks, how would it be if we decided to cut emissions? What a change it would make to the health of planet earth with its amazing eco-systems, and to millions of our suffering global family.

Sister Lena Deevy, LSA, is the founder and former executive director of the Irish International Immigration Center (now Rian) in Boston who now lives in Dublin and volunteers with a humanitarian refugee program in Greece. She wrote the letter above "in solidarity and friendship to the readers of Boston Irish" and added, "We are truly all in this together and I pray for protection from the virus for all of us and send greetings and good wishes."

Rian Legal Q & A

The rights of immigrant children

Q. *Some friends of mine recently moved to a new school district, and they have been having trouble enrolling their children in the local public elementary school. Both the parents and the children are legal permanent residents. Can the school stop the children from enrolling in school?*

A. No. Under federal law, all children in the United States are entitled to public elementary and secondary education regardless of their race, color, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, or the status of their parents or guardians. A school, therefore, has no legal basis to prevent legal resident children from attending. Note especially that this entitlement also extends to cases where children or their parents are undocumented.

There is some confusion about the kinds of information that schools can collect from pupils and their parents without violating federal law. The Civil Rights Division in the US Department of Justice has published a fact sheet with some clarification of this issue. These are the main points:

(1) Schools are allowed to require proof of residency in the school district. Examples of evidence of residency could be a lease or utility bills. However, a school district may not inquire about the citizenship or immigration status of pupils or their parents.

(2) Schools may require a copy of a child's birth certificate only in order to establish that the child meets the age requirements for a particular grade in school, and they may not prevent a child from enrolling merely because he or she has documentation showing birth outside the United States.

(3) A school may request a child's Social Security number in order to use it as a student

identification number, but it must inform the child and the parents that providing the number is voluntary, and it may not prevent the child from enrolling if the parents choose not to provide the number. [Note: Using Social Security numbers rather than randomly generated numbers for identification purposes in schools, on driver's licenses, etc. may be unwise in view of the possibility of identity theft.]

(4) Data on race and ethnicity: In order to meet various statistical reporting obligations under federal and state law, schools may request, but may not require, that parents provide such data.

Anyone who believes that a school district is violating federal law with respect to the immigration status of children or their parents may contact one of the following agencies: Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section (877) 292-3804 (toll-free); education@usdoj.gov; Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, (800) 421-3481 (toll-free); ocr@ed.gov

Rian attorneys are available to provide advice on any immigration matters. Our walk-in immigration clinics have been suspended due to COVID-19, but our attorneys are providing free immigration consultations over the phone and will be happy to speak with you. Please call 617-542-7654 to schedule a phone consultation.

Disclaimer: These articles are published to inform generally, not to advise in individual cases. Areas of law are rapidly changing. US Citizenship and Immigration Services and the US Department of State frequently amend regulations and alter processing and filing procedures. For legal advice seek the assistance of Rian legal services staff.

From Co. Fermanagh to Boston: Her story

As a third-year student in Computer Technologies at Ulster University, Rebekah Richmond took full advantage of the opportunities provided to her on her J-1 visa, completing a software engineering internship in Greater Boston. Growing up in a small village in Co. Fermanagh, Rebekah always knew she wanted to visit Boston. Rian Immigrant Center sourced a great software engineering internship and after sending it to Ulster University, Rebekah jumped at the opportunity.

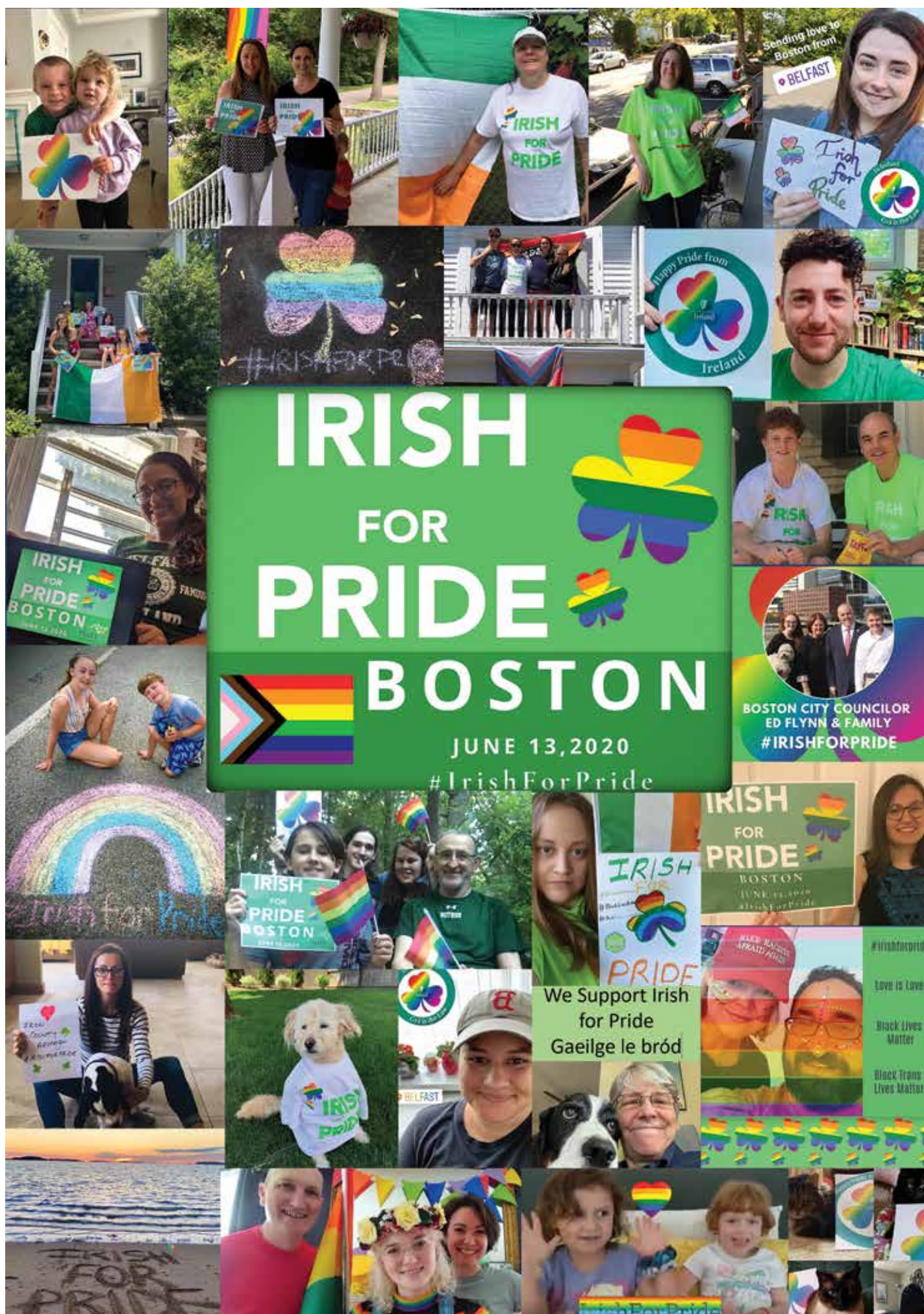
With the support of the Center and encouragement of her university, Rebekah's dream came true: she got the internship at Insight Enterprises in Watertown. Being part of a great team, learning something new every day, and gaining invaluable work experience has, in Rebekah's words, "definitely made me more determined and reassured me in my chosen career path for the future."

Rebekah settled quickly and happily into life in Boston, partaking in all the experiences and enjoying the many sights the city has to offer. "I always felt right at home," she said. In addition to visiting museums and local historical icons such as the Freedom Trail and Boston Tea party ship, she also became a self-proclaimed Boston Bruins fan. A highlight of her time in Boston was her extensive travel throughout New England, including many fun weekends with her friends on Cape Cod. Rebekah made time for a weekend in New York City, and even ventured all the way to Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic.

Her advice to potential J-1s is to take full advantage of the chance. Travel as much as you can, and "grab this opportunity with both hands." She added, "I never thought I would be brave enough to move from small town in Northern Ireland to the city of Boston but I can tell you, it was the best decision I ever made."

Unfortunately, Rebekah had to return home two months earlier than anticipated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite her disappointment at having to cut short her stay in the US, she truly made the most out of her time here in Boston, and encourages other J-1s to do the same when the opportunities arise.

'Irish for Pride' steps up despite pandemic crisis



In the absence of the Pride Parade this year, members of the 'Irish for Pride' group still came together on June 13 to celebrate the event virtually as a way to demonstrate their ongoing support and commitment to equality and inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community.

We were delighted with the response and enthusiasm from the community, and it was great to see all the photos coming in all weekend. We had over 50 people participate, from Boston to Rhode Island and New Hampshire; we even had folks from Ireland joining in the fun. We were

very impressed with how creative people got, and it was so fun to see people get their pets involved!

Thank you to all who participated, we look forward to June 2021 when we can come together in person as a group and join in the parade once again.

The virtual celebration was organized by the Rian Immigrant Center, in partnership with the Consulate General of Ireland, Boston and partnering organizations Boston Irish, Boston Northeast GAA, Charitable Irish Society, Cumann na Gaeilge i mBoston, Enterprise

Ireland, Boston Friends of the Gaelic Players Association (GPA), IDA, Ireland Funds, Irish American Partnership, Boston Irish Business Association (BIBA), Irish Cultural Centre of New England, Irish Network Boston, Irish Pastoral Centre, Eire Society, and the Irish Film Festival Boston.

Thank you to all these wonderful organizations for getting involved and spreading the word, and a special thanks to the team at the Irish Consulate for their work on this event and their ongoing support each year.

Greeley takes leave of post at Ireland Funds



Steve Greeley of Scituate, the Boston-based vice president of the Ireland Funds, stepped down from that post effective June 30. "After nearly twelve wonderful years at The Ireland Funds, and with my 68th birthday approaching, it's time," he said. "My objective is not to 'retire,' but to have more freedom and flexibility in my life. Jan, my wife and best friend, retired earlier this year and we look forward to starting our next chapters together."

His announcement comes as Caitri-

ona Fottrell replaced David Cronin as Ireland Fund President & CEO. Greeley says he is "working closely with Caitriona on a smooth transition and she looks forward to working with you and the Irish causes you care about."

...
Holyoke resident Stephanie C. Joyce has been appointed to a seat on the board of directors of the Irish Cultural Centre of Western New England.

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We took so much for granted; now we ask: Will things ever be the same again?

By SEAN SMITH
BOSTON IRISH CORRESPONDENT

I guess I should've kept my big mouth shut. Back around late February – you know, those halcyon, care-free days of long ago – I wrote a personal-perspective piece for Boston Irish that, among other things, took note of some considerable angst in the local Irish/Celtic music community about the shuttering of the Green Briar Pub and other recent closings of beloved venues and regularly occurring events. Did these perhaps signal a trend that might result in an imminent demise of Boston's Irish/Celtic music scene?

Nah, I said, in so many words: "Too many people have worked too hard for too long – as musicians, teachers and organizers – for it all to come crashing down."

Well, we know what happened. Within a matter of weeks, it all did indeed come crashing down, along with seemingly everything else in our lives.

Of course, "crashing down" does not necessarily mean "eradicated forever from existence." To be sure, though, it's pretty bad. Most all the pubs we used to go for sessions, concert halls, and other places where we enjoyed live performances. As of this writing, nobody knows exactly when or in what capacity they'll re-open – or how many will survive long enough to re-open. Even band rehearsals, or just informal gatherings at a friend's home for music, are rare now.

Intellectually, we know that *someday*, surely, the all-clear signal will be given. And won't that be a wonderful thing. During the last couple of months, I've spoken with, or seen comments on social media by, friends and acquaintances who sorely miss sitting in the same room and playing music with other people. Virtual sessions, whether by Zoom or Skype or other apps, simply cannot take the place of the real thing. And everyone seems to say literally the same thing: "I didn't realize how much I took it for granted. I never will again!"

Hope vs. Fear

Yet beneath the hope and anticipation, there is also some trepidation that it won't be the same somehow.

We think of what it was like to sit and play tunes in a crowded pub, or to spin through the figures of a ceilí or contra dance on an equally packed dance floor. How, we wonder, will that work in the era of social distancing? How many people will be allowed into the session or dance? Will we all have to wear protective masks while we



What with the repercussions from the COVID-19 pandemic, large-scale Irish/Celtic events -- like this scene from the 2015 Dorchester Irish Heritage Festival -- seem like a long-ago memory.

dance or play music?

In his book "Rites of Spontaneity: Communitality and Subjectivity in Traditional Irish Music Sessions," Boston University anthropologist Augusto Ferraiuolo discusses how it's not just the music that characterizes a session; it's what happens at the intervals and along the margins, the various sensations we experience – the sights, smells, and tastes as well as the sounds – and the interpersonal dynamics and social mores among those who gather. All those things, he notes, are neatly summed up in the word "craic."

And so we contemplate the coronavirus era, and how it might affect the craic, and those moments that just happen: You're playing along with the other musicians to some reel or jig, and you find the fiddle player immediately to your right doesn't seem to have the grasp of the tune – but the flute player to your left does, and you lean over more in that direction so that you're in synch. You do this with little or no thought; true, it's infringing a bit on personal space, but these acts tend to be forgiven in the session atmosphere.

We also think about the intimacy of these events. A musician I spoke with looked forward to getting out to sessions and ceilis, but wondered: "Will I be able to hug and kiss my friends, or even just shake hands with them?"

It's not just music-related activities and events, of course. We feel anxious, and not a little disconsolate, because it seems we must be vigilant about practically everything in our lives for the foreseeable future. That which we used to do spontaneously and without forethought is now subject to a checklist (appropriate social distance? face mask? hands sanitized?). Sure, we can adapt,

but in doing so, what do we leave behind?

I don't make a lot of predictions, at least not in writing. Up until that aforementioned column earlier this year, I think the last prognostication under my byline was in 1983, when as part of a sports column for the weekly paper where I worked, I projected a World Series between the Yankees and Braves; that year, the Yankees finished third in the AL East, while the Braves blew a six-and-a-half game lead to wind up second in the NL West.

So with disclaimers at the ready, here are some thoughts on what Irish/Celtic music in Boston (and elsewhere) might be like in the near, and somewhat more distant, future.

It might be that in the short term, sessions become less of a public event, and more the province of someone's living room, porch, or back yard. Or, if they are held in a pub, restaurant or other setting, perhaps session participants will have to be specifically invited or designated, based on room capacity factored by social distancing. Better than nothing? On the one hand, sure. But if you're new to this area's Irish/Celtic music scene, or to the music itself, making connections could become that much more difficult, which would be too bad – I remember being a new arrival here, and the welcoming atmosphere at places like the Village Coach House or Kinvara Pub that helped me make friends and acquaintances and improve my playing.

Then again, maybe people will, in fact, adapt: Newbies will be more purposeful and resourceful in seeking connections in the music community; experienced, longtime resident musicians will likewise make an extra effort to bring newbies into the fold; pub sessions will,



Green Briar session, 2013.

for the time being, be a less participatory event, but more people will open up their homes for sessions on some regular basis and at least partly fill the void.

Maybe that's as far as things will go, and maybe that will be enough. Maybe.

Tech and Trad

There used to be a perception that anyone involved with folk music – Irish/Celtic or practically any other kind – must surely be a Luddite of the first degree, as if playing centuries-old tunes and songs somehow rendered you oblivious to, even scornful of, modern technological advances. This notion is laughable – for one thing, have you ever noticed how many folkies work in high tech? – and most certainly does not reflect what's been happening for decades.

For example, folk/traditional musicians have been teaching via Skype, Facetime, and other such platforms for many years now. Sure, in-person instruction is still preferable for teacher and student alike, but if you're an as-

AND THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

piring fiddler whose schedule doesn't easily accommodate schlepping half an hour each way for a lesson, remote learning is a welcome solution. Or, if you find a musician whose playing style is exactly what you've been looking for, but who happens to live a couple of states – or an ocean – away from you, why not work by Skype?

Needless to say, teleconferencing has been indispensable for music teachers and students of late, including those who had given it a wide berth in the past ("Something I swore I would never do!" admits one fiddle teacher).

Livestreaming performances via Facebook, YouTube, and other means also long ago ceased being a novelty, and have in fact become a critical medium these past few months across practically every genre of music, Irish/Celtic included. Local Irish musician Declan Houton, a member of the band Devri, hosted a series of online musical get-togethers from his home in the winter and spring and raised \$25,000 for Lucy's Love Bus, an organization that supports children battling cancer. Boston-area Celtic acts such as Hanneke Cassel and Mike Block, Eamon Sefton, Maura Shawn Scanlin and Conor Hearn, and Jenna Moynihan took part in the Stay At Home Festival, a global livestream event in March held to benefit musicians who had lost income due to cancelled performances.

But this is hardly a recent phenomenon, even for the folk/trad world. Nearly 10 years ago, Concert Window – a partnership including a pair of then-Boston-based musicians, Irish-style accordion player Dan Gurney and mandolinist/guitarist Forrest O'Connor – struck an agreement with Club Passim to livestream performances from the famed Harvard Square coffeehouse. Although Concert Window closed down last year, over its lifetime it expanded to include numerous other venues beyond Boston and New England.

The Shrewsbury Folk Festival in England has been livestreaming for more than a decade. Festival organizers clearly saw it as an integral part of the whole operation, and devoted resources accordingly: Instead of a single fixed-position camera sending grainy footage, the festival live feed (available via YouTube) features a choice of two stages, each with multiple, active cameras and overall excellent picture and sound; there are also interviews and other special segments which, along with the performances, are archived on the festival YouTube page. It's a major production.

Again, most of us would no doubt prefer to see a performance in person, rather than via a monitor, TV screen, or phone. The energy of the performers, their rapport with the audience, the atmosphere in the venue, these are important parts of the live music experience that are difficult, if not impossible, to convey on livestream. Audio and video quality can vary greatly in virtual events, depending on the equipment used and the



Actually, already here: Several members of Boston's Irish/Celtic music community took part in the Pure Dead Brilliant Livestream concert in March.

performance location (a professional stage? a well-illuminated living room? a poorly lit bedroom? someone's back yard?). Things sometimes go wrong with the feed, or some other technical difficulty occurs.

Some perspective is in order here, however. Much as we – understandably, and not unreasonably – might expect, even demand a certain baseline level of quality in livestream watching, it's easy to take for granted how far this technology has come along, and how much it has proliferated in a relatively short period of time. Further refinements are surely on the horizon, making livestream technology better and, hopefully, ever more affordable.

Meanwhile, each year (though not this one, sadly) when I catch the feed from Shrewsbury, I try to remind myself how really quite cool it's been to watch on my laptop as the likes of Sharon Shannon, Andy Irvine, Ushers Island, Kate Rusby, and Daoirí Farrell play live thousands of miles away.

Ready or Not, the Future is Now

Recently, I did a story for Boston Irish on the Ministry of Folk [ministryoffolk.com], a website launched in April to aid folk/traditional musicians whose livelihood has been affected by the pandemic. The site includes a directory for performers/teachers, a calendar of virtual concert or workshop events featuring folk and traditional music, links to resources such as financial assistance campaigns for musicians, and information related to teaching and performing online.

There's a nice local angle to the Ministry: Two of its four co-founders are current Boston-area residents, and a third grew up here. All of them play folk and traditional music, though not as a full-time occupation, and have an appreciation for its presence in our lives.

Although they created the website in response to a crisis, the Ministry of Folk team has a long-term plan. As they see it, the pandemic has intensified long-evolving challenges for performers and organizers, and the impact is certain to endure for some time. Robust though Boston's folk/traditional music scene may be, it takes a lot of effort

and creativity to attract audiences and listeners at a time where entertainment options abound inside and outside the home, especially in a place like Boston. That's not going to get any easier when pandemic restrictions lessen.

Which is why the folk and trad music community needs to broaden and deepen its Internet activity, say the Ministry of Folk founders. Folkies may not be technophobes, per se, but for the most part, they haven't embraced the full capabilities of the 'Net, either – such as using social media or platforms like Bandcamp to promote, share or sell their music, or doing virtual concerts or workshops. Now is the time to take the plunge, says the Ministry team.

"There's a learning curve for everyone," Boston-area native Sarah Collins told me. "As someone used to fiddle lessons 'in person,' the idea of doing it online felt strange to me. But then I realized I could take lessons from somebody in Ireland or Scotland while sitting in my living room. That doesn't take anything away from the importance of playing music together in the same place. It's a way to extend the possibilities of what you can do with the music."

Extending the possibilities will mean some serious thought and discussion, and could entail previously unconsidered investments of time and, yes, money. Maybe I break down and buy some decent equipment for livestreaming and home recordings, and get an account on Bandcamp and YouTube so I can make my music easily available for listening and purchase, as opposed to putting out CDs. Perhaps I supplement my e-mail list by getting on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, and learning to use these effectively. Or I gussy up my website so that it's attractive and easy to navigate.

Maybe music venues will begin to permanently offer a livestreaming option for all or most of their events, upgrading their audio-visual infrastructure as necessary to justify whatever price they might charge for viewing. In addition to a slate of on-site concerts, maybe venues will regularly host remote-site events on their livestreams – and performers will have to meet certain standards for the

audio and video equipment they use.

Perhaps as an alternative to in-person or livestream events, performers will opt to record videos to be shown on a venue's Facebook or YouTube page: straightforward, minimalist, face-the-camera-and-play episodes of, say, 30 minutes; or more elaborate affairs with sophisticated artistic and production values. Maybe viewers pay a fee – proceeds split between venue and performer – to have a permanent link to the video.

I present these scenarios as hypothetical, but some of them are already happening, albeit perhaps not as exactly described. They aren't magic pills and each comes with logistical and financial issues. They also may seem far removed from the ways many of us have enjoyed Irish/Celtic music, and I don't hold them up as being superior, or equal, to the experience of sitting in a pub or concert hall.

Yet tech-assisted solutions and strategies will help keep the music alive and accessible, not just to its core audience but also to the wider listening public. To be sure, what's needed most of all are people dedicated to playing the music, whether as a vocation or for sheer enjoyment (or both). Fortunately, I think we'll always have them, especially in this corner of the world.

Which brings me back to the premise for this column: Boston's Irish/Celtic music scene may have come crashing down, but not the determined, resolute community that built and sustained it in the first place. Putting things back together will take a long time, and require revising some assumptions and expectations as to what a "scene" should encompass, and how its moving parts operate. There will be frustrations, setbacks, and occasional curse words.

So best of luck to everyone involved in the great rebirth – musicians, singers, dancers, organizers, promoters and, obviously, the people who sit, watch, and listen. I look forward to raising a pint with you, whether over a table or a livestream feed.

Oh, as for the World Series match-up this year? I'll get back to you.

Summer BCMFest is a go – in virtual format – on July 5

Summer BCMFest – the warm-weather counterpart to the annual winter BCMFest (Boston Celtic Music Fest) – will take place in a virtual format on July 5 beginning at 7 p.m., featuring, among others, Cape Breton music by the Leland Martin Trio; Boston-area Irish musicians Laura Feddersen, Nathan Gourley, Cara Frankowicz, and Alan Murray; fiddle-harp duo Jenna Moynihan and Mairi Chaimbeul; and fiddler Katie McNally.

A program of Cambridge nonprofit Passim, which hosts BCMFest events at Club Passim in Harvard Square, BCMFest celebrates Greater Boston's richness of music, song, and dance from Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton, and other Celtic traditions. This will be the sixth edition of Summer BCMFest.

Given the likelihood of continued restrictions on public gatherings due to the pandemic, BCMFest organizers opted for an online version of the summer fest.

All Summer BCMFest performances will be available via passim.org/streams. Festival details and updates will be posted at the BCMFest website, passim.org/bcmfest, and on social media.

A look at the Summer BCMFest 2020 performers (as of this writing; the lineup is a moving feature):

Katie McNally, who grew up in the Greater Boston area and has been a part of BCMFest since her early teens, has built on her foundations in the Scottish and Cape Breton fiddle traditions to create a sound that reflects her forays into American, Galician, and other folk music, as well as her original work. McNally has been a member of the Boston-based fiddle ensemble Childsplay and part of numerous collaborations, among them with Galician piper Carlos Nuñez.

One of her benchmark projects was the album "The Boston States" that she



Boston Urban Ceilidh, BCMFest 2014, Harvard Square.

recorded in her trio with Neil Pearlman (keyboards) – who will be accompanying her at Summer BCMFest – and Shauncey Ali (viola), which featured tunes inspired by old recordings of Cape Breton fiddlers both in Nova Scotia and Massachusetts and reflecting the creative energy of the Boston acoustic music scene. The trio's second album is forthcoming.

• The quartet of Laura Feddersen (fiddle, banjo), Nathan Gourley (fiddle), Cara Frankowicz (fiddle), and Alan Murray (guitar, bouzouki) possesses a wealth of experience (Feddersen, Gourley, and Frankowicz have made numerous appearances over the years at BCMFest in various collaborations) and enjoys a camaraderie as friends and housemates, but also as stalwarts of Boston's Irish music session scene – with

a particular fondness for the weekly get-together at the Brendan Behan Pub in Jamaica Plain. In fact, after the Behan shut down due to the pandemic, they embarked on a "virtual session" that has proved to be popular with musicians and non-musicians, Bostonians and non-Bostonians alike. For Summer BCMFest, the four will give a taste of the virtual session: easy-going, amiable and chock full of excellent music.

• Since meeting at the Berklee College of Music, upstate New York native Jenna Moynihan and Mairi Chaimbeul, from a musical family in the Isle of Skye, have forged a collaboration that fuses Scottish and Appalachian/old-timey music with elements of classical and jazz, as captured on their widely praised 2017 album "One Two." They have toured in North America, Scotland, and France,

with sold-out shows including Celtic Connections, Celtic Colours, and Scots Fiddle Festival.

• A frequent leader and participant at sessions in the Greater Boston area and elsewhere, Leland Martin has been strongly influenced by New England and Canadian fiddle styles and amassed an extensive library of well-known and esoteric tunes. At the winter BCMFest this past January, Martin was part of a special performance with fiddler Jake Brillhart and pianist Janine Randall, "A Cape Breton Trip Through Time," which offered an historical look at Cape Breton music, from old traditional tunes to iconic tunes from island legends, and ending with some of the newest hits from modern artists.

For more about BCMFest, see passim.org/bcmfest.

With 'the Behan' closed per the pandemic, four Saturday session regulars are livestreaming their music

BY SEAN SMITH
BOSTON IRISH CORRESPONDENT

Nestled in the northeast corner of Jamaica Plain, right near the Angell Animal Medical Center, the Brendan Behan Pub prides itself as a "cozy gathering place." Its website prominently displays a quote from the namesake Irish author and legendary raconteur identifying the necessities of life as "something to eat, something to drink, and somebody to love you."

Among the many who love "the Behan" is a confederation of local musicians who for years have squeezed into its confines for a late afternoon/early evening Irish session every Saturday. While over time the cast has changed, as some participants have moved away or onto other things, a core group has kept the faith, and the music, going, such that the Behan is regarded as one of the jewels in Boston's Irish session crown.

So when the pub closed down in

late March as the pandemic surged, Behan regulars Cara Frankowicz, Laura Feddersen, Nathan Gourley, and Alan Murray decided to take the session online. Since then, every Saturday from 5-7 p.m. – approximately the same time footprint as the in-person version – the quartet has livestreamed via Facebook from the house they share, located about a mile from the pub.

For the housemates, what began as a spur-of-the-moment, let's-see-what-happens venture has been every bit as enjoyable as they'd hoped, and somewhat more popular than they expected. The virtual sessions have attracted viewers from as far away as France and Germany, as well as from across the US. They also has served to affirm the musicians' bond with a place that means so much to them, an affection reciprocated by the pub's management and staff.

Recently, the four helped marshal

some support for the Behan when, as part of their May 30 session, they invited viewers to contribute to a relief fund set up for Behan employees, and raised \$250.

"We didn't plan anything," Frankowicz says. "There were other musicians on Facebook holding virtual sessions, so that helped give us the idea. We just wanted to keep playing, and since we all live in the same house and had to stay at home, we thought 'Why not?'"

Their initial belief that doing the livestream wouldn't be any more difficult "than pressing a couple of buttons" didn't exactly pan out, she acknowledges, but once some audio and video issues were addressed "it has really been fine, and lots of fun."

Adds Feddersen, "I don't think we imagined that so many other people would get out of it what we did – something that you could look forward to happening every week, at a time when

there is so much uncertainty."

The "Virtual Behan Session" is as informal and casual as its name implies. For two hours, the four play sets of jigs, reels, hornpipes, polkas, and other tunes from the Irish tradition on fiddles, tenor banjo, guitar, and bouzouki. There's no pre-set running order or arrangements: Someone will suggest these jigs, or those reels, or just start playing; musicians who play with each other so regularly over time often come to know one another's repertoires, and can adjust on the fly – or just sit out until a tune they know comes along.

In between playing, the four relax and chat and – since they're on Facebook – check to see which friends and acquaintances are watching, and if they have any questions or requests.

"Is that a Josie McDermott tune?" asked one viewer during a recent livestream.

(Continued on page 19)

In 'Poems & Songs from the Woodlands Edge,' amplifying the focus on the life of Thomas MacDonagh, the 'Poet and Patriot'

BY SEAN SMITH
FOR BOSTON IRISH

When it comes to making albums, Boston-area musician Martin Butler half-jokingly sums up his modus operandi this way: "Finish breakfast. Start dinner." In other words, practically as soon as he's wrapped up the work on one recording, he'll get cracking on the next one, which he's usually had in mind for some time.

"I'm very good at thinking up and planning out concepts for albums, but not so much at marketing my stuff – I find it a soul-crushing experience," he says with a laugh. "So I like to balance the two activities. That way, when I'm doing what I don't like very much – the marketing – I compensate by thinking about what the next album could be like. Sort of like while you're busy clearing the table and washing up from breakfast, you think about what you're going to make for dinner."

Thing is, Butler's metaphorical musical meals are no microwave-and-eat affairs, but sumptuous feasts involving a multitude of chefs with special talents. He recruits literally dozens of musicians and vocalists, from Greater Boston and well beyond, to contribute to his projects, as was the case for his recently completed album, "Poems & Songs from the Woodlands Edge." The recording is a follow-up to his 2016 release, "Thomas MacDonagh: Poet and Patriot," which explored the life and legacy of MacDonagh, a poet, playwright, educator, and co-leader of the 1916 Easter Rising – one of the seven Easter Proclamation signatories executed by the British. In between these two works was 2019's "Poets in the Trenches: The Irish in the Great War," which commemorated the experiences and sacrifices of Irishmen, including his namesake great-uncle, in World War I.

All three albums have a similar format: songs and tunes mainly from Irish tradition, interspersed with readings of poetry or prose, all of which recount or evoke thematic elements. In "Woodlands Edge," Butler does a deeper, more extensive examination of the foundations of and major influences on MacDonagh's writing, including his well-known poems "Knocknacree," "John-John" and "At the End."

"Where 'Poet and Patriot' was basically a three-act play of MacDonagh's life, and the different roles he played," says Butler, "I saw 'Woodlands Edge' as a closer look at him as a poet and writer, and the sources of his inspiration."

Butler's fascination with MacDonagh comes in part from having grown up in the Co. Tipperary town of Cloughjordan, MacDonagh's birthplace and childhood home. Beyond the deep respect he holds for MacDonagh's body of work, Butler finds admirable qualities in the way MacDonagh lived his life.



"Poems & Songs from the Woodlands Edge" creator Martin Butler, right, with Paddy Moloney of The Chieftains, and Jason Downes, the album's associate producer.

Cady Coleman photo

"He was a man who took chances, simply through the act of baring his soul through his poetry," Butler explains. "His life was one of passion – including a passion that would eventually lead him to lose his life – and I wanted to have the listener explore those things which fueled that aspect of him, including his great love of nature and Irish history. He exemplifies that basic, but elusive desire so many of us feel: having a dream and fulfilling it."

MacDonagh's "stubborn determination" is reflected in his relationship with William Butler Yeats, notes Butler. Prior to publishing his first volume of poetry, "Through the Ivory Gate," MacDonagh sent a draft to Yeats – to whom he intended to dedicate the work – for his comments. Yeats wrote back "in less than glowing terms" and offered MacDonagh some advice: Learn the old Irish language and don't print too many copies of "Through the Ivory Gate."

"MacDonagh had the guts to ask, and I admire that," says Butler. "In the end, he ignored Yeats's suggestion on the number of copies to print. He felt it was better to fail dramatically than to not make a total commitment. In the midst of it all, he was still traveling, lecturing, and continuing to write – being true to himself. But he did take part of Yeats's advice: He went to the Aran Islands to learn Irish."

The seeds for "Woodlands Edge" were sown during the work for the "Poet and Patriot" album, Butler explains. "There was so much I wanted for 'Poet and Patriot' but just not enough time and space, and some of the tracks recorded then were set aside for possible future use, since I had little flashes of where else I might go. And then I got involved with 'Poets in the Trenches,' which obviously was something different, but as I was wrapping that up I started thinking more about the ideas I'd been sorting through during 'Poet and Patriot.'"

A get-together in The Burren in Somerville with Turlach MacDonagh – the grandson of Thomas – and Martin O'Malley, a former governor of Maryland and avid Irish music fan, was a turning point, Butler says. "We were talking, and we hit on the

thought of 'taking a journey through Thomas's mind.' Martin just launched right into 'The Man Upright,' a poem that is believed to commemorate one of Thomas's teachers of Irish. I think that really lit the spark – I had Martin record it for me, in fact, and it ended up on the album."

Once again, Butler began inviting friends, acquaintances or friends-of-friends – including Irish music luminaries like Paddy Moloney of The Chieftains, singer-songwriter Liam O'Maonlai, and sound engineer/producer Brian Masterson (his credits include Van Morrison, Sinéad O'Connor and The Corrs) – to take part in his recording project; also among the cast were Turlach and three other members of the MacDonagh family, Muriel McAuley, Michelle Drysdale, and Dylan MacDonagh.

"I figure if I don't ask someone, I'll never know whether they can or want to do it," Butler says. "I'd rather take the chance and see if it works out. And more often than not, it does."

It certainly did for "Woodlands Edge," and as with Butler's previous albums, the result is an incredible array of sounds, styles, and tones over its 31 tracks, with a goodly number of Greater Boston-Massachusetts musicians involved: Martin Maguire's reading of "The Night Hunt," MacDonagh's recollection from childhood of local dogs in pursuit of game, punctuated by a driving reel, "Devaney's Goat," on melodeon by Paudie Walsh with Butler accompanying on bodhran (he also plays low whistle and tin whistle on the album); a snippet from "My School Days," read by McAuley, that celebrates the pristine beauty of Cloughjordan's wooded hills and flowered fields, with an elegant fiddle and piano duet from Rose Clancy and Janine Randall; and Aedin Moloney (daughter of Paddy, who plays whistle and uilleann pipes on the "Knocknacree" track) reciting "The Little Barley Stack," in which MacDonagh references the traditional music found in and around Cloughjordan, while fiddler Laura Ridarelli plays the hornpipe of the same name.

"These are examples of how the sights and sounds of his youth in

Cloughjordan, with all its natural features, influenced MacDonagh's writing," says Butler. "Musicians playing on the street were not unknown in Cloughjordan and so MacDonagh grew up with a soft spot for the traditional music. In fact, he played uilleann pipes, as well as clarinet and piano, and was a singer himself."

But Butler notes that MacDonagh's poetry wasn't all rosy nostalgia, as is evident in "John-John": a woman's ruminations on her ill-fated marriage to a man from the Traveller community, expressed through a complex range of emotions – disappointment, regret, sorrow, and wistfulness.

"I included 'John-John' on 'Poet and Patriot,' but felt it should be given a rebirth here," says Butler. "It shows the empathy MacDonagh was capable of. He supported the suffragette and women's rights movements, but influenced by his mother's sympathy for Travellers, he doesn't cast John-John as a villain. At the end of the track, there's some lively music that symbolizes John-John's return to his traveling people, and the wife's to her own freedom."

"MacDonagh's love of Ireland took on many dimensions: not just its aesthetic beauty, but its language, its history and culture, and this all came together in the belief that Ireland should be free from oppression," says Butler. "So by 1915, he has risen to such prominence in nationalist circles that he becomes the central organizer for the funeral of the great Fenian Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa – a very important event in the run-up to the 1916 Rising – and his tribute, 'On a Poet Patriot,' is included in the commemorative program for the funeral."

"Inevitably, we've come to focus on his death. But 'Woodlands Edge' offers an opportunity to consider his life through what he read, saw, heard, and experienced."

Butler is full of praise and gratitude for his many collaborators on the album, including John Schreck, its executive producer, and Mike Cleveland, who served as first associate producer.

All of which leads to the inevitable question: Now that he's finished with breakfast, is he onto dinner? True to form, Butler is already sorting through some ideas, and he has every reason to feel confident that one of them will take hold.

"I never get disheartened on a project; it may take forever, but I'll finish it," says Butler. "I think there's a momentum to every project, and I don't like to let it stop – and, fortunately, I have friends who help keep it going."

"Poems & Songs from the Woodlands Edge" is available via iTunes. For information, news and updates concerning the project, see the Facebook page at facebook.com/irishmartin1971.

By SEAN SMITH
FOR BOSTON IRISH



Marla Fibish, "The Bright Hollow Fog" • Fibish is highly regarded for her playing of Irish traditional music on mandolin, emphasizing the instrument's qualities of tone and sustain over speed, with a superb ability to tease out ornaments and triplets. She's often been glimpsed in these parts as half of the duo Noctambule with her husband Bruce Victor, but this album is Fibish's show (although Victor plays guitar on one track), as she holds forth on an assortment of traditional and contemporary tunes, including three of her own compositions, and two songs that are settings of poems by Stephen Vincent Benet and Thomas Hardy.

Fibish accompanies herself on mandola for most of the tracks, using harmonies and counterpoint as well as chording, which adds to the pleasures of "Bright Hollow Fog" – mellow, resonant passages here, bright, lilting, animated sections elsewhere, all confirming the suitability of these lute family offspring for interpreting Irish traditional music.

Nobody's about to compare the mandolin to the violin in terms of emotional/tonal range, but masterful players like Fibish bring out its shades of personality. Her arrangement of "The Quiet Glen/An Gleann Ciúin," a slow piece by the late fiddler Tommy Peoples, showcases the instrument's serene, meditative side, as does the album's title track – an air associated with the song "Building Up and Tearing Old England Down." Both of these tracks are Fibish solos, on mandolin and mandola, so you get the full measure of her melodic and rhythmic excellence.

Elsewhere, Fibish is joined by fiddler Martin Hayes on two tracks, including the opener, which combines a leisurely-paced jig ("Humours of Derrycrossnane") – Hayes playing accompaniment before joining in on melody – with a cracking pair of reels, "Maud Millar" and "Eddy Duffy's Favorite"; the other is a trio of jigs that ends with "Jackie Small's,"

one of those tunes that's more challenging to play than it seems, and therefore all the more fulfilling. That jig set guest stars Vermont musician Keith Murphy, no slouch himself in the fretted-string department; he plays mandola here and on two other tracks – including another trio of jigs that features Fibish's "Cait the Great."

Other accompanists besides Victor (on Fibish's intriguing waltz, "Ashes of Paradise") include fiddler Rebecca Richman ("The High Caul Cap" set) and Steve Baughman, whose gourd banjo adds a cool, funky undertone to the "Árd Aoibhinn/Hunter's Purse" set. Fibish's daughter, Miriam Adrianowicz, lends her step dancing to the aforementioned "Jackie Small's."

It would be unseemly to overlook the album's two songs, which reflect Fibish and Victor's penchant for drawing on poetry and literature as source material. The tender, resolute "Riversmoke" (set to music by Fibish and Victor; Fibish provides her own vocal harmony) is derived from Benet's epic "John Brown's Body," specifically the character of Melora Vilas, the unmarried, pregnant daughter of a subsistence farmer. In her soliloquy, Fibish notes, Melora chooses "the rhythms and creatures of wild nature" over conventional religious and social mores: "Good girls sleep with their modesty/Bad girls sleep in their shame/But I must sleep in a hollow tree/Till my child can have a name."

"Are You Digging on My Grave?" is a classic display of Hardy's dark, cynical humor (especially where romance and sentimentality are concerned) and Fibish, who sings it unaccompanied, sets the verses to a melody of her own, appropriately grim and morose-sounding – which makes the "shaggy dog story," as she puts it, all the more morbidly comical.

As Fibish writes in the album's sleeve notes, she has long thought of the mandolin as having a unique voice in the Irish tradition, especially when given the space to express it; nor can she separate that voice from her own. The songs and tunes, in each their own fashion, lend "Bright Hollow Fog" a quiet, delightful intensity. [marlafibish.com]

Mary Black, "Orchestrated" • Black, who went well beyond her folk/traditional roots to become one of Ireland's most influential female singers, largely retired from touring a few years ago, though she still performs in Ireland. Presumably, stepping back from live performances



doesn't necessarily preclude her making new albums, but for now this should do: Musician/composer Brian Byrne selected 11 of Black's recordings and "reimagined" them by adding orchestrations, played by the RTE Orchestra, to the original instrumentations – plus a few add-ons – and arrangements for each track.

The 11 are gathered mainly from the albums "No Frontiers," "Babes in the Woods," "The Holy Ground" and "Speaking with the Angel" – all released during the period of 1989-99, when Black, boosted to a great degree by "No Frontiers" (one of Ireland's best-selling albums in 1989), developed a strong following in the US and Europe. With backing from stalwart musicians like Donal Lunny, Declan Sinnott, Garvan Gallagher, Steve Cooney, Pat Crowley, Nollaig Casey, and Maire Breathnach, and astute choice of material – from the likes of Joni Mitchell, Richard Thompson and Dougie MacLean, as well as Irish songwriters such as Cooney and Jimmy McCarthy – plus her considerable talents and willingness to experiment, Black cultivated a polished folk/acoustic-based sound, undeniably Irish yet with a cosmopolitanism reflective of Ireland's growing world presence.

Chances are, you've heard Black's take on most of the selections on "Orchestrated," like Mitchell's "Urge for Going," MacLean's "Turning Away," Thompson's "Dimming of the Day," McCarthy's "No Frontiers" and "Adam at the Window," and Thom Moore's "Carolina Rua." The original recordings were made in the confines of a studio, of course, and not envisioned for the sonic depth and breadth of an orchestra, but on the whole they retain their intimacy and the close-knit rapport between Black and her collaborators. Byrne by and large does a good job of reining in and integrating the strings, brass, woodwinds et al, and not going the Full Mantovani.

On "Dimming of the Day," for example, the orchestra keeps a respectful distance, preserving the lovely vocal harmonies between Black, Sinnott, and

Crowley on the song's hallmark key shift, and the understated artistry in Thompson's lyrics ("You pulled me like the moon pulls on the tide/You know just where I keep my better side"). "Carolina Rua" opens with a fanfare but immediately clears the way for Black's exuberant, feisty delivery, including the infectious "doodly-bop-boodah" refrain with Mandy Murphy; this setting closes with a rendition of the reel "Crooked Road to Dublin" led by Byrne (on piano and bass), Jack Curran (guitar), Niall Murphy (fiddle) and Eoin Murphy (accordion), augmented by the orchestra. Cooney's moving "Bless the Road" stops short of being maudlin, as Byrne deploys the swells and fills shrewdly, and Black imbues it with so much dignity that a lump in the throat is more than justified.

Did "Orchestrations" need to be made? Probably not. The original, unorchestrated material still holds up very well. But it is interesting to see how the stylistic and artistic choices Black made then – obviously with no inkling that they would someday be reimagined on this scale – can translate quite reasonably to a "high-art" milieu. Further confirmation of Black's enduring appeal, if any were needed, and all the more reason to hope for a new, contemporaneous recording project. [mary-black.net]



Jarlath Henderson, "Raw" • Glasgow-based Henderson – Armagh-born and raised in Tyrone – is one of those rare performers who seems able to do it all: a gifted singer who's a superb instrumentalist in both the melody and rhythm domains. You don't have to take my word for it, since he's a three-time All-Ireland uilleann piper (also equally proficient on flute, whistle, guitar, and cittern) and was the youngest musician to win the coveted BBC Young Folk Award. More to the point, you can listen to his past work, especially his first solo release from 2016, "Hearts Broken, Heads Turned," which won all matter of acclaim for its inspired arrangements of traditional folk songs like "Courting Is a Pleasure," "Farewell Lovely Nancy" and "Rambling Boys of Pleasure,"

creatively integrating electronica, rock, and jazz.

"Raw" puts the spotlight more on Henderson's musicianship, with 8 of its 10 tracks consisting of traditional, contemporary, and original tunes. And as the album title suggests, the music is presented in a more straightforward, less-layered manner than on "Hearts Broken"; this serves to spotlight his supple, electrifying touch on the pipes and also heighten the presence of his accompanists: Hamish Napier (keyboards), Innes Watson (acoustic guitar), and Duncan Lyall (double bass, synthesizer).

The virtues of this approach are apparent on the very first track, a reel medley titled "Kitty," as Napier, Watson, and Lyall lay down a luscious rock/funk-flavored backdrop for Henderson's medium-speed rendition of "Kitty Gordon" – you can practically feel the relish with which the four strut through it – before he turns up the tempo for "The Flood on the Holm" and "McKenna's No. 2." As is the case throughout the album, Henderson's bandmates seem to accentuate just about every rhythmic variation or ornamentation he puts on a tune, and the effect is often exhilarating.

Napier's jazz-inflected playing, especially on electric keyboards, is a perfect complement, such as his masterful turns on the mazurka-like "Robin's" (and the two jigs that follow), and his subtle underpinnings on "Jana," on which Henderson switches to low whistle, not to mention his solo during a rollicking pair of barn dances credited to Northern Irish accordionist Eddie Duffy.

But that's not to overlook Watson, who gives a particularly fine account of himself on the "Boys" set – capering steadily along on a D chord through a good chunk of "Boys of the Lough" and then changing up the accompaniment into stop-and-go bursts on "The Gatecrasher" until settling into a groove for a rousing "Wind That Shakes the Barley." Lyall's synthesizers add some striking textures and drones on this track and elsewhere, including the solemn "First Do No Harm," a lament for four doctors of Medicine Sans Frontiers slain in Syria, written by Henderson, himself an MD.

A highlight of the album is "Pony," which starts with Watson flatpicking the song air "Sean O Dubhair a Ghleanna" alongside Lyall's understated bassline, joined by Henderson and Napier; there's a bridge, and then Watson and Lyall set a rocking beat to kick off the four-part jig "Langstern's Pony"

(also known as “Langstrom’s Pony”), on which Henderson pulls out all the stops.

Happily, “Raw” also gives some attention to Henderson’s singing, with his exquisite phrasing, enunciation, and timbre – often compared to Paul Brady but deserving of its own recognition – given center stage. His rendition of the lament “The Trees They Do Grow High,” backed by Napier’s gently elegiac piano, is sorrowful without being maudlin. By contrast, Henderson’s uilleann pipes are the backdrop for “The Wounded Hussar,” creating a tension and intensity that goes to the very definition of “raw.” [jarlathhenderson.bandcamp.com]

Haley Richardson and Quinn Bachand, “When the Wind Blows High and Clear”

• A pair of young musicians with intriguingly contrasting backgrounds: New Jersey native and North Carolina resident Richardson is a seasoned, All-Ireland champion fiddler in the Sligo style who at 17 has



already put together a thoroughly impressive performance résumé that includes The Burren Backroom and “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn”; Berklee College of Music alumnus Bachand, from British Columbia, is a multi-instrumentalist – guitar, mandolin, bouzouki, bass, keyboards, and percussion – whose musical tastes extend well beyond Celtic and folk to include jazz and grunge rock (among others), and known for his collaborations with his sister Kristina and performers like Jeremy Kittel, Ashley MacIsaac, and Natalie MacMaster.

“When the Wind Blows High and Clear,” their first album,

earned an “Ensemble of the Year” nomination for this year’s Canadian Folk Music Awards, and it’s easy to see why. Their talents are abundantly clear, but so is their rapport with one another, enabling them to build off their distinct perspectives and personalities – Richardson’s grounding and discipline associated with the Irish fiddle tradition, Bachand’s experimental bent encompassing different genres – and create a sound rooted in tradition with plenty of room for exploration.

Most importantly, it’s an album just full of enjoyable listening, such as “The Crosses of Annagh,” a reel by East Galway fiddler Tommy Coen, and a pair of reels “The Milkmaid/Lad’s Favorite” – these tracks get to the essence of the duo, Richardson’s assured, seemingly effortless bowing and fingering alongside Bachand’s crisp guitar work, with his astutely deployed chord voicings and rhythmic effects. Lúnasa flute player Kevin Crawford joins them for a medley of classic

jigs (“Willie Coleman’s/Scatter the Mud/The Old Favorite”), as Bachand displays his tenor banjo chops.

At a different point along the spectrum is their unconventional approach to the air “The Dark Slender Boy,” as Bachand frames Richardson’s stirring lead with a dramatic piano arpeggio and crashing guitar chords – not overriding the melody but lending it a certain tautness.

Both show themselves to be pretty good shakes at composing tunes, too: Richardson’s “The Whippet” provides a powerful close to a set that opens with Bachand doubling on mandolin and bouzouki for “O’Carolan’s Favorite” and segues into Paddy O’Brien’s “Burning Brakes”; her other originals are the playful “Maeve’s Cat Eye” and “100 Feet of Terror” – which, paired with the traditional reel “Earl of Hyndford,” is a delicious exercise in swing. As for Bachand, his “Tune for Garth Kempster” glides along smartly and sweetly, adding

instruments as it goes along, while “The Jaws of Angus” is a slowly accelerating moody, minor-key jig built on a mandolin-bouzouki-guitar triumvirate (with Séamus Ó Flatharta guesting on low whistle) that leads to Michael McGoldrick’s “Farewell to Whalley Range.”

Richardson and Bachand also each lead a song on “When the Wind,” but frankly, neither track quite matches the standard of the instrumental ones. Richardson’s delivery of “My Dearest Dear” is lovely, but the vocals sound overly reverbed and ethereal where you would wish for something more up-front and substantial; it’s much the same case for Bachand and his take on “Bonnie Miner Lad.” The instrumentation, arrangement, and overall tone for both songs are awfully similar as well.

But the album is a triumphant debut for this duo, whose partnership hopefully will persist through distance and pandemic-related difficulties. [haleyrichardson.bandcamp.com]

Saturday session regulars are livestreaming their music

(Continued from page 16)

Another inquired, “You wouldn’t by any chance know a Dinny McLaughlin tune called ‘On His Toes,’ would you?”

For those who miss it or want to watch again, a video of each session stays up for a week (they’re shared on the Brendan Behan Pub Facebook group) until the next livestream.

“It’s not a performance, and we’re not trying to be perfect,” says Murray. “We just forget there’s a camera pointed at us and act naturally. It’s really as if we were playing at the pub, with the same kind of interaction: the conversations and the joking around, and that special chemistry when you’re playing music together. And we have some friends lovingly heckling us – except that they’re doing it on social media, rather than in person.”

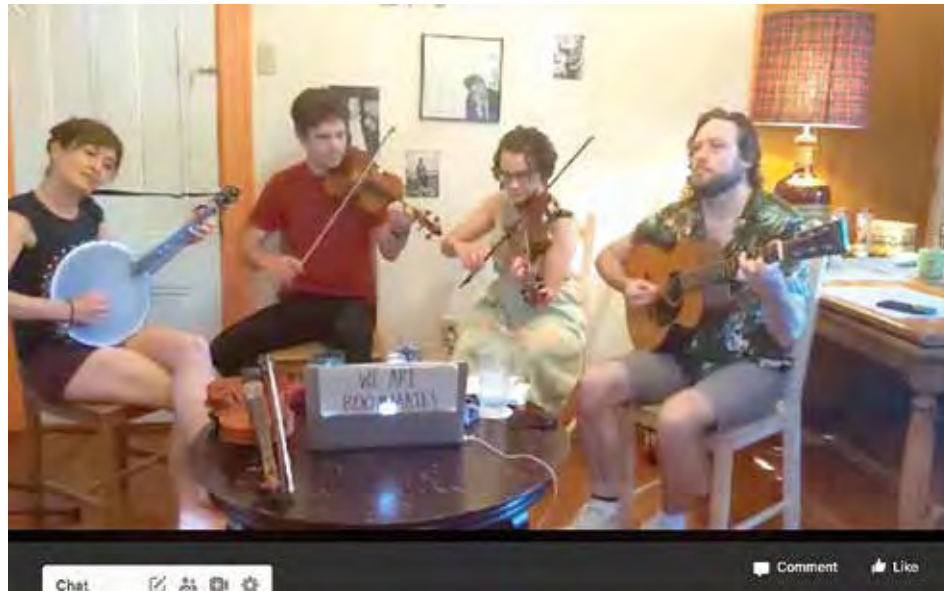
Sure enough, their June 6 livestream prompted some good-natured wisecracks:

“Don’t forget the mucky hornpipes!”
“Hope the hangovers are virtual, too.”
“Am I the only one waiting for Cara to get up and dance?”

But there are plenty of supportive comments as well: “You guys and other online sessions have inspired me to pick up my old tin whistle again,” wrote one viewer, “to the consternation of my neighbors!”

As Murray explains, their friends also “defended our honor” when some viewers – not realizing that the four live together – thought the musicians might be flouting social distancing and other COVID-19 guidelines. In response, the sessioners began displaying a homemade sign, “We Are Roommates,” during the livestream to allay any such concerns. This tactic may have created another misunderstanding, notes Frankowicz.

“Someone from France posted, ‘I



(L-R) Laura Feddersen, Nathan Gourley, Cara Frankowicz and Alan Murray shown during a recent “Virtual Behan Session” livestream on Facebook.

love that We Are Roommates band,” she says. “That was really nice to see – although we don’t consider ourselves a performance band; we just like playing together.”

Of course, the Virtual Behan Session is no substitute for the real thing, say the housemates, who appreciate the pub’s longstanding commitment to hosting the event.

“The staff really love the session and are behind it 100 percent. It means a lot when the music is so welcomed,” says Frankowicz. “That’s why we asked for donations to the relief fund – we want to support them as much as they support us.”

For Behan management and staff, the gesture was emblematic of the connection the pub has forged with the session musicians over the years.

“In Boston, Irish heritage is very

strong, and that’s something important to the Behan,” says manager Michelle Flynn. “The musicians do a fantastic job of representing that. It’s not only just that people like the music; these guys have a true following. It’s a rare thing these days.”

“Their support for the relief fund was all their idea, and it was such a kind thing to do. It just shows the kind of relationship we have. We can’t wait to get them back in here – hopefully, that won’t be too long.”

Mike Condon has tended bar at the Behan on weekends for three years, but has been a regular for the better part of two decades. A Cork native, he knows a thing or two about Irish pubs, and as far as he’s concerned, the Saturday session goes a long way toward making the Behan an Irish pub.

“It definitely brings out the authenticity of an Irish pub,” he says. “What’s

amazing is that the musicians are almost all Americans – it just goes to show how popular Irish music has become. And the quality of the music, and the atmosphere it creates, is excellent. For some customers, the session is the highlight of their week.”

The Saturday following the fundraiser for the Behan relief fund, Condon showed his gratitude by tending bar for the virtual session, serving up sangria he made through the window of the housemates’ kitchen, thus observing social distancing protocols.

“Definitely want to do it again,” he said. “That was very thoughtful of them, helping out the Behan like that.”

The housemates know it may be a while before the Behan can host sessions again, and even when it does, at the outset there are apt to be limits on how many musicians can participate. As Frankowicz observes, the pandemic will lead to changes “in how we interact with one another in many aspects of our lives.” For now, they plan to keep the virtual session going (after recently taking a two-week hiatus), although they are contemplating a move to YouTube. But however much pleasure they’ve derived from playing music while being quarantined together, Gourley and his roommates long for those Saturdays in the Behan.

“You miss seeing the friends who come by, whether to play or listen – might be somebody you haven’t seen in a while,” he says. “That’s the joy of possibilities. Of course, you don’t always realize just how much it means to you until it’s gone.”

NOTE: Laura Feddersen and some of her musical friends will be among the performers at this year’s Summer BCMFest, which will be held in virtual format on July 5 via passim.org/streams.

‘Down with Them!’ A rallying cry from the Broad Street Riot of 1837

BY PETER F. STEVENS
BOSTON IRISH STAFF

In June and July of 1837, trouble simmered in Boston, and the unrest exploded on the sultry afternoon of June 11 near and along Broad Street downtown. Fire Engine Company 20 had just returned to its station on East Street, having quelled a blaze in Roxbury. A few firemen had trudged wearily to their homes, but most went to a nearby saloon for a few drinks.

When they headed back toward the firehouse, they walked straight into a crowd of 100 or so Irishmen on their way to join a funeral procession around the corner on Sea Street. A collision was inevitable, according to the historian Edward Harrington: “The Boston firemen, the protagonists in this drama, were then almost entirely drawn from the native [Yankee] stock, and chiefly from those poorer streets of the population among whom hostility to the Catholics and the Irish was fiercest.” Several of the firemen moving toward the mourners reputedly had a hand in the burning of the Ursuline convent in Charlestown three years before.

Accounts from publications circulating at the time and from historical records of the archdiocese of Boston tell the following story:

The groups passed each other on that summer’s afternoon with little more than surly stares, and the engine company had nearly made it through the crowd, which “seemed peaceable enough,” without incident. One engineman, however, 19-year-old George Fay, “had lingered longer than his comrades over his cups.” A cigar dangling from his lips, he either shoved several of the Irishmen or insulted them.

Within seconds Fay and several of the Irish were flailing away. Fay’s comrades rushed to help him, but, “being badly outnumbered, got the worst of it, and two of them were severely beaten” by the Irish. The enginemen fled to their station at the order of Third Foreman W.W. Miller.

If Miller had merely barred the station’s doors, many witnesses later agreed, the pursuing Irish would soon have turned back to the funeral. Miller, though, “lost his head completely...carried away either with fear or with rage and thirst for revenge.” He issued an emergency alarm so that



The Broad Street Riot occurred in Boston, fueled by ethnic tensions between English-Americans and Irish-Americans.
Image courtesy City of Boston Archives

every fire company in Boston would come to East Street “to take vengeance on the Irish.”

The Irish had begun to disperse, but that did not stop the men of Engine Company 20 from rolling their wagon into the street and sounding its bell in a false fire alarm. Then Miller dispatched men to ring the bells of the New South Church and a church on Purchase Street. One of the firefighters dashed to Engine Company Number 8, on Common Street, with a wild message: “The Irish have risen upon us and are going to kill us!”

The Irishmen who had fought with Company 20 were now following the funeral procession of a hearse and several carriages trailed by about five hundred mourners. The cortege wound its way north onto Sea Street en route to the Bunker Hill Cemetery in Charlestown.

Company 20, with Miller leading, pursued the Irish. “Let the Paddies go ahead,” a fireman shouted, “and then we’ll start!” An onlooker saw the enginemen rush toward Sea Street and the procession with huzzas and cries of “Now look out! Now for it!”

The Irish mourners had walked only a block before another band of firemen, Company Number 14, approached. At the sight of the Irish, an engineman cried, “Down with them!”

Nearly at the same moment, the procession turned onto New Broad Street (near today’s South Station)—and directly into oncoming Engine Company Number 9. The horse-drawn fire wagon veered into the mourners’ ranks, scattering and

knocking down men, women, and children. The Irish “jumped at the conclusion that Number 9’s men had intentionally insulted and assaulted them.”

A melee erupted, with Miller, Fay and the rest of Company 20 arriving to join the fray. Fists and kicks flew in all directions, screams of rage and pain pealing along Broad Street. Sticks, cudgels, and knives soon materialized, and stones, bricks “and any other missiles that came to hand” slammed against heads and hearse alike.

The Irish and the enginemen would give starkly contrasting accounts of who started the brawl. The Yankee version was that Number 9’s engine did not hurt anyone and that the collision was “accidental.” To the Irish, the firemen’s version “did not escape charges of whitewashing.”

Those who had been following the hearse, as well as other witnesses, contended that George Fay, “the very head and leader of the quarrel...seized the rope and guided the engine in among the marchers, while some of the firemen tried to kick Irishmen, and some cried ‘Down with them! Trip up the horse!’”

One fact is certain: The brawl soon swelled into a full-scale riot. The hearse’s drivers inched their way up Broad Street and eventually reached Charlestown, but the procession was “quite broken up.”

Irishwomen and others from the shattered funeral march ran to Broad Street with shrieks for help and fear-embellished claims that the firemen were killing the Irish and that the Yankees had toppled the

hearse, smashed open the coffin, pitched the corpse into the street, and desecrated it. From all corners of the neighborhoods stretching along the waterfront, Irishmen rushed to the fight. Additional engine companies also poured onto Broad Street, where groaning and unconscious men lay crumpled atop the paving stones.

Crowds of spectators, Irish and Yankee alike, further clotted the street, cheering and exhorting their opposing sides until the brawlers “were excited almost to a point of frenzy.”

The weight of numbers lay with the firemen, their ranks buttressed by Protestant workmen, and they drove the Irish all the way down to the entrance of Old Broad Street, a gateway to the Irish neighborhoods. Realizing they were now fighting for their very homes, immigrant men, women, and children tore bricks and stones from their own hearths to hurl at their foes.

As the engine companies and their workmen allies scattered Irishmen and surged into the narrow streets, they chased or dragged Irish families from their homes and plunged into an orgy of looting. Edward Harrington writes:

“Wherever the marauders broke in, they smashed windows and doors, stole whatever they coveted, and then proceeded with savage thoroughness to destroy everything else. Clothing was torn to shreds, shoes were cut to pieces; furniture and household goods of all kinds were thrown into the streets. Featherbeds were ripped up

and their contents scattered to the winds in such quantities that for awhile, Broad Street seemed to be having a snowstorm...the pavement in spots...buried ankle-deep in feathers.

For immigrants who had been rousted from their cottages in Ireland and had seen their homes tumbled by landlords and British troops, the scene was sickeningly familiar. The looters trashed scores of households.

There is evidence that a few firemen, despite their brawling with the Irish that day, actually plundered homes. The blame for the break-ins falls largely upon “stout [Yankee] loafers and young hooligans” who trailed the engine companies, urged them on without joining the fight, and “seized the chance” to plunder.

Although continuing the fight, the Irish fell farther back from the overwhelming Yankee gangs. By 6 p.m., crowds of terrified immigrants crowded the wharves, their backs literally to the water’s edge.

Help came belatedly from a source on which few of the Irish would have counted. Mayor Samuel A. Eliot sent ten companies of infantry and the Boston Lancers, cavalry, on a sweep along Broad Street and the adjacent Irish neighborhoods. The fire companies and their cohorts scattered. After nearly three hours of fury, the Broad Street Riot came to an end.

Although heads had been cracked and blades and clubs had torn men open, miraculously, no one had been killed. The number of wounded was so large that it could not be tallied accurately.

In July 1837, 14 Irishmen and 4 Protestant men arrested during the brawl stood trial in front of a jury entirely composed of Yankees. Three of the Irish were sentenced to several months in jail. The Protestants were found “innocent.”

Not even the fury of the Broad Street Riot could make Boston’s Irish abandon their foothold along the waterfront. They had dug in and would refuse to be dislodged during decades of discrimination to come. On that June 1837 day, they had battled as a community.

The chief sources for the details in this article are “History of the Archdiocese of Boston,” Vol. 2, pp. 243-251; and the 1837 publications the Boston Daily Atlas and the Boston Post.

BOSTON IRISH

PERSONAL HISTORY

A detour to Brooklyn, a lesson in kindness

By MARTIN MCGOVERN
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH



Martin McGovern

Working my first black tie dinner as a very junior public relations person, I learned virtually nothing about my chosen profession. The scale, pace, and glitz of the fundraiser at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City during the early 1980s overwhelmed me while also reinforcing how much I had yet to master in the business of communications and fundraising.

The night, however, was not a complete loss, as an after-dinner experience taught me a more valuable life lesson. As the gala wrapped up, my boss took me aside and suggested we take a detour to Brooklyn instead of returning to Yonkers where we were staying with his relatives. My boss was Rev. Bartley MacPhaidin, then the president of Stonehill College.

Father Bart wanted to visit an old friend who was not well. I yearned for sleep. Keeping my grumblings to myself, I drove out with him from Manhattan to Brooklyn where our destination was a neighborhood bar owned by an Irish immigrant who, like Father Bart, hailed from Donegal. While he visited with his friend in the apartment above, I sat solo at the bar sipping beer. In my tuxedo, I cut



Martin McGovern and Father Bartley McPhaidin back in the day.

an awkward figure. Out of place twice in one night – inexperienced at the Waldorf and way overdressed at a bar that catered to working folks. No wonder the minutes ticked by slowly as my frustration festered.

After about an hour or so, Father Bart came down the stairs. Finally, we headed for Yonkers and the prospect of sleep. Breaking his silence as we drove, he spoke about his friend’s terminal illness but in such a compassionate tone that guilt gnawed at me

for having been so grumpy about the detour. My mind had been on relaxation and recuperation after a difficult professional baptism. His was on an act of mercy and kindness, tending to the sick and the dying. The gap between us humbled me.

In the first half of the evening, Father Bart had charmed a banquet hall full of prosperous benefactors in an elegant hotel. In the second part, he sat in more everyday surroundings with a family coming to terms with the prospect of a devastating loss.

He had raised a lot of money for the College that night, but success did not distract him from his pastoral mission or loyalty to a friend. He found the energy, time, and care to reach out to someone in need at the very moment he could have been basking in professional glory.

That was an instructive lesson for me about priorities and balance in life. I have never forgotten its moral or the example of its teacher. In the years that followed, I was blessed to have Father Bart as a mentor, a friend, a Sherpa guide to life in America, and the best man at my wedding.

He died in 2016, but every so often that detour to Brooklyn plays in my mind. A jarring lesson at the time, it will be in my heart forever.

Originally from Dublin, Martin McGovern lives in Mashpee and works at Stonehill College in Easton. An earlier version of this piece was published on July 22, 2016, in “Anchor,” the newspaper of the Fall River diocese.

Cultural Centre welcomes all for fine dining and drinks

The Irish Cultural Centre of New England in Canton opened for outdoor dining last month. “Going forward, the center will be open every weekend for dinner, with plans to add Sunday lunch sometime in the very near future,” said Maudy Dooher, Director of Programming.

“As we enter phase three we hope to have more live performances, dinner and drinks on the outdoor patio and under the tent, and fine Irish fare with a wide variety of Irish stouts, ales and ciders. Summer cocktails and an array of Irish whiskeys are also on hand. Come join us for dinner and drinks where a big Céad míle fáilte is waiting!”

Dining at the ICCNE is open to the public on Friday & Saturday evenings. Reservations required. Call 781-821-8291 or email: kryder@irishculture.org

...

The ICC together with the Consulate General of



Ireland, Boston, hosted a tribute luncheon to James Joyce last month. Vice Consul Shane Caffrey gave a short reading from “Ulysses” and Maureen McNally, above, offered some wonderful insight into his life and works.

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Jean Kennedy Smith, last of the siblings, is dead; she was 92

Jean Kennedy Smith, the second youngest, and the last survivor, of the nine children of Joseph and Rose Kennedy, died on June 18 at her home in Manhattan. She was 92.

Ms. Smith, a graduate of Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York, married a shipping executive, Stephen E. Smith, in 1956, a time when her brother, John F. Kennedy, was making waves as a prospective presidential candidate.

Ms. Smith, who had gained wide notice when she and her sisters campaigned for their brother in his successful 1946 congressional run, and her husband were prominent players in the Kennedy entourage when JFK won the White House in 1960.

Jean Kennedy Smith remained active in public life during and after the deaths by assassination of her brothers Jack and Bobby, with a special interest in people with disabilities. She created Very Special Arts in 1974 as an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The program aimed at "providing people of all ages living with disabilities the opportunity to learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts."

In 2011, President Barack Obama presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her advocacy work.



Above, Jean Kennedy Smith on one of her many trips to the JFK Library in Dorchester. Below, with her brother Ted..

In 1993, Ms. Smith was appointed US ambassador to Ireland by President Bill Clinton. She served there for some five years during which she assisted in the peace effort with Northern Ireland generally, and specifically when she recommended that the United States grant a visa to the highly controversial Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams.

She was honored as Irish American of the Year by "Irish America" magazine in 1995 and granted honorary Irish citizenship by Irish President Mary McAleese in 1998.

Ms. Smith's niece, Caroline



Kennedy, and the JFK Library Foundation published the following statement on her passing:

"Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith was an inspiration and a role model for our family. She played a central role in the Irish Peace Process, was a longtime Trustee at the John F. Kennedy Center for the

Performing Arts, and carried forward our family's work on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities as the founder of Very Special Arts.

"With her husband, Stephen E. Smith, and her beloved brother Ted, she played a vital role in the life of the JFK Library, helping to establish it on Columbia Point and generously supporting the JFK Library Foundation.

"Jean was always coming up with good ideas - and making sure that other people executed them. She was the person who first suggested that the

JFK Library Foundation present an annual Profile in Courage Award as a way of honoring her brother's memory. Thirty years later, the Award has become recognized as the "Nobel Prize for Politics" and is her legacy as well.

"Her son, Stephen Kennedy Smith, the author of "JFK: A Vision for America," carries on her work as a member of the Foundation's board of directors.

Gerard Doherty dies at 92; politician who worked on Kennedy campaigns

The Honorable Gerard F. Doherty of Charlestown passed away on June 16, 2020 at the age of 92 in the home where he was born on Washington Street. He was a graduate of Malden Catholic High School, Harvard University, and Wayne State University, where he obtained a master's degree in public health administration and then to Suffolk University Law School.

He was known for his many professional accomplishments as a lawyer, real estate developer, member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, chairman of the Democratic Party and as political campaign manager extraordinaire.

Mr. Doherty's law practice spanned more than 50 years specializing in real estate issues. He was involved in the development of many projects throughout New England, the most notable of which were Admiral's Hill in Chelsea, MA, and the conversion into affordable housing of the State Prison in Windsor, VT.

His political career started with his election as a member of the Massachu-

setts House. He continued in politics as an intimate of the three Kennedy brothers: Jack, Bob, and Ted. He first met President Kennedy in front of his home on Washington Street in Charlestown in 1947 during the Bunker Hill Day Parade.

Ted Kennedy's successful first campaign for the United States Senate was managed by Mr. Doherty, who also managed Robert Kennedy's successful presidential campaign in Indiana. He also managed Lyndon Johnson's presidential campaign in Massachusetts and Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign in New York.

The New York Times referred to "Gerry" as a "campaign impresario." President Carter designated him as a United States Delegate to the funeral of Pope John Paul I and as a delegate to the American Russian Housing Committee.

For more than 25 years, Mr. Doherty was actively involved in the Kennedy Library, serving as a trustee and as a co-chair of the Annual Profile in Courage Award Dinner. He was a staunch supporter of the EMK Institute for the

United States Senate. He recorded his political adventures in a memoir, "They Were My Friends - Jack, Bob and Ted, My Life In and Out of Politics."

To those who knew him best, he will be remembered for his many unpublicized acts of kindness and generosity to friends and strangers, both financial and non-financial. Mr. Doherty was always noted for his intense loyalty and generosity to family, friends, schools. He served on numerous boards of trustees, including Malden Catholic, Our Lady of the Elms College, Suffolk University, Pioneer Institute, Massachusetts Board of Regents for Higher Education, the Irish immigration center, RIAN, the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary. His favorite organizations were the Charlestown Knights of Columbus Council # 62, Charlestown Old Schoolboys Association and the Bunker Hill Associates. He was instrumental as a founding member of JFK Family Service Center of Charlestown and Charlestown Catholic Elementary School.

Mr. Doherty leaves his wife, the



Gerard Doherty is pictured at a recent Irish event hosted by the Rian Immigration Center. Photo courtesy Ronnie Millar

Hon. Regina L. Quinlan Doherty, and many nephews and nieces. He was predeceased by his first wife Marilyn M. (Dillon) Doherty, by his brother Edward M. Doherty, Jr. and sister-in-law Marguerite M. (Conlon) Doherty.

Eavan Boland dies at 76 in Dublin

- an appreciation by a former student



By MICHAEL MCGONAGLE
SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH.COM

Poetry fans in Ireland and the world over continue to mourn the death of Eavan Boland, one of her country's leading poets and a champion of women in the arts who died in late April at age 76. Ms. Boland first published her poetry when she was a first-year student at Trinity College, Dublin, her work growing into a force with successive volumes of elegance and power.

From her earliest work, Ms. Boland explored the identities of Irishness and Irish women. These were constant themes, the "wider contexts of nationhood and womanhood" as stated in her volume "The Journey and other Poems."

When she was a child, she moved to London when her father was appointed Ireland's ambassador to the United Kingdom, and it is there that Ms. Boland had her first experiences of alienation from the prevailing culture. In dealing with this distancing, she strengthened her identification with her Irish heritage. She recalled this period in several of her poems from "The Journey," particularly in "An Irish Childhood in England: 1951":

"...theteacherintheLondonconventwho when I produced "I am n't" in the classroom turned and said - "you're not in Ireland now."

Ms. Boland also plumbed the emigrant experience from the perspective of those who remained:

"Like oil lamps we put them out the back, of our houses, of our minds. We had lights better than, newer than and then a time came, this time and now we need them. Their dread makeshift example."

But it was as a liberating force for Irish women writers that Ms. Boland won the hearts and admiration

of her contemporaries. In 1991, she publicly criticized "The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing," touted to be the most complete collection of Irish writing ever compiled. Though her work was included in the volume, she was one of only three women in the contemporary section, leading her to rally opinion against omissions of other women in essays and reviews and speeches. As she put it in a speech at Trinity:

"I am critical of the recent Field Day anthology which has 34 male poets and 3 women poets in the contemporary Irish poetry section. It has other absences. There are no [female] section editors. There is no mention of the women's movement, whose ideas and importance can be seen in something like the recent debate on abortion. There are articles by distinguished scholars such as Edward Said but you can't find the name Mary Robinson in the index. The Field Day anthology indicates the fact that those who put together canons which confuse power with authority do so at their peril ..."

"Shewasatthetimeofthepublication of "The Field Day Anthology" a warrior goddess on behalf of the throng of excluded women writers," the poet Mary O'Malley wrote in 1999 for the journal Colby Quarterly. "Her magnificent defense of contemporary women writers ensured that such an extraordinary exclusion, whether from arrogance, ignorance, or appalling sloppiness, is unlikely to happen on that scale in Ireland again."

Ms. Boland also opened up new territory as fit subject matter for poetry. The Irish writer and scholar Declan Kiberd once said that she was "one of the few Irish poets to describe with any fidelity the lives now lived by half a million people in the suburbs

of Dublin." It was no coincidence. In 2014, she told the arts and culture magazine Believer:

"I was a woman in a house in the suburbs, married with two small children. It was a life lived by many women around me, but it was still not named in Irish poetry....I've often said that when I was young it was easier to have a political murder in a poem than a baby.

"I wanted to put the life I lived into the poem I wrote. And the life I lived was a woman's life. And I couldn't accept the possibility that the life of the woman would not, or could not, be named in the poetry of my own nation."

Aside from writing and raising two daughters with her novelist husband, Kevin Casey, Ms. Boland pursued a very successful academic career, taking up teaching at Trinity College, Dublin, University College Dublin, and Bowdoin College. She was also a member of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, and a writer-in-residence at Trinity College, Dublin, and at the National Maternity Hospital.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, she taught at the School of Irish Studies in Dublin. From 1996 until her death, she was a tenured professor of English at Stanford University where she was the Bella Mabury and Eloise Mabury Knapp Professor in the Humanities and the Melvin and Bill Lane Professor and director of the Creative Writing program. She divided her time between Palo Alto, and her home in Dublin.

It was at University College Dublin in the early 1980s that I had the privilege of studying under Ms. Boland while pursuing a graduate course in Anglo-Irish Literature. What strikes me to this day is how consistent her demeanor in the class was with

her poetic voice - generous and modest, but authoritative. In this, she was an inspiration to our class in Modern Irish Poetry, and particularly to the women, who clearly emulated her. A number of them went on to successful academic careers of their own in Canada, the US, and Ireland. The many accolades and academic awards Ms. Boland received as her career matured were no surprise to those who studied with her.

In 2018, to mark the 100th anniversary of the granting of suffrage to women in Ireland, she read excerpts at the United Nations from a poem she had written for the occasion, "Our Future Will Become the Past of Other Women." It included a section that, she told the assembly, was about the grandmothers and great-grandmothers of the suffragists, women who had never had the chance to vote:

"Ghost-sufferer, our ghost-sister Remind us now again that history Changes in one moment with one mind. That it belongs to us, to all of us. As we mark these hundred years We will not leave you behind."

It would serve her well as an epitaph. Eavan Boland held herself, as well as others, accountable. Her students, her readers, her fellow poets all knew that they could count on her to stand up when it mattered. As Hannah Aizenman, the New Yorker's poetry coordinator, wrote in the magazine's edition dated April 29, the day of Ms. Boland's death, she "refused to let the lyric off the hook of history."

Michael McGonagle is a Dorchester native, the son of Irish parents, and a long-time Jesuit educator. He currently works at Notre Dame Academy in Hingham and serves in the Ignatian Volunteer Corps.

South Shore Irish Heritage Trail discussion will continue

South Shore towns from Weymouth to Plymouth hope to get a major tourism boost from a proposed Irish Heritage Trail that will highlight sites of interest to Irish Americans and visitors from Ireland and around the world.

The pandemic forced the postponement and rethinking of a Scituate meeting to which political and civic leaders from nine South Shore towns had been invited. The proposal for a South Shore Irish Heritage Trail from the Scituate/West Cork Sister City Committee was to be unveiled at that meeting. Rather than a large group meeting as originally planned, there is now to be a three step approach:

First, there will be an array of printed materials ready for distribution in October when town officials are more apt to have time to study them. Next,

there will be an explanatory You Tube Video presentation for viewing in early November. This will be followed by the third step - a Zoom-based Question and Answer meeting in mid-November.

Backed by \$1,250 in seed money from the Irish government, the hope is to win participation in a South Shore Irish Heritage Trail from communities that boast the highest concentration of residents with Irish roots in the entire United States. An astounding 40 to nearly 50 per cent of area residents can trace their heritage back to the Emerald Isle.

"One model for this project in the extremely successful Wild Atlantic Way in Ireland," said Siobhan Hunter, Chair of the Scituate/West Cork Committee. "We hope to do something similar here showcasing sites with connections to Ireland and the immigrants who flocked

here in pursuit of better lives."

Among the early discussed stops along the Trail:

- The former Hull summer home of celebrated Irish-American John Boyle O'Reilly, a poet, journalist and civil rights activist. The family of President John F Kennedy also had links to the town.

- The Cohasset memorial to the 1849 shipwreck of the Brig St John in which nearly 100 Irish immigrants perished.

- The Scituate Maritime and Irish Mossing Museum which chronicles a local industry begun by Irish immigrants in which many generations of Scituate young people participated.

- The Plymouth Public Library contains the only dedicated Irish Collection of any city or town on the South Shore.

The West Cork Committee invites participation from South Shore towns. One lure is possible continued funding from the Irish government through its Emigrant Support Program. The committee has applied for a \$75,000 grant to fund planning and development of the Trail including an interactive web page to guide visitors to Irish-themed sites in the South Shore towns.

"Not only would this be an asset to all those who live here regardless of ethnicity but the side benefits for tourism could also benefit each community in a substantial way," said Hunter.



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