

# BOSTON Irish

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Spring, 2024

[BostonIrish.com](http://BostonIrish.com)

## Dual Celebration

## St. Patrick's Day Evacuation Day



Historic Dorchester Heights in South Boston.

*Original art by Vincent Crotty*



# Happy Saint Patrick's Day

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2024

# St. Patrick's Day Celebration

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**MARCH 13, 2024 | 8AM**  
InterContinental Boston  
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Join Boston-area business, political, and community leaders, and Partnership friends, as we celebrate the most Irish of holidays, St. Patrick's Day! We are honored to welcome the **Taoiseach of Ireland, Leo Varadkar, TD** as our keynote speaker.

Register at [WWW.IRISHAP.ORG/EVENTS](http://WWW.IRISHAP.ORG/EVENTS)



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## St. Patrick Parade dates and times

**Sat., March 2**  
Pawtucket at noon

**Sat. March 9**  
Cape Cod, 11 a.m.  
Hartford at 11 a.m.  
Providence RI, 12 Noon

**Sun., March 10**  
Worcester at Noon  
New Haven at 1:30 p.m.

**Sat., March 16**  
Newport, RI, at 11 a.m.

**Sun., March 17**  
Abington at 1 p.m.  
South Boston at 1 p.m.,  
Holyoke at noon  
Scituate at 1 p.m.  
Portland, ME, at noon  
West Warwick at 1 p.m.  
Dublin, Ireland, at noon  
Cork City Ireland, at 1 p.m.

**Sun., March 24**  
Manchester NH, at noon

Source: Boston Irish Tourism Assn.



Last year's parade in South Boston featured 148 groups and 4,000 participants.

George Comeau photo

## South Boston route set for Sun., March 17 parade

Since 1901, Boston's Evacuation Day/St. Patrick's Day Parade has commemorated and celebrated the significance of the double holiday with a grand march through the streets of South Boston.

Each year, the parade steps off on the Sunday closest to March 17th, with a commitment to keeping alive the tradition of honoring heritage and service. This

year's parade takes place on the date itself, Sun., March 17, at 1 p.m., and showcases some 4,000 participants across 148 groups, with hundreds of thousands of spectators. The events are sponsored by the Allied War Veterans Council of South Boston, with event management by Conventures Inc.

The route starts at the Broadway/Dorchester Ave intersection, then moves east on West

Broadway, left onto East Broadway, right onto P Street, right onto East 4th Street, left onto K Street, right onto East 5th Street, left onto G Street, right onto the southerly arm of Thomas Park, left onto Telegraph Street, left onto Dorchester Street to the end at Dorchester Avenue. More details available online at [southbostonparade.org](http://southbostonparade.org)

## For Dorchester, March 17th marks two landmark holidays

By PETER F. STEVENS  
BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

In early March 1776, Gen. George Washington rode out to Dorchester and reined in at the farm of Captain John Homans, who lived in "the upper end of town." Homans's acreage was full of white birch, and Washington ordered his troops to cut down the trees so that "the citizens of this and the neighboring towns...could cart them...on the night of the 4th, to [Dorchester] Heights."

The Heights were dotted by "nine dwelling houses on the Neck, now South Boston." The American Revolution was about to arrive at the front doors of those nine Dorchester households.

On the night of March 4, as American cannons opened up on British positions to divert the Redcoats' attention from the Heights, some 300 wagons and carts teams piled high with timber for protective fences (fascines) creaked toward the slopes. So, too, did approximately 2,000 of Washington's troops, lugging cannons dragged all the way from Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York, the entire procession snaking forward with

as much silence as possible. Washington, anticipating that the British would mount a bombardment and assault, had ordered his men to pack 2,000 bandages for the wounded.

Many residents of Dorchester hauled timber up the Heights on that icy, blustery night. The troops went right to work on the hills' summits, erecting gun emplacements and bastions and positioning mortars and large-bore cannons with a direct view of British-occupied Boston and the harbor below.

The British commander, General Sir William Howe, awoke on March 5 to find the rebels on the high ground of the Heights and reportedly wrote, "The rebels have done more in one night than my whole army would have done in a month...on Dorchester peninsula...a work which the king's troops had most fearfully dreaded."

Facing catastrophe, Howe had no choice but to abandon Boston. His nearly 10,000 Redcoats boarded the 125 transports and warships in Boston Harbor and sailed away on March 17, 1776.



Graphic shows Gen. Washington entering Boston after British evacuate the harbor on March 17, 1776.

Washington knew that day was a holy day for the Irish, with many Irishmen having fought at Bunker Hill and having hauled those ponderous cannons up Dorchester Heights. He acknowledged both facts by ordering that the password of the day be "Saint Patrick." Those Irishmen had witnessed what their

countrymen on the "old sod" could only dream of: the British in full flight.

Today, 248 years later in Boston, March 17 fittingly marks both St. Patrick's Day and Evacuation Day – the celebration alike of Ireland's venerated saint and the day the Redcoats departed Boston for good.



# Consul General embraces life as a Bostonian: ‘Everybody’s so lovely, so warm, so welcoming’

By ED FORRY

BOSTON IRISH PUBLISHER

It was Christmas Eve Day 2023 and Ireland’s Consul General Sighlé Fitzgerald was on the beach at M Street in South Boston. The outside temperature was 5 degrees with the water temp in the high 30’s and she was there to join with a few other sturdy souls to take a mid-morning plunge into the waters of Dorchester Bay to help raise funds for the Irish Pastoral Centre.

“It’s a Lovely Christmas Eve Dip this morning with the Boston Irish Dippers.... and amazing post-dip catering,” she posted that day on her Facebook page.

A week later, she joined her new bathing-suit friends for a New Year’s Day dive at Quincy’s Wollaston Beach. “Great turnout for New Year’s Dip with

the Boston Irish Dippers in support of the Irish Pastoral Centre,” she wrote online.

Boston’s newest Irish diplomat has visited a lot of places and made a lot of friends since arriving at the Irish Consulate last summer. Already she has been all over New England – a train trip to Maine on Amtrak’s Downeaster, visits to Irish groups in New Hampshire and Western Mass., and multiple meetings with Irish organizations all over greater Boston.

After almost three decades with the Department of Foreign affairs in posts in Madrid, Brussels, and Washington, Sighlé Fitzgerald has quickly settled into her new assignment in Boston.

“Boston is fantastic, do you know, terrific,” she said in an interview with the *Boston Irish Magazine*. “I mean, everybody’s so lovely, so warm, so

welcoming. It’s super, it’s a lovely city. I’d previously been in Washington and I suppose Washington was much more of a transient city, with people who were coming and going all the time. But Boston is smaller and it’s easier to get around and, oh, I’m enjoying it. I have a good sense of the place now.”

Sighlé, the daughter of a Garda who was raised in Mullingar in Ireland’s Midlands, regularly sends messages to her Facebook friends, telling of her delights and discoveries in her visits around New England.

On a trip to Portland: “Maine blew me away -3,500 miles of coastline !! I’ve only just begun....”

On a weekend on Boston’s South Shore: “No surprise that I felt so very much at home here. Scituate is twinned with West Cork, Perfectly



Consul General Sighlé Fitzgerald at the Irish Consulate offices in Copley Square.

Scituate, amazing place and people...”

She was especially pleased that the Consulate sponsored a Feb. 1 event to celebrate the great Irish woman, St Brigid: “A great evening celebrating renewal, leadership and empowerment with these amazing women #láfhéile-bríde,” she said.

She was also delighted to see the accomplishments of Irish women receiving increasing recognition, which moved her to speak about her literary interests. “I am a big Bronte fan, because the father Bronte was born in county Armagh. So, over the years, I’ve been very interested in the whole Bronte link to Ireland because Charlotte Bronte herself married a man from Armagh, and obviously I’m from the Midlands, so I know that part of the country well, and she spent her honeymoon in Ireland.

“I’m more of a reader than a writer,” Sighlé told me. “But I have to have with an odd bit of poetry and whatnot; you know, there’s a bit of a poet in me somewhere.”



Consul Fitzgerald is pictured with the “Boston Irish Dippers” at M Street beach to benefit the Irish Pastoral Center.

## The Presence of Rose: Remembering an aunt’s immigrant example

By MARTIN MCGOVERN

SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

When my father declined to cross the Atlantic for my wedding in 1990, I understood why. Traveling from Dublin to Massachusetts and meeting so many new people would have been anxiety inducing for him. Although his decision did not upset me, it left me worried about my mother traveling solo and without a partner at a family event.

Thanks to my aunt and godmother, Rosemary Whitty, those concerns were short lived as she volunteered to accompany my mother to the wedding. That meant she had to travel from her home in Middlesbrough in England’s northeast and connect with my mother, her

sister, in Dublin before heading to Boston.

When it came to family, distance or difficulty never deterred Rose. Having her present at the wedding with my mother was both a relief and an expression of her loyalty to family and her affection for us.

On the day itself, the two sisters enjoyed themselves immensely. Moreover, they stayed several nights with the mother of my bride. The three of them clicked and had much fun together – a good omen for inter-family harmony.

Rose left school at 14 to help her mother cope with a large family. Subsequently, she emigrated, finding employment in Cardiff, where hotels were hiring in anticipation of the 1958 British and Commonwealth Games. There, she met her husband and together they raised a family and built a life for themselves in Britain. As she did so, Rose always found ways to keep the ties between home and away alive and vibrant.

Growing up, I remember the excitement when they would arrive at my grandparents’ house after taking the ferry across the Irish Sea for a summer holiday. There was the lilt of Rose’s Irish accent tinged with Welsh or regional English tones, the buzz of a family catching up, and the prospect of English sweets then not available in Ireland!

After working in Norway one summer, I visited Rose in Middlesbrough on my way back to Dublin. Over several days, she and my uncle Kevin treated me like royalty, and I basked in their kindness after

several months of hard work on a Nordic farm.

With their children raised, Rose and Kevin frequently vacationed with my parents in both Britain and Ireland. Inveterate explorers, they knew how to relax and enjoy themselves.

Then, when age and illness took their toll on my parents, Rose returned to Dublin many times to care for them. Even after my mother passed, Rose still came to assist my father. She did so out of love, a generous heart, and an unbreakable family bond.

I left Ireland not as a teenager but at 23 and, even with the benefit of higher education, I found my early years in America challenging. I can only imagine what Rose faced as a teenager emigrating alone in an age before cell phones, Zoom, the internet, and cheaper travel options that make it much easier to stay in touch today.

Although I went farther abroad than she did, the challenge remains essentially the same – how to build a life in a new country without being a stranger to the folks in your old one.

I have been living in Massachusetts now for 45 years and Rose’s example has encouraged me to invest in my American life while keeping my Irish connections alive and flourishing – it’s a delicate balance alternating between hosting and being hosted. With work, family commitments, and financial concerns, it has not always been easy doing so. However, it really helps in terms of confidence when you see what someone you know, love, and trust can accomplish.

Rose died last November. I am grateful for her guiding example and my heart will hold cherished memories of her always.



Aunt Rose

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# Stormont back in the North, Sinn Féin slipping in the Republic

With a mixture of fanfare and cautious optimism, Northern Ireland's power-sharing Stormont assembly finally is up and running after a two-year impasse. Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill is the first ever nationalist First Minister in the six counties and Emma Little-Pengelly of the Democratic Unionist Party is her deputy.

The lengthy stalemate stemmed from the post-Brexit requirement for checks on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. To a substantial swathe of unionists, this was an abomination. Following months of painstaking negotiations, an accord that eliminated checks for items remaining in the north and assuaged concerns about the north's constitutional position within the United Kingdom was reached.

DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson was able, just about, to sell it to his party. There was, and is, a good deal of internal grumbling and dissent – as well as the incandescent rage of the intransigent Traditional Unionist Voice head, Jim Allister, at what he has repeatedly branded a “sell-out.” It is not easy to comprehend their perspective; this is an objectively good deal for Northern Ireland, and the best that unionists could have hoped for.

Moreover, it is beyond time that the Stormont assembly return to the business of seeking solutions to the myriad vexed problems that do not run along the old “green” and “orange” fault lines and are affecting the people who trusted the members of the legislative body to represent their interests. One can only pray that two women of a new generation, O'Neill and Little-Pengelly, will forge a solid, collegial relationship and effectively govern a society that continues to change apace. May this be the last collapse of an institution that so many vested so much hope in the wake of 1998's Good Friday Agreement.

In this rather delicate context, some observers attacked Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald, for emphasising how important an occasion this was for nationalists and republicans in that having one of their own in charge was a giant step on the road to a united Ireland. Others contended that it would be dishonest for the Dublin-based TD (member of Dáil Éireann, the lower house of parliament) to say anything else. Considering all the circumstances, though, her staying so doggedly on message probably was a misstep, albeit a minor one.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin's advantage in the polls has diminished as this country



Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly have been appointed first and deputy first ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive.

faces into local, national, and European elections in the next year. It has held steady at the top, but the emergence of immigration as an animating issue is responsible for an undeniable erosion in its base.

Its overarching pro-immigration stand is at odds with many working-class voters who wish to reduce the number of newcomers Ireland takes in. In the aftermath of the Dublin riot in November, McDonald and other Sinn Féin politicians went in a more conservative direction.

This seems, on the one hand, to have proven a case of “too little, too late” for the less affluent citizens whose support they have relied upon. Opinion surveys suggest that some of them have drifted to immigration-skeptical independents or small, far right groupings. On the other hand, some young people, who are left of centre, shut out of the housing market, and, hence, drawn to Sinn Féin's effective spokespeople and more radical policies on these matters, have apparently gravitated toward other parties on the left.

Sinn Féin is still in enviable shape. The party should win the most seats in the forthcoming contests. But the Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael/Green Party coalition will derive solace from these declining numbers, even as their own haven't surged. The strategies employed and the pivots made in the looming campaigns will be fascinating to monitor. The local and European elections are in June.

## RIP John Bruton

His faith informed him

Sadly, John Bruton, the taoiseach

(prime minister) from 1994-1997 and later European Union Ambassador to the United States, died on Feb. 6. His critics used to claim that the proud Fine Gael man was a “West Brit” and one even referred to him as “John Unionist.” They now recognise that he was absolutely correct in arguing that the backgrounds of all people in Northern Ireland had to be accounted for in pursuit of an end to armed conflict and in condemning the IRA's litany of violent acts unwaveringly and unequivocally.

Indeed, his contemporaries from decades ago, pundits and historians have acknowledged that he and UK Prime Minister John Major laid a lot of the groundwork that made possible the breakthroughs in the peace process that their successors, Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair, are widely credited for.

Watching the coverage of his funeral and burial, two things struck me. First, yet definitely not for the first time, was that the Irish “do death” very well. The rest of the world could learn from how empathy, sensitivity, gratitude and, yes, humour are typically to the fore. Second was at a personal level for me, as a practising Catholic whose faith informs his outlook. Bruton was recalled frequently as a devout Catholic. He wrote a book, “Faith in Politics,” during a very busy retirement. In it, he examined the appropriate role of religious faith in the public sphere among other things. In this regard, words in the funeral oration delivered by the current taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, resonated with me. “John was pro-life...he believed that political parties could be a broad church and a big tent,

especially on issues of conscience and faith.” Would that more of my fellow Democrats concurred.

## Doubts about Biden on rise with the Irish

I have noted in this space previously that the attentiveness of Irish people to American politics is extraordinary. And to a greater extent than ever before, there is a razor-sharp focus on the presidential election. As part of a broader poll, *The Irish Times* recently asked people who they favour to be the 47th POTUS: Biden or Trump. The latter was preferred by merely 14 percent; 50 percent opted for Biden; 32 percent want neither.

It is surprising, in my estimation, that President Biden, who literally basked in a four-day reciprocal lovefest across this island less than twelve months ago, has only half of the Irish in his corner. The questions and comments that are routinely put to me reflect genuine worries and doubts about his age and capacity.

What I suspect is a significantly stronger factor in the shift in sentiment is his administration's ongoing funding of Israel's war efforts in Gaza, notwithstanding reportage of the president's opposition to the Israeli Defence Force tactics and dislike of Benjamin Netanyahu. There is the moniker bestowed on him by leftist TDs and activists: “Genocide Joe.” There are the dodges from government ministers when journalists query if they will challenge their counterparts on the annual mid-March transatlantic pilgrimages to the US.

And there is the disgust with someone they expected better from that I hear daily from friends, neighbours, and colleagues. They refuse to accept my retort that they have a fair point, but that President Biden is between a huge rock and a very hard place, politically speaking, at a crucial historical juncture.

Many Irish have lost the loving feeling they had for Joe Biden. At this stage, the unfortunate truth is that a majority would say that he is obviously superior to Trump – and not much else. It has been a swift fall from grace.

Happy St. Patrick's Day to all!

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

**BOSTON IRISH**

**HONORS**

14 TH ANNUAL LUNCHEON

**Save the Date**

Friday, October 25, 2024

**NEW VENUE:**

John F. Kennedy Library

Dorchester, Massachusetts



# Belfast's elite have long stoked sectarian division to blunt labor solidarity. Is 2024 the turning point?

On Jan. 18, more than 170,000 public sector workers in Northern Ireland went on a 24-hour strike. The 17 trade unions representing nurses, teachers, ambulance staff, bus drivers, and road maintenance crews did so with the support of most of the people in Northern Ireland. According to the office of national statistics, there are 861,000 workers in Northern Ireland, which means the strikers constituted 20 percent of all workers in the six counties. (If the same percentage of workers were on strike in Massachusetts, more than 720,000 workers would be on the pickets.) Rolling industrial actions were planned for February and March.

The immediate issue inspiring the strike was restoring the devolved government of Northern Ireland, shuttered by a DUP boycott for two years. The cost of living and inflation have risen sharply in recent years, and in response, the UK government in Westminster has allocated funds for public sector pay raises for Northern Ireland as they have for England, Scotland, and Wales. But without an assembly in the North to release and administer the funds, the raises for nurses, teachers, and other workers were stuck.

The DUP has been pressured to end their boycott for two years by, among others, the president of the United States, various British and Irish prime ministers, and the president of the European Commission. To no avail. The legendary Unionist intransigence has been on full display. Then came the strike.

The unions received cross-community support for this and the subsequent strikes that were planned. Virtually everyone in Northern Ireland either works in the public sector or has a relative who does. Union members also vote. Less than two weeks after the strike, on Jan. 30, the DUP suddenly announced that they would return to government. Their self-serving claim is that major concessions to the Windsor Framework have made the return possible, but the timing relative to the strike is more than a coincidence.

This turn of events evokes a largely forgotten moment of Belfast history: the 1907 Dock Workers strike. Then as now, strikes in Northern Ireland were not just a reaction to a crisis but evidence of broad social movements often shrouded by the twin tribalisms of unionism and nationalism. Then, as now, the strikes were an assertion of solidarity irrespective of political or religious identity and an offering of an alternative social and economic path. Has the interdenominational approval for labor changed the political dynamic in Northern Ireland? Can labor serve as a force for unity in the fractious politics of The North? History does not encourage this optimism.

*"In other places one might hope to arrest the tendency for history which first occurs as tragedy to repeat itself as farce; here the*



Labor rally at Belfast City Hall Jan. 18, 2024.

*motive is stronger because, at least for the working class of Belfast, history has tended rather to pile tragedy on top of tragedy."*

Historian John Gray on the 1907 dock workers strike in his book, "City in Revolt."

The tactic of stoking sectarian division to defeat labor solidarity in Belfast has a long history. The city emerged as an industrial powerhouse in the 19th century, growing from 19,000 inhabitants to 360,000 in just one hundred years. In 1907, Belfast was the fastest growing city in the United Kingdom. The largest shipyard, rope manufacturing plant, linen mill and cigarette factory in the world were all located there. Sirocco, a company that had invented a tea drying process (and later air conditioning), had emerged as one of the world's largest engineering firms.

All of these industries had ecosystems of manufacturing plants and craftsmen. The markets for Belfast's products were global and the ports were teeming with activity.

Belfast's wealth was closely associated with the Imperial project. In 1896, after the conquest of Burma, the Viceroy of India came to Belfast to announce a large order of ships to support growing trade with India. The Boer War saw a boom in the orders for troop transport vessels. The expanding British Empire meant money flowing to Belfast. One manufacturer of lemonade marketed its product as a "Gift from Mother Empire." Today, the union flags still flying around poor loyalist communities with curbstones painted red, white, and blue are sad relics of how the British Empire delivered Belfast's golden age to a few at the top, including at least three millionaires.

BostonIrish readers who have visited Belfast will find it difficult to imagine an opulent Belfast, but the industrial era in Belfast produced wealth at the Gilded

Age-Newport mansions- JP Morgan level, far beyond anything ever seen elsewhere or before in Ireland, except for the Guinness family. Enormous villas, yachts, and public buildings like the ostentatious City Hall were markers of Belfast's arrival.

*"Behind every great fortune lies a great crime."*

Honoré de Balzac

What was Belfast's secret sauce for economic success? In the minds of the Belfast robber barons, it was their superior work ethic, inventiveness, and sobriety, qualities that they believed set them apart from the native Catholic Irish. One might think increased automation was key to profitability, but industries like ship building and linen works are difficult to automate. The real reasons were 1) the global market created by the empire, and 2) an unlimited supply of destitute unskilled laborers in Ireland.

Skilled craftsmen in the factories and shipyards were unionized and paid well, sometimes better than their counterparts in Britain. Skilled jobs

and apprenticeships were held almost exclusively by Protestants. Occasionally, a small number of "reliable Catholics" would rise to these positions and buy homes in more fashionable areas, but during recessions, Catholics were the first to be fired from their jobs and burned out of their homes in spasms of sectarian violence. To oversimplify the social strata of Belfast at the time, the ruling class were generally Anglicans, skilled laborers were Presbyterians, and the unskilled laborers were Evangelical Christians or Catholics.

Catholics were disproportionately over-represented among the unskilled workers, but Protestants constituted the majority. Catholics were only 25 percent of the population of The North at the time. Unskilled laborers of both communities, (dock workers, carters, coal heavers, cigarette factory and linen mill workers) were paid less than starvation wages. Some 43 percent of children over 10 years old were workers. Life was hard and life was cheap, defined by misery, chronic poverty, and early death. Poor Protestants had a better chance of avoiding absolute destitution during economic downturns because family members who were in better positions could help in lean times, but for the unskilled 'spellsman' (gig worker) life was precarious.

## "Big Jim" Larkin arrives in Belfast in January 1907

James "Big Jim" Larkin was born in Liverpool to Irish parents in 1876. He worked as a child on the docks and once stowed away on a ship to Uruguay. Back in Liverpool, he worked as a sailor and dock worker, rising to foreman in his teens. He also became deeply involved in the socialist movement, initially rejecting trade unions as instruments of capitalism. In 1905 he became an organizer when his Liverpool employer brought in blacklegs (scabs) to break a strike for higher pay. Despite the strike's defeat, Larkin became a full-time organizer.

He arrived in Belfast without fanfare

(Continued on page 8)



'Big Jim' Larkin at work on the stump.



# Reflections at 85

By JAMES W. DOLAN

Having reached the final chapters of my life, I think back on all I have absorbed within the context of my professional career as lawyer, judge, and, in retirement, as an arbitrator, mediator, and occasional columnist.

Unfortunately, I am not as confident as I once was. My faith in a benevolent, all-knowing deity, a creator that oversees the universe and guides a flawed humanity to truth, love, understanding, justice, compassion, and mercy, is diminished, due in part to my work, which is largely based on analyzing evidence upon which a sound, coherent judgment could be based.

The standard of proof in a criminal case is: "Beyond a reasonable doubt" (i.e., virtually certain). In a civil case the standard is: "By a fair preponderance of the evidence." (i.e., more probable than not). It's a sensible distinction considering the respective consequences of the former as compared to the latter. After analyzing the evidence – scripture, religion, history, science, evolution, evil, destruction, and death – I cannot find belief in a benevolent God proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The evidence is inconclusive.

One could, however, reasonably conclude the existence of God under the less rigorous "fair preponderance of the evidence standard." The agnostic cannot say one way or the other. There is evidence pointing in both directions. Some make "a leap of faith" in choosing to believe because there is a fundamental need for order and purpose in life and because they fear the consequences of denial.

I, too, want and need to believe in a purposeful life. But, when I consider the millions who have died in wars, the crusades, inquisitions, and other abuses promoted by my church, the cruelty and evil that are so much a part of human existence,



and the natural disasters that have caused so much death and destruction, I wonder. How could an all-knowing, compassionate, loving, merciful deity, the God of the Sermon on the Mount, tolerate such suffering.

Some say it's original sin, the inevitable abuse of free will as first described in the Garden of Eden. But why would a God of love give humanity free will, knowing the harmful effects of its abuse and the evil it would cause, then send his son to suffer and die on a cross to redeem us from the consequences of mankind's inherent sinfulness. Why make us earn salvation? Why not provide it as a gift? But who am I to try to understand and explain such complex mysteries?

Is God the uncaused cause or is God a creation of scientific phenomena, a chemical or nuclear chain reaction that gave rise to a cascading, evolutionary phenomenon that over the ensuing millennia produced this planet, life in its primitive form, and the countless galaxies beyond. Even primitive man sought explanations for existence and appealed to gods for protection, food, comfort, and meaning in an acknowledgement of a power to which they owed their very existence.

Those primitive beliefs slowly evolved into a faith based on the arrival of a savior, a messiah who would guide humanity to a "promised land" along a path which, if followed, would assure ultimate salvation and eternal life. I define faith as the affirmation

of hope. Hope is not a thing, it is a yearning for something. In this case, a need to believe in something beyond our normal comprehension, the acceptance of an unprovable truth.

Faith is a choice. If it turns out you are wrong, what is there to lose? Death is the end. But what if it's not the end and there are consequences to how we live? Blaise Pascal, a wise and practical 17th-century Catholic philosopher/scientist, observed that faith in God was the only sensible choice. The consequences of what is known as "Pascal's wager" are clear. If wrong, there is only oblivion. If right, you can look forward to eternity in heaven.

I'll take that bet. There is just enough love, honor, and decency in the world for me to believe that creation was not just a chemical reaction, an accident with no underlying purpose or design. For me, love is the fountainhead of all virtue, that from which all the others flow. The only way to balance the inequities and suffering so apparent in human history is for an all-knowing, all-powerful, merciful God to offer salvation to mankind, particularly to those who have suffered.

Wishful thinking, perhaps. But then trying to understand and explain God is well beyond both my pay grade and capacity.

## ETERNITY

When your life is finally over,  
You expect to wind up 'neath the clover.  
Eternal life seems much too long,  
Maybe someone got it wrong.

JWD

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

# Belfast's elite have long stoked sectarian division

(Continued from page 7)  
as part of a small delegation of English trade unionists. His mission was to organize the unskilled dock workers. Larkin's rhetoric was compelling: "The great are only great because we are on our knees. Let us rise," he said.

The surge in union membership after his arrival was a measure both of Larkin's effective organizing and of widespread deprivation. By April, small strikes for better wages by dockers began across the city's quays. Sympathetic strikes by carters and coalheavers spread; the cigarette factory and linen mill workers followed. For the first and only time in history, the Royal Irish Constabulary (the police force) mutinied, refusing to escort imported blacklegs. Railway workers put tools down. The public were in general support of the workers. In a city of 360,000, over 200,000 participated in massive public demonstrations in support of the strikers. The 12th of July, usually a peak of sectarian violence, had Orangemen in processions proudly displaying their strike badges as well as their orange sashes. At one Orange rally in a moment of solidarity, the clergyman, Rev. J. Calvin said of the strikers:

"It was not the Catholics they were engaged in fighting; they were a democ-

racy fighting for mere existence against an aristocratic and selfish monied class."

The backlash was swift. The Tory press ran headlines like "Are the Orangemen of Belfast going to allow themselves to be led by a Fenian?" Not to be outdone, the Catholic cardinal instructed his parish priests to condemn Larkin as a "Godless atheist and socialist." The industrialists and the lord mayor demanded military action from Dublin. Ten thousand troops were deployed to the city. The police force had only numbered 2,000 prior to the mutiny. Soldiers attacked workers with bayonets and bullets and protected blacklegs were imported to what became an occupied city.

The Tory press continued their daily lies, spreading the rumor that Larkin was paying more strike benefits to Catholics than to Protestants. Catholic neighborhoods were leafletted with messages that socialists would behead their priests and burn their churches and convents. 90 percent of the police were either transferred out of Belfast or terminated. As the strike wore on, the workers and their families began to starve and the solidarity of the movement to wane. Small pay concessions were made to individual unions but without recognizing the unions. By the end of the summer, the strike was

defeated by the monied interests of Belfast aligned with the Tories in Britain and the British army.

Despite this epic failure, Larkin brought his message and mission to Dublin and began organizing unskilled laborers there. He led the lockout of 1913-14 and formed a partnership with James Connolly, who became a key leader in the Easter Rising of 1916. Larkin himself was smuggled out of Ireland after the lockout and by 1916, he was in a US jail after being convicted of 'criminal anarchism.' New York Gov. Al Smith later pardoned and deported him to Ireland in 1923. Ironically, Archbishop John Charles McQuaid celebrated his funeral Mass in 1947.

## Of 1907's relevance in 2024

During that summer of 1907 an alternative to the nationalism or unionism binary was offered: shared prosperity. It was repressed brutally by the ruling classes, the army, and undermined by sectarian bigots and the Catholic hierarchy. The partition of The North after Irish independence further shattered the Irish labor movement by amputating the most industrially developed region from the rest of the island.

The sectarianism that had appeared to be in momentary retreat in 1907 returned like a virulent cancer. 'Playing

the Orange card' worked for Randolph Churchill in 1886 to defeat Home Rule, again in 1907 to defeat the Dock Workers Strike, and many times since, including during the 2016 Brexit vote. The orange card is being played again now but while the DUP are still playing the old game in which most everyone loses, organized labor may have changed the game.

The resurgence of unions in Northern Ireland is not happening in a vacuum. Joe Biden became the first US President to stand on a picket line by joining a successful UAW strike. The writers and actors in Hollywood, teachers in LA and Newton MA, nurses in Boston, and UC grad students are all flexing their collective bargaining muscles. Union membership among the young is growing. Labor, long in retreat, is reasserting itself.

Can the modern labor movement move Northern Ireland beyond its self-defeating sectarianism to the vanguard of creating an Ireland that is both prosperous and fair? Irish history is not always encouraging but hope springs eternal.

February 1 marks both the pagan festival Imbolc and St. Brigid's Day, symbolizing the new beginnings of Irish Spring. Maybe this island is ready for a springtime of solidarity. Happy Spring!



1737



2024

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**MAR. 3:** Open House, at the IPC in Dorchester, 3PM-7PM

**MAR. 8:** Local author, Vincent J. Quealy, Jr., reading & discussion of his book "Reflections of an Irish Grandson" 6:30-7:30PM.

**MAR. 12:** IPC Toddler Group, St. Patrick's Day Party, 10AM

**MAR. 14:** Luck O' The Irish Bingo, 1-3PM

**MAR. 15:** St. Patrick's Day Event at Florian Hall, 11AM-3PM

**MAR. 22:** Scéal ó Bhéal, Irish storytelling and conversation at the IPC, 6-7:30PM

**MAR. 24:** Traditional Music Session, 3pm-5pm



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#### Irish Heritage Month March 2024

#### Lawrence, Massachusetts

*Preserving and Fostering our Heritage and Culture*

#### Friday, March 1, 2024 -

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

#### Saturday, March 2, 2024 –

**152nd SAINT PATRICK'S DAY BANQUET AND DANCE** at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA. Traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner featuring a NewCaterer (Simply Elegant Catering) with dancing to the **Silver Spears Irish Show Band** from **6 pm – 11 pm** – Awarding of the Richard Cardinal Cushing and Irishman & Irishwoman of the Year Awards. For more information contact Charles Breen at 508 328 0323. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – **Handicap Accessible**

#### Sunday, March 3, 2024 -

**OPENING of the EXHIBIT "1916: A year that Changed Irish History"** – at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

#### Sunday, March 3, 2024 –

**WHITE FUND LECTURE** -Maine Author, JOHN CASHMAN. Mr. Cashman will discuss his historical novel, "THE SURVIVOR AN IRISHMAN'S STORY" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

#### Sunday, March 10, 2024 –

**WHITE FUND LECTURE** – with Author, JAMES P. GREGORY JR – Mr. Gregory will discuss his book, "UNRAVELING the MYTH of SGT. ALVIN YORK: THE OTHER SIXTEEN" – Noted prominently in this book Lawrence native, Patrick Donohue - at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm. (FREE) - Handicap Accessible

#### Wednesday, March 13, 2024 -

**AOH NATIONAL HUNGER MONTH FOOD DRIVE:** Please consider donating canned goods and non-perishable food items. All food items received will be donated to a local food pantry. TIME: 6 pm – 7:00 pm at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence MA. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – Handicap Accessible

#### Friday, March 15, 2024 –

**54th ANNUAL SAINT PATRICK'S DAY LUNCHEON** at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner featuring a New Caterer (Simply Elegant Catering) with entertainment by the Silver Spears Irish Show Band at NOON. Awarding of the Honorable John E. Fenton Citizenship Award - For more information contact Jack Lahey @ 603-560-8192. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – Handicap Accessible

#### Saturday, March 16, 2024–

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

#### Saturday, March 16, 2024–

**SAINT PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION** at Saint Patrick Parish Center, David Burke Way, Lawrence, MA @ 5 pm. For tickets and more information please call 978 683 – 9416 - Handicap Accessible

#### Sunday, March 17, 2024–

**HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY!** – Enjoy this grand day with family and friends listening to Irish Music, stories, and laughter at home with family and friends or at your favorite restaurant!

#### Sunday, March 24, 2024–

Join **PIANIST TERRI KELLEY & VOCALIST BILL DONELAN** for an All-new Program of **CELTIC MELODIES - FROM ANCIENT GAELIC AIRES TO CURRENT SONGS -s-** at the Lawrence Public Library, Sargent Auditorium, 51 Lawrence St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm Presented by Division 8 (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

#### Sunday, March 24, 2024–

**EXHIBIT CLOSES** "1916: A Year that Changed Irish History" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence (FREE) – Handicap Accessible

**The Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA Division Eight AOH** was founded on November 5, 1871. The Division yearly hosts numerous social events and activities, and has scholarship opportunities for members, the children, and grandchildren of members on the high school and college level, including a scholarship for study in Ireland.

Division 8 meets at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA on the second Wednesday of the month. For information on AOH Membership please write to: Division 8 AOH Organizer, PO Box 1407, Lawrence, MA

**IRISH HERITAGE MONTH IS SPONSORED BY  
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*Irish Heritage Month 2024 is supported in part by a grant from the Lawrence Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.*





# Breaking barriers in Baltimore: David Badejo's J-1 Experience

David Badejo began his visa journey in January of 2023 with a bit of a rocky start. He shared with us that initially there was a misconception about the timeline, but with the support of individuals like Jude and Nora at the Rian Immigrant Center, he was able to successfully secure his visa by February. It was a remarkably quick turnaround time!

When he initially applied to participate in the visa, his goals for work included efficient operation in a well-established business, increasing knowledge in physiotherapy, effective communication, and exploration of diverse cultures in Baltimore. Day-to-day life involved a balance of work and activities, including gym sessions, hiking in the Shenandoah Mountains, sports leagues for both bowling and soccer, and exploring Baltimore's attractions.

David found that the internship

at Elite Physical Therapy Baltimore emphasized discipline, respect for rules, and professionalism. He worked as a technician, learning how to guide clients through exercises in various therapies, and conduct competency exams. Challenges included juggling multiple priorities and supporting complex evaluations.

One of the most pointed experiences he noted was hosting a Rock Steady boxing class for Parkinson's patients. This helped him learn more about ways to assist people with limited cognitive and physical abilities, and how he might implement exercise to help combat the effects of Parkinson's.

David appreciated the cultural diversity in the US, specifically in the Baltimore area. Throughout his time there, he was exposed to people of all walks of life, different capabilities, and linguistic backgrounds. He thoroughly

believes that the mentorship he received at Elite PT Baltimore created a welcoming and open environment for everyone who walked through their doors. He noted that his supervisor, Caroline, once told him "It's one thing to say all cultures, beliefs, and communities are welcomed but a complete other thing to say that and have it represented by your staff and patients."

David found the support from Rian, particularly Jude, to be exceptional. He added that with the assistance he received, he felt far more prepared for his appointments and ready to tackle work upon his arrival to the US. David's favorite part of the experience was connecting with the people of Baltimore and engaging in some unique activities, including dressing up as a pirate for a cruise with work colleagues.

Upon returning to Ireland, David plans to apply the skills learned,



Taking a selfie in the Shenandoah mountains.

including communication, punctuality, and cultural awareness, to his studies. His experience was described as transformative, providing valuable insights into the professional workplace. As for his advice for future J-1 participants, he emphasized the need to embrace the rollercoaster of emotions and the challenges that come with it, adding that he would "110 percent recommend to anyone who feels like they are looking for more than what they're used to."

## The ways and means of pursuing a fiancé visa

**Q.** *I've been in a serious relationship with my partner, and we recently got engaged. I am a US citizen and live in the US, but my partner lives abroad and is not a US citizen. What makes sense for us to do?*

**A.** If your fiancé resides overseas, and you intend to marry in the US, then the best option is to pursue a K visa, colloquially known as the fiancé visa. This particular visa provides couples with a pathway to live together in the United States and initiates the process for the foreign resident to obtain permanent residence.

If you choose to pursue this route, you should know that your fiancé will spend some number of months unable to lawfully work after entering on the K visa. If you would rather get married first or discuss how that option would be different from the K visa, then please contact Rian.

There are two basic requirements that a couple must fulfill in order to submit Form I-129F, the USCIS application for the K visa. First, both members of the couple must be legally free to marry (i.e., not married

to another person), and the couple must intend to marry within 90 days of the fiancé's admission to the US. Second, barring exceptional circumstances, the couple must have met each other in person within the last two years. Provided that you and your fiancé meet these requirements, then you can proceed to obtain the evidence to prove your eligibility, including proof of US citizenship, sworn statements signed by both individuals pledging intention to get married, termination of previous marriages, arrival-departure records if the fiancé previously entered the US, and record(s) of the in-person meeting. The filing fee as of this writing is \$535.

When USCIS approves the I-129F petition for your fiancé, the second step of the process begins. At that point, USCIS forwards the case to the National Visa Center (NVC). The NVC assigns a new case number and sends along the petition to the US Embassy or Consulate where your fiancé lives. Your fiancé will need to submit the DS-160, Application for a Nonimmigrant Visa online in order to be scheduled for an interview at the appropriate US Embassy or Consulate.

Does your fiancé have minor children? No issue. Those children will be listed on the initial petition, and they will be eligible to apply for a visa based on their relationship to the principal beneficiary. Each eligible child will need to file a separate application and pay the filing fee.

After the interview, provided that all goes well, your fiancé will receive a visa to enter the US. Your fiancé must seek admission to the US while the visa is valid, and your fiancé needs to bring a sealed packet prepared by the consular officer, if they are provided with one. Once your fiancé arrives, you two have 90 days to marry, and once married, your spouse can submit an application for permanent residence.

This process can take some time, and it requires patience to navigate multiple immigration bureaucracies. We strongly recommend that you always contact the Rian Immigrant Center to schedule a consultation prior to preparing or submitting any immigration forms. If you would prefer to show up to one of our in-person legal clinics at various Boston Public Library branches to ask your questions, you can find more information on our website at [riancenter.or/consultations](http://riancenter.or/consultations).

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







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# What's Happening Onstage This Spring

By R.J. DONOVAN  
SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

From spirited comedies to award-winning dramas and Broadway legends, here's a sampling of what will be brightening Boston stages in the coming weeks.



**"Thirst"**  
Through March 17, Lyric Stage Company

In Ronan Noone's latest play, a story's unraveling on the other side of the kitchen wall in Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night." Two Irish immigrants share their gloomy chores alongside a resilient American chauffeur with a troubled past. Tensions rise, high-spirited humor and harsh cynicism boil over, and the trio confront abandoned dreams and heart-breaking misfortunes. Underneath it all, hope is not as far away as it seems. Put the kettle on. [lyricstage.com](http://lyricstage.com)



**"Titanish"**  
Through March 17, Greater Boston Stage Company

Colossal disaster looms! A bawdy combination of "SNL," "Airplane!" and "Titanic," this epically silly, quasi-musical spoof of everyone's favorite sea-faring film is sailing toward every comedic iceberg on the horizon. Near, Far, Wherever You Are, you'll definitely want to hop onboard. [greaterbostonstage.org](http://greaterbostonstage.org)



**"The Minutes"**  
Through March 24, Umbrella Arts Center

The smallest towns hide the biggest secrets. Award-winning

playwright Tracy Letts's new play is part biting comedy, part Hitchcockian mystery, and at its dark heart, an unflinching allegory about small-town politics and real-world power. With both funny and jaw-dropping revelations, Letts takes a hard look at the growing movement to deny or rewrite some of the most unpleasant truths about America's past. [theumbrellaarts.org](http://theumbrellaarts.org)



**"Exception to The Rule"**  
March 7 - 17, Modern Theatre

Delve into the lives of six black high schoolers navigating detention at one of the city's most challenging schools. The late-afternoon lockdown looms through diminishing daylight and the absence of an authority figure. "Exception" plays with time, leaving the audience questioning the duration of its characters' detention while underscoring the neglect that poor schools suffer by drawing parallels between detention and incarceration. [frontporcharts.org](http://frontporcharts.org)



**"Tarzan"**  
March 8 - 17, Franklin Performing Arts Company

Washed up on the shores of West Africa, an infant boy is taken in and raised by gorillas who name him Tarzan. He struggles to navigate a jungle, thick with emotion, discovering his animal upbringing clashes with his human instincts. Based on Disney's epic animated musical adventure, with a score by rock legend, Phil Collins, this re-imagined, immersive, concert production of "Tarzan: The Broadway Musical" stars Broadway's original Tarzan, Josh Strickland. [fpaonline.com](http://fpaonline.com)

**"Cost Of Living"**  
March 8 - 30, SpeakEasy Stage

Winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize, this wry and quietly observed drama intertwines the stories of four lonely souls to examine the forces that bring people together and the way we all need each other. It's about the complexities of caring and being cared for, and the realities of navigating the world for people with and without disabilities. [speakeasystage.com](http://speakeasystage.com)



**The Magic Of Ireland:**  
A St. Patrick's Day Concert  
March 9 - 10, Reagle Music Theatre

Reagle Music Theatre captures the allure of Ireland with a holiday concert headlined by Ciarán Sheehan (Broadway's "Phantom of the Opera") and Boston favorites Kathy St. George, Jennifer Ellis, and Rick Sherburne. With traditional Irish melodies, comedy, poetry, and more, the cast also features The Harney Academy step-dancers showcasing the precision and grace of Irish dance. [reaglemusictheatre.org](http://reaglemusictheatre.org)



**"Girl From The North Country"**  
March 12 - 24, The Emerson Colonial

It's 1934 in Duluth, Minnesota. We meet a group of wayward travelers whose lives intersect in a guesthouse filled with music, life, and hope. Written and directed by celebrated playwright Conor McPherson, the show integrates 20 legendary Bob Dylan songs as they've never been heard before, from "Forever Young" to "Like A Rolling Stone." This Tony Award-winner "lights up the night with the radiance of divine grace." [emersoncolonialtheatre.com](http://emersoncolonialtheatre.com)

**Alan Cumming is Not Acting His Age**  
March 15, Sanders Theatre

Alan Cumming returns with an intimate, new cabaret evening of story and song celebrating and combining his puckish, eclectic spirit with a joyful and mischievous exploration of that most communal of concerns: Aging! With multiple theatrical honors, Cummings has been acclaimed for his Broadway performances as the Emcee in "Cabaret." [celebrityseries.org](http://celebrityseries.org)



**"The Cher Show"**  
March 15 - 17, Boch Wang Theater

Superstars come and go. Cher is forever. This is the Tony Award-winning musical of her story, with 35 smash

hits, 6 decades of stardom, 2 rock star husbands, a Grammy, an Oscar, an Emmy, and enough Bob Mackie gowns to cause a sequin shortage. Do you believe? [bochcenter.org](http://bochcenter.org)



**"A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder"**  
March 15 - 30, Company Theatre

The distant heir to a family fortune sets out to speed up the line of succession by employing a great deal of charm and a healthy dose of murder. This very proper Tony Award-winning musical set in England's Downton Abbey-era has been called a witty "knock 'em dead hit!" [companytheatre.com](http://companytheatre.com)

**"Driving in Circles"**  
March 21 - April 6, Boston Playwrights Theatre

This darkly funny, solo-ish, folktronica musical explores how we recover from trauma. The show chronicles the main character's winding journey to metabolize, heal, and love as an adult who experienced childhood sexual abuse. A cross between a rock concert, confessional monologue and stand-up comedy, the production crafts a kaleidoscope of past and present, memory and meaning. [bu.edu/bpt/](http://bu.edu/bpt/)



**Patti LuPone: A Life In Notes**  
April 2, Symphony Hall

Spend a dazzling evening with Broadway legend and three-time Tony Award winner Patti LuPone ("Evita," "Sunset Boulevard," "Company," "Gypsy"). In this personal musical memoir, LuPone, backed by her band, shares the indelible songs that have defined her life on and off stage. Everybody rise! [celebrityseries.org](http://celebrityseries.org)

**"Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812"**  
April 18 - 20, Cutler Majestic Theatre

Young and impulsive, Natasha awaits the return of her fiancé from the front lines. When she falls under the spell of the roguish Anatole, it's up to Pierre, a family friend having an existential crisis, to pick up the pieces of her shattered reputation. This award-winning, electro-pop, Broadway opera is based on a scandalous slice of Tolstoy's "War and Peace." [emersonstage.org](http://emersonstage.org)



The Irish Cultural Centre's Fourth Annual

# *Lá Fhéile Pádraig*

*St. Patrick's Day Celebration in Boston*



*"An Gradam Dóchais" ~ The Hope Award*

*Recipients Deirdre & Bob Leger*

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**5:30pm to 8:30pm**

**The UMASS Club,**

**1 Beacon St, Boston, MA**



# MARCH EVENTS

## AT THE IRISH CULTURAL CENTRE



**FEBRUARY 29TH & MARCH 7TH**

**Irish Breads, Soups & Scones Cookery Class**

6:30PM | Tickets \$65 | Pre Booking Required



**MARCH 2ND**

**Live Music - Keohane & Kenneally**

6 - 9PM | The Irish Cultural Centre's Pub | Free Admission



**MARCH 8TH**

**An Irish St.Patrick's Day Concert With Green Road**

7:30PM | Advanced Tickets \$40 | Members \$35 | Kids \$10



**MARCH 9TH**

**Céilí - Music by Comhaltas**

2 - 5PM | Admission \$15 | Tea & Coffee Provided



**MARCH 9TH**

**Trevor Sexton & Ger O'Donnell Live In Concert**

7PM | Advanced Tickets \$30 | Meet & Greet \$40



**MARCH 10TH**

**Breaking Trad Live In Concert**

3PM | Advanced Tickets \$25



**MARCH 12TH**

**4th Annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration in Boston**

Honoring Deirdre & Bob Leger | The UMASS Club | Tickets \$75



**MARCH 16TH**

**Pop Up Gaeltacht - Sponsored By Mass Bay Movers**

5 - 8PM | The Irish Cultural Centre's Pub | Free Admission



**MARCH 23RD & MARCH 30TH**

**Live Music - Dave Try**

6 - 9PM | The Irish Cultural Centre's Pub | Free Admission

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# “The Legacy Series and “The Legacy Fund” aim to make sure that Brian O'Donovan's work will endure

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

The passing of Brian O'Donovan last fall has been felt keenly by the Celtic music community in the Boston area and elsewhere – a community he had no small part in fostering.

O'Donovan died on Oct. 6 of glioblastoma; he chose Seamus Heaney's phrase “walking on air against his better judgement” as his legacy to all his family, friends, acquaintances, and many fans and followers. He was a renowned broadcaster, promoter, organizer, and consummate emcee, through his GBH radio show “A Celtic Sojourn,” the annual Christmas and St. Patrick's Day “Celtic Sojourn” stage productions, and many other recurring or special events and programs.

It's an impressive legacy to say the least, and that word – “legacy” – is at the heart of two endeavors aimed at literally keeping his name, as well as his memory, in the community's collective heart and mind.

One of these ventures is already quite familiar to local audiences: the Burren Backroom Series, now renamed as the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Series, which since 2011 has brought a variety of traditional and contemporary music performers from the Celtic world to the Somerville venue.

The other is a more recently launched undertaking: the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund, which will provide opportunities for Celtic musicians to develop their music and careers, operated by Passim – the Harvard Square-based non-profit whose enterprises include Club Passim and a music school.

“The Legacy Series and the Legacy Fund both reflect what Brian strongly believed,” says Lindsay O'Donovan, his wife of 42 years. “First, that music – especially this kind of music – should be shared and enjoyed together in a public setting, rather than just through speakers and headphones. It was one of his favorite catchphrases: ‘Live music is where it's at!’

“Brian also felt that Celtic musicians, particularly those young and starting out, should have a chance to cultivate their talents and bring their sound to wider audiences. That's how this music lives on.”

The Legacy Series retains its most important qualities, says O'Donovan. The acts that perform represent a spectrum of styles and sounds, as well as names both familiar and unfamiliar. Over the years, the series has hosted Dervish, Lúnasa, Robbie O'Connell, Martin Hayes and Dennis Cahill, Tannahill Weavers, Karan Casey, Liz Carroll, Frankie Gavin and De Dannan, Sharon Shannon, Finbar Furey and many other bands and performers prominent in Celtic music. There also have been acts relatively less well known or established, at least at the time: The Jeremiahs, Còig, The Fretless, Socks in the Frying Pan,



Brian and Lindsay O'Donovan in one of their favorite places: onstage at “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn.”  
*Vic Dvorak photo*

Connla, Vishten, the Friel Sisters and the Young Irishlanders.

Many performers with ties to Greater Boston and New England have appeared in the series as well, among them Matt and Shannon Heaton; Flynn Cohen; Maeve Gilchrist; Keith Murphy; the trio of Sean Clohessy, Pauline Conneely and John Coyne; Hanneke Cassel; Fellswater; and Katie McNally and Neil Pearlman.

Whatever an artist's home base, or their approach to Celtic music, says O'Donovan, the important question is, “Is this someone Brian would want to play in the Backroom?”

O'Donovan notes that, for acts outside the region or the US, the Backroom is most often a welcome add-on to a tour itinerary: “If someone is going to be performing in Massachusetts or elsewhere in the Northeast not too far from Boston, and they have a date they can fill, then playing in the Backroom works perfectly for them.”

The appeal goes deeper than that, however, she adds. “First of all, the Burren has such a great reputation throughout the Celtic music world that most anyone would like a chance to play there. Most of all, the Backroom has a special, intimate feel to it – very different than a concert hall. A performer knows the Backroom audience is going to be up close and engaged, which makes for a really good time.”

Keeping with that in-your-living-room vibe, Brian O'Donovan would always hold a brief conversation with the featured performer or band during the concert, giving them an opportunity to connect with the Backroom crowd in a more personalized way.

“This was something Brian did a lot, whether at the Backroom or ‘A Celtic Sojourn Christmas’ or other events



Brian O'Donovan in performance at a “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” event.

he hosted,” says Lindsay O'Donovan, who has taken on the series' emcee role, which includes the on-stage chats. “People always said how much they appreciated the informality of these discussions and the insights performers would share. It really made you feel like you were gathered in somebody's home. So, we certainly want that to continue.”

O'Donovan expressed her gratitude to the Burren co-owners Tommy McCarthy – who co-launched the series with Brian O'Donovan – and Louise Costello, as well as Backroom manager Tom Bianchi, audio engineer Joyce In, and all other behind-the-scenes staffers. Shannon Heaton and the publicity company Hurd Strategy also have lent valuable assistance, she says.

McCarthy, for his part, is only too glad that the series lives on. “Brian and Lindsay have given us many memorable events here at the Burren over the years. We're delighted that Lindsay wants to continue with the Backroom series and keep bringing in such great acts. We recently sent a mass email to all the folks who've been attending the concerts with a note

from Lindsay announcing the plans to continue the series. It's really important that those words came from Lindsay, because so many people are mourning Brian's loss, and it meant a lot to them to hear that his work will live on.”

Brian O'Donovan's work will live on in a different, but also entirely appropriate way, through his namesake Legacy Fund at Passim. It is envisioned as similar to Passim's Iguana Music Fund, which pays for projects and expenses that aid in artists' career growth, from recording projects to community programs to specialized equipment or instruments; in its 14-year history, the Iguana Fund has awarded nearly \$600,000 in grants to fund more than 300 projects. The Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund will give out grants annually to qualified artists via a detailed submission process. Entries will be judged and grants given out based on available funding and need.

“People here have always been so generous in supporting Celtic music,” says Lindsay O'Donovan, “and it just made sense to have a charity – in Brian's name – through which they can target that support directly to the performers and others who help make Boston such an exciting place for Celtic music.”

There are also plans to hold an annual event to benefit the Legacy Fund, she adds.

“Brian was a huge supporter of our local music scene and of Passim, specifically,” says Passim Executive Director Jim Wooster. “It's a great honor for us to be entrusted with his Legacy Fund, and to use it to help new musicians develop their careers. Clearly, it's something Brian would be very much in favor of.”

While no one could ever replace Brian, friends and acquaintances of the O'Donovans note that Lindsay has her own essential strengths as an organizer and leader, added to the accumulated experience and insights from working side-by-side with Brian for so many years.

For her part, Lindsay has confidence that Brian's legacy will endure in a meaningful way.

“Brian had the personality to pull everything together, and the innate ability to win people over,” says Lindsay. “If Brian had an idea, he would seek out others he felt could play a role in making it a reality – or sometimes they would come to him – and he could make them feel that their contribution was an important one.”

“It's fortunate there are so many of these connections, built up over the years, that we're able to draw upon to keep Celtic music as a vital, active force in Boston.”

For information on events in the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Series, see [burren.com/music.html](http://burren.com/music.html).

To learn more about, and donate to, the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund, go to [assim.org/mission/grants/brian-odonovan-legacy-fund](http://assim.org/mission/grants/brian-odonovan-legacy-fund).



# ‘Thing of the Earth’ ... ‘The Yew & the Orchard’

BY SEAN SMITH  
BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR



Réalta, “Thing of the Earth” • Quite a journey for this Belfast band, which started out more than a decade ago as a trio with uilleann pipers Conor Lamb and Aaron O’Hagan – both also playing whistle and flute – and guitarist and vocalist Deirdre Galway. By the release of their second album, “Clear Skies” (2016), they’d expanded to a quintet with Dermot Mulholland (bouzouki, double bass, tenor banjo, vocals) and Dermot Moynagh (bodhran, percussion), and their full-bodied sound – reflecting a self-proclaimed reverence for Irish folk revival masters like Planxty and the Bothy Band – made a very favorable impression well beyond Ireland. In fact, the band appeared locally at the Irish Culture Centre of Greater Boston in 2019.

Since then, Breton native Loïc Bléjean has replaced O’Hagan on uilleann pipes and other wind instruments. And for this album, Réalta brought in Belfast guitarist/mandolinist and singer-songwriter Myles McCormack as a guest star. In addition to a few appearances on mandolin, he leads three of the album’s four songs, including its title track, which he wrote and recorded on his 2023 album “To Better All Things.” It’s not as off-the-wall a move as one might assume, because while McCormack is decidedly contemporary-minded in his influences, he has been involved in the traditional music scene as well, and so his presence complements rather than complicates the proceedings.

Certainly, the band’s instrumental sets are as tight, animated, and enthralling as ever. Whether in unison or harmony, the dual pipes make for a potent combo, the rhythm from Galway and Mulholland is solid and shrewdly deployed, while Moynagh’s bodhran often lends an infectious rock-n-roll beat, especially on “Ski-doo,” written by Aussie guitarist Steve Cooney.

Mulholland also is an exceptional tenor banjo player, as he demonstrates through a set of reels that begins with his solo on Liz Carroll’s “Johnny D’s” (written not for the late, lamented Somerville music venue but for

the guitarist John Doyle) and only gets better as the pipes join in on a pair of venerable trad tunes, “The Connaught Heifer” and “The Jolly Tinkers,” before finishing up with the joyous “Mill House,” composed by Scottish fiddler John Martin (formerly of Ossian and The Easy Club).

Lamb and Bléjean’s pipes are in the spotlight – with Moynagh lending some nifty syncopation – on a classic mixolydian jig from the repertoire of Kevin Rowsome, “Up and About in the Morning”; there’s a striking contrast with a segue into the slide “Scattery Island,” Lamb’s whistle playing over the pipes drone and joined by McCormack on mandolin and Mulholland on bouzouki; then it’s all in for another slide, “The Slippery Dip” (written by accordionist Sean Quinn) to finish out the medley.

Réalta changes up the dynamic at various times, to great effect: Galway breaks out her flatpicking skills on her medium-tempo jig “Red Rock,” while on “Fluffy’s Frolics” and “Frosty’s Frolics,” a pair of brisk slip jigs composed by Patrick Davey – one in F, the other F-minor (for those who like something beyond the D/G/Am/Em menu) – Bléjean and Lamb switch to whistles and Mulholland to double bass.

McCormack, whose voice is ingratiatingly mellow, makes his singing debut on the band’s rendition of Robert Dwyer Joyce’s oft-covered ballad “Wind That Shakes the Barley,” a lament for both a love lost and a country downtrodden. While most versions – with the notable exception of that by Solas – tend to be slow and solemn, Réalta pushes the tempo and rhythm some and in so doing creates a certain foreboding; the quite spectral harmony supplied by guest singer Cathy Jordan of Dervish is the coup de grace.

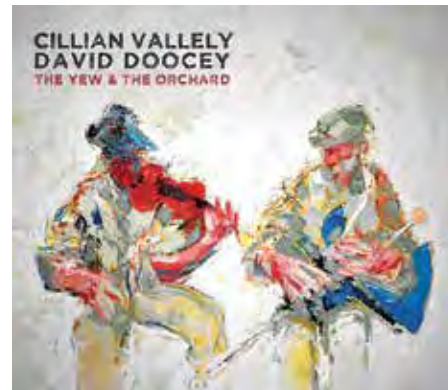
McCormack’s own material often deals with the search for meaningful connections, among people and especially with the natural world, and the barriers to those relationships – which, not surprisingly, are often put up by ourselves. As he sings on the gently plaintive title track: “Believe in yourself, believe in the Earth/Some things have worth, some thing of the Earth.”

In a similar spirit, McCormack covers none other than Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changing,” although he alters the vibe from rabble-rouser to something more introspective – as if to suggest that the real change has to come from within (he also switches the time signature to a bluesy 4/4).

The fourth song is a counterpoint of sorts to the other three, the nostalgic if somewhat bittersweet “Mulroy Bay,” popularized by showband singer John Kerr and said to have been written by Hugh Friel of Donegal. Mulholland takes the lead vocals with

some winsome pipes and whistle, and Galway’s fine piano backing and harmony singing.

This might all seem a pretty unwieldy mix for one album, but nothing on “Thing of the Earth” feels like an overreach or underachievement, thanks to Réalta’s excellent musician-



ship and canny arrangements. They continue to fulfill the promise shown back in the 2010s.

[realtamusic.com]

Cillian Valley and David Doocey, “The Yew & the Orchard” • Valley and Worcester native Doocey share some significant attributes, notably the strong presence of traditional music in the family: In fact, both have siblings who, like themselves, are supremely accomplished musicians. Valley (uilleann pipes, whistle, low whistle) is well known as a founding member of trad supergroup Lúnasa and has appeared with everyone from Bruce Springsteen to Natalie Merchant; Doocey (fiddle, concertina, bouzouki, guitar) owns multiple All-Ireland titles and in addition to membership in bands like Gráda and Blás has made music with Sharon Shannon, Martin Hayes, Finbar Furey and other luminaries. “The Yew & the Orchard” – the title is a reference to natural features of their respective locales, respectively Mayo and Armagh – is their first album together, and there is every reason to hope there will be more. The pair display simply top-level musicality as well as an inspired choice of material, including some of their own work.

Adding to the pleasures of “The Yew & the Orchard” are contributions from a couple of those aforementioned talented siblings (there are more than one apiece in both families) – pianist Caoimhin Valley and guitarist Patrick Doocey – plus Sean Óg Graham (a member of Beoga and currently on tour with Karan Casey) on guitar.

You can’t do much better than the set of traditional slip jigs, “James Byrne’s/Humours of Whiskey/Up and Down Again,” which in addition to the superlative performance (Patrick Doocey included) is an excellent example of how to assemble a medley for a contrast of ambiance and tone. There’s also an outstandingly constructed trio of reels, beginning with

Doocey’s own “Worcester Reel” (yes, named for that fair city) – which features an especially striking Dooceys’ duet – and amped up by Valley’s entry on “St. Ruth’s Bush,” finishing with another Doocey original, “Gay Cassidy’s.” Valley’s “Cider Shack” ushers in a set of slides that segues into “Bolt the Door” via the O’Neill Collection and – from the repertoire of Kerry’s own Pádraig O’Keefe – “I’d Rather Be Married Than Left,” which deserves at least as much affection for its joyous melody as its quirky title.

“The Yew & the Orchard” has plenty of kick, to be sure, but more serene moments, too: Witness Doocey’s playing of a Junior Crehan reel, “West Clare Railway,” Graham’s guitar picking neatly complementing the bowing on the A part, followed by a moody Dorian-mode “Jug of Punch.” Valley leads in on an air from Munster, “A Ógánaigh An Chúil Chraobhaigh (O Young Man of the Flowing Hair)” – one of those tunes tailor-made for the pipes – and then Doocey introduces the D-minor “Peacock’s Feather” hornpipe, with Caoimhin Valley’s splendidly empathic backing.

Valley and Doocey show no qualms about going outside the Irish domain. One track has an Americana tint, as Valley plays slow, mournful low whistle to open the old-timey tune “Elk River,” and then Doocey brings up the tempo, multi-tracking his own bouzouki and guitar backing as well; they segue into “Ryan’s,” written by Jack Herrick and Clay Buckner of famed North Carolina string band Red Clay Ramblers.

Elsewhere, an ebullient set of hop jigs – jauntily escorted by Patrick Doocey – opens with “Tha’m Buntáta Mór (The Potatoes Are Big),” a piece of Scottish Gaelic puirt-a-beul from Highland piper Allan MacDonald, leading into a pair of Valley originals. Another Highland piper, James MacKenzie, was the source for the brisk 9/8 march “Heights of Dargai,” followed by “Paddy Joe’s,” which Doocey learned from Mayo accordionist Paddy Joe Tighe. And the album’s final track – which starts with “Big Pat,” associated with renowned uilleann piper Leo Rowsome, and a Donegal variant of “Scotch Mary” – ends with a Shetland reel, “Oot Be Est Da Vong,” which translates to “east of the vong,” referring to a cherished fishing area.

An earlier draft of this review ended with the observation that, given their respective schedules, it might be difficult to see Valley and Doocey on the same stage – making this album all the more a cherished listening experience. But here’s a late-breaking bulletin: Valley and Doocey, along with guitarist Alan Murray, will be at Boston College’s Gaelic Roots series on April 25 at 6:30 p.m. (see bc.edu/irish) Catch ’em live, while you can.

[cillianvalley.com; daviddoocey.com]



# BostonIrish Arts Calendar

## March 2024

So, here we are, in what is arguably the most active month on the Irish/Celtic music calendar – especially here in Greater Boston/Eastern Massachusetts. Asampling of what’s coming up follows.

– SEAN SMITH

We’ll start with the Burren’s Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series, which will present **Dàimh** on March 6. Based in the Isle of Skye and West Lochaber, the quintet – former winner of Folk Band of the Year honors at the Scottish Traditional Music Awards – focuses on the wildly beautiful music traditions of the Scottish Highlands and islands. Angus Mackenzie (bagpipes) and Gabe McVarish (fiddle) lead the melodies, backed by Ross Martin (guitar) and Murdo “Yogi” Cameron (mandola, accordion); vocalist Ellen MacDonald imbues the songs, in Scottish Gaelic, with a full emotional range. They also have their own YouTube channel of teaching videos, “School of Dàimh.”

• The Cherry Street Music Americana series will hold a “Celtic Soiree” on March 9 at 7:30 p.m. with some local flavor. Flute/guitar duo **Matt and Shannon Heaton** – whose new album, “Whirring Wings,” has been discussed in these pages – will perform at the event, which takes place at the Allen Center in West Newton, along with their special guest, uilleann piper **Joey Abarta**, who released a fine solo recording, “King of the Blind,” during the past year.

Details available at [newtonculture.org/cherry-street-music](http://newtonculture.org/cherry-street-music).

**Breaking Trad** comes in the following day, with a new line-up that pairs recent arrival (and Worcester native) fiddler David Doocey with accordionist Dónal Murphy, both of them multiple All-Ireland champions. Guitarist Mike Galvin is experienced in different musical styles, but he certainly understands how to propel traditional Irish tunes along energetically and tastefully.

There’s not a lot of subtlety or variation to Breaking Trad’s approach – and truth to tell, none is particularly necessary: Murphy and Doocey set a groove with their tight playing, and Galvin drives things along in a splendidly brisk manner. Rumor has it they’ll be marking the release of their new album, “Drive.” (Breaking Trad also will perform on March 10 at the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston in Canton; see below.)

**Open the Door for Three**, a trio of Irish musicians whose penchant for scholarship complements their talents for arrangement and performance, will officially launch their new album on March 13. The band comprises Maine-based spouses Kieran O’Hare (uilleann pipes, flute, whistle) and Liz Knowles (fiddle) and Dublin-born and current Chicagoan Pat Broaders (bouzouki, vocals), and their individual histories in the music scene are considerable and impressive. The three are also known for their diligent research, digging into books, collections, recordings, and other sources, and for the harmonies



**Open the Door for Three** will appear at the Groton Hill St. Patrick’s Day Celebration (March 16) and the Burren Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series (March 13).

and well-crafted arrangements that typify their sound. (Open the Door for Three also are part of the Groton Hill St. Patrick’s Day Celebration on March 16; see below)

On March 20, it’s bluegrass-folk-Irish performers **JigJam**. The band – Jamie McKeogh, Daithi Melia, Gavin Strappe, and its newest member, St. Louis native Kevin Buckley – boasts extensive traditional Irish credentials, with quite a collection of All-Ireland titles at Fleadh Cheoil competitions. To this they add an appealing blend of bluegrass and Americana styles and a lively stage presence, not to mention dapper wardrobes – a combination that, along with their four albums, has brought them acclaim well beyond Ireland.

(Read more about the Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series. See Page 18.)

Also at the Burren this month is **The Kings of Connaught** (March 14), a trio from Galway that last year embarked on its first US tour that included a stop in the Boston area. The three – Liam O’Grady (vocals, five-string banjo), Mark Costello (vocals, guitar), and Thomas Ryan (whistle, harmonica, guitar) – all work at tried-and-true “day jobs” but have fashioned a very winning sound in the ballad-band mode, with classic songs like “The Rocky Road to Dublin” and “The Irish Rover” alongside instrumentals (“Planxty Irwin” and Finbar Furey’s “Lonesome Boatman”) and covers of contemporary numbers, from Richard Thompson’s “Beeswing” to The Eagles’ “Peaceful Easy Feeling.”

You can’t talk about the Burren’s March calendar without mentioning the St. Patrick’s Day special variety dinner show, masterminded and headed up as always by indefatigable owners **Tommy McCarthy and Louise Costello**, with various friends and acquaintances lending their talents. The show is on March 15 at 7 p.m., then with multiple performances on March 16 and 17.

For more on Burren events, see [burren.com/music.html](http://burren.com/music.html).

• City Winery Boston begins its observance of St. Patrick’s Weekend on March

16 with **Enter the Haggis**, known for its prodigious – even quirky – blend of rock, fusion, bluegrass, traditional Celtic fare, agitpop, folk, and other strains. From head-banging, arena-friendly Celtic rock to more nuanced, lyrical, indie-type offerings, ETH (Craig Downie, bagpipes, guitar, keyboards, whistle; Brian Buchanan, fiddle, guitar, mandolin, accordion; Rose Baldino, fiddle; Trevor Lewington, guitar, mandolin, keyboards; Mark Abraham, bass, banjo; and Bruce McCarthy, drums) combines a versatile repertoire with sociopolitical conviction, all of which is in evidence on their most recent album, “The Archer’s Parade,” which they released at the very beginning of the pandemic.

On the day (or “the Day,” if you prefer) itself, you’ve got options: In the City Winery’s Haymarket Lounge will be a tribute set to Shane McGowan and the Pogues by **Big Bad Bollocks**. Formed in 1989, the Western Massachusetts-based band (John Allen, vocals, accordion, whistle; Pino, lead guitar; Bob Richards, drums; Ernie Wilson, bass) is known as one of the earliest Pogues-inspired groups in the US. They’ve released four albums and made guest appearances on recordings by the Dropkick Murphys and Mighty Mighty Bosstones, with whom they’ve also shared the stage, as they have with Stiff Little Fingers, Bo Diddley and KRS-One, among others.

Or you can go to the main stage and catch **Leahy**, one of Canada’s most esteemed progressive folk-roots bands. Leahy’s members are from an Ontario family with Irish and Cape Breton ancestry – national and cultural legacies they proclaim through their high-energy music and performances. In addition to their studio and live recordings, which have sold well more than half a million copies worldwide, Leahy has been featured in three PBS television specials, including their memorable “Gael Force” appearance with The Chieftains that showcased the band’s dancing as well as instrumental prowess. Their 2021 album, “Good Water,” showed the band moving into new territory,

spotlighting their song and instrumental compositions, as well as the influences – rock, choral, country, classical – that have inspired them. (The performance is co-presented with Global Arts Live.)

Information at [citywinery.com/boston](http://citywinery.com/boston).

• Rockport’s Shalin Liu Performance Center will host an “Upstairs on Main” event on March 7 with North Shore singer **Michael O’Leary** and friends. O’Leary is a singer of Irish, Scottish, and maritime ballads and songs who has appeared at BCMFest, Portsmouth Maritime Folk Festival, Rockport Celtic Festival, Irish Connections Festival, New England Folk Festival, and other events and venues in New England. He also organizes music cruises in Gloucester Harbor and sessions on the North Shore. In 2003, O’Leary was co-recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council Traditional Arts Apprenticeship grant that enabled him to study the traditional Irish sean-nos singing style from Bridget Fitzgerald.

Genre-busting fiddler **Eileen Ivers** is at Shalin Liu on March 21. A Grammy-winning performer, co-founder of Cherish the Ladies, and the featured fiddler in the original “Riverdance” production, Ivers has long taken inspiration from the music she heard on and around the streets of her native New York City, including African, Latin, jazz and rock (*The New York Times* once called her “the Jimi Hendrix of the violin”). Her interest in blending music, cultures, stories and emotions from all corners has not only brought her acclaim, but an honorary Doctor of Arts degree from Iona College, which praised her “lifelong commitment to innovation, excellence and deep dedication to bringing people together through music.” Ivers is accompanied by her band “unIVERSal roots”: Buddy Connolly (accordion, whistles, keyboards); Colin Forhan (guitar, banjo, concertina, vocals); Lindsey Horner (upright and electric bass, saxophone) and Dave Barckow (percussion, guitar, vocals).

See [rockportmusic.org](http://rockportmusic.org).

• The pride of *Dhúin na nGall*, **Altan**, will be at Somerville’s Crystal Ballroom on March 24, where they will introduce their brand new album titled, appropriately enough, “Donegal,” and brand new member, fiddler/vocalist Claire Friel (one-third of the Friel Sisters). Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (fiddle, vocals), Martin Tourish (accordion), Ciarán Curran (bouzouki), and guitarists Mark Kelly and Daithí Sproule continue to mine the richness of the Donegal tradition while making connections to music of other cultures and genres. “Donegal” is the band’s first album since 2018’s “The Gap of Dreams,” which celebrated the valuable role of music, songs, dance, and stories played in helping past generations cope with the demands of rural life, as well as famine, conflict, and emigration. They also have released a book, *Altan: The*



*Tunes*, the only collection of Donegal music currently in print, comprising 222 melodies collected and recorded over their lengthy history and including interviews with band members.

Tickets available through [globalart-slave.org](http://globalart-slave.org).

- The fine Boston-born Anglo-Celtic trio Bellwether is on hiatus, but their accordionist, pianist, and vocalist **Alex Cumming** will be at Club Passim on March 20 to celebrate the release of his first solo recording, “Homecoming.” Along with Bellwether, Cumming has been part of numerous other collaborations playing vocal and dance music from British Isles and related traditions. “Homecoming” includes songs and tunes from both sides of “the pond,” among them the maritime ditty “Boston Harbour” – appropriately enough, since Cumming moved to the Boston area in 2015 before subsequently relocating to Brattleboro.

Details, tickets at [passim.org](http://passim.org).

- If you’re the participatory sort, then you should come to the traditional Irish ceili hosted by the **Boston College Gaelic Roots** series on March 22 at 6:30 p.m. in BC’s Gasson Hall. There’s no experience necessary to join the dancing, because **Kieran Jordan** will teach and direct the proceedings. Live music will be provided by Gaelic Roots director **Sheila Falls Keohane** and friends. Costs nothing to get in.

See [bc.edu/irish](http://bc.edu/irish).

There also will be an all-ages “**Community Ceili**” organized by the Powers Music School on March 30 from 6-8 p.m. at the Tracy Powers Concert Hall in Belmont, with caller **Jackie O’Riley** and open band led by **Natasha Sheehy, Devin McCabe, and Ellery Klein**.

Details at [Powersmusic.org/irish-sessions](http://Powersmusic.org/irish-sessions).

- The Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston in Canton will have its St. Patrick’s Day celebration, of course, but there are two other events of note. On March 8 will be a show with **Green Road** and Irish soprano **Clodagh Kinsella**, celebrating the close Ireland-US ties. Green Road combines Irish folk and ballad standards with a country and bluegrass tint, from “Galway Shawl” and “Leaving of Liverpool” to “Only Our Rivers Run Free” to “Sonny’s Dream” – a celebration of “the connections between folk music at home and abroad,” as they say. Its members (P.J. Sinnott, lead vocals, five-string banjo; Jon Reville, mandolin, tenor banjo; Tony McCabe, bass, vocals; Ned Wall, uilleann pipes, low whistles; Fergal O’Hanlon, guitar, vocals) have a long track record in Ireland’s pubs and clubs, sessions and fleadh’s, and theater and TV performances.

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



**Breaking Trad** is at the **Burren Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series (March 7)** and the **Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston (March 10)**.

The following day, **Trevor Sexton and Ger O’Donnell** will be at the ICC. The singer-songwriter duo offers up traditional and original material, with compelling vocals and multi-instrumental accompaniment. Sexton counts Bob Dylan, Bob Marley and Pete Seeger among his influences, and leans on a storyteller’s style in creating his songs. A music educator, arranger and composer, O’Donnell started out on classical flute and fife before finding his calling as a crafter of songs – his singles “Turquoise Ink” and “Talk About Heroes” both reached number 1 in the Irish charts. Sexton and O’Donnell were featured by TG4 in its broadcast of last year’s Fleadh Cheoil and have appeared in concert with Cherish the Ladies.

As noted earlier, **Breaking Trad** is at the center on March 10.

See [irishculture.org](http://irishculture.org) for details and tickets.

- There’ll be two opportunities to catch the Groton Hill St. Patrick’s Day Celebration on March 16, at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. In addition to **Open the Door for Three** (also at the Burren’s Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series, as noted above), the event will include sets by fiddle-piano duo **Katie McNally and Neil Pearلمان** and guitarist-vocalist **Keith Murphy**. McNally’s exuberant, passionate fiddling and Neil Pearلمان’s dynamic piano-playing – mixing elements of jazz, Latin, and other musical forms – make for a fascinating modern outlook on Scottish and Cape Breton music while maintaining a healthy respect for those traditions. Murphy has been a mainstay in the New England folk music scene for years, renowned for his percussive, infectious guitar rhythms and tender, expressive singing, with a repertoire that encompasses Irish, English, Canadian, Quebecois and French traditions.

Go to [grotonhill.org/tickets](http://grotonhill.org/tickets).

- Singer, producer and TV host **Michael Londra** will bring the stage version of his popular “Ireland with Michael” series to Beverly’s Cabot

Theater on March 17. A native of Wexford – renowned as a wellspring of opera – Londra first achieved stardom in 1998 as the lead tenor in the “Riverdance on Broadway” production, a role he was to play in the show’s subsequent U.S. tour. His other artistic achievements include his five albums, among them “Celt” and “Beyond Celtic”; the PBS concert special “Beyond Celtic” he produced, earning two Emmy awards; guest appearances with bands such as De Dannan and Téada; and his performance with Judy Collins for the Kennedy family in commemoration of John F. Kennedy’s 1963 trip to Ireland. In 2021, “Ireland with Michael” debuted on PBS, in which Londra takes viewers on a musical tour around Ireland as he visits various cultural, historical, and social settings; the stage version of the show was launched last year and toured 21 cities in the US.

More at [thecabot.org/event/ireland-with-michael](http://thecabot.org/event/ireland-with-michael).

- Speaking of “Riverdance,” another famous stage spectacle of similar stature will be at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium on March 14: the 25th anniversary edition of **Michael Flatley’s “Lord of the Dance.”** The show was Flatley’s first project after his breakout role in “Riverdance,” and following its 1996 premiere in Dublin, “Lord of the Dance” proved to be a hit in London, Australia, South Africa and then the US. Flatley created an expanded version, “Feet of Flame,” which toured Europe and then the US; he gave his final performance with the show in 2016. In 2023, the show returned to Dublin to formally celebrate 25 years. The 2024 version includes novel musical elements and choreography, updated costumes, state-of-the-art technology and special effects, and a cast of 40 dancers led by veterans Matt Smith and Cathal Keaney. (This show was rescheduled from last November.)

Go to [lowellauditorium.com/ticketed-events](http://lowellauditorium.com/ticketed-events)

- While we’re on the subject of significant milestones, **Celtic Woman** is in the midst of its 20th-anniversary tour, which will bring them to Medford’s Chevalier Theatre on March 21 to present their wildly popular concert-hall mix of traditional Irish music with other material ranging from folk to contemporary pop. The group has revamped its line-up over the past few years, and currently includes fiddler Tara McNeill and Muirgen O’Mahony with newest members Emma Warren and Mairéad Carlin. They’ll be touring their just-released “Celtic Woman 20th Anniversary” album, with old reliables like “The Parting Glass,” “Amazing Grace,” “You Raise Me Up” and “Danny Boy” as well as some excursions into Gaelic language songs: “Dúlaman,” “Is Sinne Mná na hÉireann” and “A Stór Mo Chroí.”

See [chevaliertheatre.com](http://chevaliertheatre.com).

- The **Red Hot Chilli Pipers** are at Cary Memorial Hall in Lexington on March 10. RHCP has gained renown for its inimitable “bagrock,” a mix of traditional pipe tunes and contemporary pieces – including classic rock hits like “Smoke on the Water,” “We Will Rock You,” and “Don’t Stop Believin’.” Many of its members have competed at the highest level of bagpiping and drumming, and some have completed degrees at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The band has released nine albums, including 201’s “Fresh Air,” and appeared on the soundtrack to “How to Train Your Dragon 2.”

See [www.caryhalllexington.com](http://www.caryhalllexington.com).

- **Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy** head to Worcester’s Hanover Theater on March 9 as part of the Music Worcester Presents series. Representing the union of two renowned family Canadian Celtic music traditions, these fiddling and step-dancing spouses – MacMaster from Cape Breton, Leahy from Ontario – have earned numerous honors, including JUNO and East Coast Music Awards, and have started a new family music tradition with their children, who typically travel with them on tour and join in their concerts of powerful, up-tempo instrumentals as well as intimate, heartfelt melodies. Last year, they released their second album together, “Canvas,” which goes beyond their previous takes on Celtic music, embracing a global/international perspective as well as more contemporary production and innovative arrangements, incorporating new instrumentation and contributing musicians – among them cellist Yo-Yo Ma and Grammy-winning Americana/Appalachian musician and singer Rhiannon Giddens.

Go to [musicworcester.org](http://musicworcester.org).

- Down on the Cape, you can take in a “**Prelude to St. Patrick’s Day**” at Highfield Hall and Gardens in Falmouth on March 10 at 4 p.m., featuring the band **Golden Lane** (John MacDonald, fretted instruments, vocals; Pat Black, bodhran, whistle, vocals; Bill Black, fretted instruments, vocals; Colin Everett, uilleann pipes, whistle; Mark Oien, whistle) and members of the **Maureen Haley School of Irish Dance**.

See [capeirish.com/golden-lane](http://capeirish.com/golden-lane).

Please note: Some events may already have sold out by this calendar’s publication date.



# The Heatons unfurl their wings with new album

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

If it seems like a long time since Matt and Shannon Heaton last released an album, well, it is: not since 2014, when the local Irish music duo came out with “Tell You in Earnest.”

But in January, the Heatons formally launched their sixth recording, “Whirring Wings,” with a concert in The Burren Backroom as part of the Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series. Characteristically, the duo had invited members of the audience to bring instruments and join in a set of jigs at the end of the show; sure enough, a few fiddles, concertinas, and banjos emerged in the Backroom and followed the Heatons through “Geese in the Bog” and Vincent Broderick’s “The Haunted House.”

Ten of the album’s 11 tracks comprise instrumentals, some from Irish tradition, some penned by Shannon – who plays flute; Matt plays guitars, bouzouki, and bodhran – and other musicians like Liz Carroll, Martin (Junior) Crehan, Paddy Fahey, Finbarr Dwyer, Tommy Coen, and Brendan Mulholland, who has a cameo appearance on one track. The Heatons also do a rendition of the Robert Burns song “Westlin Winds,” from which the album title is derived (“The moorcock springs on whirring wings/ Among the blooming heather”). There is also an extensive companion book available, with notes about the project and information and sheet music for all of the music on the album.

A work of art, whether an album, a painting, a sculpture, or some other form of expression, isn’t conceived and created in a hermetically sealed environment. Being human, an artist can be influenced and affected not only by personal matters but also by compelling events on a far greater scale. This confluence can change, sometimes drastically, how the artist acts on the original inspiration for the work – or whether the artist does so at all.

For the Heatons, who have long made engagement with their community of musicians and listeners an imperative, “Whirring Wings” was a means of keeping those ties intact while affirming their own unique connection to the music, and with each other, after a period of pandemic-generated upheaval marked by loss, hope, and the promise of renewal.

“Being able to do this album, and in our basement studio at home, felt like we were striking a balance,” explains Shannon. “During the pandemic, we made an effort to maintain – and build on – the relationships we had with people through music, such as by holding a ‘Virtual Guided Session’ regularly on YouTube. It was wonderful to facilitate that, to help organize something participatory which people invested in and was important to them.

“But Matt and I wanted something for ourselves. We wanted to be able to focus on playing the music as we’ve always played it – sometimes really up-tempo, or with our variations or other little details and quirks that just come to us – and especially playing music, some of



**Matt and Shannon Heaton officially launched “Whirring Wings,” their sixth album, at the Burren Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series earlier this year.**

which we’d written, that spoke to what we’ve experienced these last few years.”

The result is the vintage Heatons that listeners in Boston, and many places elsewhere, have long admired and cherished. Sharing her thoughts for BostonIrish a while back on the flute’s presence in Irish music, Shannon said that “the deepest and most nourishing Irish flute playing features a rich straight tone, superb intonation, gorgeous rhythmic style, and clean mechanics with sensible and interesting phrasing” – all of which is readily apparent on “Whirring Wings,” whether she’s busting out a muscular reel or vivacious jig or conveying emotional intimacy in a slower tune.

Matt’s guitar and bouzouki playing, meanwhile, is multi-faceted and “endlessly creative,” as Shannon describes it. He provides solid rhythm but avoids a uniform or heavy-handed approach, altering chord progressions and iterations, and sometimes using a more melodic approach. He might, for example, alternate between a three-tone pattern of plucked harmonics on the A part and chords on the B part, or shift between flatpicking and strumming the chords, adding contrast and texture to the melody Shannon plays.

The Heatons, who rose to prominence in the Celtic music scene during the 2000s, were a very busy couple as the 2010s wore on, what with their shared and individual musical pursuits – including “Tell You in Earnest” – and raising their then-pre-teen son. The two also maintained an active presence on social media and through other avenues, notably Shannon’s “Irish Music Stories” podcast. When and where possible, they cultivated and supported opportunities to bring the music community together, including BCMFest, which Shannon co-founded and helped organize for many years. Nonetheless, they had planned to put out an album in late 2019, but when that didn’t happen, the timetable got pushed back.

Then a few months later, the whole idea of timetables became practically

irrelevant.

“Once the shutdown happened, the idea of making an album didn’t seem as important,” says Shannon. “We felt that offering ways to keep people engaged in the music – at a time when there weren’t any concerts or sessions and everyone was quarantining – was more useful than a one-way presentation.”

With music-related and other usual activity outside the home all but curtailed, the Heatons found themselves – even after the lockdown eased – far more attuned to the natural world, which produced some fascinating and inspirational scenes right outside their windows.

Inspiration also came through personal events and milestones, such as their son’s completion of fourth grade during the lockdown, or snippets of everyday life – like a friend’s struggle to cook a chicken in the midst of a Heatons’ online session.

“A lot of music grew out of this period,” sums up Shannon. “I wrote several dozen new tunes and we put together 50 new arrangements. We produced e-books of tunes with accompanying MP3 for download as well as YouTube videos. So, when we were thinking about making this album, we asked ourselves, ‘What is the story we want to tell? Which tunes or songs will help us tell it?’

“We wanted to paint a picture of that weird time when we were all hunkered down in our little landscapes and had the chance to pay more attention to the elements of the natural world. It was difficult period for many of us, but we also had an opportunity to connect with the beauty of nature and appreciate the kindness around us, and to see how amazing people can be to one another.”

Many such sentiments and reminiscences are expressed in the album’s accompanying booklet, which, according to Matt, was inspired by those that came with LPs of traditional Irish music released in the 1970s by Shanachie Records. As he explains in the booklet, the shift from physical products like

LPs, cassettes, and CDs to the digital/streaming format has changed the way many people experience music: “But maybe it can still be worthwhile to offer something tangible, something to hold and pore over while listening.”

Informative, hilarious or poignant, the descriptions and anecdotes contained in the booklet make for an enjoyable read and, in many respects, underscore the virtues of looking for improbable and compelling stories that emerge around us. The reel “Big-Eared Brad,” for example, recalls how the Heatons managed to achieve détente with a wild rabbit who made himself at home in their backyard and dined on their garden, while terrorizing fellow wild rabbit (“Chubby Andrew”) and a chipmunk (“Long-Necked Jimmy”). Another reel, “Cher Ami,” is a sort of postscript to “Big-Eared Brad,” about the mourning dove – named after a heroic World War I carrier pigeon – who sat vigil for Brad upon his passing. The slip jig “Little-Leaf Linden” is an ode to a big, beautiful tree the Heatons share with their neighbors.

Perhaps most memorably of all, after receiving news that the brilliant Prince Edward Island musician Pastelle LeBlanc had died, Shannon looked out into her yard to see a pair of cardinals – evoking the widespread, ages-old belief in redbirds as signs and portents of a loved one’s passing. She drew upon this moment to write the march “Two Cardinals,” for LeBlanc and her sister Emmanuelle.

The Heatons, of course, also proclaim their love and respect for Irish tradition on “Whirring Wings,” such as a set of three reels associated with P. Joe Hayes, a co-founder of the illustrious Tulla Ceili Band (and father of acclaimed fiddler Martin Hayes). Other classic, treasured tunes include “I Buried My Wife and Danced on Her Grave” – with the ear-catching D-C natural-A phrase in the B part – “Rose in the Heather” and the dulcet D reel “Mother and Child.”

“Westlin Winds” is a capstone of sorts to “Whirring Wings,” a love song that also contains some quite severe observations about humans’ unfortunate penchant for cruelty to the natural world, and to one another. As such, it dovetails with the unresolved issues and emotions the pandemic stoked in many people, including Shannon, who laments what she sees as an all-too-ready inclination to purge this period from our collective memory.

“Yes, we all want to move on, but can we think about some of the other things that went on during the pandemic? We gave nature, and our planet, a break for a while and stopped driving. We checked in one another to make sure we were OK, we started thinking about living simpler, thinking local. Did that all have to stop?”

“So, my feeling is you gotta ‘do the Burns’: Get out there and appreciate nature, what it does for us, what it means to us.”

For more about “Whirring Wings,” see the Heatons’ website at [mattandshannon-heaton.com](http://mattandshannon-heaton.com)





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# A Long Day's Journey to 'Thirst' At Lyric Stage Company

By R. J. DONOVAN  
SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

Eugene O'Neill's classic drama "Long Day's Journey Into Night" follows one devastating day in the life of the Tyrone family. Set in 1912 in the family's Connecticut summer home, the highly autobiographical Pulitzer Prize-winning play reveals a family shattered by addiction, disease, and desperation.

Meanwhile, offstage in the kitchen of the same house, there's an equally compelling drama unfolding with the staff – two Irish immigrant maids and an American chauffeur.

That's the story that is captured in "Thirst," Ronán Noone's compelling look into the Irish immigrant experience and the search for love, serenity, and a place to call home in a new world. The play runs at Lyric Stage through March 17.

Aimee Doherty plays Bridget, "a disappointed cook whose shuttered heart only blooms when she has a bottle in her hand;" Kate Fitzgerald is Cathleen, "a vibrant young summer maid – also known as 'the second girl' – who survived a trip on the Titanic;" and Michael Kaye is Jack the chauffeur, who's hiding a troubled past.

Of the three, only Cathleen appears in "Long Day's Journey." And O'Neill does not present her in a very flattering light. The other two are referenced but never seen.

Ronán Noone first brought the three characters to life in "The Second Girl," which played The Huntington Theatre in 2015. Although the production was well-received by audiences, he was not satisfied with the tone of the story he was telling. In hindsight, he found it too woeful.

It was his friend and colleague playwright Theresa Rebeck who encouraged him to reimagine the story. She assured him there was untapped joy there in sharp contrast to the misery of the Tyrone family. And so, he went back to work.

Rebeck subsequently directed a production of the new piece, entitled "Thirst" – which Ronán happily terms "a separate work of art" – at the Dorset Theatre Festival in Vermont in 2022.

In the audience at Dorset was Lyric's Artistic Director Courtney O'Connor, who immediately knew it was perfect for Lyric's audiences. Courtney is directing the production at Lyric and says she felt a special affinity for the play.

"This is a story near and dear to my heart," she has said, "as I honor the journey of my own great-grandmother leaving Ireland to pursue a life in America."

Ronán Noone is a graduate of the University of Galway who emigrated from Ireland (Clifton) in 1994. He has written 11 full-length plays that have been produced in theaters across the United States, including 4 off-Broadway productions. "Thirst" is his twelfth play. He is a recipient of the Elliot Norton Award and three IRNE Awards. With a full work schedule, he teaches at Walnut Hill School for the Arts and is an assistant professor (adjunct) at Boston



Aimee Doherty, Michael Kaye, and Kate Fitzgerald in Ronán Noone's "Thirst"  
Nile Hawver/Nile Scott Shots

University's MFAPlaywriting program. He and his wife and their two daughters make their home on the South Shore.

Ronán and I recently discussed the metamorphosis of "Thirst." Here's an edited look at our conversation:

**RJD.** I saw "The Second Girl" at The Huntington and found the characters and the setting very engaging. On a side note, I still have the sensory memory of the Cathleen character actually cooking breakfast on stage and the smell of bacon and eggs wafting into the house. Were you unhappy with it all?

**RN.** Lugubrious, that's the term I think about. I found the story full of grief, too much grief. There was enough grief in "Long Day's Journey Into Night." It represented both Irish Americans and Irish immigrants, and sadly, I thought. Having lived here over 20 years, yes, there is grief in our lives, but I also found an awful lot of joy in coming to America. I found a lot of immigrants who have joy, who have succeeded, who have found a place for their ambition . . .

I wanted "Long Day's Journey" to be in conversation with "Second Girl," and I had to reinvent it to have two ideas in conflict with each other. The grief, the function of one side, with the joy and a kind of appreciation of what immigration can mean for somebody. Starting a new life. I wanted to bring that back to it. I couldn't find that in "The Second Girl."

**RJD.** Even back then, I recall your talking about O'Neill's condescending attitude to Cathleen, the Irish second girl in the kitchen.

**RN.** In the first ten pages of Act Three of "Long Day's Journey," Cathleen

is referred to as stupidly ignorant or silly. Ten times. Part of it, too, was wanting to take back some of that dignity . . . You didn't get on a boat and come all the way across here because you were stupid. You got on a boat to come over here to try and make a life for yourself.

**RJD.** My own great-grandmother was in that same position. She came over here in the 1880s, found work as a servant and then brought over other young ladies and found them jobs, too. They were all working hard for a better existence.

**RN.** When the oldest son got the land, what were you to do? Come over here and try and make a life for yourself as a young woman. That, to me, sounds wildly courageous. Certainly not under the banner of stupidity. And so, with that in mind, it's so easy for the Irish to find the grief. It's so easy. And we can wallow in it. And so, the longer I spent in America, the more I realized I was trying to reconcile the Irish-ness that I have with the American-ness that I grew up with over the last 20 years. To try and reconcile that meant you had to find a place where you could see happiness bursting through. Maybe it's the American dream, or maybe it's the optimism of it. So let me wallow in

that for a while and then let's bring the two of them together. And out of that came "Thirst." A thirst for ambition and a thirst to succeed.

**RJD.** We're you involved in casting Aimee, Kate, and Michael at Lyric.

**RN.** Yes, I was involved with Courtney in all casting. And I have to say it's the most gorgeous bunch I seen cast in some time. I'm expecting some heat on that stage, if I'm allowed to say that.

**RJD.** You are. The characters come from your own hometown area. Were you inspired by anyone you knew back then?

**RN.** Oh, my grandmother is all over this play. When I left for America, she sat me down in the front room – which is always the room nobody ever used – and so you go in there, and you go, "Oh-oh, heavy conversation coming." And she takes out a small packet in her hand. And it's one of those old hotel button and thread packages. It's kind of wrapped and she hands it to me and she says, "In there now are threads and buttons for a shirt. Cause when you get to America, you never know when you'd need a button." I brought that with me, and I still have it.

**RJD.** She would be very pleased to have inspired you.

**RN.** Every play I've written is a kind of purging of my own spirit. That sounds kind of egotistical but you have to dig into yourself to find what there is. There's the joy of coming to America to figure out how it works, realize you're escaping a place where maybe you're told your station is your duty, and now you can actually become whatever you want to be. That's the Cathleen character. I have a lot of me in that . . . The antenna is always up and you're hearing people talking and you're picking up what they say, and it just stays with you.

**RJD.** I understand you visited Eugene O'Neill's grave for inspiration. Most people probably don't know that O'Neill's final resting spot is right here in Jamaica Plain.

**RN.** I did. I thought it was the right thing to do. I had studied O'Neill's work and never understood it fully when I was younger. And then when I came to America, I started saying, "Oh, I see now how the American Irish think . . . So, I took that time to start rereading his work and seeing exactly where he was coming from. And recognizing the traits of characters I had grown up with, in his work. And so, when I went to his grave it was to say, "I'm taking on this journey with Cathleen, with respect. If you're okay with that, let me know." And so, I heard nothing. (Laughing) And so, I took that as okay. And knowing O'Neill's work. I think along the way, you would have seen him say, "Go on, you do it then. Take it on."

**RJD.** And in taking it on, you've completely reframed the emotional tone from the ground up to create "Thirst" as a separate work of art.

**RN.** Yes, but you'll still smell the bacon.

•••

"Thirst," through March 17, Lyric Stage Company of Boston. Info: 617-585-5678 or lyricstage.com.



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# Greene-O'Leary School of Irish Dance

**Saturday, March 16, 2024**

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

**St. Patrick's Day**

Come enjoy a celebration of St. Patrick's Day. Exuberant dancers demonstrate athleticism, skill, and poise while presenting traditional and contemporary styles of Irish dance.



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*Little Red and the Big Bully Wolf*

**Tuesday, April 16, 2024**

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



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friends — the three little pigs, the Gingerbread Man, and more — as they learn to face their fears and stand up to the Big Bully Wolf. Learn to identify, report, and resist bullying as we follow Little Red on her journey to grandma's house. Funny, dramatic, and highly entertaining!

**Register:** The *Celebrate!* series is appropriate for family audiences and children ages 5 and up. In order to optimize your comfort and enjoyment, reservations are recommended for all visitors to this free program. **Visit [JFKLibrary.org/celebrate](http://JFKLibrary.org/celebrate) or call 617-514-1644 or email [JFK.celebrate@nara.gov](mailto:JFK.celebrate@nara.gov) to make a reservation.** Children are seated on the floor with their caretakers. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

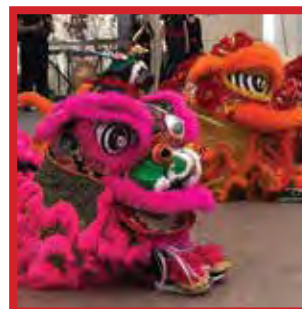
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## Benkadi Drum and Dance

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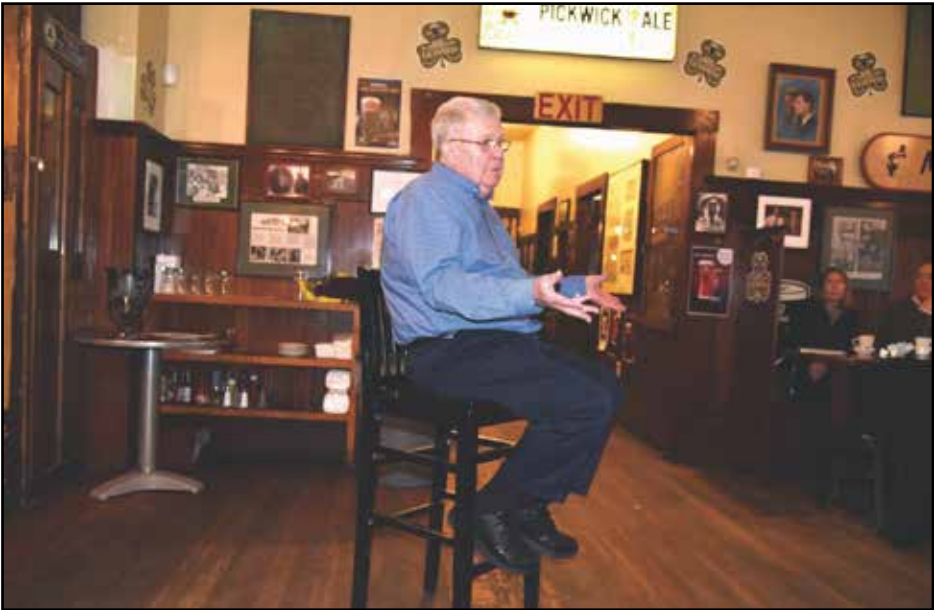


# Gerard ‘Gerry’ Burke, at 83; maestro at Doyle’s Café in JP

Gerard Francis Burke, 83, of Canton, MA and formerly of Jamaica Plain, died peacefully on Feb. 16, at home, where he was surrounded by his family.

Fondly known as “Gerry,” Mr. Burke was the oldest of five children born to the late John P. Burke and Mary (Callahan) Burke. He was raised in Jamaica Plain and spent his youth working at the Refectory and Concession stands at Franklin Park along with his father and his siblings. He attended Jamaica Plain High School, Saint Francis College, and Portia Law School.

His work at the Park ignited his love of working with the public and connected to his love of Boston politics, its Irish history, and its tribal roots from across the sea, all of which propelled him toward countless occupational adventures and a successful career at the late and lamented Doyle’s Café on Washington Street in Jamaica Plain. He was a constant presence there for decades with his brothers and his son.



Gerry Burke holding court at Doyle’s Cafe back in the day. Harry Brett photo

Mr. Burke defined the proud Boston Irish guy who was always ready to regale listeners with stories, real and mythical, of the old days. He was a

magnetic life force who, at bottom, enjoyed being with people. But most of all, he loved being at home with his family members, who will miss his charm, wit, clever sayings, stories, and his constant love and support.

He leaves his wife of 55 years, Mary Ann; his son, Gerard Burke, and his wife Carolyn of West Roxbury, and their children, Paul, Catherine, Gerard and Mary Ann; his daughter, Margaret Glynn, and her husband Martin of Walpole; step-grandchildren Falan (Tracey) Glynn-Roulinavage and Kaylan (Matt) Rinehimer; and step-great grandchildren, James, Savvy, Remy, and Baker. And he leaves his siblings, Edward (Joni) Burke, Helen (William) Baird, William (Therese) Burke, and Francis (Mick) Foret.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Feb. 23 at Saint John Chrysostom Parish, 4750 Washington St., West Roxbury. Interment was in Saint Joseph’s Cemetery, West Roxbury.

# IPC begins March events with tribute to a ‘Special Corkonian’

The Irish Pastoral Centre in Dorchester will kick off its month of March events on Sun., March 3, with an Open House showcasing its recent expansion into additional ground floor space at its Adams Corner offices and meeting rooms, located at 540 Gallivan Blvd., rear unit off the parking lot.

“We are very excited to share about our upcoming Open House in collaboration with the Knights & Ladies of St. Finbarr - Cork Club to view our expansion at the IPC,” said Executive Director Mary Swanton.

“This will also be a celebration of a very special Cork man, Fr. Dan Finn.

It is our hope that you can join us for our Open House on Sunday, which is actually Fr. Dan’s 80th birthday (surprise celebration!)

Please share news of this celebration honoring our Shepherd and great friend.”

Richard Archer, president of The Knights and Ladies of St. Finbarr - Cork Club, said “The club is delighted to work with the Irish Pastoral Centre on this exciting day as we honor a Special Corkonian. Please join us at the IPC. We encourage all to wear your Cork colors of Red and White. Everyone is welcome.” “Join us on March 3rd from 3 to 7 p.m. at the IPC in Dorchester for food, friendship and music, Swanton said. “All are welcome to attend, no



Fr. Dan Finn and IPC Executive Director Mary Swanton share a cruise in 2018.

RSVP required. We look forward to your presence.”

Wishing the Boston Irish Reporter a Happy

# St. Patrick's Day

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# MARCH MILESTONES

## St. Patrick's Month has proved memorable for the Boston Irish

By PETER F. STEVENS  
BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

### From Stately Church to Status Symbol

On March 10, 1861, a throng gathered on Harrison Avenue to dedicate a new church for Boston's growing population of Irish-Catholics and German-Catholics. Bishop John B. Fitzpatrick, the Irish immigrant and philanthropist Andrew Carney, and the chief architect, Tipperary-born Patrick C. Keely, figured prominently in the ceremony to celebrate the fruition of Father John McElroy's mission to establish a church and eventually found a Jesuit college to provide education for Irish immigrants amid virulent ethnic and religious prejudice of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Boston.

The Church of the Immaculate Conception, and soon after a school that would evolve into Boston College, was rising above the South End.

Keely, a gifted architect whose work included Boston's Cathedral of the Holy Cross and numerous other Catholic churches throughout Greater Boston and New England, rendered the Church of the Immaculate Conception in stunning white New Hampshire granite in a classic Renaissance Revival style.

Today, some 163 years later, another vision for the Harrison Avenue edifice has supplanted that of Father McElroy. Developers have turned the stately church into luxury residences.

### Keeping an Eye on the Fenians

Controversy has erupted numerous times when it comes to Boston's famed St. Patrick's Day Parade. One clash came on March 17, 1876, the 100th anniversary of the day when cannon emplaced by George Washington's rebel army drove the British Redcoats out of Boston for good. Discussions by the city legislature to enact an Evacuation Day observance met staunch opposition from Brahmins and Yankees who feared that the "ragged Irish" would twist such a holiday into debauched revelry under the cover of their patron saint's name.

Despite that, the city's Irish were determined to march in a St. Patrick's Day parade, and march they did. The *Boston Pilot* (Volume 39, Number 12, March 18, 1876) hailed their "Grand Celebration in Boston," noting "the affair will be entirely independent of the centennial celebration of Evacuation Day"

Among the many Irish organizations marching was an approximately 200-man Fenian contingent. The Fenians did pose a concern for the parade organizers, as well as the city writ large. Sworn to rid Ireland of British rule, a Fenian army composed largely of battle-hardened Irishmen from both the Union and Confederate ranks in the US Civil War had launched failed invasions of British-held Canada in 1866, 1870, and 1871. The *Pilot* reported: "The chief marshal has concluded that no organization illegally formed and bearing arms shall take part in the procession...."

At 10 a.m. on March 17, the Knights of St. Patrick gathered at 560 Broadway, the home of Chief Parade Marshal Major Lawrence J. Logan. The full procession paraded at noon on a route first to the State House to be reviewed by "His Excellency Gov. Rice and staff, and at City Hall by Mayor Cobb and city officials."

John Boyle O'Reilly, a former Fenian firebrand, prisoner of the Crown, and now editor of the *Pilot*, was at that very moment was one of the plotters of the New Bedford whaling bark Catalpa's rescue mission to break six Fenian soldiers from Fremantle Gaol in Western Australia.

A report in O'Reilly's newspaper noted that Logan, perhaps daunted by the size of the procession, was supposed to host a banquet that evening, "but as he



Tremont Temple

thinks he could not do justice in the way of accommodating all his friends, he has given up the project."

### A Gathering at the Temple

On March 4, 1878, some two years after that "Grand Celebration," thousands of Boston Irish gathered at the Tremont Temple, a former theater that in 1843 had become a Free Baptist church and a key gathering place for Abolitionists. The March assemblage was there to celebrate the 100th birthday of the Irish rebel Robert Emmet, who, scant minutes after being convicted of high treason in a Dublin court in 1803, uttered the immortal words, "Let no man write my epitaph..."

James Jeffrey Roche, an unabashed admirer of O'Reilly, wrote that "the exercises at Tremont Temple" featured The Patriot's Grave," a poem by John Boyle O'Reilly. Scanning the spellbound crowd, awash in the poem's final line - "That every patriotic life is the

patriot's epitaph" - O'Reilly paused. Then, his voice rising, he moved many in the Temple to tears: "A life such as his [Emmet's] is never wasted. Often it is the price that is paid for justice."

### "With Goodwill Doing Service"

On St. Patrick's Day 1887, the Charitable Irish Society of Boston celebrated the 150th anniversary of its founding (the likely site was the Parker House) and the embracing of its motto - "With Goodwill Doing Service." One of the featured speakers was John Boyle O'Reilly, a man who had been accepted as a Charitable Irish member in December 1871. Joining him on the lectern was another rising star in the Boston Irish community - Patrick Collins, who would go on to become mayor of the city.



Patrick Collins

The Society's 150th served in a sense as a showcase for two men who were proving how far the Irish had come since its members had first gathered in 1737. Still, as the words of O'Reilly and Collins reflected, the Boston Irish still faced a long, grueling path to acceptance among, in historian George W. Potter's words, "the icicles of Yankee land."

As Boston gears up for another St. Patrick's "Marching Season," it is fitting to remember the long and arduous march slog to 2024's "Grand Celebration in Boston."



*Please come and celebrate a ministry of faith & love*

## Dorchester's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Patrick's Day Brunch

Saturday, March 16, 2024

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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

### 2024 Dorchester Hall of Fame Inductees

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Latoyia Edwards

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Dan Rea

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IAP salutes  
three on  
Women’s  
Christmas

Ireland’s former President Mary Robinson, US Ambassador Claire Cronin, and award-winning actor Geraldine Hughes were feted in January at a series of three na mBan (Women’s Christmas) events in Boston, Washington, and Chicago hosted by the Irish American Partnership.

At right: Geraldine Hughes converses with Donie O’Sullivan; below left: Northern Ireland Envoy Joe Kennedy, IAP president Mary Sugrue, and Ms Hughes; Ireland-born CNN journalist Donie O’Sullivan makes a point.

*Photos from Boston event*



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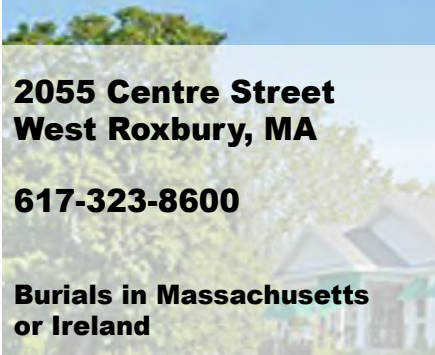
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# Sustainability reigns at Powerscourt Estate and Gardens

Features include a waste reduction plan, biodiversity rewilding, wildflower meadows, and a bee sanctuary.

Powerscourt Estate and Gardens in County Wicklow is continuing its journey towards being recognised on a global stage for its sustainability initiatives. The stunning Palladian mansion, set in 1,000 acres, which include 47 acres of landscaped gardens, is one of Ireland’s top attractions and has been named the third best garden in the world by National Geographic.

With its mix of styles, which include an Italian garden, a Japanese garden, a walled garden with a bee sanctuary, lakes and woodland walks, it is a magical place to spend a few leisurely hours. As head gardener Alex Slazenger prepares to plant new flowers and shrubs that will bloom in spring, he is trying to think like a bee, choosing colors and shapes of plants that will attract pollinators.

In the herbaceous border, new plants will include the foxtail lily, which is native to the Himalayas, white master, and camassia, all great for pollinators and producing a riot of colour. Installation of a wooden boardwalk through the heart of the rhododendron plantation is also underway to bring people into the heart of the color, while the shrub bed next to the mansion is being replanted with low-growing bulbs such as hyacinth, crocus, daffodil and bluebells to create a great spring show.

Sustainability is at the heart of all the gardening activity and so anything that is taken out of the garden is put back in as mulch or compost. Looking further into the future, Alex is also carefully choosing the species of trees that will be planted so that the garden will evolve sustainably over the next couple of hundred years.

Earlier this year, Powerscourt Estate and Gardens became the first major visitor attraction on the island of Ireland to achieve the Sustainable Travel Ireland certification, which uses criteria that are recognized by the UN-mandated Global Sustainable Tourism Council. This award followed the estate implementing a number of sustainability measures including an integrated energy management system, a waste reduction plan, biodiversity rewilding initiatives such as wildflower meadows, a tree planting programme, and the bee sanctuary at the walled garden.

A pioneering spirit has always existed for environmental and nature protection on Powerscourt Estate as it was originally purchased to create hydroelectric power at its waterfall, the highest one in Ireland.

Source: Tourism Ireland, Ireland.com



Some of the treasures featured at the 1,000-acre Powerscourt House and Gardens in Co. Wicklow, at top, named by National Geographic as world’s 3rd best garden. Center: Some of the 47 acres set aside for landscaped gardens; bottom, the Pagoda in Japanese Garden. Photos courtesy Tourism Ireland.





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Aimee Doherty, Michael Kaye,  
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Connemara school seeks help

To the Editor  
a chara,

I am writing to you from a small village school in Connemara, Co. Galway. The population of our village has fallen dramatically in the past number of years due to emigration, a lack of job opportunities, and young people unable to secure planning permission for housing. As a result, our primary school is in danger of closing. This is a tragedy, as the school is the heart of our community.

The school, along with our parents, have decided to come together to begin a campaign to increase the number of pupils in our school. The committee is fundraising to provide a house rent-free for a year to a family interested in relocating to our Irish-speaking village. The family will reside in the area and the children will attend our school in a bid to increase the number of pupils enrolled in the school. Unfortunately, grants are not available for such a fundraiser so we would be most grateful for any support given to our cause.

Míle buíochas ó chroí,  
Áine Ní Fhlatharta (Principal)

Scoil Rónáin, An Trá Bhain, Co. Galway, Ireland  
[idonate.ie/fundraiser/Scoilronain](https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/Scoilronain)

### Help us excavate Ballintober Castle

To the Editor

I received your email address from members of the Irish Charitable Society as I wanted to bring attention to the broader Boston community about an archaeological field school opportunity in Ireland.

I, along with one of my other co-directors, also a Ph.D. candidate, Andrew Bair (at Harvard), are organizing an excavation with an Irish colleague, Dr. Niall Brady, in county Roscommon at the medieval Ballintober Castle.

The Castles in Communities Archaeological Field School and Research Project (CIC for short) is entering its eighth field season in Ballintober Village, County Roscommon, Ireland. Nestled in the island's "hidden heartland," CIC is designed to serve first-time diggers and more experienced volunteers and students. We pride ourselves in accepting learners of all ages and at different stages in life.

Our project examines Ballintober Castle and its associated deserted settlement from past to present. The castle was built in the late 1200s by the Anglo-Norman baron Richard de Burgh, but within a century, it fell to the O'Connor kings of Connacht, who resided there for the next 500 years as one of their principal centers, close to their ancestral royal landscape of *Cruachain* / Rathcroghan.

The castle is still owned by the O'Conors. One of our primary research goals is to inform our understanding of the past through broadening narratives about colonial encounters between Anglo-Normans and the indigenous Gaelic-Irish.

Additionally, we prioritize collaboration with members of the Ballintober community to promote tourism and to facilitate a conservation management plan for the castle ruins that will one day be open again to the public.

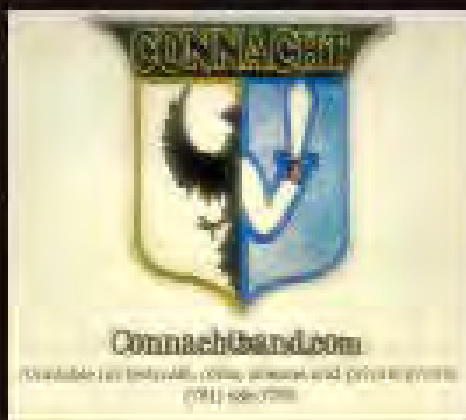
Our project is not just an archaeological field school but an experience of cultural immersion. The 2024 field season will consist of an intensive six weeks of training, starting on June 22 and running until Aug. 1. We take a multi-pronged approach to providing a solid training in the key stages of any research archaeological project. The busy weeks are also punctuated with lectures, presentations, community events, and field trips to neighboring sites and places of interest across Ireland's northwestern landscapes, which are among the most alluring and attractive in all of Ireland.

Best wishes,  
Rachel Brody, Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of History, Boston College

[discoversuckvalleyway.ie/suck-valley/heritage-culture/castles/ballintober-castle/35/](https://discoversuckvalleyway.ie/suck-valley/heritage-culture/castles/ballintober-castle/35/)



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