

# Boston Irish

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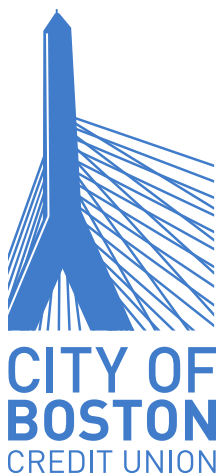
March 2021

BostonIrish.com



Boston City Hall, Winter 2021

*Original painting by Vincent Crotty*



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# The chatter: Is someone from Boston headed to the US Embassy in Dublin?

BY ED FORRY

BOSTON IRISH PUBLISHER

Boston is abuzz over prospects that the US Ambassadorship to Ireland might be filled by a hometown candidate.

While most recognize that President Biden has some more urgent issues on his mind, there's a consensus here that more than one Bostonian would be a good fit for the post.

Here are some names that are being mentioned: Former US Sen. Paul Kirk, former Boston Police Commissioner Kathy O'Toole, former Massachusetts lieutenant governor and current public affairs activist Tommy O'Neill, Democratic strategist and philanthropist John Cullinane, New England Council CEO Jim Brett, Harvard Kennedy School's Richard Cavanagh, and Bank of America vice chair Anne Finucane.

Massachusetts has generated talent for the top diplomatic post before: the



late Richard Egan, co-founder and former CEO of EMC, served as ambassador under President George W. Bush from

2001-2003; Jean Kennedy-Smith, sister of JFK, was the envoy under President Bill Clinton; and the late Margaret

Heckler, a former Congresswoman from Massachusetts, was posted in Dublin under Ronald Reagan.

Whoever is named to the post by the Biden-Harris administration will be asked to oversee construction of a new embassy complex in the Ballsbridge section of Dublin. This month, the US government agreed to purchase the property, which once was the site of the old Jury's Hotel. It is located across the street from the current embassy campus.

The Jury's was a familiar place to a generation of tourists from Boston and the United States, the site of the popular Jury's Cabaret, where Irish comedian Hal Roach entertained thousands of delighted American visitors with his unique brand of Irish humor (his catchphrase: "Write It Down!")

Pending final approvals, the construction is expected to take at least 36 months to complete.

**March 3, 5 p.m.**

**BIBA Member Showcase**

Boston Irish Business Association kicks off the St. Patrick's Day season with a Member Showcase-Companies present business updates and share how BIBA can add value to their efforts. With opening remarks by Consul General Laoise Moore, the event will finish with small group networking. Registration required: [bibaboston.org/](http://bibaboston.org/)

**March 5, 9-10 a.m.**

**First Friday Coffee with the Consulate**

The Consulate General of Ireland in Boston hosts a special St. Patrick's Day edition of their "Virtual" First Friday reception. Join in via Zoom for coffee & a preview of the events happening within the Irish and Irish-American community in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. RSVP: [bit.ly/37PBgnR](http://bit.ly/37PBgnR)

**March 5, 4:30 p.m.**

**The Irish Influence - Lenny Abrahamson**

Each week Boston College Professors Mike Cronin and Joe Nugent explore how the culture of Ireland has shaped and still shapes the story of America, through conversations with leading academics, officials, artists, and others. This week's guest is Oscar-nominated film and television director Lenny Abrahamson. RSVP/ more info: [bit.ly/2ZR1uC1/](http://bit.ly/2ZR1uC1/)

**March 11, 3 p.m.**

**Finnegans Wake - Made Easy!**

James Joyce's final work has a reputation as a difficult book to read. The Here Comes Everybody Players have been dramatizing excerpts from the book for many years. In this Zoom performance, hosted in partnership with the Consulate General of Ireland in Boston, they will bring out some of the humor, humanity and linguistic playfulness of the work with excerpts that will delight



## St. Patrick's Month Calendar 2021

both those both familiar & unfamiliar with it. RSVP: [bit.ly/300xbsV](http://bit.ly/300xbsV).

**March 12, 4:30 p.m.**

**The Irish Influence - Manchán Magan**

BC Professors Mike Cronin and Joe Nugent host writer and filmmaker Manchán Magan, who has made over 30 travel documentaries focusing on issues of world cultures and globalisation. He presented No Béarla, a documentary series about travelling around Ireland speaking only Irish. RSVP: [bit.ly/2MtiefG](http://bit.ly/2MtiefG).

**March 14, Noon**

**Maine's Virtual St Patrick's Parade**

The Irish American Club of Maine will host a virtual parade featuring participant video submissions, with three types of videos: The Crowd, The Marchers, and The Floats, Music & Dancing. Dress in your best Saint Patrick's Parade finery to make it fun and festive! Anyone can submit in one of the categories and we welcome a colorful display much like parades in the past. Info: [maineirish.com](http://maineirish.com).

**March 15, 6 p.m.**

**Irish American Partnership St. Patrick's Day Celebration**

The 26th annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration Featuring honored guest, award-winning actor Cillian Murphy. As Patron of the UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway, Cillian Murphy shares the Partnership's interest in empowering young people to actively engage in their communities. Info: [bit.ly/3aWC5wY/](http://bit.ly/3aWC5wY/)

**March 17, All Day**

**ICCNE St. Patrick's Day Celebration**

All are invited to the Irish Cultural Centre of New England St. Patrick's Day festivities. Corned Beef & Cabbage all day (takeout meals are available), and live Trad music also available to be streamed at home! Three sittings: 1:30, 3:45 & 6 p.m. Reservations are required. Email: [ICCPub@IrishCulture.org](mailto:ICCPub@IrishCulture.org). Music also online at [www.irishculture.org](http://www.irishculture.org).

**March 19, 4:30 p.m.**

**The Irish Influence - Ambassador Dan Mulhall**

BC Professors Mike Cronin and Joe Nugent host Ireland Ambassador Dan Mulhall. Since joining the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1978, he has served in numerous posts around the world including Ambassadorships to Malaysia, Germany, and most recently the United Kingdom. RSVP: [bit.ly/2NF0tKU](http://bit.ly/2NF0tKU).

**Note:** These listings from the Irish Consulate, may be incomplete due to press deadlines. More events will be announced as details are confirmed. Updates on Twitter (@IrelandBoston), or by subscription to the Consulate's newsletter, [dfa.ie/Boston](http://dfa.ie/Boston)

# You're Invited

## 2021 St. Patrick's Day Celebration

An evening of Irish Heritage, Culture, Music and more

**MARCH 15, 2021 | 6PM EST**  
FREE TO ATTEND

Join the Irish American Partnership on this most Irish of days, and celebrate St. Patrick's with musical performances, special guest appearances, and messages of thanks.

Register: [www.irishap.org/events](http://www.irishap.org/events)

As we find new ways to connect to the people and places we hold dear, the Partnership is honored to serve as your bridge back to Ireland.



FEATURED GUEST  
**CILLIAN MURPHY**

ACTOR & PATRON,  
UNESCO CHILD & FAMILY  
RESEARCH CENTRE AT THE  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF  
IRELAND, GALWAY



IRISH AMERICAN  
PARTNERSHIP



## A PROCESSION OF MANY HUES AND HURDLES

### History of St. Patrick's Day Parade shows it's a march of stops and starts

By PETER F. STEVENS  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

It's off — again. This March, the skirl of pipes, the beat of drums, and the tramp of thousands of feet will not echo above the streets of Southie. For the second straight year, Covid-19 has brought the traditional procession to a halt, preventing Boston from being awash in marching bands, military formations, and all the other trappings of the "Big Parade." Those trappings, of course, include dense crowds of all ages, an ocean of green beer, green plastic derbies, "Kiss Me, I'm Irish" badges, and faces — some, but far from all, reflecting various stages of inebriation and emblazoned with painted shamrocks or the Irish tricolor aside. World War I led to two cancellations of the parade; icy streets and snow stopped the event in 1920, 1956, 1978, and 1993.

Man-made controversies have also dogged the near-annual event. It is worth remembering, however, that what so many take for granted with regard to the parade was not ever so — even in recent years.

#### In the Beginning

For the Boston Irish, honoring — let alone celebrating — St. Patrick proved a long struggle. The first local stirrings to commemorate Ireland's patron saint came in 1737. On March 17 of that year, 26 men — the Charitable Irish Society — gathered in the heart of the Puritan city to hold a decidedly Improper Bostonian event. (There is evidence suggesting that the Charitable Irish held the first Saint Patrick's Day Parade a dozen years earlier, in 1724.) Perhaps the best-known Boston Irish symbol of the holiday is The Parade. Locally, the phrase means one thing — South Boston's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade.

It all started officially in 1901, but the procession that so many both enjoy and take for granted today did not get scheduled easily. After Irish-Catholic immigrants began landing here in ever-increasing numbers in the 1840s and 1850s and staked their claims to new lives in America, they soon were thumbing their collective nose at Yankee antipathy to any commemorations of St. Patrick's Day.

As early as 1841, without official sanction by government officials, more than 2,000 local Irish, after honoring their patron saint at a traditional Mass, had marched through the North End, their bands booming, their crowds singing.

By 1900, St. Patrick's Day parades organized by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which numbered some 8,000 members in Boston alone, had become the norm. Bands, organizations, refreshments — all were handled by the Hibernians' Entertainment Committee.

In mid-March 1901, the blare of



This scene captures the essence of the annual St. Patrick's Parade in South Boston — the skirl of pipes, the beating of drums in the middle of thousands of sidewalk watchers. Unfortunately, the pandemic has brought the traditional procession, which has had its ups and downs, to a halt for the second straight year, preventing Boston from being awash in marching bands, military formations, and all the other trappings of the "Big Parade."

Chris Lovett photo

bands and the vibrations of marchers' feet pealed above South Boston's streets. Banners awash with glittering shamrocks, harps, and images of the patron saint himself nodded in the gusts racing in from the Atlantic. The date, however, was March 18 — with good reason. The city's leaders had sanctioned South Boston's first official St. Patrick's/Evacuation Day Parade for the 18th because the 17th had fallen on Sunday and was subject to the Blue Laws. On that Monday morning, the procession commenced with Major George F. H. Murray the inaugural chief marshal for the parade in 1901.

In a nod to the burgeoning political power of the Boston Irish, the City of Boston served as the parade's sponsor until 1947, when Mayor James Michael Curley — "Himself" — found a way to make the event even "greener." He designated the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council as organizer, planner, and sponsor of the parade — and as arbiter of who got to march in it. The seeds of future political, social, and cultural strife had been sown and would erupt in later years on the literal and figurative route of the procession.

#### 'The Troubles' Come to the Parade

Some 25 years later, as "The Troubles" raged in Northern Ireland, many of the Boston Irish espoused their support of the Irish Republican Army, most notably in the form of the local chapter of the Irish Northern Aid Committee. Irish nationalists marched in an unofficial manner in a number of the South Boston St. Patrick's Parades, but in 1972, the nationalists' presence took a blatantly public turn. Representatives of the Northern Aid group marched with a coffin shrouded by the Irish Tricolor and held a sign proclaiming "England, Get Out of Ireland!" They all wore black armbands.

The March 20, 1972, *Boston Globe* ran a quote by Jim Dunn, of NORAI: "This is the sort of procession that should be taking place today. We don't think bands should be playing and people cheering while people are dying in Belfast and Derry."

#### Race and the Parade Route

With racial tensions rising in Boston (the school desegregation/busing era),

Massachusetts, and the entire nation in the 1960s and 1970s, the unrest seeped into and eventually exploded over the parade. In 1964, the NAACP decided to enter a float in the march, knowing how risky the gambit was but wanting to appeal to a perceived bond among Black people and the local Irish for social equality. On March 17, 1964, NAACP Executive Secretary Thomas I. Atkins explained to the *Globe*, "The purpose of our entry... and the message of the sign re the same — the basic similarity between the Irish fight for freedom and the freedom fight of the Negro for equality."

A number of parade watchers proved anything but welcoming. Rocks, bottles, and racial epithets poured down on the organization's float from an element that the NAACP deemed the "lunatic fringe."

Racial turmoil continued to beleaguer the parade through the busing crisis of the 1970s. With the controversial measure igniting rage in white and Black neighborhoods, tensions erupted at the 1974 parade, where Boston Mayor Kevin White was jeered and pelted with snowballs.

A year later, anti-busing floats elicited loud cheers. So high did tensions soar that in 1976, US Army Col. Forest Rittgers of Fort Devens declined to allow his units to march in the parade because his troops had endured volleys of hurled snowballs, firecrackers, and racist insults in the 1975 parade, according to the *Globe*. Even though 1976 was the 75th anniversary of the parade, the busing crisis reduced the usual throng to roughly half the event's usual numbers.

#### A Long Slog toward Equality

In 1992, the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council denied the application of the Irish American Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Group of Boston, or GLIB, to march in that year's parade. GLIB, winning a court order to march, did so. In 1994, when GLIB filed and won a sexual-discrimination suit against the parade's organizers, the Allied War Veterans responded by canceling the parade.

Eventually, the case wound its way to the US Supreme Court. In 1995, the justices ruled that the Allied War Veterans Council's right to free speech on religious grounds — their Roman Catholic faith — gave them the green light to ban gays from marching.

Time, like the parade, marched on. Over the ensuing 20 years, gay activists fought for the right to join the parade, with gay veterans leading the way. In March 2015, Boston Pride and Outvets were allowed to join the procession, and in response, Marty Walsh became the first Boston mayor to march in the parade in some two decades.

"With this year's parade," he told the media, "Boston is putting years of controversy behind us."

For further reading, see the book "South Boston on Parade," by Paul Christian.



# Mother and Baby Homes panel report lays out ‘dark, shameful chapter’ in 20th century Ireland

By LARRY DONNELLY  
BOSTON IRISH COLUMNIST

WICKLOW, Ireland – In January, this country was rocked by the publication of the final report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation, which runs to thousands of pages and tells the often harrowing stories of the unmarried mothers and their children who were effectively committed to the homes between 1922 and 1998. Most damningly, the report confirms that approximately 9,000 children died while living in the homes. It recommends that a state apology, redress, and information about birth parents all be granted to the survivors.

In its wake, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin said that the report “opens a window into a deeply misogynistic culture in Ireland,” sheds light on a “dark, difficult and shameful chapter,” and acknowledges that there had been “a completely warped attitude to sexuality and intimacy and that young mothers and their sons and daughters were forced to pay a terrible price for that dysfunction.” Meanwhile, another prominent politician, Richard Boyd Barrett, himself born into a mother and baby scheme, alleged that the report and the government’s response to it amounted to “a sham, an insult, and a whitewash.”

The recent revelation that the oral testimony of more than 500 witnesses to the commission had been destroyed has compounded the anguish and outrage of the survivors and their advocates. It is questionable if those people who were put through hell for no good reason will ever get the justice they richly deserve. And it is very difficult for those of us who remain observant Catholics to comprehend that the clergy we were taught to revere could have perpetrated such evil. In the 20th century, when our Church exerted near total control over Irish society, some of its deeds were unforgivable. Absolute power does corrupt absolutely. Saddening and sickening in equal measure.

## The Irish watched ‘angrily’ as Capitol was breached by a mob

It is a struggle to find the words to adequately capture the scenes that unfolded on Capitol Hill on January 6. Suffice it to say that it is with a deep sense of shock and shame that from afar I saw fellow Americans do damage to a physical structure and, in the process, seek to unravel our democratic institutions. Regrettably, I couldn’t help but think of how the insurrection of a criminal mob was playing right into the hands of those who loathe the United States. It surely did, yet there was a widespread sympathy and solidarity in Ireland. People watched it both closely and angrily on CNN and were relieved when the threat finally subsided, though not before 5 people lay dead.

Just as the November presidential



election made Dorchester’s John King a household name here, the day that will forever live in infamy created another Irish CNN sensation. This time, it was the network’s reporter, Donie O’Sullivan, a proud native of Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry. O’Sullivan’s reporting of events as they transpired was outstanding. He was cool and professional in an environment full of risk and his journalism garnered him plaudits from every direction. A subsequent interview with *The Irish Times*, in which he spoke candidly of the mental health issues that he has faced in the interest of helping others, is further testament to the quality of Donie’s (as he has become known to all) character.

On the flip side when it comes to character, the outcome of Donald Trump’s impeachment trial flowing from his role as the catalyst for the attack on the Capitol Building was no surprise. The general reaction here was one of disgust that so few Republicans were moved – either by the capable House managers or the dismal Trump defense team. That said, I was surprised that Sen. Cassidy of Louisiana and the retiring Sen. Burr of North Carolina deserted their erstwhile ally and voted to convict.

I am constantly asked what’s next for the 45th POTUS? I don’t have an answer. I do know that there is typically nothing deadlier than yesterday’s politician. Trump had looked set to buck that truism. But January 6 and the fallout, particularly his ban from social media platforms, make it harder to envisage his playing the prominent role he once looked certain to assume. “The Donald” has proven me wrong before, however.

## Hurrahs ring out across Connemara as Mayo’s Joe taps Galway’s Marty

The nomination of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh to be Secretary of Labor in the Biden/Harris administration was greeted enthusiastically throughout Ireland and was celebrated joyously in Connemara, his parents’ home turf. As a long-time union member who overcame adversity and has toiled

**The report “opens a window into a deeply misogynistic culture in Ireland,” sheds light on a “dark, difficult and shameful chapter,” and acknowledges that there had been “a completely warped attitude to sexuality and intimacy and that young mothers and their sons and daughters were forced to pay a terrible price for that dysfunction.”**

**- An Taoiseach Micheál Martin**

hard for everything he achieved in life, Walsh is an inspired choice. In an America where income inequality and its consequences are omnipresent and where livelihoods have been decimated by Covid-19, he has his work cut out for him. (As an aside, his departure from Boston sets up what should be a fascinating race to succeed him. Buckle up, #bospoli junkies!).

All of us with connections to the west of Ireland were heartened as President Biden, who has family roots in Ballina, Co. Mayo, indirectly referenced the storied rivalry between Galway and Mayo when he announced Walsh’s selection. This is arguably the most Irish presidential administration in American history and it presents tremendous opportunities for all of us committed to deepening a relationship that is already the envy of the rest of that world.

In that context, it is a pity that the pandemic prevents Micheál Martin from getting to the White House this month and that Ireland can’t avail of the endless possibilities a bilateral get-together on March 17 offers. At the virtual meeting that will take its place, I hope the Taoiseach isn’t shy about asserting that the Irish intend to be back on Pennsylvania Avenue in 2022 and that the green carpet is ready anytime Joe Biden wants to come “home.”

## February brings the Brrrrrrs, the pandemic brings the blues

There are very few occasions on which I have been genuinely freezing cold during two decades in Ireland. During February in County Wicklow, there was a week of windy, icy, snowy, frigid weather that necessitated wearing the heavy winter coat that seldom gets taken out and forced me to abandon several of the multiple long walks I use to break up my days of homeschooling Larry Óg and remote working, as well as to get a bit of badly needed exercise. Experiencing Boston-like chills made the ongoing lockdown more exasperating.

Following an explosion in the numbers of persons acquiring and sadly dying from coronavirus when Ireland eased restrictions in the run-up to Christmas, the gates were swiftly shut again as a matter of necessity. This is the third full-scale lockdown and many

people, me included, are finding this one harder than the first two. My son hasn’t been in school since the 22nd of December. I haven’t been in a pub or restaurant or hit a golf ball in 2021. Of course, that’s an extremely selfish perspective in light of what others are going through, but I am jealous hearing my pals back in Boston making plans to go for lunch or a few beers.

Here’s hoping we get things under control as soon as possible and we can get some semblance of normality back once and for all – without yo-yoing between opening and closing. Unfortunately, the message from government and the medical experts is that this is far from imminent.

## Oh for the days when a ‘ball and a beer’ were affordable

On a lighter note, speaking of eating and drinking out in and around the city of my birth, I have noticed an astronomical increase in price over the course of a few short years. In those heady days when we in Ireland or visiting tourists could actually go out and enjoy ourselves, I would defy anyone to show me evidence that a night of eating and drinking in Galway City, oft-labelled expensive, approaches the costs of doing similar in the Boston area. It’s now more than \$5 for a bottle of Budweiser, before tip, in many suburban establishments. Ten dollar pints of Guinness are common downtown. And even John Stenson’s venerable and very affordable Éire Pub in Dorchester’s Adams Corner isn’t immune to the trend. Last week on Twitter, I noticed a “special” for two hot dogs and chips for \$6. While that and other tasty treats sounded fantastic to someone who’s homesick, what happened to the dollar dogs?!

I know six bucks isn’t a lot. Plus, it’s a long distance from the most egregious examples I could point to. I also recognize that the public health crisis has severely impacted bars and restaurants and that operating expenses are huge. But I would think that bargains might be the best way to entice wary customers to get back out and to spend. A night out shouldn’t be the preserve of high income earners.

At any rate, what I wouldn’t give to be a customer for a few days at my favorite haunts in town, in Dorchester or in Quincy, catching up with friends and complaining about what has changed and keeps changing since I’ve been away from my old stomping grounds, especially the skyrocketing prices. God knows when that will be... Happy St. Patrick’s Day!

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



# It won't be easy, but make no mistake: The unification of Ireland will happen

*"The attraction of the possible is in the end more powerful than that of the unattainable" – Patrick Kavanagh*

BY TIM KIRK  
BOSTON IRISH COLUMNIST

A united Ireland. Irish unity. A Nation Once Again. Notions that have animated Irish and the Irish diaspora for generations evoke both excitement and anxiety at what their pursuit might unleash and what the consequences of their achievement might entail.

There is growing momentum that a united Ireland is not just possible but inevitable in the post-Brexit world. The old Harry Truman chestnut that "it's amazing what you can accomplish in politics if you don't care who gets the credit" could be modified slightly in this case because all of the main political parties in Ireland deserve credit. Unity will require both patience and boldness and will not be achieved through armed action but by democratic means for utilitarian reasons.

The UK's withdrawal from the EU has already disrupted the economy and every other element of society in Northern Ireland. From reduced grocery store supplies to the mandatory quarantining of pets to visiting Great Britain, life has become more complicated. This will likely get worse as the various grace periods end, the excuse of the Covid crisis disappears, and the full disaster of Brexit plays out.

## Three Recent Events in Ireland During Covid, and After Brexit

- In late December 2020, critical cases of Covid in Northern Irish Intensive Care Units overwhelmed several hospitals. Patients who should have been in ICU beds were treated in parked ambulances. In response, the Republic of Ireland sent ambulances and crews of paramedics from the Republic across the border to work alongside their Northern Ireland counterparts.

- In January as the first effects of Brexit began to hurt UK citizens, Northern Irish university students were stunned when Boris Johnson cut the Erasmus study abroad program from the budget. Johnson had promised to stay in Erasmus just days before, but in announcing the UK's exit, he boastfully promised to introduce a 'new, better, world-beating study abroad program' for UK citizens. A broken promise mixed with bumptious delusion is Johnson's stock in trade. In response, the Republic of Ireland's Education Minister, Simon Harris, guaranteed that any Northern Irish student who wished to continue in the program would have the costs paid by the Republic of Ireland.

- In early February the All-Island Cancer Consortium (AICC), a north-south initiative that began in 1999 growing out of the Good Friday Agreement, convened a virtual meeting to signal a



Mary Lou McDonald acknowledges the applause of delegates after she was elected as Sinn Féin's president at the party's special conference at the RDS in Dublin on Feb. 10, 2017.

Niall Carson photo

redoubling of efforts to defeat cancer. The AICC involves Queen's University Belfast, Trinity, UCD, the US National Cancer Institute, and a host of public/private sector partners across the island of Ireland. In a testament to humanity's spirit and ingenuity when put to positive purpose, the AICC explained that the response to the Covid crisis has actually improved some elements of cancer research. For example, the fact of restricted movement, especially for at-risk patients, has led to fast-tracked approval for mailing medications to clinical trial participants and to the broader use of telemedicine which has accelerated clinical trials.

These affirmative acts of kindness as well as basic competence by government and civic organizations spread goodwill and trust on the Island of Ireland. Cooperative efforts are especially important now as the predicted impacts of Brexit begin to damage the people, economy, and society of Northern Ireland. Hard-line unionists who supported Brexit now blame Boris Johnson for not negotiating a better version of the Northern Ireland Protocol. In turn, Johnson blames the EU or minimizes the very real issues as 'teething pains.'

## Bottom Line on Border Misstep: The Problem is Brexit Itself

In early February, during a row over Covid vaccine supplies, the EU made a blunder by threatening to close the border by invoking Article 16 of the Northern Ireland protocol, which allows the EU or UK to unilaterally suspend aspects of its operations if either side considers that aspect to be causing "economic, societal or environmental difficulties." The misstep was quickly corrected, but loyalist threats to EU customs officers closed customs facilities temporarily and Johnson, the opportunist, was quick to attempt to

assign all of the Brexit issues on this mistake. But, of course, that is nonsense. The problem is Brexit itself.

Trade routes are already being reorganized directly to the continent to avoid Brexit difficulties. Large ferries from the Stena Line and Brittany Ferries are being reassigned from shipping lanes from Ireland to Europe over the UK land bridge in favor of shipments directly from Ireland to French ports in Roscoff, Dunkirk, and Calais to avoid impediments. In the short term Northern Irish retailers, manufacturers, and farmers will tolerate delays to maintain trading arrangements with Great Britain. After all, 80 percent of trade to and from Northern Ireland is currently with Britain, but over time this may shift significantly and the purpose of Northern Ireland's membership in the UK will be brought further into question. Brexit could be the "ghastly mistake" that Eamon De Valera admitted to sometimes hoping England would commit.

Brexit and Covid have made the UK weaker than ever. The Scottish Nationalist Party is pushing for a new independence referendum and even the Wales movement is growing. In late January the former UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, wrote: "By unleashing English nationalism, Brexit has made the future of the UK the central political issue of the coming decade. Northern Ireland is already heading for the exit door."

## Does Brexit Fortell Fulfillment of the Dream of Irish Unity?

One hundred years ago, Ireland became the first successful independence movement by a nation controlled by the victors of World War I. Besides Ireland, US President Woodrow Wilson's push for self-determination by small nations was applied only inside the empires that had lost the war. Ireland's was not a com-

plete victory, however, as the nation was partitioned with six counties in the north retaining their status as members of the UK along sectarian lines. At the time, one of the main unionist arguments for partition was that unionists wanted to stay integrated with the broader world while the Irish Free State was intent on creating an inward-looking, isolationist, agrarian, Celtic utopia.

Today, those roles have been reversed. The Republic of Ireland has taken its seat on the UN Security Council this session; it has arisen as a "tiny diplomatic superpower"; and it has seen its global facing economy, even during the pandemic, grow at 3.5 percent, powered by the tech and pharma markets. During the same period, the UK has contracted by 9.5 percent (The Guardian) due to the negative double whammy of the pandemic and Brexit.

The unintended contributors to the conditions for Irish unity are the rise of English nationalism and Boris Johnson himself. Former Exchequer Osborne goes on to note that the latest polling shows that only 31 percent of the English people would care if Northern Ireland left the UK. Most would be happy to say good riddance to a drain of their resources.

The moral and material support of the USA and the EU will be crucial to the success of this project. Joe Biden gives all parties confidence that the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) will be upheld and that the UK will fulfill its obligations while France and Germany's support before, during, and after Brexit bode well for Irish reunification.

## Three Major Parties Have Advanced Favorable Prospects for Irish Unity

As 2021 begins, the prospects and conditions for Irish unity are as favorable as they have ever been. The reasons are more practical than poetic, and all of the major parties in Ireland deserve credit for their contributions to a united nation. There is an old yarn noting that when a third person joins a political party in Ireland, the subject of their first meeting is "the split." The origins of the three main parties in Ireland are intertwined, and space does not permit addressing their complex histories. Rather, I will highlight several lesser-known contributions from recent Irish history by the main parties that have helped create the conditions for unity.

## Fianna Fail

In 1990, the rotating role of President of the EU commission fell to Ireland, specifically to Charlie Haughey, the charismatic Fianna Fail Leader and Taoiseach. The issue of German reunification was top of the agenda that year after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The two most powerful EU countries were unenthusiastic about the



proposal. France's memories of three disastrous wars between 1871 and 1945 made it uneasy about a united Germany. Georges Clemenceau, who fought in 1871 and led France in WWI, left strict instructions that when he died (1929), his coffin was to be buried standing up and facing east, forever a sentinel against German aggression. Margaret Thatcher saw a united Germany becoming the dominant force in Europe and was opposed. But Haughey took bold action with his one-year leading the EU council, convening a conference of EU leaders in Ireland to promote Germany's cause and to plan the practicalities of German reunification. Helmut Kohl considered Irish support crucial, saying at the time, "You have always supported the idea of German unity. We will never forget that."

### Fine Gael

In 2016, after the shocking Brexit referendum victory, Irish unity was discussed widely as a possible outcome. The next year, Fine Gael Taoiseach Enda Kenny secured unanimous support from the EU to fast track "automatic" EU membership for Northern Ireland - "if Irish unity occurred at some stage in the future." If a border poll does occur and Irish unity is confirmed, Northern Ireland's acceptance into Europe is assured. Importantly, this move was not a call for an immediate border poll that might have threatened Unionists.

This is a huge advantage compared to Scotland. Like Northern Ireland, Scotland voted to remain in the EU but was removed from the Union by Brexit. Scotland's independence movement has been re-energized by the Brexit outcome with proponents arguing that the 2014 independence referendum was defeated because Scots were told that independence would mean leaving the EU.

Now the situation has reversed itself: Voting to leave the UK would give Scotland the chance to rejoin the EU. There are some ifs: If the Scottish Nationalist Party wins in May, if the independence referendum is called by Johnson, and if it is successful, Scotland could then start to apply for EU membership.



Beryl McCraoney Slevin, originally from California, reacts as residents of Ballina, Ireland, begin celebrations in the ancestral home of Joe Biden in anticipation of the results of the US election on Nov. 7, 2020. *Brian Lawless photo*

### Sinn Fein

Modern Sinn Fein's mission and purpose is to achieve Irish unity. It has held that banner high for its entire existence, defending and advocating for the rights of their supporters in Northern Ireland. The party deserves credit for keeping the goal of a united Ireland alive, for becoming a constitutional party in the early '90s in embracing democratic politics as the means to achieve its aims, and for building the only all-island political party, its recent success driven as much by its call for more affordable housing as an appeal to patriotism. Sinn Fein under its president, Mary Lou McDonald, wants the planning to start now. It has also been clear in stating that Sinn Fein is not the solitary custodian of the aspiration for Irish unity, it is an issue for all of Ireland's main parties.

### Challenges for Unification

The UK spends 11 billion euros a year in subsidies to keep its six-county statelet on the Island of Ireland running. The practical challenges for blending the two jurisdictions will be considerable. Integrating the health and education systems, pensions, and currency stability are a few among many.

The other major challenges are ideological and political. Northern Ireland was born in part by the notion

that partitioning majority Protestant counties would protect the interests of the Protestant minority, but in practice, it compounded the problem by creating minorities in two jurisdictions. Even the most sympathetic observer of Unionism would be hard pressed to evaluate the last 100 years of partition as a success at any level. This year, some diehard unionists are attempting to "celebrate" the centenary but the effort seems half-hearted at best.

Some unionists will always paint their curbstones red, white, and blue, fly Union flags over their homes, and reject a united Ireland. One need look no further than the US Capitol insurrectionists on Jan. 6 with their Confederate flags to know that some ideas live on, nourished by lies and hatred, no matter how bankrupt.

Ironically, the most extreme elements of unionism - those that reject marriage equality and a woman's right to choose - are most aligned with the Catholic Church on social issues. Differences will remain, but the five parties in Northern Ireland would be wise to heed President Biden's plea to the American people in his inaugural: "Hear one another. See one another. Show respect to one another. Politics need not be a raging fire destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war."

### True Unity

A clear majority of Northern Ireland wants to stay inside the EU to allow themselves and their children the opportunity to study, work, and travel without restriction in the EU, but membership alone is not enough to unite Ireland.

To truly unite Ireland, a new shared mission and purpose must be envisioned. A new Ireland could be united by the common goals of creating an inclusive society where the Irish people flourish with world class healthcare and education, green energy and transportation infrastructure, shared prosperity, healthy sustainable food production, and secure retirement. This new Ireland would continue to be a mecca for writers, artists, musicians, actors, historians, as well as engineers, scientists, researchers. In essence, it would be a country where anyone from anywhere could thrive. A united Ireland would serve as an example that peace is not just possible, it is transformative, and that tolerance, while certainly better than conflict, is only a step toward love. Ireland's overcoming of its own painful history of colonial oppression and the long struggle for freedom and unity can inspire other peoples, including the United States, as they deal with post-conflict societies.

Irish political parties will need to be big-hearted enough to give each other credit, and nimble enough to build coalitions in a new political landscape. There is every reason for confidence; modern Irish politics can be contentious but are generally not practiced with malice. If Nelson Mandela could reach out to the Orange Afrikaners who imprisoned him, and if France and Germany can cooperate after a century of mutual annihilation, surely a majority of people in Northern Ireland can vote to join the rest of the island's people to work together for a new future of shared purpose.

It would be naive to think that this will be easy and without painful setbacks. The financial support from the UK would need to be extended by a transition period, or replaced by other negotiated means, like reparations for past harm. But make no mistake Irish Unity is coming.



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Lloyd-O'Sullivan Wealth Management Team

**Kenneth Lloyd**

AIF, LUTCF, CLTC, Senior Partner  
klloyd@financialguide.com

**Brian W. O'Sullivan**

CFP, ChFC, CLU, Senior Partner  
bosullivan@financialguide.com

234 Copeland Street, Unit 225 | Quincy, MA 02169 | Office: 617-479-0075 | Fax: 617-479-0071

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# Scoping out the recovery with Tourism Ireland

By Ed Forry

In late January, officials of Tourism Ireland hosted a wide-ranging online conversation about what's happening in Ireland, even as the hard-hit hospitality and travel sector there continues to hemorrhage after twelve months of a complete shutdown due to the pandemic.

The organization's CEO, Niall Gibbons, spoke from his office in Dublin, and he was joined by Alison Metcalf, agency EVP for North America in New York, and RTE presenter and commentator Marty Morrissey in a one hour reach-out to more than 50 American and Canadian Irish media and cultural representatives.

Highlights from the session included the following information:

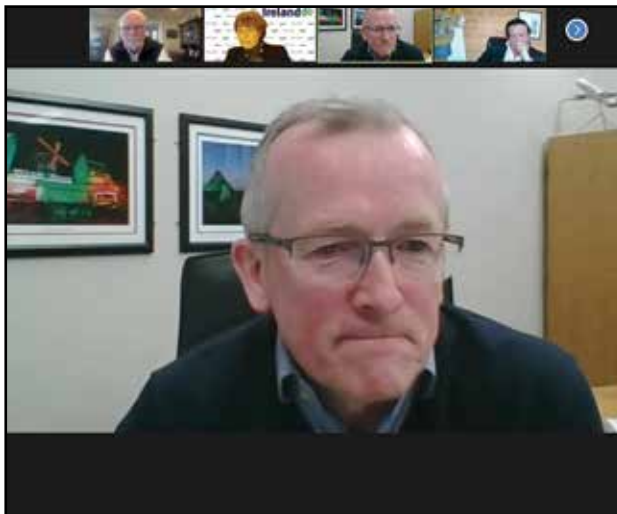
- Some 325,000 workers in the Irish tourism and hospitality sectors have been unable to work for a full year due to the shutdown. The industry usually employs 10 percent of the island's workforce.
- With the failure of budget airline Norwegian Air (NAI), transatlantic service from Cork has ended, and is not likely to be resume anytime soon
- Surveys reveal a huge pent-up demand by those wanting to return to Ireland to re-connect with friends and family.
- The agency is hoping that a small recovery will take place in late summer or fall this year, but full recovery of the industry is not expected until at least 2022.

...

"I remember in 2013, when Taoiseach Enda Kenny launched 'The Gathering,' I wondered if we would ever see one million visitors from North America spending a billion dollars," Gibbons said. "But by the time we got to 2019, it was actually two million visitors spending \$2 billion. And what happened was that Great Britain, which had traditionally been our biggest market, was completely eclipsed by this whole North American wave. And it has been a phenomenal success story; it really has.

"I scratched my head all the time because no one could ever have foreseen that. I used to always start my speeches on the first of January saying, 'The clock has gone back to zero and we have to do it all again,' and people used to laugh. Now, the clock really has gone back; it went back to zero on the 13th of March last year. And it has been at zero since. So here we are again. And we just have to dig deep and find resilience."

Gibbons said that the coronavirus has altered Tourism Ireland's mindset about visitors' travel plans. "I put the call out for when the time is right to come home. And what we've been doing is really important; we're listening to our customers. We've conducted thousands of interviews around the world and asked people when they might travel again, where might they go, and what are they looking for? People are saying it is the time to get back to Ireland. There's pent-up



Tourism Ireland CEO Niall Gibbons explains plans to revive the hospitality and tourism sectors during a January Zoom conference that included Alison Metcalf, the agency's executive VP for North America in New York.



demand there, no question about it. They want to go back to destinations that are familiar.

"If I were having this conversation with you two years ago, people would have been looking for new destinations, places that they could brag about to their friends; now, that's what people have been telling us. They want to get back to visit their friends and family. They're looking for the familiar now. And I think that's where markets like North America and, you know, talking to an audience like you, it's going to be so important that we can connect with those people who want to come home.

"The second thing we've been looking at is connectivity, because having the demand is great, but if you can't get here, it's academic - and air access is a key component of the Tourism Ireland strategy, never more so in North America where we used to only have seven gateways, the traditional ones like New York, Boston, Chicago, which we saw expanded into Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Charlotte, and over the last number of years, into places like Dallas, San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles.

And we've been talking with the airlines and airports over the last while to make sure they are all going to come back to Ireland and come back at the same or

greater volume than they did before. I don't think it will be as big in the initial instance as it was, but we are working very hard in that space because it's that critical factor for people trying to get home. It then is supporting our industry here at home.

"The Irish tourism industry has a very small number of big players like Aer Lingus and Ryanair and Irish Ferries, but it's actually 20,000 plus small enterprises, mom-and-pop enterprises - the caddies on the golf courses, the guys that bring people out fishing, or provide the taxi services, the concierge services. There are almost 325,000 people who work in our industry and they're anxious to get back oin the job.

So there are the three big things for us: how the consumer feels, how do they get here, and how we support our industry to connect with the marketplace. And I think the diaspora, our family of 70 million people around the world, is going to be a cornerstone of the economic recovery. I'm very confident.

"We'd like to think that things would start recovering in quarter three this year. And a lot of that's going to come down to two things: first, the speed and success of the vaccine rollout, and secondly, how fast air connectivity gets reestablished. I've no doubt when those two things do get going, that it will start to flow again."

Currently, the only Boston flights to Ireland land in Dublin; the popular routes to Shannon were cancelled almost a full year ago. Gibbons was asked about current airline connections.

"The situation is very fluid at the moment," he said. "I was talking with Aer Lingus and Delta the other day, and Delta has suspended service for this summer, but I hope it will come back in 2022. Aer Lingus has expanded its fleets; they've got five new planes coming in and they have applied for landing rights in Manchester for a transatlantic service.

"What's happening there is that they're filling a gap that has been created by the collapse of Virgin Atlantic. Aer Lingus is still very committed to Ireland. I have spoken to some of their board members, and they're very keen to come back this summer, but it's unlikely to be the same as what it was, and we're really looking hopefully to a bigger season in 2022.

"Norwegian is another airline that's in big, big trouble. It looks like at least [there'll be] some sort of bailout assistance from the Norwegian government. And I'm not sure we'll see that Cork service coming back; there's no line of sight right now in relation to a transatlantic service from Cork. I think the priorities will be restoring into Dublin and Shannon in the first instance, and Cork would come after that."

Gibbons says he remains hopeful, and offers a simple message: "We can't wait to see you. That's something that I put out on social media over here, and it's very interesting. Sometimes the Irish can be very cynical about their own campaigns, but it's funny: That simple message, 'We Can't Wait to See You Again!' did strike home."

## Giddens headlines free virtual holiday concert from Limerick

By Reporter Staff

The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick will present a free virtual St. Patrick's Day concert of music, song and dance in University Concert Hall on the holiday that will see performers from all over the world coming together, including Grammy award winner Rhiannon Giddens, at right, an American musician, who won 'Best Traditional Folk Album' as part of the ground-breaking ensemble Carolina Chocolate Drops at the 2011 Grammys.

She continues to have huge success, with her more recent solo endeavours winning 'Best Album of the Year' at the International Folk Music Festival in 2016 and 2018, while she also named BBC 2 Folk Singer of the Year in 2016.

The concert will also feature the spectacular Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre, which will premiere an innovative triple aerial hoop system with their new "Handful of Dreams."

The event is a partnership between UL Global, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University Concert Hall and Limerick Culture and Arts Office, Limerick City and County Council.

The concert will be available to view at 8 p.m. EST on March 17. For more information and link to the concert on the Irish World Academy website, visit [irishworldacademy.ie](http://irishworldacademy.ie).



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**Mary C. Forry, President (1983-2004)**

**Edward W. Forry, Publisher**

**Thomas F. Mulvoy Jr., Managing Editor**

**William P. Forry, Editor**

**Peter F. Stevens, Contributing Editor**

**News Room: (617) 436-1222**

**Ads : (617) 436-1222**

**Fax: (617) 825-5516 [news@bostonirish.com](mailto:news@bostonirish.com)**

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1737



2021

# The Charitable Irish Society

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While the Society is not gathering this year for its traditional Anniversary Dinner, we trust you will be celebrating the Feast of Saint Patrick in your own special and safe way!

With warmest best wishes to all,

The President and Board of Directors of the  
Charitable Irish Society





# March in Ireland is all about a saint named Patrick

By JUDY ENRIGHT  
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

Welcome to March, the month to celebrate St. Patrick and everything Irish. There are so many stories about the good saint and as many questions as to whether there was just one Patrick or many who traveled around to spread Christianity. If there was only one, he was very well-traveled and, like St. Bridgid, he managed to get around exceedingly well in an era when there were no cars, trains, or other such means of transportation.

## THE SAINT

The St. Patrick who is celebrated this month was reportedly born in Britain around 400 AD. He was captured by bandits and taken to Ireland as a slave when he was 15. He escaped captivity and ultimately returned to Ireland to convert the pagans.

Patrick is said to have died on March 17 and buried in the graveyard beside Down Cathedral in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland. Although he is credited with driving snakes from Ireland while fasting atop Croagh Patrick in Co. Mayo, it is said that there never were any snakes in Ireland. Snakes were simply a symbol used for the conversion of pagans and the expulsion of Satan from the island.

If you would like to learn more about St. Patrick, his life and journeys, you might start at the St. Patrick Centre in Downpatrick that is billed as "the only permanent exhibition in the world that tells the story of Ireland's patron saint." The Centre is just a two-hour drive north of Dublin and about half an hour from Belfast. For details, visit [saintpatrickcentre.com](http://saintpatrickcentre.com)

The Centre has an interpretive exhibit, art gallery, restaurant, and an excellent craft and gift shop with unusual Irish-made gifts. The Centre also has an extensive outreach program - Friends of St. Patrick - with chapters all over, including Pittsburgh and Milwaukee among others in the US.

## ST. PATRICK'S TRAIL

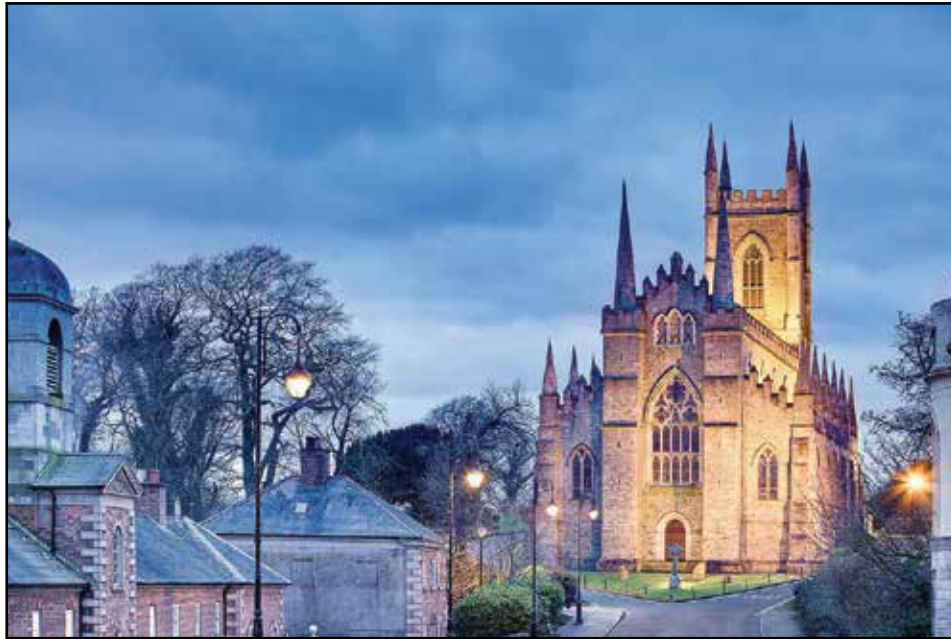
Northern Ireland is such a beautiful and friendly land and any time of year is a good time to travel there and follow St. Patrick's Trail.

If you start in Armagh, you can follow a 92-mile signposted driving route all the way to Bangor. There are many places of interest along the way such as St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Armagh County Museum and public library, the Cistercian Monastery (Bagenal's Castle) in Newry, and other attractions nearby, including the Dromore High Cross and Cathedral; Bangor Abbey and North Down Museum in Bangor; and St. Patrick's Triann Visitor Centre, which has three major exhibits including The Land of Lilliput, based on Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

To learn more, visit: [discovernorthernireland.com](http://discovernorthernireland.com)

## ST. PATRICK'S FESTIVAL

Yes, there will indeed be a very different March 17 experience in Ireland because of Covid-19. The annual holiday festivities in Ireland will be virtual this



Down Cathedral in Downpatrick, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, is where St. Patrick is said to be buried. Photo courtesy of St. Patrick Centre, Downpatrick. Blessing of the grave of St. Patrick at Down Cathedral in Downpatrick, Co. Down. Photo courtesy Dr. Tim Campbell, director, St. Patrick Centre, Co. Down



year and can be accessed from your living room with the national St. Patrick's Day Festival 2021 moving online, bringing color, culture, and pageantry into homes around the world over six days and nights.

The festivities will be presented through SPF TV, a St. Patrick's Festival TV Channel, at [stpatricksfestival.ie](http://stpatricksfestival.ie), and will be accessible around the world. Assorted events, created by artists, musicians, performers, arts and live event workers, as well as community organizations across Ireland, will be on SPF TV during the week-long run.

Details on St. Patrick's Festival 2021, SPF TV, and RTÉ/SPF Virtual Parade will be announced soon. Sign up for news and updates at [stpatricksfestival.ie](http://stpatricksfestival.ie).

## FAMILY DAY

There was a day when St. Patrick's observances in the US far out-celebrated anything the staid Irish did on that special day. In Ireland, March 17 was primarily a family day that included church, lunch with the family in a local hotel or pub, and then home. The most obvious display of Irishness we saw in Ireland when we were there on March 17 was a live shamrock pinned to a coat. The only "KissMme, I'm Irish" buttons and emerald green garb were worn by tourists.

But that was then, and this is now. If you are lucky enough to be in Ireland in March, you will no doubt find many Covid-free and safe ways to celebrate the saint and his annual day.

## LEENANE FESTIVALS

Sadly, the wonderful Connemara April/May walking festivals in beautiful Leenane, Co. Galway at the head of Killary Harbor have been cancelled this year because of the pandemic.

At a past event during that festival, there was a fascinating Herb Walk along the Famine Trail presented by a Galway GP & herbalist who pointed out what grows along the roadside and what herbs people used during the famine to survive.

As with events elsewhere during this Covid crisis, all community activities normally conducted in the Leenane area have been deferred until further notice.

The community has urged older people - and others who are vulnerable - to heed the advice of the Government and reduce social contact. The community has also asked people who are well to please telephone older or vulnerable neighbors and collect groceries, fuel, medicines, etc. to limit their need to go out and also stay in touch with those who are self-isolating and arrange to drop supplies at their door.

There are many older, single people who live in isolation in the hills around Leenane and it's so nice to know that the community is looking out for them. Services such as Meals on Wheels and other essential services will continue to be provided and the website notes that arrangements can be made to have meals dropped at the door if the person is self-isolating or doesn't want to risk contact with others.

Alone, an organization for older people, also has a Covid-19 helpline that people can call from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. with any concerns.

When we're able to travel again and you're in Leenane, be sure to stop by the Sheep and Wool Museum. It's an interesting place with an excellent gift shop and homemade luncheon fare like quiche, soups and yummy desserts.

For more information, visit [leenanevillage.com](http://leenanevillage.com)

## TRAVEL PLANS

We saw a photo on Facebook in mid-February of blooms starting to burst forth on trees and bushes in an Irish garden. A friend of the woman who posted the photo said Snowdrops were blooming in his yard, too. Ireland's spring is ahead of ours here in New England, and April and May are such a perfect time to visit.

Enjoy your trip to Ireland whenever you go and don't forget to check with your travel agent or check the internet for the very best travel specials. Tourism Ireland's website - [discoverireland.com](http://discoverireland.com) - is a great source of information for travelers and many details about different areas, activities, festivals, and more.

When you're in Ireland, be sure to stop by the Failte Ireland tourist board offices (marked with a big green shamrock) for the latest happenings, to secure accommodation, and to learn about the area where you'll be traveling.

Check out the Aer Lingus website and other international carriers, too, for air and ground deals. Above all, have a very happy St. Patrick's Day wherever you choose to celebrate.



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## Clara Casey, a Rian J-1 exchange visitor, shares her experience amid a pandemic

I am from County Clare in Ireland and I studied Biotechnology at the National University of Ireland Galway. I applied for the J-1 visa sponsorship with the Rian Immigrant Center on St. Stephens Day, 2019. The process moved forward without delay and within six weeks I was on my way to the United States with my visa in hand.

I arrived in the US last February with my bachelor's degree, so my aim was to get into the Biotech or Pharma industries. A few weeks into my J-1, however, Covid arrived and New York City went into lockdown, and the entire world quickly fell into a pandemic. I had to make the decision whether I wanted to stay or not, and the Irish Government was recommending that all Irish citizens on short term visas immediately return home.

Rian Immigrant Center was great in keeping us informed of these travel advisories, its Resource & Support Services contacts, and, of course, its internship placement support. Although worried, I carefully considered my options and decided that I would stay in the US

and try my best to make the most of my opportunity. I put all my efforts into job hunting but was immediately faced with another adversary - most of the companies that I was interested in were operating on indefinite hiring freezes because of the pandemic.

Thankfully, the Learning Exchange Programs team was determined to continue to help find internships for the few J-1 exchange visitors who had decided to stay in the US, but they had not yet secured positions. The programs held Zoom workshops and virtual networking events to help us further our efforts. They put us in contact with Rian volunteers in NYC who dedicated hours on end to helping us to get interviews and secure jobs.

One such volunteer, Patrick McCrossan, provided me with one of the most important nuggets of advice that I think all future J-1ers should take to heart. He showed me how I could search on LinkedIn for people under the terms "Ireland" "NUIG" "Science" and NYC." I began reaching out to the hundreds of people on the list that came up, and I

was astonished by the response that I received. I had spent months applying for jobs on job sites to no avail, but all these people with connections to Ireland were delighted to lend a helping hand. Many people set up calls and sent my resume to people they knew. It was in this way that I landed the position where I currently work, in Mount Sinai, a highly esteemed hospital in NYC and one of the top hospitals in the US.

Despite the restrictions in place due to the pandemic, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to take road trips to Maine, Massachusetts, and Tennessee. The weather in NYC allowed for outdoor dining during the pandemic, so I enjoyed many evenings out in New York's restaurants and bars with friends.

And with easy access to the beaches on the subway, I made sure to get the most of the summer sun.

The two main things that I missed out on during my year in NYC were sporting events and shows on

Broadway. These were mostly postponed due to the pandemic.



Clara Casey enjoying New York City

Although the year was not what I expected, I really did have one of the best years of my life living in New York City and doing invaluable neuroscience research on Alzheimer's disease and bipolar disorder in Mount Sinai. My J-1 experience has afforded me endless opportunities for personal growth, opportunities, and success.

## Answer truthfully, fully on all immigration forms

**Q.** I'm applying for legal permanent residence in the US, based on my marriage to a US citizen. I'm undocumented, and

I've been working here for several years without authorization from the immigration authorities. I see that the forms involved in

the process for getting a green card include questions about my employment history as far back as five years ago. I'm concerned that my application will be denied if I list my jobs in the US. What should I do?

**A.** Quite simply, you need to tell the truth in response to all the questions on the forms filed with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This means not just making true statements; it also means not omitting facts when asked for them.

Some applicants are tempted to say that they have been unemployed for their entire time in the US or to simply leave blanks where job information is sought. Likewise, some applicants think that they can get away with denying past involvement with the criminal justice system in the US or abroad or with omitting reference to past entries into the US or past marriages, for example.

This belief is often based on rumors or hearsay about some acquaintance who allegedly got away with this in the past. Applicants need to realize that the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI run criminal background checks on applicants that reach records worldwide. Plus, US arrival and departure records are held in a computerized database and are easily retrievable by immigration officers.

Finally, the interviews for adjustment of status applicants are conducted by experienced USCIS officers who are adept at detecting falsehoods in applications.

There are potentially two major consequences when certain false statements or omissions are detected: (1) The immigration benefit sought could be denied, and the applicant will risk deportation; and (2) making a false statement or omitting a material fact on

an application form (as well as submitting any false documents to accompany an application) is equivalent to perjury, a federal felony that could result not just in deportation but prosecution and imprisonment in the US beforehand.

It is, therefore, crucial to understand the importance of submitting complete and accurate applications to USCIS. The good news for adjustment of status applicants who are immediate relatives of US citizens (spouses, parents, unmarried children under 21) is that unlawful presence in the US and unauthorized unemployment are not in themselves grounds for denying an application. Likewise, some minor criminal offenses, if openly disclosed, are not necessarily a bar to permanent residence. However, anyone who has a criminal record, no matter how minor and how long ago, and no matter what the outcome of the case was, needs advice from an experienced immigration lawyer before proceeding with any application to US immigration authorities.

...

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

...

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

## LÁ FHÉILE PÁDRAIG SONA DUIT!

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# Lá Fhéile Pádraig sona daoibh!\*

\* Happy St. Patrick's Day!

The Rian Immigrant Center provides a range of immigration legal, resource and support services to immigrants from Ireland and from around the globe.

Contact us at 617-542-7654 or see our website [riancenter.org](http://riancenter.org) for more information.

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**Lá Fhéile Pádraig sona duit!**

**Best wishes for a happy  
& blessed St Patrick's Day**



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# BOSTON IRISH O'Grady Remembering Liam Dignam (1897-1921)

BY THOMAS O'GRADY  
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

Launched in 2012, the Government of Ireland's "Decade of Centenaries" commemoration is now in its final phase. So far the commemoration has acknowledged the political and social unrest leading up to and including the Easter Rising of 1916 as well as Ireland's role in the Great War of 1914-18, the first sitting of the Dáil in 1919, the emerging presence of women in Irish public life, and literary and cultural developments in the midst of all these other seismic events and changes. The next couple of years will include remembrance of the Struggle for Independence, the Civil War, the Foundation of the Irish Free State, and Partition.

This month, I am personally marking the centenary of the death of a specific active participant in the Struggle for Independence. Mostly unsung outside his native County Offaly (known as Kings County a century ago), Liam Dignam was the Officer Commanding of the 1st Battalion (Clara) of the South Offaly Brigade of the Irish Republican Army. He was 23 years old when he died in the Mater Hospital in Dublin on March 21, 1921, finally succumbing to wounds he had suffered almost five months earlier, on October 25, 1920, when he was gunned down in a drive-by shooting carried out by some combination of the Royal Irish Constabulary and "the Tans," the generic term for two distinct units of auxiliary police raised to augment the overextended Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC).

Comprising mostly demobilized British soldiers, veterans of the Great War recruited in England, the original so-called "Black and Tans" derived their nickname not only from their hybrid uniforms—the dark bottle-green tunics of the RIC mismatched with khaki military trousers—but also from a pack of Tipperary hunting hounds, and aptly so, as essentially they were unleashed in Ireland to put down the Irish Republican Army with indiscriminate and ruthless disregard for a people and a place in which they had only a mercenary investment. As the historian Robert Kee clarifies, however, much of the catalogue of atrocities (many of them reprisals for IRA attacks on the RIC) associated with them—random home invasions, burnings of town centers, assassinations, and drive-by shootings—belongs to another group: "The Black and Tans were supplemented by a new specially-raised Auxiliary Division of the RIC which was brought into being on 27 July 1920. . . . In some ways this Auxiliary Division, which permitted its members to wear either the traditional dark RIC uniform or army officers' service dress without badges of rank, with dark Glengarry caps, and which was

to hunt rebels in motorized packs across the Irish countryside, qualified even more aptly for the term Black and Tans. All the new forces were often referred to in tones equally expressive of hatred, contempt, and healthy respect as 'the Tans.' And as such they have gone into Irish myth."

According to an eyewitness to Liam Dignam's shooting, the RIC and the Tans were true to form on the night of October 25. Speculating that the shooting was in retaliation for an IRA raid on the RIC barracks in Clara earlier in 1920, Seán O'Neill submitted to the Bureau of Military History, 1913-21, a typewritten statement in 1955 describing the incident in graphic detail: "One Saturday evening a Lancia car laden with R.I.C. and Tans came from the direction of Tullamore and as they passed through Clara I had a good look at them through the shop window. But they were sporting rifles in a dangerous fashion as if they were going to fire into Whyte's shop. I moved back quickly out of range. They passed, but did not fire. . . . Liam Dignam and myself entered Cowan's public house to ask those present to leave as it was past closing hour. Neither of us were taking any intoxicating liquor but there were a few men at the bar who were inclined to discuss the merits or demerits of this county or that. We again asked them to leave and drop the discussion and went out into the street and had a chat when, all of a sudden, a Lancia car came down the hill as silent as a ghost and the Tans and R.I.C. jumped out and fired at us without the slightest warning. I dashed round the corner and over a wall and Liam dived in the opposite direction. . . . He got a bullet in the back at the point of the kidney. I heard him moan and say he was shot. The R.I.C. jumped into their vehicle and sped off as fast as their engine could take them towards Tullamore. I immediately returned to find Liam on his face half-way in the door calling for his mother. It was pathetic."

First taken to a "safe house" in Clara and then spirited to a hospital in Dublin—transported via barge on the Grand Canal—Liam Dignam lingered in agony. (Seán O'Neill recalls a telling detail from the immediate aftermath of the shooting: "When Liam's back was examined, I could see a large wound and I suspected that the Tans or R.I.C. used split or 'dum-dum' bullets.") After his death, his body was returned to Clara for burial.

A year later, two days after the first anniversary of his death, Liam Dignam was remembered in Clara. In a letter to her daughter Alice, who had emigrated to New York City in 1912, his mother wrote: "On March 23rd we had an office and high mass and after mass the greatest procession that was ever seen in Clara to his graveside where the Rosary was recited in Irish by Rev. Father Smyth and answered by a vast



multitude of people. There were ten priests at the mass and the day was like a day in June. It was kept like a holiday—all shops closed, the factory off and all work in the town suspended until after two o'clock. It was all carried out splendid and there is one thing certain, that as long as Ireland is Ireland your dear brother Willie will never be forgotten. I only wish you were here to see and know what was thought about Poor Willie, it would make you proud to have a Brother to do so much for his country. Even though he lost his life his dying [words] were if I could only creep down to the Boys I would do the same again for Poor Old Ireland. During the procession all the school children stood to attention in both schools and it was splendid. . . ."

I expect that Liam Dignam will be remembered in Clara again this year on the centenary of his death. I and my siblings and our cousins on this side of the pond will be remembering him, too. His sister Alice was our grandmother. Liam Dignam was our great-uncle. Growing up, we absorbed the family lore of how my father's mother would gaze at the photo of her brother in a trench coat and a slouch hat, an ammunition bandolier slung across his chest and a wooden swagger stick in his hand, and of how she would sigh about "poor Liam" having "died for Ireland."

*Thomas O'Grady was Director of Irish Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston from 1984 to 2019. He is currently Scholar-in-Residence at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana.*

## Swanton takes charge at Irish Pastoral Centre

The Dorchester-based Irish Pastoral Centre, a non-profit that helps immigrants from Ireland get settled in Boston, has a new leader, Mary Swanton, a native of Ireland's Co. Limerick.

Active for years in Adams Village, where the organization is headquartered, Swanton started as executive director on Jan. 25.

"She brings with her a wealth of relevant experience that she has accumulated from many years of working in fine arts, programming, and community development," read a statement from the agency's board of directors.

"Well-known in the Boston Irish community, Mary has liaised with all Boston area organizations through work at the Irish Emigrant newspaper, and she created many programs and performances for Boston Irish events." Said Swanton: "Boston has been my home for 34

years and it means a lot to me to be Irish in Boston. We are part of a great multi-generational story that's rooted in our shared heritage where the Irish Pastoral Centre serves us so well.

"This is truly a unique 'heart and soul' organization that quietly supports all of us in joy and sorrow, in the past and present. I am honored to share and continue their great work and legacy."

The Irish Pastoral Center was founded in 1987 at St. Mark parish. The agency's offices, now located in a professional building at 512 Gallivan Blvd. are closed due to the pandemic. Swanton and her staff can be contacted by telephone at 617-265 5300.

-ED FORRY



## Author will talk on book about famine relief voyage of USS Jamestown in 1847

National Parks of Boston, the USS Constitution Museum, USS Constitution, and Boston Harbor Now have organized an open-to-the-public virtual gathering for next Tuesday (March 9) from 6 to 7:30 p.m. that will feature stories and a conversation with Stephen Puleo, author of "Voyage of Mercy: The USS Jamestown, the Irish Famine, and the Remarkable Story of America's First Humanitarian Mission."

The USS Jamestown, a converted sloop-of-war, left Charlestown Navy Yard in March 1847 to deliver humanitarian aid to Ireland, which was then in the grip of the devastating Potato Famine. This extraordinary voyage—with ties to Charlestown Navy Yard and the people of Boston—marked the first official US foreign aid mission authorized by Congress, and set a precedent for humanitarian efforts worldwide.

To register, go to [voyageofmercy.eventbrite.com](http://voyageofmercy.eventbrite.com). For more information, call 617-242-5642.



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Virtual

## A ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELTIC SOJOURN

with Brian O'Donovan

*Exploring the influence and impact  
of Irish Music around the world*

### March 11 – 17

This year, **A St. Patrick's Day Celtic Sojourn** will be online for you to enjoy, to gather with loved ones in the safety of your own homes. Our goal is to be there virtually for you, singing together some familiar songs, visiting various musicians, singers and dancers around the world in their homes while sharing the celebratory spirit of the holiday.

This will all happen in a series of unique performances especially built for this March and partnering with the venues around New England where we normally would be presenting the show. The shows will be built especially for this unique year, and in this unique style, so we hope you can join us.

Head to [www.celticsojournlive.com](http://www.celticsojournlive.com) to buy tickets, and to sign up for our email list to get more information.

[www.wgbh.org/celtic](http://www.wgbh.org/celtic)



PHOTO CREDIT: TIM RICE PHOTO



# Virtual Celtic: March roundup

*"Virtual Celtic" explores online concerts, festivals, workshops and other events that feature or include Celtic music.*

BY SEAN SMITH  
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

•Boston College's **Gaelic Roots** concert series – which for almost two decades has hosted prominent musicians and experts in Irish, Scottish, American, and related folk music traditions –

made the transition last fall to the virtual format with its "Lunchtime Series," incorporating real-time presentations by notable musicians with pre-recorded performances. The fall series featured two distinguished Irish fiddlers, Manus McGuire and Gerry O'Connor.

The spring 2021 Lunchtime Series will kick off March 11, from noon to 1 p.m., with one accomplished traditional Irish fiddle player saluting the life, music, and 130th birthday of another: Oisín Mac Diarmada – an acclaimed performer, teacher, scholar, and a founder of popular traditional Irish band Téada – will present a combination lecture and performance in celebration of Michael Coleman (1891-1945), a key figure in the evolution of the Irish-American music style and a pioneer in the recording of traditional Irish music.

A County Clare native, Mac Diarmada is widely recognized as one of the best Irish fiddle players of his generation. He has released or appeared on an assortment of recordings, including "The Green Branch" with his wife, the pianist Samantha Harvey, and five as a member of Téada, known for its energetic, expressive combination of traditional Irish music with contemporary-minded arrangements. Mac Diarmada has often toured throughout the United States and in 2012 appeared at Gaelic Roots with accordionist and vocalist Séamus Begley.

Although born in Clare, Mac Diarmada, who had started fiddle at a young age, moved to County Sligo, the birthplace of Coleman and home to a distinctive fiddle style Coleman promulgated to great effect. Raised in this region's rich musical environment, Coleman had become a skillful fiddler by the time he immigrated to the United States in 1914. After living with his aunt in Lowell, Mass., for three years, he settled in New York City, a hotbed of traditional Irish music in the 1920s thanks in great part to Coleman and his fellow immigrant musicians, many of them also from Sligo.

In 1921, Coleman made the first of some 90 commercial recordings, most of which were issued on 78 RPM records. His art, along with those of other Irish musicians of the period, were crucial to preserving the sounds and styles of traditional Irish music – especially that of Sligo – and proved invaluable to musicians, scholars, and aficionados in later generations.

"There are many who believe Michael Coleman to be the most influential Irish musician of the 20th century," said Gaelic Roots Director Sheila Falls, a fiddler herself, who added that this year the Traditional Music Archive in Dublin will make available previously unreleased private recordings of his. "So it's quite appropriate to have Oisín present this in-depth look at Coleman's life and music."

Mac Diarmada, who co-published a tunebook featuring 22 famous Sligo fiddlers, Coleman among them, offered some thoughts on this legendary figure in Irish music.

**Q.** What do you see as Michael Coleman's most important contributions to Irish music?

**A.** Many artforms are nurtured by one-off, extraordinary visionaries, and in the world of traditional Irish fiddling, Michael Coleman inhabits that role for so many of us. The recording legacy Coleman has left is not only enormous in its scope, but the artistic



Oisín Mac Diarmada will celebrate the life and music of Michael Coleman.

vision it showcases has been incredibly inspirational for generations of fiddlers. This legacy is still strongly felt in the New York City area, and the reach of Coleman's influence in Ireland very quickly spread throughout all the regions from the 1930s onwards.

To this day, the music of Michael Coleman retains a unique mystique and fascination, and is said by so many to be unsurpassed in both its technical and interpretative mastery. It is amazing that in recent times, some new recordings of Coleman have come to the fore, most recently some acetate recordings recorded by another Sligo fiddle master – Lad O'Beirne – in 1942, preserved for decades by the great accordionist Joe Burke, and now made publicly accessible by the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

**Q.** Is there some aspect of Coleman's life/music you think is perhaps overlooked or under-appreciated?

**A.** I think the aspect of his genius that can be difficult to articulate is the extraordinary creativity in improvisation which he displays in so many of his recordings. I mean, we talk a lot about the creative process in traditional music and how tunes are rarely played the same way twice by musicians, but the scale with which Coleman embraced this is truly unparalleled. The renowned fiddler Jesse Smith has transcribed Coleman's recordings in great detail through his academic research, and I'm sure people will continue to be fascinated with the extent of Coleman's creativity.

It is a source of great fascination for me how Coleman navigated from the informal social-based music making in rural Sligo to the rigors of a professional

recording career in New York, with what seems incredible ease. In New York during the early 1920s, he was in the right place at the right time in order to be presented with the opportunity to record prolifically, but even more than that, he was the right person to be thrust into this role. The world of traditional Irish fiddling would be so much the poorer had Michael Coleman not been recorded.

**Q.** What kind of influence has Coleman had on you personally?

**A.** Coleman's music will always be an enormous source of inspiration for me, a continual reminder of the potential for great artistry that lies within so much of the traditional Irish music repertoire. Listening to Coleman periodically is both humbling and inspiring in equal measure, and it helps me remember that exploring the inner beauty of tunes in a deep way is essential to keeping this music fresh and meaningful for player and listener. Living here in Sligo, we are incredibly proud of Coleman's legacy and his role in bringing Sligo music to wider attention.

**Q.** Oisín, how have you and Samantha been faring during this past year?

**A.** The pandemic has brought a huge change of lifestyle for so many, myself included. There has been a lot which we have missed, particularly in our musical lives, yet there have been other sources of great enjoyment – most notably the fun of watching our little boy Finnán growing up! Both Samantha and I were touring in the US last March when the lockdowns started, and it took a while for the situation to sink in. We could never have guessed that nearly a year later, the situation would still be playing out.

I've been thankful how our government here in Ireland has tried to support artists during a very difficult time. Of course, people are hurting, but we are not alone. I've been trying to keep busy with online teaching and performances, as well as planning some new projects with Trad Ireland / Traid Éireann, a new resource organization set up by my Téada band-mate Tristan Rosenstock and myself.

[Gaelic Roots events are livestreamed via the Gaelic Roots Facebook page and YouTube, then made available through the BC Irish Studies Program web page at [bc.edu/irish](http://bc.edu/irish).]

•New Jersey native **Haley Richardson**, one of the best young (as in college-age) Irish fiddlers to emerge in the past decade – she released her first album at age 12 – will perform a "St. Patrick's Day at Home" concert on March 17 at 3 p.m. (EST), presented by *Irish Music Magazine*.

A student of Sligo fiddle master Brian Conway, Richardson has played with such luminaries as Liz Carroll, The Chieftains, Altan, Dervish, Cherish the Ladies, John Whelan, and Paddy Keenan, and is a member of Green Fields of American and the John Whelan Band. She recently toured as lead fiddler for the 25th anniversary "Riverdance" tour and was featured in the 25th anniversary show recorded in Dublin and shown world-wide.

Locally, she has appeared in the "Christmas Celtic Sojourn" and "St. Patrick's Day Celtic Sojourn" productions. Richardson has won multiple championships at the All-Ireland Championships and the coveted junior and senior Fiddler of Dooney awards.

For details on viewing the concert, go to [haleyrichardsonmusic.com](http://haleyrichardsonmusic.com).

•The **Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Boston Music School** is accepting registration for its online spring program until March 10. Classes, which are held via Zoom between 9 a.m. and noon on Saturdays, begin March 27 and go for 10 weeks. Instruction is available for fiddle, accordion, banjo/mandolin, concertina, sean-nos dance and other instruments, as well as singing.

Go to [bostonirishmusicschool.com](http://bostonirishmusicschool.com).



# An all-star cast is ready to perform remotely, but in ‘real time’ format for St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Fresh from the success of the virtual “A Christmas Celtic Sojourn” in December, WGBH broadcaster Brian O’Donovan and his dedicated production team, plus a cohort of accomplished music and dance performers – including some from Greater Boston – will present an online version of the annual “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn,” from March 11 to March 14, and on March 17.

Joining O’Donovan, the show’s creator and host, will be Newfoundland singer Matthew Byrne; Boston-based Irish fiddlers Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen; Scottish/Cape Breton-style fiddler Hanneke Cassel and Québécois guitarist Yann Falquet; local uilleann piper Joey Abarta; highly touted traditional Irish duo Caitlín Nic Gabhann and Ciarán Ó Maonaigh; and *sean-nos*, or “old-style” Irish dancer Emma O’Sullivan.

Also performing will be guitarist-pianist-vocalist Keith Murphy, who plays music from his native Canadian Maritimes as well as the Quebec, New England, and Celtic traditions, and serves as the “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn” music director.

In addition, there will be a special appearance by the Rasa String Quartet, which has its roots in the New England Conservatory of Music.

According to O’Donovan, the show will follow the blueprint provided by “Christmas Celtic Sojourn”: He and the locally based performers – Gourley, Feddersen, Cassel, Falquet, and Abarta – “bubbled up” recently at the Cabot Theatre in Beverly to work on the production. They serve as the core ensemble, with Byrne, Nic Gabhann-Ó Maonaigh, and O’Sullivan beaming in from remote locations.

And, as with “Christmas Celtic Sojourn,” “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn” performances will be presented in collaboration with a partner venue: the Hanover Theater in Worcester (March 11); Shalin Liu Performance Center, Rockport (March 12); Sanders Theatre, Cambridge (March 13); Cabot Theatre, Beverly (March 14); these shows, and the March 17 WGBH special edition, will all begin at 7:30 p.m. as if in “real time” and then be available on demand exclusively for those who buy tickets.

“We learned a lot from our ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’ experience,” says O’Donovan. “One thing we learned is that people are desperate for a semblance of their old lives, and that includes enjoying live music. Just as importantly, they miss the routine that goes with it, where you head out to the venue, settle into your seat, and anticipate the dimming of the lights and rise of the curtain. We heard how some people gathered together – safely – to have dinner and cocktails while they watched ‘A Christmas Celtic Sojourn.’ Clearly, they were glad to have an event serve as a social occasion they could all enjoy.

“Which is why we are again doing



(L-R) Greater Boston Irish musicians Joey Abarta, Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen are among the cast of this year’s “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn.”

this as a ‘real-time’ performance – here, you can click on the link to the show five or 10 minutes beforehand and see a generic countdown clock, and we’ll stream some slides and St. Patrick’s Day music until the show begins. The show will have two sets of approximately 40 to 45 minutes each, and there’ll be a 10-minute intermission – again, just as if we were all at a theater.”

Though it included familiar elements of in-person, pre-COVID performance events, “Christmas Celtic Sojourn” went well beyond a conventional livestream-from-the-living-room approach, with high-quality video, audio, and editing, and other top-shelf production values, seamlessly synching up the local and remote performers. That will be the case again with the “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn,” with some additional flourishes: O’Donovan will narrate a drone video flyover of his hometown of Clonakilty in Cork, for example, and musician Harry Giles will demonstrate his recipe for Irish coffee from Somerville’s beloved Irish pub The Burren.

“Many people – and we had almost 6,000 join us – said they were moved by ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’; it really struck a chord with them,” says O’Donovan. “We spent a lot of time talking and planning, going through what would be needed to make the show as good as it could be. Why? We felt it was very important to give the performers a platform where they could shine, to create an individual event with a personality all its own. The technology enabled us to produce something meaningful.

“Because ‘Christmas Celtic Sojourn’

and ‘St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn’ each has its own vibe, we’ve made the effort, again, to give the latter event something special that resonates with the audience. So, for example, this year I’ll be able to say, ‘Hey, check out where I’m from’ and give folks a look at my Irish hometown, which fits right in with the St. Patrick’s Day spirit.”

The virtual approach also will enhance a “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn” staple: the singalong to “The Leaving of Liverpool” that concludes the first set. Audience members are encouraged to submit videos of themselves singing, and clapping along to, the chorus of this longtime Clancy Brothers favorite (precise directions are provided on the show’s website, [celticsojournlive.com](http://celticsojournlive.com)), and some will be incorporated into the end product.

A look at the 2021 “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn” performers:

- Matthew Byrne is renowned for his rich tenor voice and sensitive, empathetic treatment of songs from the vocal tradition of his homeland, and his own family. Byrne has won two Canadian Folk Music Awards “Traditional Album of the Year” honors for his recordings; he is preparing to record his fourth studio album, to be produced by renowned English folk musician Martin Simpson.

- Spouses Caitlín Nic Gabhann and Ciarán Ó Maonaigh both come from venerable Irish music families and have been heralded as among the vanguard of a new generation of traditional musicians. A native of County Meath, Nic Gabhann is a three-time winner of the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil on conc-

tina, a talented step dancer who was in the “Riverdance” troupe, and has performed with, among others, Paddy Keenan and Cherish the Ladies. Ó Maonaigh, a former TG4 “Young Musician of the Year” award winner, grew up steeped in the Donegal fiddle style. Their album with Cathal Ó Curráin, “The High Seas,” was one of the most highly praised Irish/Celtic releases of 2018.

- She may be an All-Ireland champion in “old-style” dance, but Galway native Emma O’Sullivan is well-versed in new media: She has gained worldwide attention for the viral videos she has posted – shared by some 20 million people – of her energetic street performances. Her tours have taken her around the globe, including one that featured a seven-month residency with legendary country singer Dolly Parton.

- Since arriving in Boston several years ago within a few months of each other, Nathan Gourley and Laura Feddersen have become mainstays of the area’s Irish scene, whether at sessions, ceilis, or concerts. Their fiddling, as spotlighted in their 2015 album “Life Is All Checkered,” represents what they call “the American style of Irish music”: an amalgam of the styles and influences that developed over time in places like Boston, New York City, Chicago, and wherever else strong Irish music communities have thrived – offshoots of the regional traditions that originated in Ireland, but also dependent on the individual player who’s playing it.

- Another fixture of Boston’s Celtic scene is uilleann piper Joey Abarta, who has performed locally and elsewhere





The Rasa String Quartet will play a specially commissioned piece at “A St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn.”

frequently, including in a duo with Nathan Gourley, as well as with Mick Moloney and the group The Green Fields of America. He also took part in the special 2018 production, “Seeking Sanctuary,” an immigration-themed event at the Boston Center for the Arts that featured a commissioned piece by Charlie Lennon, one of Ireland’s most distinguished tradition-influenced musicians/composers.

- Hanneke Cassel and Yann Falquet represent a blending of distinctive music traditions infused by contemporary influences and styles. Cassel’s expressive, emotive, and energetic brand of American Scottish fiddle – featuring many of her own compositions as well as tunes from Scottish and Cape Breton traditions – has been highly influential as well as popular in the Celtic music world. Falquet is an active, creative acoustic guitar player on the Québécois scene who has drawn inspiration from the playing of the accompanists of different cultures (Brittany, Scandinavia, Ireland, North America). He appears on Cassel’s recently released album, “Over the Sea to Skye.”
- A familiar figure in the Boston/ New England folk scene for some 30 years, Keith Murphy has been part of numerous collaborations, notably with his wife, fiddler Becky Tracy – with whom he recorded the 2020 album “Golden” – the Boston-based fiddle ensemble Childsplay, and fiddlers like Brian Conway and Hanneke Cassel. He has also forged a successful career as a soloist, an engaging singer with a repertoire drawn from his native Newfoundland as well as Irish, English, Scottish, and French traditions, and as



Hanneke Cassel and Yann Falquet play music from Scottish, Cape Breton and Québécois traditions.

a masterful arranger.

- A union of different cultural backgrounds that formed at NEC in 2019, the Rasa String Quartet has become a progressive force on the New England chamber music circuit, performing in less conventional venues such as house concerts, local clubs and brew-

violist Claudia Do Minh Ramos and Korean-American cellist Eunghee Cho.

O’Donovan had commissioned the quartet to resurrect a mid-20th century classical composition, “Meath Pastoral,” by Arthur Duff, for last year’s “St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn”; the production’s show last March in Rockport – right before the COVID lockdown began – was their only performance of the work.

“We’re very happy to have the Rasa String Quartet with us again,” he says. “They take chamber music in some exciting directions, and Maura – a highly trained classical violinist but with a folk/trad sensibility – is certainly one reason for that; however, they are all talented and inventive musicians and will be a big part of this year’s show. They’ll be accompanying Keith on a lovely, moving traditional song, ‘Crossing the Bar,’ as well as another audience favorite ‘Will You Go Lassie Go?’”

However much O’Donovan may sing the praises of virtual performances, he is clear about his preference: “Will they ever replace live music? No. No way. But they can certainly supplement live music, perhaps whet our appetites for the real thing, and provide some creative possibilities as to how music, and other kinds of art, can be presented.

“I think we’ve all seen in this past year how valuable art is to us, especially art with a strong sense of history and tradition. It reminds us how humanity has managed to outlast those forces which have challenged us: pandemics, politics, or whatever else.”

For more about “A St. Patrick’s Day Celtic Sojourn,” go to [celticsojournlive.com](http://celticsojournlive.com).





# University of Limerick presents a **Virtual St. Patrick's Day Concert** 8pm EST

The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick, presents a special performance of music, song and dance for St Patrick's Day. This unique concert has performers from all over the world coming together at University Concert Hall for an exciting virtual event, featuring special guests Rhiannon Giddens, Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre, and students and graduates of the Academy.

For more information on and link to this **free** concert please visit

[www.irishworldacademy.ie](http://www.irishworldacademy.ie)



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#### Thursday, March 4 at 7pm:

Virtual Mixology Class with Terri Nixon & Devri

#### Saturday, March 6 at 6pm:

Virtual Concert with Scotland's finest "Heron Valley"

#### Sunday, March 7 at 3:30pm:

Author Discussion with Kyle Darcy & Michele McPhee "Crime Time"

#### Saturday, March 13 at 7pm:

Virtual concert with "Strawberry Hill" streamed live from the ICC

#### Wednesday, March 17:

Virtual St. Patrick's Day celebration kicks off at 3:30pm. "Music, Songs, Stories & Irish Dance."

#### Saturday, March 21 at 3pm:

Virtual concert with Celtic Violinist "Máiréad Nesbitt"

#### Tuesday, March 30 at 5:15pm:

Lecture "Revolution in Ireland: 1921 and the violent quest of self-determination" by Professor Ruan O'Donnell from the University of Limerick

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**Tuesday at 5pm** with Denis Galvin. Next session begins on March 2

**Bodhran for Beginners / Beyond Beginners online - registration open**

Wednesday at 5pm / 5:45pm with Aimee Farrell Courtney. Next session begins on March 3

**Adult Baking Class** in person at the ICC - *registration open*

**Wednesday at 6:30pm:** March 3 - Mushroom risotto & sponge cake

**Wednesday at 6:30pm:** March 10 - Sheet pan chicken & profiteroles

#### Singing Workshop online / for ages 11+

(youth) - *registration open*  
Thursday at 5pm with Jen O'Shea

#### Irish History Classes online- *registration open* / 4 week course

Thursday at 6pm: A virtual history tour of Co. Cork *starts* March 4

Thursday at 7:30pm: The life and times of St. Patrick *starts* March 4

**Irish Music Classes** - *registration open*: next session began February 27

Saturday / all ages

9:30am: Beyond Beginner online Tin Whistle

10:45am: Fiddle *in person at the ICC*

11:30am: Button Accordion *in person at the ICC*

**Irish Language Classes** - next session will begin in March. Registration now yet open. This class is offered in conjunction with Cumann na Gaelige

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# For Jenna Moynihan, her EP ‘Five Songs’ is ‘a reimaging of what folk music can be’

By SEAN SMITH  
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

It took Celtic fiddler Jenna Moynihan a while before she realized she was making her first album as a singer. About four years ago, Moynihan - currently living in Gloucester but a habitué of Boston's Celtic/folk music scene since moving here more than a decade ago - took up an invitation to visit the studio where she had recently recorded an album as a member of Laura Cortese and the Dance Cards. In addition to playing fiddle, Moynihan had contributed some vocal harmonies, and the studio's owner/producer/engineer, Sam Kassirer, was impressed enough to tell her she should try singing lead.

"I had no idea, no plan to make an album, certainly not as a singer," recalls Moynihan, a native of New York's Southern Tier and graduate of the Berklee College of Music. "But Sam was so encouraging: He said, 'Let's do some songs and see what happens.'"

What happened wound up taking four recording sessions, the last in January of 2020, but the result was the EP "Five Songs," which Moynihan released this past fall. A low-key, sometimes subdued blending of folk/acoustic and contemporary styles, the album includes three songs from the Irish and American folk traditions plus covers of lesser-known compositions by two accomplished but nearly forgotten singer-songwriters - the author of an iconic 1960s anthem, and a pop music maverick who turned his back on commercial success.

"Five Songs" is the latest milestone in the progress of Moynihan, who as a child became infatuated with Scottish fiddle through listening to Alasdair Fraser and Jeremy Kittel, among others. Since coming to Boston, she has released her first solo album, 2015's "Woven," formed a duet and recorded with Scottish harpist Mairi Chaimbeul, performed locally at BCMFest and Club Passim, and at Symphony Hall with the Boston Pops, and twice appeared in "A Christmas Celtic Sojourn." She has also broadened her horizons by exploring American fiddle stylings and indie/acoustic pop, in collaborations with Cortese as well as the Milk Carton Kids.

And, somewhere in there, she also learned to sing.

"It was nothing formal - I didn't take lessons or study under someone," says Moynihan. "Most of my singing was at music parties or jam sessions, and then I started getting more opportunities to sing harmonies in performance. And I listened to different kinds of music, and just took what I liked."

It's not as if she was operating at a disadvantage, either, Moynihan adds. "As a fiddler, I'm melody-driven. A lot of folk songs, especially traditional ones, have melodies that feel good to me, like a fiddle tune, so I think that's helped me in finding my voice. I'm just trying to enjoy the whole experience and keep learning."



**Jenna Moynihan:** "As a fiddler, I'm melody-driven. A lot of folk songs, especially traditional ones, have melodies that feel good to me, like a fiddle tune, so I think that's helped me in finding my voice."  
*Louise Bichan photo*

On "Five Songs," Moynihan has a quiet, understated delivery, putting each song squarely at the center of attention, melodically and lyrically. But there's also a confidence and purposefulness to her singing, with the occasional ornamentation or bending of the note, that keeps you engaged. Kassirer helps matters by giving Moynihan lots of space, arrangement- and engineering-wise, while playing piano on each track - spare, almost minimalist chording, arpeggios and improvisations, but constituting what Moynihan calls "the backbone" for the album; at various times, he adds vibraphone, marimba, electric piano, organ, and synthesizer for texture and effect.

"I feel that, with Sam's piano - washy and dark - there is a thread through the five tracks," she explains. "The EP is a reimaging of what folk music can be: There are songs that are very old, from tradition, and then there are others that are more recent but speak to similar emotions and situations. Sam's piano, and the other instruments, give these songs a common context."

Sean Trischka also provides a light touch on drums and acoustic and electric guitars here and there on the EP, and Deitrich Strausse adds some very mellow brass accompaniment, as well as guitar and bass. Moynihan's fiddle peeks out every so often for a solo, or provides a subtle backdrop for her vocals.

The EP's centerpiece is "Across the Western Ocean," which Moynihan released as a single, an Irish song of immigration dating from the Great Famine (like many traditional folk songs, it has shared elements with other songs, in this case the sea shanty "Leave Her, Johnny"). The narrator in the song is focused less on what he's leaving behind than what he's heading for: "a land of plenty," to be sure, but first he has to survive the crossing by packet ship, often perilous for reasons that go beyond the stormy sea ("They'll steal your gold and your stores away").

There's something about Moynihan's phrasing during the "Amelia, where you bound?" that puts an emphasis on "bound," and in so doing points up the word's multiple definitions: the state of being restrained or confined; or of being in transit. For her part, though,

Moynihan focuses more on the latter meaning, which she says has taken on greater significance in the past year.

"I've come to feel there's a lot of comfort in the song, and the idea of being on a journey: As we've seen in recent years, an incredible amount of people across the world have taken journeys, and faced many kinds of dangers and obstacles. And if you think about it, we've all been on a journey ourselves these many months with the pandemic."

"So we're all going through the unknown, but you have to believe there's something better at the other end."

Also from the Irish tradition is "Streets of Derry," famously recorded by Andy Irvine and Paul Brady on their landmark LP, which is where Moynihan heard it. The song's narrative is a twist on the familiar damsel-in-distress trope: In this case, it is the damsel who is the savior, out to stop her lover's execution.

"I really like the strong female role, where she's the hero and rides to the rescue," Moynihan says. "But above all, it's a beautiful love story, and the melody is so gorgeous. I was glad to be able to do my own version of it."

Moynihan goes to the American tradition with an abbreviated rendition of "The Blackest Crow," featuring a graceful fiddle-piano break juxtaposed against a pulsing, sequenced beat. Sometimes known as "My Dearest Dear," and thought to have originated in the Appalachian and Ozarks in the immediate post-Civil War era, the song has been a mainstay of American folk music for decades, recorded by performers ranging from Tommy Jarrell and Jean Ritchie to Bruce Molsky and the all-female band Uncle Earl.

"It's a 'forever' song for me," says Moynihan. "I've heard 'Blackest Crow' for years, and even before I sang publicly, I would enjoy singing it just for myself."

Those three traditional songs actually constituted the mid-point of the "Five Songs" creation. On that first day in 2017 when Moynihan came to Kassirer's studio, her first track was Harry Nilsson's "Turn On Your Radio" - a barebones valediction, with music as the keepsake ("Turn on your radio, baby/Listen to my song"). Nilsson blazed brightest from 1968-73, when his songs "Without

You" and "Coconut" were international bestsellers and his cover of "Everybody's Talkin'" won a Grammy, though he never did major public concerts or toured; he became a drinking buddy of John Lennon (who, along with his Fab Four bandmates, referred to Nilsson as "the American Beatle") and avoided any further dalliances with the commercial music scene in favor of going his own route.

"I've listened to Nilsson's music for many years," says Moynihan. "I really like the heartbeat of the song, and how it pushes things along. Recording it was totally an experiment, but I liked what we were able to do with it."

The EP's final song is "Something on Your Mind," written by the enigmatic Dino Valenti, one of several pseudonyms used by Chet Powers. Raised in a carnival family, Powers/Valenti ran away at 17 and became a staple of the late '50s/early '60s Greenwich Village folk circuit, then headed off to Los Angeles where he penned "Everybody Get Together," which became a 1960s musical touchstone, and eventually joined the popular San Francisco psychedelic rock band Quicksilver Messenger Service.

Among Powers/Valenti's friends and acquaintances of the Greenwich Village days was Texas-born blues singer Karen Dalton, who recorded a version of his "Something on Your Mind" - which in turn inspired Moynihan to include it in her repertoire, struck as she was by the undercurrent of tension in the lyrics ("You can't make it without ever even trying/And something's on your mind").

"It evokes a feeling of not knowing for sure where things stand," she says. "To me, it feels like you're singing 'Hang in there' to yourself."

Moynihan was able to complete the EP through a grant from Cambridge nonprofit Passim's Iguana Fund, and is grateful for the support, which she says went beyond financial.

"Passim said, 'We like your idea. Go for it,'" she explains. "I can't overstate what that means when you're trying something new. I wanted to create a setting in which my voice was front and center, in a way it had never been before, and to see how this connected with me as a musician. I was so happy Passim gave me the chance to do that."

Like many performers, Moynihan has been largely sidelined by the pandemic, except for virtual concerts and events like the 2020 "Christmas Celtic Sojourn," but in addition to working on her own music, she has found another important outlet.

"I've been doing a lot more teaching, and that's been a positive development," she says. "Teaching feels like the most natural avenue to share your music. You feel like you're connecting in a very important way, and keeping in touch with the music community out there."

For more about Jenna Moynihan, and to listen to "Five Songs" and other recordings, go to [jennamoynihan.com](http://jennamoynihan.com).



BY SEAN SMITH  
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

**Full Tilt, “Full Tilt Live”** • Oh, my. This is one of those albums that hits so many buttons beyond the visceral pleasure of listening to it because of what is represented in the joining of these skills, talents, and experience.



Full Tilt is a union of different generations as well as music traditions: Manus McGuire, member of such bands as Buttons and Bows and Moving Cloud and champion of the Sligo fiddle, but also greatly interested in other styles; accordionist Alan Small, a veteran of the Scottish ceilidh band scene; Shetland/Scottish fiddler-pianist Gemma Donald, a past finalist for BBC Young Traditional Musician of the Year; and Shetlander Brian Nicholson, a guitarist and vocalist with a variety of musical tastes and interests.

The quartet seamlessly merges Irish, Scottish, and Shetland tunes, including originals by McGuire, Donald, and Small and others by the likes of Charlie Lennon, Nollaig Casey, April Verch, Donald Shaw, and Ed Reavy. Full Tilt also is able to shift between different incarnations, sounding fully comfortable in archetypal ceilidh band (Irish or Scottish) mode, modern Celtic folk revival vein, or a Saturday-night-in-the-pub vibe.

Most of all, they just sound so damn good. The virtuosity and chemistry displayed by McGuire and Donald, whether playing in unison or – better yet – in harmony, is energizing. Small’s accordion (which includes a MIDI-enhanced bass) provides a deft, rhythmic punch and he’s a fine melody player, too. Nicholson’s electric guitar lends versatility, adding complementary and creative shades of rock, country, blues, and jazz.

It’s a pure delight to hear McGuire and Donald whip through some old familiars, like “The Barrowburn Reel,” “Ten Penny Bit,” the absurdly intricate “Belfast Hornpipe,” and a medley encompassing Ed Reavy’s “Maudabawn Chapel,” traditional tunes “The Cameronian” and “Dawn Hornpipe,” and Donald Shaw’s “The Shetland Fiddler.” McGuire and Donald also each get to lead a set of their own instrumentals: McGuire’s reels “Howling at the Moon/Sunset Over Scariff/Gortcommer Welcome” and Donald’s jigs “Johnny Barton’s Fiddle/Elma’s Big Break/Capers in Culbokie.” Their adaptation of Nollaig Casey’s slow air “Lios Na Banriona (Fort of the Fairy Queen),” meanwhile, is breathtakingly beautiful.

Full Tilt displays their inventive, fun spirit on the outstandingly well-crafted “Pink Panther Set”: Donald – whose piano chops are in the spotlight here – plays the intro to the famous Henry Mancini-penned theme, to which Nicholson unfurls a genuine slow-burn rock/blues solo, while over them Small breaks into the classic trad Irish “Morrison’s Jig”; then McGuire picks up the melody and the trio is off and running without a hitch, segueing into J.S. Crofts’ “Rosemary Lane” and Charlie Lennon’s dearly loved “Handsome Young Maidens.”

Nicholson adds another dimension with his selec-

tions of songs by Shetland writers, in robust Shetland dialect: John Barclay’s “Isle O’Gletness” is homage to home and hearth, McGuire and Donald’s fiddles making it sound like a sweet Texas waltz; the sprightly maritime “Farewell Tae Yell,” by Larry Robertson and Robert Tait, punctuated by a nifty recurring 2/4 riff by fiddles and accordion; and “Du Picked a Fine Time ta Faa-by Dastreen,” Bobby Tulloch’s witty Shetland take on “You Picked a Fine Time to Leave Me, Lucille.”

Yet another undeniable asset of this album is that, as the title indicates, it was recorded live, back during the band’s 2019 tour. If you think you’ve somehow become inured to listening to music at a remove, “Full Tilt Live” reminds you of what a special thing an in-person event is: the in-the-moment sensation, the rapport between band and audience, the sheer joy of applauding and cheering a great performance. Listening to this album isn’t exactly like being there, obviously, but you’ll get more than enough pleasure out of it. [fulltilt.band]

**Salt House, “Huam”; Jenny Sturgeon, “The Living Mountain”; Lauren MacColl, “Landskein”** • Scottish trio Salt House hit the trifecta over this past year, with its third album and solo releases by two of its members coming in the space of eight months. Each recording is enjoyable on its own terms, but this convergence of the three also offers an opportunity to appreciate the individual talents, interests, and personas that constitute a band lauded as much for its defining artistic vision as well as its musicianship.

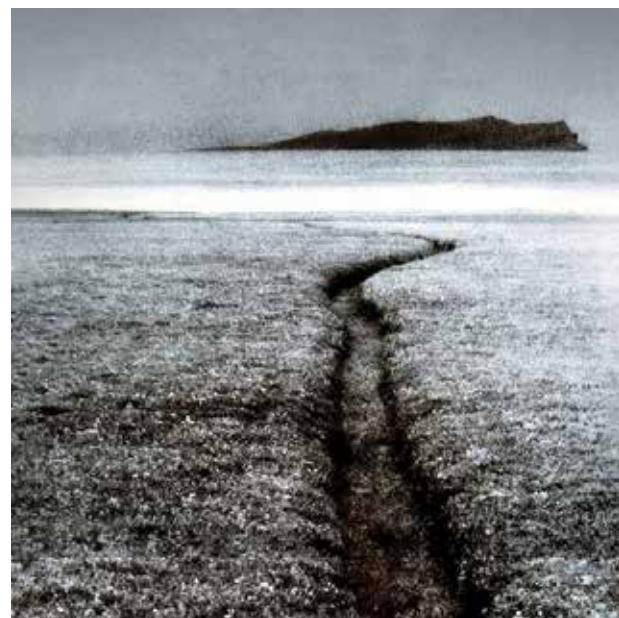
Salt House originally began with a different name and went through a couple of configurations – they released their first album as Salt House in 2013, “Lay Your Dark Low,” as a quartet – but since 2018 has consisted of Ewan MacPherson (guitars, dulcimer, vocals) Lauren MacColl (fiddle, viola, glockenspiel, vocals) and Jenny Sturgeon (guitar, keyboards, dulcimer, vocals). The trio has fashioned a sound that marries contemporary acoustic styles, such as 1960/70s UK blues-folk a la Pentangle, with introspective, pastoral songwriting that is deeply ingrained in folk song and literary traditions.

“Huam” – the Scots word for the call of an owl – affirms Salt House’s self-described interest in “place, politics and landscape,” with an emphasis on environments that bring comfort and reassurance in the midst of turbulence. But implicit in their songs’ ardor for rural shades and peaceful glens is a belief that, rather than escaping to nature as refuge or weekend getaway, one should embrace it as a commitment worth undertaking.

Such is the case with “Mountain of Gold,” sung in gorgeous fashion by all three with a part-hymn, part-lullaby quality to it (“When the hill awakens from sleeping/And the winter runs from the land/When the burn continues its singing/When spring reveals its hand”), and “The Same Land,” a lament achingly voiced by Sturgeon and MacPherson (“Hurry down on stoney ground/Through the fractious never ending/It’s all mixed up and descending/Until we find the time to breathe”) – with harmonium drone and distant, slightly distorted electric guitars – not to mention their setting of Emily Dickinson’s “Hope Is the Thing with Feathers.”

But Salt House does not gloss over the darkness within the natural world, as evidenced by “William and Elsie,” their chilling adaptation of a Danish ghostly-lover ballad in which the titular William describes the afterlife (“Whenever thou art smiling, when thy bosom gladly glows/My grave in yonder dark kirk yard is hung with leaves of rose/Whenever thou are weeping, and thy dreadful sadness reigns/My grave in yonder dark kirk yard is filled with living pain”), and an entrancing “Lord Ullin’s Daughter,” Thomas Campbell’s tragic poem of lovers fleeing the fury of her father, straight into the wrath of the elements (“By this the storm grew loud apace/The water-wraith was shrieking/And in the scowl of heaven each face/Grew dark as they were speaking”).

Listening to Sturgeon’s “The Living Mountain,” it’s clear how much she contributes to Salt House’s



artistic vision. Born in Aberdeenshire and now living in Shetland, Sturgeon has a PhD in seabird ecology, and her songwriting reflects an abiding interest in, and fascination with, the sights, sounds and rhythms of nature – and how humans perceive them (or perhaps fail to adequately). Her 2017 EP, “The Wren and the Salt Air,” was inspired by the unique bird populations of the remote St Kilda island group; that album included field recordings of wild birds and island weather.

Here, Sturgeon has taken inspiration – and the album’s title – from “The Living Mountain,” a memoir by Anna “Nan” Shepherd (1893-1981) of her experiences and impressions of walking in the Cairngorms mountain range. The songs here are richly lyrical, vivid, deeply felt meditations equally steeped in senses and science. Sturgeon follows the structure of the book – the tracks are named for each chapter, in order – and focuses on some aspect, feature or sensation Shepherd observed or felt during her travels through the Cairngorms.

Shepherd wasn’t just out for a pleasure jaunt to gaze at pretty flowers and photogenic wildlife: She gave herself over completely to the mountains and their environs, and Sturgeon conveys this in songs like “The Recesses” (“Cracks and fissures/Fractures forced and falling fair/in the dark and hidden/You don’t really know what’s there”) and “Frost and Snow” (“Wild winds keen/A cornice formed, overhang it leans/Prevailing force, sastrugi like the waves/A sea of ice, sea of ice”).

Sturgeon also adapted a couple of Shepherd’s poems for the album: “Man” – which appears on “Huam” under its original name, “Fires” – and “Water” (known as “Singing Burn”).

The melodies and arrangements devised by Sturgeon thoroughly complement the lyrics. She accompanies herself variously on guitar, piano, harmonium, dulcimer, whistle, and synthesizer, with occasional help from Grant Anderson (bass, vocal), Mairi Campbell (viola, vocal) and Sua-Lee (cello). On “The Group,” piano and strings help proclaim the Cairngorms as both a rich realm of life and a life force in of itself (“I’ve been witness through the ages/Marked changes and uses”). “The Plants” is an introduction to the mountains’ diversity of flora, with a joyous, proud refrain, “We are of the soil.” “Water,” accompanied for the most part by a single drone note, animates the springs, creeks, rivers, and other bodies of water, and their interrelationship with the terrain (“From trickling burn to lowland plain/The spring she sees it all”).

In the concluding track, “Being,” piano and strings embrace Shepherd’s/Sturgeon’s benediction, a call to be mindful of our true selves, set loose from distraction: “Living through the senses/As we search/To find out what’s real.”

As in “The Wren and the Salt Air,” Sturgeon makes use of assorted field recordings from the Cairngorms National Park throughout the album, enabling the

(Continued on page 24)



# An act of betrayal blows a life apart



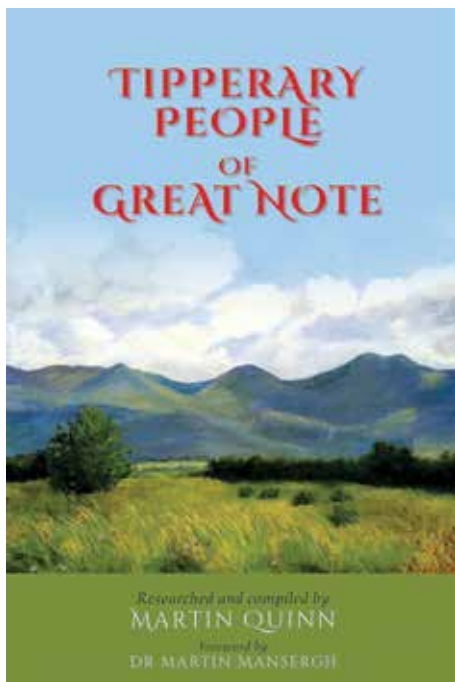
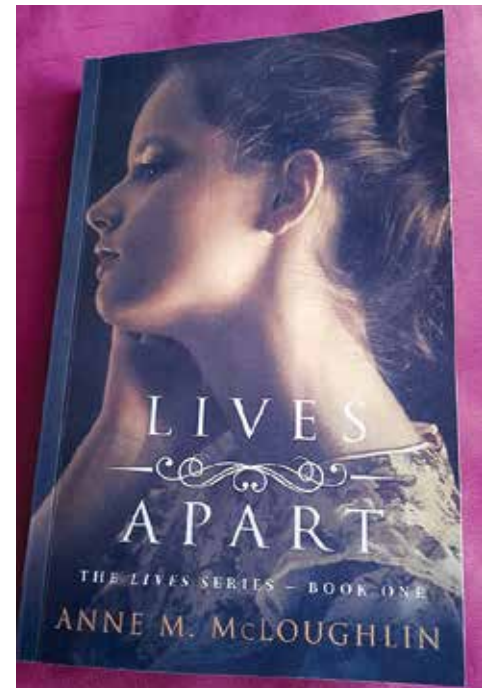
**Anne McLoughlin's 'Lives Apart'**  
Assessing disastrous acts  
and sibling relationships

This is a tale of emigration from Ireland to America after the famine. A family saga of betrayal, tragedy, and survival. It tells the story of young Johanna McNamara, who, in 1877, leaves her quiet life on the family farm in County

Clare and emigrates to America to join her successful businessman brother Hugh. Full of hope, she is determined to make a success of her life. However, tragedy strikes before she finds her feet in this new world, and she must put the care of others before her own needs. Back in Ireland, farming life for the family continues through the seasons, with her brother Art struggling to deal with his troubled son Declan. Sending him to the USA is an option that might help turn him into a man. But little does Johanna know what lies ahead with the arrival of a nephew, whose act of betrayal will blow her life apart. Set in Ireland, Boston, San Francisco, and Nova Scotia "Lives Apart" explores sibling relationships and how a disastrous action can reverberates through the lives of the extended family. It also looks at the experience of

emigration, both for those who had the courage to venture across the Atlantic and those they left behind.

**About the Author:** Anne McLoughlin was born in Dublin, Ireland and now divides her time between there and her home in rural County Wexford. Having spent most of her working life in television production with RTE (Ireland's National Broadcaster), she took the plunge and went freelance for ten years before retiring to concentrate on writing. She has written stories for children's programs and published a series of social history books on the Macamores in County Wexford. "Lives Apart" is her debut novel. It is published by Poolbeg Press and is available from Amazon – eBook or Paperback.



**Martin Quinn's 'Tipperary People of Great Note'**

**Flashbacks: 1100s through the 2000s**

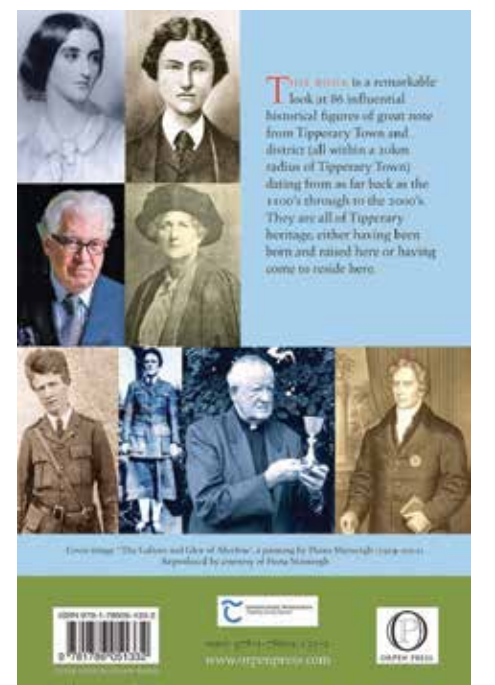
The book catalogs 86 influential historical figures of great note from Tipperary Town (Ireland) and the surrounding district dating from the 1100s through the 2000s. They are all of Tipperary heritage, either having been born and raised there or having come to reside here. In a foreword, Former Minister of State Dr Martin Mansergh writes, "The most important heritage of any area is its people. Irish people particularly are rooted in place, even when living elsewhere. For this volume, Martin Quinn has selected 86 men and women, mostly from the last three hundred years, from Tipperary Town and district, all of whom left their mark. A few we will have known personally. More we will have heard of. Others we are glad to learn about. Each biography gives a picture. Many of us will be stimulated

to find out more."

The author sends a message to the Boston Irish: "I think that the book would be of great interest to Tipperary people in the US. It includes several who emigrated to the USA, including the author and broadcaster Frank Delaney, the actor Neil Fitzgerald, the founder of Fahey Banking, Timothy Fahey, the patriarch of the Brown dynasty (grandfather to Gerald 'Pat' Brown), Joseph Brown, the Olympic Bronze medalist James Mitchel and Titanic survivor Kate McCarthy."

**"Tipperary People of Great Note"** is published by Orpen Press and may be ordered [orpenpress.com/books/tipperary-people-of-great-note/](http://orpenpress.com/books/tipperary-people-of-great-note/).

**About the Author:** A native of Bansha, Martin Quinn has a long history of community involvement and served a term as National President of Muintir na Tíre, Muintir na Tíre, the National Association for the Promotion of Community Development in Ireland.



## "If I am lucky this wine will drown my sorrows"

(Continued from page 23)

mountains and its denizens to lend their own voices.

(Sturgeon has recorded "The Living Mountain Podcast," conversations with artists, writers, and ecologists about their connections with the mountains, outdoor places, and how they inspire and influence their work. She's also working on a film complement to "The Living Mountain.")

MacColl's "Landskein" has a simple, straightforward premise, consisting of airs and other slow or moderate-speed tunes from the Highland fiddle tradition. It's literally a solo effort, except for four tracks on which James Ross provides sparse, sensitive piano accompaniment; some of the other tracks include a faint drone from a pump organ or an electric guitar, or additional plucked or bowed strings on fiddle or viola.

While there is some variance of tempo, pace and time signatures, "Landskein" has a very pleasing unhurried, contemplative feel to it – and a spacious sound as well, due in no small part

to it being recorded in a village hall near Loch Ness. The album is like an aural microscope, bringing up close every bow stroke, no matter how soft or faint. And the diversity of character among the tunes is profound, from the stately, sedate "Mrs. McIntosh of Raigmore" to the supernatural edginess of "Sproileag (An Untidy Witch)," the quiet, intense vibrato of "Air Mullach Beinn Fhuathais" to the unusual cadence in "'Lal, Ial, Ars' a' Chailleach," which came to MacColl from a singer (Rona Lightfoot) rather than an instrumentalist.

Thematically, the title "Landskein" – a reference to the lifelines that bind people (like MacColl in this case) with landscape, memories, stories and traditions – is of a piece with "Huam" and "The Living Mountain." The album also helps one better appreciate the traditional roots and styles within MacColl's fiddling, set as they are in the contemporary milieu of Salt House.

MacPherson – a member of famed folk-rock fusion band Shooglenifty – is

the odd one out here, at least in terms of a solo recording. But on "Huam" his gifts as a songwriter are abundant, and bring more of an overt social-justice perspective to the Salt House gestalt: "All Shall Be Still" offers reassurance of finding tranquility in a time of noise and unrest ("Politicians are arguing over numbers and names/Their lies are lost when the waves come roaring"); "If I Am Lucky" considers the risks of taking, or not taking, action ("If I am lucky this wine will drown my sorrows/ If I am lucky the world is cooling down/ But I've believed so many of their stories/ I must be bold and stand my ground").

"The Union of Crows," which ends the album, is a particularly fascinating MacPherson composition. The title and recurring lyric is a play on "the Union of the Crowns," the problematic unification of England, Scotland, and Ireland that accompanied the 1603 accession to the throne of James I. Although his song doesn't relate directly to that historical event, MacPherson explains

that the phrase suggested to him the disenfranchisement and alienation of people at the hands of the powerful, who churn out consumer goods or other sources of distraction while socioeconomic inequalities and other perils mount.

"So while the others toil on, with golden light bright in their eyes

We'll stop our lives from passing by, we'll stop the murder with just our hands

And as a river slowly grows, with rain from off surrounding hills

We will not heed the darkened wing of our great union of crows"

Collectively or individually, the members of Salt House will be enriching Scottish folk music for some time to come, and that's reason to cheer. ["Huam" is available at [salthouse.bandcamp.com](http://salthouse.bandcamp.com), through which links to "The Living Mountain" and "Landskein" may be found.]



# The Emerald Isle is rich in US presidential roots

A Dublin history site, EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum, posts that there are 23 US Presidents who have some Irish heritage? From 7th President Andrew Jackson, born only two years after his parents emigrated from Antrim, to No. 46 Joe Biden, who can trace his ancestry back to Counties Louth and Mayo, fully half of the presidents can claim some roots in Ireland.

**Andrew Jackson:** He was born in the Waxhaws region the runs along the borders of North and South Carolina. His parents had left the village of Boneybefore in Antrim only two years previously. The village is now home to the Andrew Jackson Centre. The first Ulster-Scots president, he was known as 'Old Hickory' and was also a slave owner, general, and lawyer.

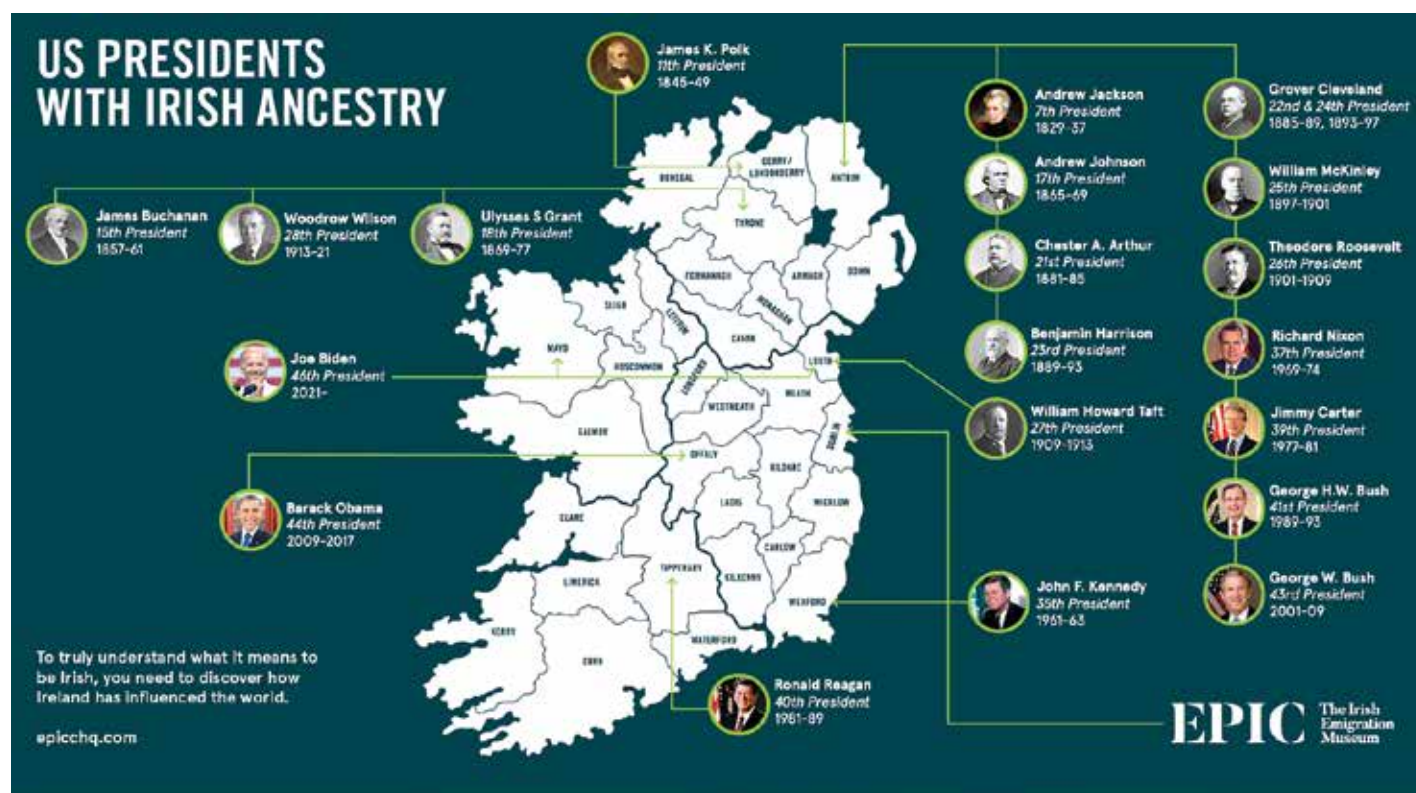
**James Knox Polk:** His great-great-grandfather came from Donegal. Descended from Ulster Presbyterians, the Polks first arrived in Maryland in the late 17th century. They had previously held land and owned property around Coleraine in Derry and Lifford in Donegal. A proponent of the expansionist 'Manifest Destiny' policy, Polk was responsible for deciding the official border between British Canada and the United States and fought a war with Mexico to seize control of California, Texas and the rest of the modern-day south-western US.

**James Buchanan:** His parents came from Donegal and Tyrone, arriving in Pennsylvania in 1783, four years before his birth. He is one of three US presidents who had at least one parent born in Ireland – along with Jackson and Chester Arthur. To date, Buchanan is the only president to remain a lifelong bachelor. A career politician and former diplomat, he left office just before the outbreak of the American Civil War.

**Andrew Johnson:** His grandfather was from Antrim and is believed to have left Mounthill in Antrim for Britain's North American colonies around 1760. Johnson became president following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in April 1865 and led the government's efforts to re-establish the Union following the conclusion of the Civil War. He also made history as the first US president to be impeached, though he was kept in office by the Senate.

**Ulysses S. Grant:** His great-grandfather hailed from Tyrone. The celebrated Union army general was descended from John Simpson, a native of Ballygawley, Co. Tyrone who arrived in the USA in 1760. The 18th US president was also the first to visit Ireland, though it was after he had left office. A noted war hero but a lackluster politician, he had a cabinet that was rife with corruption.

**Chester A. Arthur:** His father was from Antrim, near Ballymena in Antrim and left for the United States 14



years before the birth of his son. Arthur ascended to the presidency following the assassination of President Garfield.

**Grover Cleveland:** His grandfather was from Antrim. He is best remembered as the only US president to serve two non-consecutive terms in office. His grandfather left Antrim toward the end of the 18th century and would go on to become a book publisher in Baltimore.

**Benjamin Harrison:** His great-grandfather was from Antrim. After a career as a lawyer and brigadier-general in the Civil War he served as a US Senator for six years before becoming president.

**William McKinley:** His grandfather was from Antrim, hailing from Ballymoney, and arriving in the US around 1743. McKinley led the US to victory in the Spanish-American War and seized control of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam. He was assassinated in 1901 while delivering a speech in Buffalo, New York.

**Theodore Roosevelt:** His ancestors from Larne, Co. Antrim. He was the youngest ever to take office when, at 43, he succeeded William McKinley following his assassination. A charismatic leader, he expanded the powers of the presidency and won the Nobel Peace Prize for his mediation of the Russo-Japanese War.

**William Howard Taft:** His ancestors came from Louth. He was the only person to serve as both President and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

**Woodrow Wilson:** His grandfather came from Tyrone. He is best remembered as the president who oversaw America's entry into the First World War and helped to found the League of Nations in its aftermath.

**Harry S. Truman:** His ancestors

hailed from Donegal and Tyrone. He succeeded Franklin D. Roosevelt when the then president died in office. He was responsible for dropping the atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and he oversaw the beginning of the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

**John Fitzgerald Kennedy:** His great-grandparents came from Limerick, Wexford, Cork, Clare, and Fermanagh. The most well-known Irish American president, JFK was also the first to visit Ireland while still in office and the first Roman Catholic to be elected president. His life was tragically cut short when he became the fourth US president to be assassinated while in office during a trip to Dallas.

**Lyndon B. Johnson:** Great (x5) grandfather from Galway. He grew up in central Texas, not far from Johnson City, which his family helped found. A veteran politician, his term as president was dominated by the ongoing Vietnam War and his "Great Society" programs.

**Richard Nixon:** His ancestors were from Kildare. His mother Hannah was descended from the Milhous family, Irish Quakers from Timahoe, Kildare while the first Nixon to arrive in the US, James, left Ireland in 1731.

**Gerald Ford:** Great (x4) grandparents came from Armagh and Down. He assumed the presidency following Nixon's resignation in 1974, the first vice-president to do so in such circumstances.

**Jimmy Carter:** Great (x4) grandparents hailed from Antrim. His term was dominated by economic issues. In 2002 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social

development.

**Ronald Reagan:** Great-grandparents from Antrim and Tipperary. He could boast at least three Irish ancestors, most notably Michael Regan from Ballyporeen in Tipperary who left Ireland in 1851. When he visited Ireland in 1984, following his re-election as president, he visited his ancestral hometown where they later named the local bar after him.

**George H.W. Bush:** Great (x4) grandparents from Down. A former senator and vice president, he took office in 1989. He led the US during the First Gulf War and oversaw the end of the Cold War but would economic problems at home would see him fail to be re-elected for a second term.

**George W. Bush:** Great (x5) grandparents from Down. The son of George H.W. Bush, he was only the second child of a former president to then become president. He led America during a transformative period dominated by the 'War on Terror' which he declared in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

**Barack Obama:** His great-great-grandfather was Fulmuth Kearney of Offaly. He paid a visit to Moneygall, his ancestral home place, in 2011.

**Joe Biden:** His great-great grandparents were from Mayo and Louth through his maternal line. Pioneering research carried out by our partners at the Irish Family History Centre in 2016 revealed he is descended from the Blewitt and Finnegan families, respectively. His great-great grandfather Patrick Blewitt left Mayo in 1850 to become a sailor in the USA and settled in Scranton, Pennsylvania, while his great-grandfather, James Finnegan, born 1840, arrived in Ovid Township, Seneca, New York in the late 1840s.



# Ocean Edge offers a fun respite on Cape Cod

One of Cape Cod's best destinations — Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club — continues to offer its guests some unique get-away options to help them fight off the pandemic blues.

Nestled along the coast in the town of Brewster, the 337-room resort has weathered the Covid storm well, with strong bookings throughout the holiday season, thanks in part to safety-conscious innovations. One of them is the The Frost Bar, a new wintertime food and beverage destination set up on the terrace of the Mansion, the complex's main building. The terrace has been transformed into a pop-up culinary experience with an arctic setting, complete with private igloos that can be reserved for up to 6 guests for a 90-minute seating.

Located behind The Mansion overlooking Cape Cod Bay, guests and patrons alike can book a table inside the restaurant for traditional a-la-carte dining or a private igloo with exclusive dining packages that include wintry cocktails with an assortment of delicious hors d'oeuvres and seasonal entrees. From a gouda and caramelized onion fondue to lobster poutine and butternut squash risotto, the Ocean Edge culinary team aims to tantalize your taste buds and keep you warm this Cape Cod winter.

The resort is also offering an Igloo Package through March 25, which will include 10-20 percent discount on an overnight stay. In addition to the Frost Bar, the resort has its Beach House Spa open for guests, including services like massages, manicures and pedicures, waxings, and facials, along with bridal services. A "girls getaway" package offered this season includes multi-bedroom villas and 25 percent discounts on spa treatments through May 27.

The Frost Bar active will remain open until mid-April, at which point the terrace will be switched over to a different, spring season identity as The Front Lawn. The Front Lawn experience at Ocean Edge transforms the five-acre Mansion lawn into an open-air hangout, with brews, bites, and live music on the weekends. Adults and kids alike can space out and enjoy quality time together while enjoying the cool Cape air.



Coming back for spring 2021: The Front Lawn at Ocean Edge.

All photos courtesy Ocean Edge Resort and Golf Club.



One of the signature cocktails at the Frost Bar at Ocean Edge.

Exclusively for this pop-up, the sprawling green space is decked out with lawn games, a wood-fired oven with an eclectic menu of light bites, such as wood-fired chicken wings, white clam pizza, and s'mores nachos. It will



A room with a view at Ocean Edge in Brewster, MA.

also feature craft cocktails, wines, and buckets of beers featuring local Cape Cod breweries, like Devil's Purse and Hog Island.

the website [oceanedge.com](http://oceanedge.com) or call 1-508-896-9000. Rates start at just \$119 per night.

-REPORTER STAFF



Inside one of the igloos at Ocean Edge.



Ocean Edge Frost Bar and igloos have been a huge hit in the winter season. The venue remains open through mid-April.





Irish defeat Italy in Guinness Six Nations play - When in Rome. Ireland won a big Round 3 victory on Feb. 27 against Italy in a Guinness Six Nations match-up. After two losses to start the tournament, Ireland dominated the Italians 48-10 on their home turf. The six tries for the

green were all converted by captain Jonathan Sexton, who led the squad. The match featured the international debut of 21-year-old Craig Casey of Limerick, in action, above. He and Ryan Baird made their international debuts during Ireland's 48-10 victory. The win was also the first



test appearance for Leinster lock Ryan Baird. The annual international men's rugby competition includes sides from England - the reigning champions from 2020 - France, Wales and Scotland. Ireland last won the title in 2018.  
*Photos courtesy Guinness Six Nations*



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