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BRING ON THE PARADES



A view of the South Boston St. Patrick's Day/Evacuation Day parade as seen in March 2022 shows a large group of spectators along East Broadway in front of The Playwright, a popular bar and restaurant. *Chris Lovett photo*

Officials set earlier start time for March 16 South Boston parade

By **CASSIDY McNEELEY**
REPORTER STAFF

South Boston's annual parade, a dual celebration of St. Patrick's Day and Evacuation Day that will kick off on Sun., March 16, will begin an hour-and-a-half earlier than past years as elected officials and parade organizers attempt to curb the unruly behavior that has marred the event in recent years.

The parade will commence from its customary starting point by Broadway MBTA station at 11:30 a.m., according to state Sen. Nick Collins and City Councillor Ed Flynn, who both called for reforms to the parade after a string of assaults, overcrowding, and other incidents along and near the parade route last year.

In a statement to The Reporter, Collins said, "The parade will be starting earlier this year in an attempt to get a better handle on the tomfoolery. Last year, there were regrettable moments at the parade that we don't want to see repeated this time around."

Flynn will serve as the parade's general chairman and the chief marshal is Allana Devlin Ball, a South Boston native who is a retired US Navy Lt. commander.

"Following last year's unacceptable violence and public drinking at the Evacuation Day Parade," said



A member of the Boston Police Gaelic Column played the bagpipes as he marched with fellow officers and band members up Broadway in 2022. *Chris Lovett photo*

Flynn, "I convened a monthly meeting and task force with the South Boston elected officials, South Boston Allied War Veterans Council and city and state agencies, including the Boston Police Department, the Massachusetts State Police, MBTA Transit Police, and the Boston Parks Department, among others.

"This task force and partners in the community have met multiple times since then to prepare and discuss

public safety for all and restore a family-friendly environment at this year's parade."

The parade will follow its traditional route, up West Broadway from near the T station and onto East Broadway to City Point. Marchers will then turn at P street to East 4th and head back west, ending on Dorchester Street at Andrew Station.

Flynn added this note about the proceedings on March 16: "I have made it a priority to ensure that the focus of the parade returns to Evacuation Day and honoring our veterans, military families, first responders, as well as our proud immigrant history and families that came to our city in search of a better life.

"As the City of Boston is down approximately 130 officers this year, law enforcement will collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure that all visitors respect the rule of law and the people of South Boston. I expect all visitors to respect the rule of law and act accordingly. It is critical that we ensure a family-friendly event to honor our veterans and military families."

The parade will be preceded by the traditional St. Patrick's Day Breakfast, which once again will be hosted by Sen. Collins, who says the breakfast will begin at 9

(Continued on page 9)

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Happy

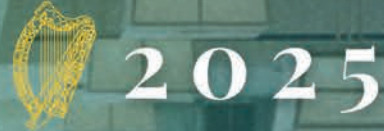
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An immigration lawyer lays out what people who lack status need to know as ICE ramps up its enforcement

For immigrants from Ireland and other nations who are living and working in the United States but lack the formal credentials allowing them to do so – and for their families and friends – these are parlous times. The Trump Administration’s policy on rounding up illegal residents

on criminal or civil grounds and sending them back to their homeland forthwith “makes no sense,” says Immigration Attorney John P Foley, “it’s just cut and create fear.”

In a discussion with Boston Irish Publisher Edward Forry, Mr. Foley focused on Irish communities and those

areas where inattention can be fatal to an individual’s hope for a path to US citizenship. He details how ICE agents are approaching their assigned responsibilities, and he lays out how some people who are out of status now might be able to overcome obstacles and obtain citizenship.

Q. What is the distinction between people who illegally entered the country and people who have overstayed the limits of their allowed times here? How does that relate to the Irish community right now?

A. When it comes to the Irish community, the vast majority of those who are out of status are people who came in on what is called the Visa Waiver program or the ESTA program. In that program, you’re allowed to go online, register and get a 90-day visa to enter the United States without having to go to the consulate. So those people who have stayed beyond their their 90 days are out of status.

The fine print in that policy is that they have waived their rights to judicial processing. That’s the reason why they will be targeted. If they are caught by an ICE agent, they can be removed without ever going in front of an immigration judge.

So, an ICE officer who has a quota of people to remove per week will go after the low hanging fruit and Visa Waivers. Overstays among the Irish are low hanging fruit. They’ll simply be picked up, and instead of waiting years to go in front of a judge, they’ll be detained at a facility for a short while, put on a plane, and sent back to Ireland.

Q. What advice do you have for them?

A. They should have a plan ready. Contact the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA.org), get an attorney who speaks their language, one that lives near you, one you can afford. Then make a family plan for what you will do when ICE takes a member of your family.

Q. Do you think Irish overstays in particular are vulnerable right now?

A. Ireland is one of about 35 countries that have access to the Visa waiver program. It’s a reciprocal program we have with other nations that, as I said, allows people to come in as visitors without the need to go to a consulate for a visa interview. I think that when the beds and the holding facilities fill up with people on their way out of the country, and there’s no place to put them, they’re still going to want numbers.

Those are our neighbors. Those are our friends. We all know people who are in that category whether we recognize it or not. They live amongst us and they’re part of our community, and they’re going to be impacted by this administration’s immigration policy.

Q. There’s a program whereby you, if you’re an overstay but you have a child who has been born here, you might be able to gain citizenship. How does that work?

A. If you are a visa overstay, you have very limited means to get legal. You need to have an immediate relative who is a US citizen, so it can be a spouse or it can be a child who has turned 21. So, in those few cases you can adjust your status based on a family-based petition. If you have, say, a brother who’s a US citizen, he’s not considered an immediate relative. So, you can’t adjust status based on your sibling relationship.

It’s an avenue to legalization because instead of facing ICE, you’ll be dealing with USCIS, which is the Citizenship and Immigration Service. They’re in the business of giving out benefits. So, you’ll be going after your benefit. I advise anyone who is in a domestic situation as outlined above to go right away to an immigration lawyer, that’s the fastest thing they can do to get legal. Get a lawyer, adjust status and become a legal resident or a green card holder, and that puts a person on a path to US citizenship.

Q. By doing that, are you making yourself vulnerable to deportation?



Immigration attorney John Foley

“The place where people usually get in trouble is behind the wheel of a car or in a place where alcohol is served. So, if you know your immigration status is an issue, you just want to avoid that. If you can avoid driving, I would do that. And if you could avoid being in a place where there are a lot of undocumented people and you know it, I would try to avoid that, too. So instead of getting in a van at the end of the day and getting a lift home with five or six other coworkers, get home on your own. ... This administration is removing people who are considered collateral damage: They remove somebody who has a criminal problem, but at the same time, they remove all of those in the same place who are out of status.”

A. You are acknowledging that you’ve overstayed, you’re signing forms under the pains and penalties of perjury, so you’re telling them the truth, but you’re really not exposing yourself to ICE, you’re really putting yourself on a path to legalization. Once you start the process of a family-based petition, ICE would keep its hand off the case, unless there are unusual extenuating circumstances.

So, ICE is about Immigration and Enforcement and USCIS is about benefits, US Citizenship and Immigration Services. It’s providing immigration benefits and services. It is the arm of the US government that gives green cards, employment cards, and, ultimately, the arm that naturalizes people to become US citizens.

USCIS reviews all of the cases, obviously, and when they come across cases that should be ICE cases, they do refer them to that agency, but those are for people who have significant criminal issues and other problems.

Q. When a person has been adjudicated favorably by USCIS, does he or she get a green card and have legal status to live and work here?

A. Yes. You adjust from a Visa waiver overstay to that of a legal resident. If it’s based on marriage and you’ve been married for less than two years, it’s a conditional legal residency, which is only good for two years, but that makes you legal in the United States. You can reside here, you can work here, and, most importantly, you can travel internationally and get back in. And it also puts you on a path toward citizenship. If you are doing it based on marriage and your spouse is a US citizen, you can become a

US citizen yourself after three years; if you’re doing it through a child, you can become a US citizen yourself after you’ve been a green card holder for five years.

Q. What other advice do you have for overstays?

A. The place where people usually get in trouble is behind the wheel of a car or in a place where alcohol is served. So, if you know your immigration status is an issue, you just want to avoid that. If you can avoid driving, I would do that. And if you could avoid being in a place where there are a lot of undocumented people and you know it, I would try to avoid that, too. So instead of getting in a van at the end of the day and getting a lift home with five or six other coworkers, get home on your own. That way, if ICE goes after one of your coworkers, you are not collateral damage. This administration is removing people who are considered collateral damage. And that’s what I mean: They remove somebody who has a criminal problem, but at the same time, they remove all of those in the same place who are out of status.

Q. If ICE stops a van because they believe that there’s one person who’s in criminal status, how do they interrogate the others who are in that van?

A. You have to show them an ID, but you don’t have to say anything. You can say, I want a lawyer, but they can be intimidating. And they will run you through the system. They’ll run your name, your date of birth, and they can check their database. It’s pretty straightforward. We know who has come into the country, we know how long they were given to stay in the country, so we know who is an overstay.

ICE agents also have access to all of the court records, so they know what people have a criminal past. So ICE is equipped with up to date information. They know for the most part, who they’re looking for.

Q. Are immigration judges being targeted?

A. The Trump administration has fired 20 immigration judges, many of whom had just completed their training and hadn’t sat for cases yet – even though there are 4 million cases backlogged in the system. They got rid of them because they were appointed during the Biden administration. In many cases, they were just terminated with an email and were out of a job overnight.

One of the judges fired without ever sitting on a case is a local woman, Kerry Doyle. She is the former chapter chairperson of the American Immigration Lawyers Association who joined the Biden administration and was appointed to the immigration court. She has a child in college and, in addition to wondering how she is going to pay for her mortgage, she is now concerned about how she will pay her son’s college tuition.

She is an extremely intelligent, hard-working, and decent person who over her career has helped thousands of people. That someone like her could be harmed by this administration underscores how bad Trump and his people really are.

Q. How do the sitting judges interact with ICE?

A. ICE simply is the enforcement branch. Even a liberal immigration lawyer like me wants criminals prosecuted and removed from the United States, but that’s not what the Trump administration is doing for every violent criminal. It is deporting hundreds of others who were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. It’s just another Trump scam. So, ICE is being used by the Trump administration in a scam.

John Foley is the grandson of immigrants, and has more than 25 years of immigration law experience dealing with all types of immigration visas and issues.

More than an ocean separates Ireland and America in 2025

Of the 2,175 Americans asked in a new CBS/YouGov poll that was taken from Feb. 5 to Feb. 7, 53 percent endorsed "the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president"; 58 percent concurred that he is "effective"; and 55 percent affirmed that he has been "competent" in executing the duties of his position to date.

Leaving aside the usual retort that it is a single poll and some legitimate criticisms of how the questions were phrased in the survey, it did reflect widespread approval, at least at this incipient stage, of the Trump presidency. Speaking anecdotally, it is in keeping with what I heard from very many of the family, friends, and acquaintances I chatted with in Washington and in the Boston area in the period after Christmas.

Yet following weeks of what can only be described as shock and awe – at home and abroad – I was fairly astonished to see these robust figures for the bombastic billionaire. It is hard to know where to start when it comes to assessing the frenetic pace that Trump has gotten off to and the conceivable impact of the far-reaching executive orders he has issued and the objectively extreme agenda he seems determined to pursue.

My surprise is undeniably shaped by the profound disgust and disbelief that is so prevalent in Ireland. Trump's words and deeds since Jan. 20 have

confirmed people's biggest fears. Most, though definitely not all, loathe the man. And they cannot comprehend how any sentient being could choose Donald Trump for a seat on a city or county council, never mind pick him as the commander-in-chief.

Irish ire has been especially provoked by his expansionist intentions with respect to Canada, Greenland, the Panama Canal, and now Gaza, which are quite a distance from the America First, inward-facing rhetoric he deployed to his advantage during the campaign. That the electorate hasn't collectively recoiled in horror at the president's evident embrace of "manifest destiny" as his foreign policy has incensed those here who disdain the US. They have always been a more numerous minority than we like to think. And they are increasingly out in the open about their feelings these days.

It is impossible to predict what is next. But again, things could deteriorate further before they improve. All the while, the residents of this island will look on aghast, unable to fathom why an America they no longer recognize put Donald Trump back in the White House.

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In this context, civic discourse in Ireland is currently dominated by concern as to just how we will be affected by the fallout from the Trump presidency. An Taoiseach (prime minister) Micheál Martin has been invited to present the

traditional bowl of shamrock in the Oval Office on March 17. In addition, the new government is dispatching a sizeable contingent of cabinet ministers (Minister for Enterprise Peter Burke will be in Boston) and the attorney general to all corners of the US. Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) Simon Harris is focusing on trade as part of his portfolio and is establishing a US-based advisory board comprised of successful Irish American businesspeople.

The signals that Trump is sending on tariffs and his desire for the repatriation of jobs and tax revenue are foreboding for the Irish economy – exposed as it is given the amount of foreign direct investment from US corporations and the volume of pharmaceutical and other goods exported from here across the Atlantic – and in turn, for the fabric of Irish society. The European Union will negotiate with and/or retaliate against the Trump administration as a bloc. That said, Ireland is well-situated for a host of reasons, including its famed "soft power" stateside, to play a vital role in avoiding the worst-case scenarios being mooted.

Tales abound of Trump abandoning a supposedly rigid stance in the past on the basis of a personal connection, a whim, or the careful massaging of his mammoth ego. Consequently, without wanting to be excessively glib or trivial, I would suggest that the prospect of the golfers Shane Lowry and Rory McIlroy

acting as good will ambassadors for Ireland and the EU is worth exploring. The president is a golf fanatic.

The unfortunate added wrinkle at a complex and potentially perilous juncture for the US-Irish bond is the exponentially expanding attitudinal gulf that divides us on the Middle East. On my recent travels, I was struck by how aware ordinary Americans are of the breakdown in diplomatic relations between Ireland and Israel and by the growing perception that this country is fundamentally anti-Semitic.

Benjamin Netanyahu and Co., together with their friends in the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), have been mass communicating their displeasure with the Emerald Isle. Some of the prominent individuals promoting Trump's ideas on tariffs and trade are also staunch defenders of Israel, such as Howard Lutnick, who routinely refers to Ireland pejoratively in the media.

The Irish leaders journeying to Washington, DC and beyond for St. Patrick's Day must approach this subject with enormous caution in talks with their counterparts. The overwhelming majority here are certain of the righteousness of the Palestinian cause and furious at what they deem the grossly disproportionate Israeli response to the atrocities of October 7th. This contrasts starkly with an endemic indifference to global affairs on the one hand, and an unwavering sympathy for a steadfast ally in a troubled region on the other, that are both common in the US.

There are no straightforward answers to this quandary. In my view, however, even as leftist opponents of the government allege moral cowardice, Ireland has to put pragmatism and self-interest to the fore. That does not mean jettisoning support or advocacy for the suffering women, men, and children of Gaza. But realpolitik dictates that this is not the appropriate occasion to call attention to a radical divergence of opinion on the Middle East. We live in the world as it is, not as we might wish it were. Maybe trite, yet still true.

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On a badly needed lighter note, the Irish tourist season kicks off in earnest this month. I expect the streets of Galway, Dublin et al. to soon be teeming with Americans. Geopolitical disagreements notwithstanding, the welcome mat remains intact and this is a fantastic time to make a trip "home" – whether it's your first or your fifteenth visit. The dollar is virtually on par with the euro. And by comparison to the absolutely extortionate prices for pints, meals, hotels and nearly everything else in Massachusetts, you will find bargains aplenty, particularly if you venture outside the capital city.

So go ahead and book the flights. I promise you won't regret it. Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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

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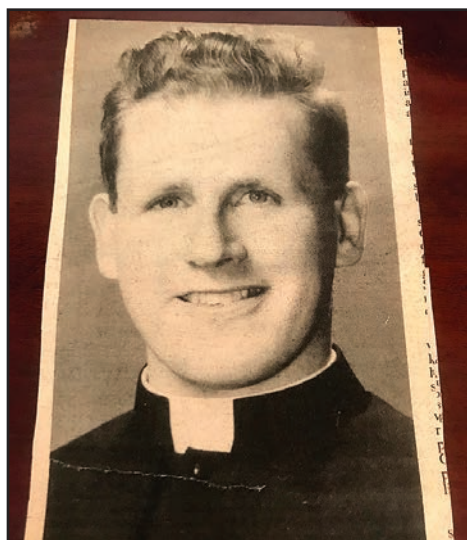


Mary Ann Brett

‘Padre Eugenio’ shed his grace on the streets of Peru

Irish-born priest on mission from Boston was decades-long champion of community solidarity

Father Eugene Kirk, a longtime member of Boston-based Missionary Society of Saint James the Apostle, passed away in December at 90. The society was founded in Boston in 1958 by then-Archbishop Richard J. Cushing who was inspired by Pope Pius XII’s call to strengthen bonds between dioceses in the northern and southern hemispheres. The society is not a religious order but an organization of diocesan priests who serve impoverished and often remote communities in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. While most priests serve the Society in the missions for 5 years, Father Gene served for more than 60. His life as a missionary priest was admirable in every way and an example of how Boston and Ireland’s histories are intertwined.



Father Eugene Kirk, a Catholic missionary for more than 60 years

Padre Eugenio finds his life’s mission

I first met Father Gene in 1986 on a dusty road in Lima, Peru. His compassion, generosity of spirit, and willingness to work side by side with his parishioners in a densely populated urban parish had already made “Padre Eugenio” a legend.

Born and reared in Kilkenny, County Louth, Ireland, Father Gene joined the Society of Saint James after his 1962 ordination in Dublin. After a year in Belmont and Chelsea parishes as well as time spent in language training in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Gene was assigned to parishes in the Andes. He developed a deep connection to the campesinos (country people) of the mountains, a bond that would inform and enrich his life and work. Soon Gene found his life’s mission in the “pueblos jovenes” (young towns or shanty towns) on the outskirts of Peru’s capital city.

Large-scale migration from Peru’s mountain villages to the capital started in the late 1960s and was accelerated by a terrorist campaign waged by the Maoist group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). Unprotected by the Peruvian military, hundreds of thousands of campesinos abandoned the Andes and moved to Lima. There was no support awaiting the migrants there, no jobs,

housing, medical care, running water, sewerage, electricity, schools, police service, welfare, transportation system or even roads. The people built it all themselves.

In 1971, migrants established the squatter settlement that became Villa El Salvador on empty sand flats south of Lima by erecting rudimentary shacks from straw, discarded cardboard boxes and whatever else they could find. Father Gene moved to the settlement to serve the few thousand campesinos. The community grew to three hundred thousand in three years. Poco a poco (little by little), the people organized themselves to build an entirely new city. The church community served as a meeting place and organizing platform. Father Gene worked at the grassroots level with activists, partnering with the community’s democratically elected representatives, some of whom were members of the local communist party. Together they secured land, running water, electricity, and established schools, community gardens, and soup kitchens. Eventually “Villa” gained full recognition from the government. After eight years, Gene was brought back to Boston for two years in Dorchester’s St. Paul’s Parish, but his heart was in Peru. Cardinal Humberto Medeiros allowed him to return, and apart from

occasional trips to Boston and Ireland, he stayed there.

The vast majority of slums in South America are miserable concentrations of poverty, criminality, and hopelessness but Villa El Salvador has always been the opposite: solidarity. The remarkable success is held up as an inspiring model of self-help and self-government for squatter communities around the world. Major news outlets, including the *New York Times*, have written stories and produced documentaries about the triumph of Villa El Salvador, often quoting Father Gene. Straw shacks were improved to cinder block dwellings and eventually fine multi story homes. The development of housing and infrastructure was achieved with almost no external or governmental funding.

Liberation theology sets out a new course

The establishment of Villa El Salvador coincided with the liberation theology movement. In 1971, the same year that Villa was created, liberation theology’s most visible champion, Gustavo Gutierrez, published his seminal work, “A Theology of Liberation.” The movement inspired human rights and social justice advocates from the clergy and lay community. The central goal was to align the Catholic Church with the struggles of the poor. Traditionally,

the church in Latin America has been an instrument of the powerful, but progressives believed that to live up to the mission of Jesus, the church must choose the “preferential option of the poor.”

Father Gene and his like-minded brother priests and women religious were not liberation theologians as such; they were practitioners. They naturally sided with the poor in their daily struggle to survive rather than the powerful interests of aristocratic landowners, military, and multinationals. By building communities of peace, prosperity and fairness, they showed that solidarity works.

Boston Irish readers who are over 50 may remember this period of Catholic progressivism (after the Second Vatican Council and before John Paul II) fondly: “Godspell,” guitars at mass, using pita bread rather than the industrially produced wafers for the eucharist. In my parents’ circles of friends and family, priests, women religious, and lay people all anticipated that women would be priests and that priests would be able to marry.

Cold Warriors launch a backlash

The social justice initiatives of Father Gene and priests like him were not really political, or even theological. They wanted to help people improve their material conditions like having food, water, and shelter. Nevertheless, discussing “social justice” from the pulpit drew attention from reactionary forces within and outside the church. The world of the 1970s-1990s was split into the simplistic cold-war binary of communism vs. the free world. Liberation theologians’ analysis of the Latin American reality drew heavily on the work of Karl Marx. In the context of the Cold War, quoting Marx put the movement in the crosshairs of a new pope and the United States of America. The Vatican and successive US administrations aggressively rolled back progressives in Latin America and around the world. Father Gene was placed on a CIA communist watch list.

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‘Padre Eugenio’ shed his grace on the streets of Peru

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In Villa El Salvador as a teenage lay volunteer, I was asked by several wary parishioners if I were in the CIA.

The backlash was effective. Upon his elevation in 1978, John Paul II and his right-hand man, Cardinal Ratzinger, used their power to systematically neutralize the leadership of the liberation theology movement by demoting, silencing, defrocking, defunding, and excommunicating those who preached or wrote books about the movement. The pope forbade anyone to speak about women’s ordination. In Massachusetts, after the human rights activist and Jesuit priest, Bob Drinan, had served in Congress for 10 years, he was forced to resign. In Latin America, progressive cardinals, bishops, and lay leaders were replaced by conservatives. To the people, the pope said: “You should be more interested in getting into heaven than making heaven on earth.” In the face of economic hardship, he encouraged the people to “pray.” In Villa, they believed in the power of prayer but they also believed in organizing.

Why would church leaders disband or cripple lay organizations that were helping the poor feed themselves while at the same time call upon rich people

to feed the poor? Progressives saw a reassertion of the church’s millennia-long relationship with the rich and powerful. Conservatives argued that the pope and Ratzinger were right in saying that all people – rich and poor – are worthy of salvation and that “siding with the poor” meant excluding the rich.

The United States was not playing games in Latin America, either. The CIA orchestrated the assassination of Che Guevara in 1967 in Bolivia, reportedly at the hands of the Nazi Klaus Barbie, World War II’s “Butcher of Lyon.” After the war, Barbie worked under an assumed name for the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the CIA, spying on French communists. After he was convicted in absentia of war crimes, Barbie was smuggled out of France by the CIA and the Croatian Catholic Church. Thanks to the CIA, Barbie lived freely in Bolivia and Peru until 1983, training special forces on torture techniques to repress left wing movements. He died in 1991 in a French prison. In other actions, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger violently overthrew the and socialist Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 and Ronald Reagan armed and trained death squads in Central America including those who killed Bishop Romero in 1980.

The list goes on.

A pope panders to Peru’s elites

In 1985, John Paul II visited Peru, where rather than cheering the self-help of the community, he pandered to the elites of Peru and encouraged them to “feed the poor.” The poor of Peru were not asking for charity. What they wanted was not to be beaten, tortured, and disappeared by the ruling class for demanding their rights. During the pope’s visit, there were blackouts caused by bombs detonated by Sendero Luminoso, whose attacks had originally driven the campesinos to leave the mountains. The pope lumped together left-wing politicians, activists, and priests with the rebel group. He was wrong. Of liberation theologians, the pope declared: “When they begin to use political means, they cease to be theologians.” But what is politics really? Is using collective action to demand clean drinking water politics? Perhaps, but community leaders like Father Gene did not shy away from that responsibility.

He stood with “his people” for the rest of his life. All his advocacy work was in addition to his vocation as a priest: baptizing children, performing marriages, anointing the sick, consoling the bereaved, counseling the discouraged, and celebrating the Mass for a very large parish.

As skilled carpenter, an ability he honed while serving a Cistercian Abbey in Louth as a young lad, Gene built his own home in Villa El Salvador and helped build many others. He was proud that every tile and every brick of the churches in Villa was made by the people themselves. Maybe the magic ingredient of Villa was the Irish concept of ‘Meitheal’ that Gene brought from Ireland. Indefatigable in service, he was famous for riding his yellow motorcycle to perform his pastoral duties well into his 80s.

Father Gene was as humble as he was generous, maintaining that it was the people who led the way in building a peaceful and prosperous community from scratch. He believed that he was there simply to “acompañar” (accompany) la gente (the people) on their life’s journey, which included the struggle to survive. Community groups, often led by women, to buy milk or stoves collectively and prepare and distribute nourishing meals to the least fortunate all took root during Father Gene’s tenure. Community and medical centers are lasting marks of a community that “found shelter in each other.”

On Saint Patrick’s Day in 1987 at the celebration of the 25th anniversary of his ordination, I was lucky to hear Father Gene share two life lessons that I have reflected upon ever since. First, he said that “the capacities for gratitude and forgiveness are two of God’s most important gifts.” Secondly, he said, that “wherever there is love and service to others, God exists.”

A few years ago, our daughter Laura honeymooned in Peru. She and her husband took a bus to Villa El Salvador and asked the first person they met where they could find “Padre Eugenio.” Even though Villa El Salvador had over 500,000 residents by then, they were immediately guided to Father Gene’s home. The door, as always, was open.

John Paul II’s long papacy halted the liberation theology movement. He was followed by an even more conservative Benedict XVI and by a personally progressive(ish) but doctrinally restricted Francis. The result is an ultra-conservative Church obsessed with restricting reproductive rights (isn’t that politics, too?) rather than empowering the poor to improve their lives and communities.

Reactionary forces prevented the development of many more Villa El Savadors, but they could not undo what the spirit of Villa El Salvador had already created, and Father Gene played his part. The last time we met in Boston, he admitted, “Ach, you know in Villa, after so many years, I’ve become a bit of an icon,” a modest understatement offered not with pride but with bemusement.

If there is a heaven, Padre Eugenio is in it, and he will leave the door open.

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6 PM

Omni Parker House



Honoring Gold Medal Award Recipient Monica McWilliams, Northern Irish academic, peace activist, human rights defender and former politician. In 1996, she co-founded the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) political party and was elected as a delegate at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998.

Join us for a lively and elegant evening in honor of Monica McWilliams!

For more information, contact Gold Medal Dinner Committee Members:

email Cate McGrail @ cateowo@hotmail.com

Tickets are \$250.00 per person

eiresociety.org

BOSTON IRISH Holiday Parades

Earlier start called an ‘attempt to get a better handle on the tomfoolery’

(Continued from page 1)

a.m. and be televised on NECN, NESN, and BNN-TV and on the radio at 950 AM. Featured guests will include federal, state, and local elected officials, military officials, and a special guest speaker from the Irish government, Peter Burke, the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism, and Employment. The 42-year-old Doyle is a native of Mullingar who has served as an elected member of the Dail since 2016.

Collins said he expects Boston’s still-developing mayoral election will be the center of much attention and jabs at the breakfast. “The mayoral race is on everyone’s mind,” he said Collins, who noted that “the enthusiasm from volunteers, participants, and sponsors has shone through” as he prepares for this year’s breakfast.

The celebrations surrounding the St. Patrick’s Day and Evacuation Day holiday requires months of planning and unfold over several weeks in and around South Boston. The festivities began on March 1 with the annual Jimmy Flaherty Kickoff Breakfast at Seapoint Bar & Grill. The days following included competitions in the boxing ring at Peter Welch’s Gym, on the Tynan School basketball court, and at the Murphy Skating Rink.

On Wed., March 12, Councillor Flynn, along with his council colleagues Erin Murphy and John Fitzgerald of Dorchester, will host an Irish flag-raising ceremony open to the public on City

Hall Plaza at 10:30 a.m.

On March 17, the day after the parade, Flynn and Collins said they will take part in the Evacuation Day historical exercises at Dorchester Heights, the National Park site where colonial troops under the command of Gen. George Washington took up a fortified position that prompted British forces to leave Boston under the threat of an artillery bombardment in 1776.

Collins, along with community members will meet at the South Boston

OFFICIAL ROUTE OF 2025 South Boston Evacuation Day/St. Patrick’s Day Parade



Start Broadway Station up West Broadway continue onto East Broadway take a Right on P St then Right onto East 4th Street. Follow East 4th Street left onto K Street and then right onto East 5th St. Continue up East 5th and take left onto G Street. Stay to left of South Boston HS onto Thomas Park follow Thomas Park and take a left onto Telegraph St. Down Telegraph Street Left onto Dorchester Street. Follow Dorchester St until you arrive at Parade ending in Andrew Sq

South Boston Candlepin. (Must be 21 to attend.) On Tues., March 11, a swimming competition at the Edgerley Family Boys & Girls Club will start at 6 p.m. The Murphy Skating Rink will be the scene for an “Ice-O-Rama” event on Wed., March 1, 2 at 6 p.m. The James F. Condon School will host an athletic competition on Thurs., March 13, 4 p.m. On Friday, March 14 from 4-8 p.m., it’s the Timothy “Doc” Cook Shamrock Showdown at the Murphy Rink. The evening of March 14 is also the time of the South Boston Citizens Association 145th Evacuation Day Banquet at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

On Sun., March 16, the Edgerley Family South Boston Boys & Girls Club St. Patrick’s Day 5K Road Race starts at 9:30 a.m.

Day, dates for other St. Patrick’s Parades

- Sat., March 1 – Pawtucket, RI, at noon
 - Sat., March 8 – Cape Cod, 11 a.m.; Providence at noon
 - Sat., March 15 – Newport, RI, 11 a.m.
 - Sun., March 16 – South Boston, 11:30 a.m.; New Haven, 1:30 p.m.; Worcester, noon; Abington, 1 p.m.; Scituate, 1 p.m.
 - Mon., March 17 – Dublin, Galway, Cork, Sligo et al, Ireland
 - Sun., March 23 – Holyoke.
 - Sun., March 30 – Manchester, NH.
- Information courtesy of BITA-Boston Irish Tourism Association*



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Celtic Bells ★ “The Irish in Boston”

Saturday, March 8, 2025

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

St. Patrick’s Day

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



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to make a reservation. The Celebrate! series is appropriate for family audiences and children ages 5 and up. Children are seated on the floor with their caretakers. Registration is recommended but not required. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

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JOIN US AT THE PASTORAL CENTRE

MAR. 5: IPC Toddler Group, St. Patrick's Day Party, 10AM

MAR. 7: Supper Club, 5PM-7PM (to register call: 617-265-5300)

MAR. 14: St. Patrick's Day Event at Florian Hall, 11AM-3PM

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

THINKING OF SPENDING YOUR J1 SUMMER IN BOSTON?

All J1 student queries please contact:
J1@ipcboston.org or Call 617-265-5300



THE IRISH PASTORAL CENTRE



WELCOMES 2025 J1 SUMMER STUDENTS

Tues. June 10th, 3-5PM

Join us at The IPC for our annual J1 Orientation. This will be a highly informative event where students can meet each other, get to learn about our culture, open bank accounts, switch phones to a USA network, and much more!

For more info/ RSVP email J1@ipcboston.org

The Irish Pastoral Center, 540 Gallivan Blvd, Rear, Dorchester, MA 02124



Ard-Chonsalacht na hÉireann
Consulate General of Ireland



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SAINT PATRICK'S Celebration

FRIDAY 14th MARCH | **Annual Mass & Blessing of Shamrocks** | **TICKET \$40**

Corned Beef Dinner Followed by music & dancing with Erin's Melody

11am-3pm

****REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED BEFORE THE EVENT****

Tables of 10 available - if you would like to be seated next to someone please purchase tickets together

Payment must be made at the IPC or www.ipcboston.org before the event.
Mail checks to Irish Pastoral Centre, 540 Gallivan Blvd, Unit Rear, Dorchester, MA 02124

Florian Hall, 55 Hallet St, Dorchester, MA 02124



617-265-5300 | www.ipcboston.org
540 Gallivan Boulevard (Rear), Dorchester, MA 02124

The IPC receives a Bronze rating from Guidestar. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization: EIN 208046867. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by the law.



Ard-Chonsalacht na hÉireann | Bostún
Consulate General of Ireland | Boston

IPC Senior Programs



The IPC hosts weekly coffee groups in Brighton, Weymouth, Dorchester, and West Roxbury!

SCHEDULE:

- Mondays:** Cara Club in Brighton 1PM-3PM
- Tuesdays:** Young at Heart in Weymouth 1PM-3PM
- Wednesdays:** Café Eireann in Dorchester 11AM-1PM
- Thursdays:** Crossroads Café in West Roxbury 1PM-3PM

Contact IPC's Senior Coordinator Peggy Conneely at pconneely@ipcboston.org or call (617) 265-5300 if you or someone you know is interested in joining.



Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA Division Eight Ancient Order of Hibernians Lawrence, Massachusetts

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

Irish Heritage Month March 2025 Lawrence, Massachusetts

Preserving and Fostering our Heritage and Culture

Saturday, March 1, 2025 – 154th SAINT PATRICK'S DAY BANQUET AND DANCE at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA. Traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner by Simply Elegant Catering with dancing to the **Silver Spears Irish Show Band** from 6 pm – 11 pm – Awarding of the Richard Cardinal Cushing, Irishman & Irishwoman of the Year Awards. For more information contact Jeff Sullivan by email at jdsullivan1@comcast.net or you may text or call him @ 603-479-5395. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – **Handicap Accessible**

Sunday, March 2, 2025 - ANNUAL Wild Rover 4 MILE Classic ROAD RACE - 11 am, at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA (rain or shine) – This event is being set up by the Wild Rover Series.

Sunday, March 2, 2025 - OPENING RECEPTION and EXHIBIT "The Rev. James T. O'Reilly and his Contributions to Lawrence and Beyond" – **WHITE FUND LECTURE** - with the **Rev Patrick Armano, who will speak on the life of the Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA and his contributions to Greater Lawrence** - at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – **Handicap Accessible**

Monday, March 3, 2025 - IRISH FLAG RAISING Across from City Hall – Common St. @11 a.m.

Sunday, March 9 ,2025 – WHITE FUND LECTURE – by Professor Richard Padova, M. ED, M.A on "A Geographical Look at Ireland" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm. (FREE) - **Handicap Accessible**

Wednesday, March 12, 2025 - AOH NATIONAL HUNGER MONTH FOOD DRIVE: Please consider donating canned goods and non-perishable food items. All food items received will be donated to a local food pantry. TIME: **6 pm – 7:00 pm** at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence MA. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – **Handicap Accessible**

Friday, March 14, 2025 – 54th ANNUAL SAINT PATRICK'S DAY LUNCHEON at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner by Simply Elegant Catering with entertainment by the **Silver Spears Irish Show Band at NOON.** Awarding the Honorable John E. Fenton Citizenship Award - For more information contact Jack Lahey at 603 560 8192. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH – **Handicap Accessible**

Sunday, March 16 ,2025 – WHITE FUND LECTURE – with Maine Author, – Michael Connolly, who will discuss his book, "Ever the Twain Shall Meet" - at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center,

1 Jackson Street, Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) -**Handicap Accessible**

Monday March 17, 2025 – HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY! – Enjoy this grand day with family and friends listening to Irish Music, stories, and laughter at home with family and friends or at your favorite restaurant!

Saturday, March 22, 2025 - IRISH FILM FESTIVAL at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence MA @ 10 am. Sponsored by Division 8 AOH (FREE) – **Handicap Accessible**

Sunday, March 23, 2025 - JOIN PIANIST TERRI KELLEY AND VOCALIST BILL DONELAN FOR AN ALL-NEW PROGRAM OF CELTIC MELODIES - FROM ANCIENT GAELIC AIRES TO CURRENT SONGS - at the Lawrence Public Library, Sargent Auditorium, 51 Lawrence St., Lawrence, MA @ 2 pm Presented by Division 8 (FREE) – **Handicap Accessible**

Sunday, March 30, 2025 - EXHIBIT CLOSES " The Rev. James T. O'Reilly and his Contributions to Lawrence and Beyond" at Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, 1 Jackson St, Lawrence (FREE) – **Handicap Accessible**

The Rev. James T. O'Reilly OSA Division Eight AOH was founded on November 5, 1871. The Division yearly hosts numerous social events and activities, and has scholarship opportunities for members, the children and grandchildren of members on the high school and college level, including a scholarship for study in Ireland. Division 8 meets at the Lawrence Lodge of Elks, 652 Andover Street, Lawrence, MA, on the second Wednesday of the month. **For information on AOH Membership please write to: Division 8 AOH Organizer, PO Box 1407, Lawrence, MA**

IRISH HERITAGE MONTH 2025 IS SPONSORED BY
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Irish Heritage Month 2025 is supported in part by a grant from the Lawrence Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



Give 'em hell, Michelle

Mayor Wu is going to Washington this month for a House Oversight Committee hearing that Congressional Republicans will no doubt use to hammer Boston and other Democrat-led cities like Chicago for their reluctance – or outright refusal – to actively aid federal authorities in immigration enforcement.

The moment will no doubt be fraught with high drama as Trump's Capitol Hill cultists seek to score political points to please their master and, they figure, embarrass their partisan foes. But from this vantage point it seems that the stage is set for Mayor Wu, in particular, to shine a light on Boston's superb and still-improving record on public safety. Boston belies the hackneyed and hollow Trump narrative that our cities are all warzones ravaged by unwashed waves of "invaders."

In fact, as longtime Bostonians are keenly aware, by several key measurements our neighborhoods are currently safer than they've been since the Eisenhower administration.

Last weekend, Trump's chosen deporter-in-chief, Tom Holman, recklessly took aim at our police commissioner and longtime Dorchester resident Michael Cox, whom he harangued from a podium in front

of a far-right conservative conference in Virginia. "I'm coming to Boston. I'm bringing hell with me," Holman harrumphed.

Wu, in a WBUR interview a few days later, had Holman pegged for the blowhard he is when she surmised: "There's a difference between bluster and legal authority."

She added: "Boston follows the laws. We are going to keep doing what we do because we are in full compliance with the laws, which say that municipal officials and municipal police departments have authority over enforcing crimes at the local level in keeping everyone in their community safe. Immigration falls under the federal government and federal officials. It is not the purview of city officials to be involved in doing the job of the federal government and it's not the federal government's job to be involved in what should happen at the local level, either."

That's a spot-on summary that we expect the mayor to lean on in her testimony on the morning of March 5.

There may well be jurisdictions in this country that could use more federal law enforcement help in policing their streets. And to be clear, Boston has – and does – collaborate with federal agents –

FBI, ATF, USPS police, etc. – routinely to arrest and detain violent offenders, drug traffickers, and other suspected criminals. What Boston – and other local law enforcement don't do – is waste their time and precious resources "rounding up" immigrants living here without federal permission.

One reason Boston can rightly claim its spot among the nation's safest and least dangerous cities is that our people know that they can trust law enforcement – and share information with them – to keep us all as safe as possible. That's not just a Michelle Wu doctrine. It has been the posture of successive administrations of Boston leaders – Menino, Walsh, Janey, now Wu – who have a common-sense approach to policing and protecting a major US city in the context of a long-busted federal immigration system.

Trump's henchmen, it seems, would prefer that we join their bogeyman approach. But we don't need a lecture from the likes of Tom Holman or his boss, Elon Musk.

We have full faith and confidence that Mayor Wu will tell Congress – and everyone else who tunes in next week – that maybe the feds should take a page out of our playbook: Here in the Hub of the Universe, we're doing just fine without your "help."

-Bill Forry

Barbara Fitzgerald is ever ready with notes on the lore of the Irish

BY ED FORRY
PUBLISHER

The month of March is here – it's time to get your Irish on! There's an array of events this month to celebrate Saint Patrick as winter winds down, with dances and concerts and other events all over town.

One of the joys of the season is connecting with the estimable Barbara Fitzgerald, who grew up in Milton with parents from Roscommon and Galway. A long-time member of the Eire Society, she is someone who enjoys talking and writing about her Irish heritage. Along with her late husband, she has been a mainstay of the Boston Irish community for decades. Barbara especially enjoys collecting Irish stories and anecdotes and passing them along via emails and social media postings to her many followers on Facebook.

In a recent conversation I asked her about that heritage: "My mother was a domestic servant, and her employer helped her to establish a savings account at the Milton Savings Bank. Most employers offered room and board to these young ladies, which allowed them to have a down payment on a house when they married. My mother saved enough to put down on a house here in Milton; most didn't have any money.

"And so going back to when these young Irish-born maids were all single, they would go to one of the old big houses where there was a maid's quarters, and they had a party, which they called the kitchen racket. There would be a melodeon player or an accordion so they could do their set dancing. Not having much money after they married, these parties continued in their homes almost every Saturday night. It went from home to home. Oh, my Irish heritage roots. I just



Barbara Fitzgerald, pictured with a photo of one of her Irish ancestors.

want my roots to continue. I want the young people to know about our Irish roots.

"Our parents weren't well educated, but they were adamant about making us go to college, making us strive to be better than them, and didn't want us to be stuck. I don't know if you ever heard the term 'a mucker'? It was a derogatory reference to the Irish who dug out and filled in the Back Bay. They were called 'muckers' because they filled in the bay when it was marsh and water. It was a very derogatory term, but they were so anxious to work that they would do that, and they didn't get a very nice name for doing it. They were the laborers that did the work, in the mud. And they were Irish. No one, no other nationality would do it"

What's her source for these stories? "Usually, I lie in bed in the morning before getting up, and I think what my day is going to be, and usually if I'm not doing too much, I'll do some research on Irish heritage – Irish American history, Ireland's Fun Facts, Celtic World and Cultures and the Wild Geese."

Recently she noted on social media that all pubs in Ireland are required to serve tea: "Well, my family was strictly the agrarian culture. And the pub was across from the church and when they went up to confession or something, some of the ladies would drop into the pub afterwards. And see, the ladies – most of them – didn't drink, so they'd order a cup of tea.

So, then it became mandatory that all pubs in Ireland serve tea."

Barbara relishes the memories of St Patrick's Day rituals when she was young. "My mother would joyfully open the little packages from Ireland before St. Patrick's Day. Inside was a sprig of live shamrock, which by that time had turned brown. She then would put in a tepid water and try to bring it back. On St. Patrick's Day, my dad would tuck the shamrock into his cap and go off to work.

"We, the children, would wear our green badges with the gold harp surrounded by tiny shamrocks. We would pin these to our outfits with the brown Shamrock from Ireland and we all had to go to Mass in Boston. It was like it was a holy day of obligation, and then you could celebrate after that. And then we went by subway over to South Boston, to watch the parade.

"And it was very dignified back in those days. Everybody was very respectful of the marchers and the fact that it was a double holiday – Evacuation Day as well as St. Patrick's. But it wasn't a celebration, the nonsense and the green hair and all that that's going on now. It was quiet. And I appreciated growing up in that culture rather than the culture now."

Following are a few of her recent postings:

Half Door in Ireland: The king of England wanted to raise extra money, so he put a tax on windows. The clever Irish took out their windows in their cottages and had two doors instead, front and back. They cut the doors in half and would leave the top door open to let in air and light.

In those days most people were poor and would keep their animals inside the house – chickens, pigs, sheep – as it meant they could sleep at night knowing that they were safe from wandering off. Cottages truly were an Irishman's cave and we as Yanks think our taxes were bad. This Irish Window Tax was repealed in 1857.

Aran Sweater: Originally, womenfolk spun the wool from the natural fleece of the sheep. And the Aran fishermen knitted the garments, using goose quills for needles that evolved into patterns of great beauty simply as befitted those who lived close to nature but symbolic and dignified. It is said in the Book of Kells that David was depicted wearing an Aran sweater.

The stitches on the garment are an allegory of the way of life: Cable stitch-Fisherman ropes; Diamond stitches- small farms on the island, it also means the fishermen's nets; Zig zag stitches- the ups and downs of marriage; Honeycomb stitches- the sweet for the tea; Tree of life stitches importance of family.

BOSTON IRISH

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Irish Network Boston to host the 2024 Spirit of Ireland Gala & Award Ceremony

This event on March 14, 2025, at the Harvard Club of Boston will bring together leaders, members, and friends from across Boston's Irish and Irish American community for an evening of music, culture, and celebration.

The highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the Spirit Award, honoring individuals who have made an extraordinary impact on the Irish community – whether through cultural preservation, community service, or inspiring the next generation. This year, Tommy McCarthy & Louise Costello will receive the award in recognition of their immeasurable contributions to Irish music and culture in the greater Boston region.

As renowned traditional Irish musicians and owners of The Burren Pub in Somerville, McCarthy and Costello have dedicated their lives to preserving and sharing traditional Irish music. The Burren, widely regarded as one of the best Irish music venues in the United States, has become a home for musicians and a cherished gathering place for the Irish American community.

McCarthy, a fiddler and mandolin player from a legendary West Clare musical family, grew up in London, where he was immersed in the rich Irish music scene. Costello, a talented banjo and accordion player from Galway, learned her craft from her father, Denny



Tommy McCarthy & Louise Costello to receive the Prestigious Spirit Award. Courtesy Irish Network Boston

Costello, and the esteemed musicians of the West of Ireland. Together, they have created a welcoming space where music, tradition, and community thrive.

"Irish Network Boston is truly honored to recognize Tommy and Louise's lasting impact on the Irish music community here in Boston & indeed all over the world," said Aoife Griffin, INB chairperson. "Their dedication to preserving Irish music and culture has touched countless lives, including those of musicians, dancers, artists, lovers of Irish culture & so much more and we are genuinely thrilled to celebrate their achievements at this year's Spirit of Ireland Gala."

Tickets & sponsorships are available, contact: aoife.marie.griffin@gmail.com or visit irishnetworkboston.com

Charitable Irish sets St. Patrick's event

The Charitable Irish Society will hold its 288th Anniversary Reception on March 17th at the University of Massachusetts Club in downtown Boston. Starting at 6:00 pm, guests will enjoy panoramic views of Boston and delicious hors d'oeuvres and cocktails.

The program will feature as our keynote speaker Louise Richardson, DBE who will receive the Society's Life Achievement Award for 2025. Born in Tramore, County Waterford and educated at Trinity College, Dublin, Ms. Richardson came to the United States to pursue graduate studies. Currently President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ms. Richardson had a distinguished career as a scholar, teacher and administrator initially at Harvard University. Subsequently, she was the first woman to serve as Vice Chancellor of the University of St. Andrews and of the University of Oxford. She has published widely in the field of international relations, focusing on terrorism and counter-terrorism.

Her ground-breaking study, *What the Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (2006) was praised by the *New York Times* as "an overdue and essential primer on terrorism". In addition to multiple journal articles on international terrorism, British foreign and defense policy, she has lectured extensively on these topics to public, media and educational organizations.

Ms. Richardson holds ten honorary doctorates from various American, Irish, British, and European universities. For

her work in expanding access to higher education in the United Kingdom, in 2022 Ms. Richardson was appointed as a Dame Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II.

The evening's program will also feature Nicholas Burns, recently returned from China where he served as U.S. Ambassador. Mr. Burns was the recipient of the society's Life Achievement Award in 2020 and will respond to the traditional toast to the United States. Irish Consul General Sighle FitzGerald will respond to the traditional toast to Ireland. Musical entertainment will be provided by the Laurel Martin Trio and soloist Mary Conroy Henderson.

The evening will also feature the installation of James Foley of Marblehead as successor to current President, Kathleen Williams of West Roxbury. Monsignor Liam Bergin, who was honored by the society last year, will deliver the invocation.

Tickets and sponsorships are available through the Society website at www.charitableirishsociety.org. Individual tickets are \$150 and sponsorships are available at \$500 (includes two tickets); \$1000 (includes four tickets); \$2000 (includes six tickets).

Sponsors will be listed in the printed program and should be sent in by March 10th. Profits from this event will go directly to the society's Silver Key Fund which is used exclusively to assist immigrants facing emergency needs.

Article submitted by Catherine B. Shannon.

IRISH NETWORK BOSTON

Please join us on the evening of

Friday | March 14th 2025 | 7 PM

For Our Annual

Spirit of Ireland Gala & Award Ceremony

Honoring Tommy McCarthy & Louise Costello

at the Harvard Club of Boston
374 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, MA 02215

Live Music | Cocktails | Hors d'Oeuvres

Jinty McGrath & David Healy Band

INB Members \$100 | Non-Members \$200
J1 Members \$50 | Membership \$50
Cocktail Attire
Tickets Limited Please Register at www.IrishNetworkBoston.com

Happy St. Patrick's Day

From Senator Nick Collins & Family

Boston Irish Calendar of Irish/Celtic Events March 2025

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

March is, of course, high tide for Irish/Celtic music happenings, especially around these parts. A look at some upcoming events:

•For starters, **Lúnasa** is in town, playing at the Somerville Theatre on Sat., March 8. You can read about it in a separate story on Page 18.

•As noted previously in this space, Irish American powerhouse **Solas** is back on the road after an eight-year hiatus. The group was scheduled to perform at the Groton Hill Music Center on March 1.

Groton Hill will hold a **St. Patrick's Day Celebration** of the Celtic diaspora, with matinee and evening performances on March 15 and a matinee on March 16. The line-up: Boston-area native **Katie McNally**, who has cultivated an exuberant, passionate Scottish/Cape Breton fiddle style; **Neil Pearlman**, whose Cape Breton-flavored piano accompaniment makes use of jazz harmony and funky syncopations that evoke Cuban and Brazilian influences (he's also an accordionist and step dancer); Boston's acclaimed traditional Irish music duo **Matt and Shannon Heaton**, with their flute-guitar/bouzouki renditions of muscular reels, vivacious jigs and emotive slower tunes, and dynamic singing of old and new songs; and **Troy MacGillivray** and **Andrea Beaton**, among the foremost Cape Breton musicians of their generation. Beaton, a fiddler, composer, and step dancer, and MacGillivray, a multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, composer and dancer, both hail from notable musical families, and have helped promote and contribute to the history and evolution of their Celtic and Gaelic musical traditions. Individually, they've earned a ton of honors and awards.

Tickets, information at grotonhill.org/tickets

•We might have thought we were seeing the last of legendary singer **Mary Black** in the US when she went on her "Last Call" tour in 2017 – which at the time was supposed to be her final slate of performances abroad – but lo and behold, she's returning to Massachusetts, sharing the stage with **The High Kings** at the Chevalier Theatre in Medford on March 14. The Dublin native first rose to prominence in the 1980s as a solo singer and a member of the traditional band De Dannan. Her albums "By the Time It Gets Dark" and "No Frontiers" established her as an international star of folk, contemporary, and traditional genres, and led to her appearance on the landmark compilation recording "A Woman's Heart," along with other pioneering Irish female artists like Maura O'Connell and Dolores Keane. Last year, she added to her considerable store of accolades with an honorary doctorate in Literature from University College Dublin and a Lifetime Achievement Award at the RTÉ Radio 1 Folk Awards.

The High Kings aren't exactly chopped liver, of course. The quartet – co-founders Finbarr Clancy, Darren



Danú plays at the Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport.

Holden, and Brian Dunphy, and most recent member Paul O'Brien – derives its sound from the classic Irish ballad style of the 1950s and '60s popularized by such bands as the Clancy Brothers and The Dubliners. Over the course of their 17-year history, the High Kings have broadened their repertoire and style, culminating in "The Road Not Taken," which featured collaborations with Irish artists such as The Script, Kodaline, Picture This, Ryan Sheridan, JC Stewart, and Wild Youth, and guest appearances by icons like Steve Perry (Journey) – on the single and associated video "The Streets of Kinsale" – and Sharon Corr (The Corrs). They'll be starting their "Step It Out" world tour this fall.

See chevaliertheatre.com

•The Burren Brian O'Donovan Legacy Series, not surprisingly, has a full calendar for this month and beyond that started on March 2 with a scheduled appearance by **RUNA**, which fuses Irish and Scottish music with Americana/roots, adding harmonies, rhythms and tints of jazz, bluegrass, flamenco and blues. In its decade-and-a-half, the quintet of Shannon Lambert-Ryan (vocals, bodhran, step-dancing), Fionán de Barra (guitar), Cheryl Prashker (percussion), Jake James (fiddle), and Tom Fitzgerald (fiddle, mandolin) has earned honors in the Irish Music Awards and Independent Music Awards.

Irish singer-songwriter **Karan Casey** was set to follow **RUNA** on March 5. The Solas co-founder and former member has had a storied solo career that has seen her explore jazz, rock and pop as well as traditional and contemporary folk. Her faculty as a songwriter was confirmed on her most recent album,

2023's "Nine Apples of Gold," including songs inspired by Irish legends and folk tradition, the plight of the Gullah Geechee people, and the painful chapters of history for Irish women. Casey also has extended her artistic interests to include a theatrical song cycle, "The Women, We Will Rise," highlighting Irish heroines like Agnes Ryan, Kathleen Clarke and Countess Markievicz." For this tour, she is accompanied once again by fiddler **Niamh Dunne** and guitarist **Seán Óg Graham**, both of whom have been key collaborators in her more recent songwriting.

The series hosts bluegrass-folk-Irish quartet **JigJam** on March 12. The band – Jamie McKeogh (lead vocals), Daithi Melia (five-string banjo, dobro), Gavin Strappe (mandolin, tenor banjo), and St. Louis native Kevin Buckley (fiddle) – boasts extensive traditional Irish credentials, with quite a collection of All-Ireland titles at Fleadh Cheoil competitions. To this they add an appealing blend of bluegrass and Americana styles and a lively stage presence, not to mention dapper wardrobes – a combination that, along with their albums, has brought them acclaim well beyond Ireland (in 2023 they played to a sold-out Grand Ole Opry). Last year saw them release a new album, "Across the Pond," that includes original instrumentals and a take on New Grass Revival's "This Heart of Mine," as well as a fun rendition of the Bascom Lamar Lunsford/Scotty Wiseman standard "Good Ole Mountain Dew."

Prior to **JigJam** will be a special performance by Irish harpist **Kieva McGonagle**, a Donegal native now living in Boston who last fall released the EP "Across the Atlantic" – inspired by

her move from Ireland to America and all the tunes and opportunities she has encountered from both countries, such as "Planxty Monaghan," "The King's Shilling," and "I Courted a Wee Girl."

Dàimh comes for a return engagement to the series on March 13. Based in the Isle of Skye and West Lochaber, the quintet – former winner of Folk Band of the Year honors at the Scottish Traditional Music Awards – focuses on the wildly beautiful music traditions of the Scottish Highlands and islands. Angus Mackenzie (bagpipes) and Gabe McVarish (fiddle) lead the melodies, backed by Ross Martin (guitar) and Murdo "Yogi" Cameron (mandola, accordion); vocalist Ellen MacDonald imbues the songs, in Scottish Gaelic, with a full emotional range. They also have their own YouTube channel of teaching videos, "School of Dàimh."

A very potent combination winds up the month for the Legacy Series on March 26: eclectic, inventive quartet **Reverie Road** and singer-songwriter **Antje Duvokot**. Recently named a Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund grant recipient, Reverie Road includes two original members of Solas (that's three mentions of that band in this column), fiddler Winifred Horan and accordionist John Williams, along with ex-Gaelic Storm fiddler Katie Grennan and pianist Utsav Lal, who studied locally at New England Conservatory. As they demonstrated on their debut album last year, the band combines a strong traditional Irish character with influences from France, Shetland, and chamber music, among others. Locally based but well-traveled, Duvokot has won some impressive songwriting awards – including one named for John Lennon – for a body of

work that the late Boston Globe writer Scot Alarik described as “intricate [and] closely observed” with “deftly chiseled” lyrics. Although more ensconced in the contemporary folk neighborhood, she has ties to the Irish/Celtic domain: Her first album, “Big Dream Boulevard,” was produced by Seamus Egan of Solas (there’s that name again), and accompanying her first professional performance in Europe – at Denmark’s Tonder Festival – were Karan Casey, John Doyle, Liz Carroll and Mick McAuley.

In addition to the Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series events, indefatigable Burren owners **Tommy McCarthy** and **Louise Costello** will hold their St. Patrick’s Day Special Variety Show March 14-17 with multiple performances and a bevy of special guests.

For all Burren events, see burren.com/music.html

• Long one of Ireland’s most celebrated singers, **Seán Keane** will be in town for two dates, on March 28 at the Irish Cultural Centre of Greater Boston in Canton, and on March 30 at The Burren’s Brian O’Donovan Legacy Series. Keane comes from a distinguished sean-nos singing family tradition that includes his sister Dolores and aunts Rita and Sarah, and by his teens he had garnered 13 All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil medals. After performing with bands such as Reel Union and Arcady, Keane struck out on his own, with plenty of accolades (including three Best Male Folk Performer awards from Irish Music Magazine) and critically acclaimed and best-selling albums as a result. His repertoire ranges from traditional to pop, blues, and country, including his moving rendition of Brendan Graham’s immigrant saga “Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears” – a theme of great importance to Keane, who in 2020 became an ambassador to Safe Home Ireland, an Irish emigrant support service.

Information on Irish Cultural Centre events is available at irishculture.org/events

• The Centre in Canton was also scheduled to host **Cherish the Ladies** on March 5 as the pioneering ensemble marks its 40th birthday. The all-female band was a revelation when it first began performing in the 1980s and has become a dearly loved mainstay and valuable exponent of Irish American heritage. There’s even a street named in their honor on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. As co-founder Joanie Madden (flute, whistle, vocal) put it in a 2019 Boston Irish interview, the music they play is “like a golden chalice passed down. Cherish the Ladies is all about being true to the tradition and legacy, not just putting on a tune Madden’s bandmates are Kate Purcell (lead vocals, guitar), Nollaig Casey (fiddle, viola), Mary Coogan (guitar, banjo, mandolin), Mirella Murray (accordion), and Kathleen Boyle (keyboards, vocals).

Donegal-based four-part harmony group **Onóir** makes its ICC debut on March 9. Tom McHugh, Declan Gaughan, Deane Connaghan, and Diarmaid McGee began playing together during the pandemic, and subsequently gained a following through a series of videos of “The Auld Triangle,” “The Parting Glass” and “Only Our Rivers Run Free.” These and other popular traditional and contemporary Irish



Aoife Clancy and Eddie Dillon will perform in New Bedford’s First Unitarian Church.

songs – such as “The Town I Loved So Well,” “Black Is the Colour” and “When You Were Sweet Sixteen” – are on their first album, released last year prior to their inaugural US tour.

Multitasking singer-songwriter and musician **Sina Theil** returns to the ICC on March 13. German-born and Irish-based, Theil is a social media influencer, psychologist, a contributing health-and-wellness writer for Irish Runner Magazine, a motivational speaker, and a TV and radio presenter. Theil draws on country and acoustic pop styles for her own material, such as the tender, wistful “Wishing Well” and a playful holiday number, “Mistletoe Rock,” and covers of traditional and contemporary songs like “The Parting Glass,” “Fields of Athenry,” Dougie MacLean’s “Caledonia” and the Saw Doctors’ anthemic “Green and Red of Mayo.” She recently collaborated with Meadhbh Walsh to record Frank and Seán O’Meara’s heartstrings-tugging “Grace,” an evocation of artist Grace Gifford’s marriage to 1916 martyr Joseph Mary Plunkett hours before his execution.

• Those whose tastes in Irish/Celtic music extend to include Nordic traditions were scheduled to enjoy the innovative fiddle band **Frigg** at Passim on March 4, a performance that marked its 25th anniversary, a brand-new album, and a change in its line-up. Frigg began a quarter-century ago as a group of teenage musicians who, over time, fashioned a sound that interpolates Nordic with modern-day Americana – “nordgrass,” as it’s been dubbed. Last year, the band became a sextet, as long-time member Tommi Asplund left to pursue other projects. Their current line-up is Alina Järvelä and Tero Hyväluoma (fiddle); Esko Järvelä (fiddle, piano, harmonium); Petri Prauda (mandolin, cittern, bagpipes); Topi Korhonen (guitar); and Juho Kivivuori (double bass). They’ve just released their 11th album, “Dreamscapes.”

See passim.org

• **The Boston College Gaelic Roots** series will hold a come-one-come-all ceilidh on March 28 at 6:30 p.m. in Gasson 100 on the BC Main Campus. There’ll be participatory social dances taught by **Jackie O’Riley** and music provided by series organizer **Sheila Falls** and others from the community. Free and open to the public.

See events.bc.edu/group/gaelic_roots_series

• Speaking of ceilis – or “ceilidhs” in this case -- there will be one in the Scottish/Cape Breton vein at the **Can-**



Mary Black has gone back on the road, and she’ll be at the Chevalier Theatre in Medford with The High Kings.

dian American Club of Massachusetts in Watertown on March 29. Providing the music will be fiddler **Troy MacGillivray**, part of the vanguard of the new generation of talented Cape Breton musicians, and Massachusetts’ own virtuoso Cape Breton/Scottish-style pianist **Janine Randall**; **Summer McCall** will call the dances.

See canadianamericanclub.com

• Canadian Celtic-folk-rock-fusion-and-more outfit **Enter the Haggis** will be at City Winery Boston on March 13 as part of what they’ve announced is their farewell tour (although they’ve announced plans to hold their “Camp Haggis” weekend next January at a resort in Vermont). From head-banging, arena-friendly Celtic rock to more nuanced, lyrical, indie-type offerings, ETH combines a versatile repertoire with sociopolitical conviction. In 2023, they released a 20th-anniversary commemoration of its milestone album, “Casualties of Retail,” including two remakes featuring ETH’s current line-up: Craig Downie, bagpipes, guitar, keyboards, whistle; Rose Baldino, fiddle; Brian Buchanan, fiddle, guitar, mandolin, accordion; Trevor Lewington, guitar, mandolin, keyboards; Caroline Downing, bass, vocals; and Tom Barraco, drums.

Information and tickets at citywinery.com/boston/events

• The Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport had scheduled **The Irish Tenors** for appearances on March 4 and 5. Ronan Tynan – who left the trio to pursue his own career for several years before returning in 2012 – along with Anthony Kearns and Declan Kelly, combine classical, operatic, and popular-music styles and a repertoire heavy on Irish traditional and folk, as well as inspirational songs. They celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2023 with a major tour and a new CD.

Danú, representing the musical heritage of the counties of Waterford, Cork, Dublin, and Donegal, comes to the Shalin Liu on March 8. Massachusetts resident Oisín McAuley (fiddle) is part of a talented, accomplished line-up that also includes Benny McCarthy (accordion, melodeon), Nell Ní Chróinín (vocals, whistle), Éamon Doorley (bouzouki), Tony Byrne (guitar), Billy Sutton (bodhran), and Ivan Goff (uilleann pipes, flute, whistle). In its more than two decades and various iterations, Danú released nine albums – including 2018’s “Ten Thousand Miles” – and a DVD while touring Europe and North America (once playing at the Hollywood Bowl),

and winning Best Traditional Group honors twice at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. Their performances also have been broadcast on NPR, the CBC and the BBC.

On March 15, **Dervish** – which gave a stirring show at BCMFest in January – returns to Massachusetts with a performance at the Shalin Liu on March 15. Originally formed in 1989, the sextet of Cathy Jordan (vocals, bodhran, bones, tenor guitar), Shane Mitchell (accordion), Liam Kelly (flute/whistle), Brian McDonagh (mandola/mandolin), Michael Holmes (bouzouki), and Tom Morrow (fiddle) has built its compelling sound around the instrumental and song traditions of Sligo, Leitrim, and North Roscommon. Dervish has performed all over the world, represented Ireland in the Eurovision Song Contest, served as cultural ambassadors to China (where they held an impromptu session on the Great Wall), and, in 2019, received a BBC Lifetime Achievement Award. They also have a couple of albums on the way, including a sequel to “The Great Irish Songbook” (which featured classic Irish songs sung by special guests like Steve Earle, Andrea Corr, Vince Gill, Kate Rusby, Imelda May, and Rhiannon Giddens) and another release that will be on the more characteristically trad side.

The Shalin Liu website is at rockport-music.org.

• She’s living farther south now, but onetime New England resident **Aoife Clancy** is coming through town: She and Boston area native **Eddie Dillon** perform at the First Unitarian Church in New Bedford on March 15. Clancy began her musical career in her teens, singing with her father Bobby Clancy of the Clancy Brothers, and went on to perform at various festivals and concerts around the world where she became known for her passionate vocals and diverse repertoire. Clancy was a member of the groundbreaking Irish-American all-woman band Cherish the Ladies (their performance this month noted elsewhere), and her other collaborations have included a trio with Robbie O’Connell and Donal Clancy as The Clancy Legacy. Dillon was the only American ever to tour with the Clancy Brothers, when he joined up with them in the late 1990s. He has written songs recorded by the likes of Seamus Kennedy, Barleycorn, and Kieran McDermott, and served as a backing musician (he plays guitar, mandolin, banjo and bass) for various friends and acquaintances. He also created the theatrical/musical piece “An Irish American Family,” a collection of reminiscences and stories of Irish Catholic family life in the 1960s.

Tickets, info at www.uunewbedford.org/events-1/celtic-music-with-aoife-clancy-eddie-dillon

• A new era dawns for Cape Breton’s renowned musical family, as the Cabot Theater in Beverly presents **Natalie MacMaster** and **Donnell Leahy: Four on the Floor** on March 16. Fiddlers/stepdancers/spouses MacMaster and Leahy – who themselves come from two legendary family music traditions – have for some years incorporated their seven children into their performances, but in this concert their two eldest, Mary Frances (piano) and Michael (guitar), will be a full part of the show.

More at thecabot.org/whats-on

ST. PATRICK'S DAY WEEKEND FESTIVITIES @ THE ICC



MARCH

14

6-10PM



ST. PATRICK'S DAY KICK-OFF

- Friday Night Session Group
- Social Dancing
- Special Guest Winnie Henry

FAMILY DAY BREAKFAST

- Strawberry Hill
- Face Painting
- Arts & Crafts
- Irish Vendors
- Breakfast Buffet
- Kate Jenness Children's Author
- Irish Dancers

MARCH

15

10AM-1PM



MARCH

15

2-5PM



FAMILY DAY LUNCH

- Simon Lace & Friends
- Irish Dancers
- Corned Beef Buffet
- Irish Vendors
- Arts & Crafts
- Facepainting
- Irish Dancers
- Brian Herlihy (6-9pm)

*LIVE MUSIC & CONCESSIONS 5PM-10PM

SUNDAY CELEBRATION

- Irish Dancers
- Corned Beef Buffet
- Arts & Crafts
- Brian Herlihy
- Bell & Son
- Sláinte



MARCH

16

11AM-10PM

*CORN BEEF BUFFET SERVED UNTIL 5PM

MARCH

17

11AM-9PM



ST. PATRICK'S DAY

- Corned Beef Buffet
- David Healy, Aoife Griffin & Co.
- Brian Herlihy
- Trad Session
- Cait Bracken
- Irish Dancers

*CORN BEEF BUFFET SERVED UNTIL 5PM

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Cillian Vallely and his Lúnasa Bandmates Get Ready for Their US Tour (Including a Stop in Somerville)

BY SEAN SMITH
BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

As if there weren't already plenty of Irish/Celtic-related entertainment choices in Boston-and-vicinity this month [see Calendar, Pages 14-15), here's another: Ireland's Lúnasa, a band brimming with vast musical experience, creativity, and innovation, will appear at the Somerville Theatre on March 8.

Over the course of its nearly three decades, Lúnasa has won critical acclaim for its layered, harmonically sophisticated, and quite modern treatment of Irish traditional music, marked by inspired and polished arrangements full of passion and power. They've released 10 albums, including last year's "Live in Kyoto," and played in 36 countries - including at venues such as the Hollywood Bowl and Carnegie Hall, and events like the Celtic Connections festival.

The Somerville Theatre concert is presented by Cambridge nonprofit Passim, and produced by Summer McCall, director of the Boston Celtic Music Fest (BCMFest), a program of Passim. (Tickets and other information are available at somervilletheatre.com/production/passim-presents-lunasa)

One of the more fascinating aspects of Lúnasa is that on various tours their core lineup - Kevin Crawford (flute, whistle), Cillian Vallely (uilleann pipes, whistles), Sean Smyth (fiddle), Ed Boyd (guitar), and Trevor Hutchinson (double bass) - has frequently been supplemented, with no loss of quality, by other accomplished musicians: Colin Farrell, Patrick Doocey, and Tola Custy, among others, have traveled with the band.

But for this trip to the US, it'll be the fundamental five - Crawford, Vallely, Smyth, Boyd, and Hutchinson - plus a couple of impressive guests: singer Daoiri Farrell and fiddler/banjoist Cathal Hayden.

Recently, Cillian Vallely talked about the upcoming tour, and reflected on his years with the band as it draws closer to its 30th anniversary.

So, just to confirm: It'll be you, Kevin, Ed, Sean and Trevor playing at Somerville Theatre. How has the band handled international tours in the past?

Sean, who was the main founder of the band, has always been a medical doctor. He usually only did it part-time when the band wasn't touring, but some years ago he decided to take over a clinic in Ennis and move to full-time doctoring work. We replaced him with Colin in the US, and Tola toured with us a lot in Europe. Recently, though, Sean has changed things around at work and is able to do much more of the touring. He's with us this March and most of the European gigs, but Colin will still be working with us later in the year. Ed is occasionally busy with the band Flook, and so we often have Patrick fill in on guitar. Trevor, Kevin, and I do all the tours.

Tell us about your special guests, Cathal and Daoiri.

We've all known Cathal a long time: His father and my father were old friends, and my father learned a lot of his music from families like the Haydens and Comacs in Co. Tyrone. They had a family pub that was a key center of the music scene in that area and a lot of the greats would have travelled there to play. Cathal has long been considered one of the greats of traditional music and a huge influence on younger generations, known especially for his founding of the band Four Men and a Dog. He's a very creative and stylish player and a master of both the fiddle and the banjo. We did many tours of Holland and Germany in the past with Cathal but this is the first time he'll be with us in the US.

Daoiri, who's from Dublin, is of a younger generation but has made a big splash on the folk scene in the last 10 years. He has won numerous BBC and RTÉ folk music awards at home and has been touring with us in the US for the last three years. He's a really great singer with a big personality, so he's a lot of fun on the road.



Lúnasa performances are marked by inspired and polished arrangements full of passion and power.

Anthony Mulcahy photo

We played for 20 years without any vocalist, apart from special one-offs, but since our album "Cas," we've done a lot of work with singers. It's been a nice change for the band and adds to the enjoyment of the gigs. This will be Daoiri's first time in Boston with us, so we're looking forward to you all hearing him.

You joined Lúnasa a couple of years after the band started. What impressed you about what they were doing?

Yeah, it was up and running for about two years when I joined, so I had seen them live and heard their original live album. I thought they were all great players and creating a new sound in Irish music, so it was nice to be asked to tour with them.

I had noticed they had a different piper every time I saw them play, so I suspected they wouldn't want to keep doing that. When they released their first album on a label and went full-time, they asked me to join - that was actually 26 years ago now! I definitely was into the music they were playing and could hear all the influences. I was probably into many of the same bands, like the Bothy Band and Moving Hearts, and knew it was what I wanted to play. I was never too much into pure solo playing and always enjoyed playing with guitar and in bands, creating arrangements where the melody players would play harmony and rhythm lines. I hadn't played with the upright bass in traditional music before so I could see it was going to be a unique feature of the band and the arrangements.

It's probably amazing to you all that Lunasa is closing in on its 30th anniversary. What do you see as some important developments in Irish traditional music during those three decades?

Yeah, it's a bit scary that we're not far off the 30-year mark! Outside of bands, traditional music itself wouldn't have changed hugely in that time; it's a fairly conservative tradition and the vast majority of it is not professional and not on stage. It's people playing with each other in informal sessions where a lot of the music is very similar and we all just get a big kick out of playing these great melodies, new

and old. There's probably more and more "rhythm" players in the sessions now, as the standard of guitar and bodhran playing has risen dramatically. There's more of every instrument, in fact, and way more young people playing compared to when I was young.

My parents have been teaching for nearly 60 years, so they'd have a much longer reference for this, but the standard of the young people playing now is incredible. I'm not sure if the best young players are any better than the great musicians of the 1970s that I idolized, but there's just so many more great young players now. One big factor to all this is the access to great teaching and great instruments from a young age. This helps hugely, especially with complicated instruments like the uilleann pipes, wooden flutes, harps, and so on. There are pipers all over the world and I notice this a lot when teaching. Access to recordings and videos is a huge help, too, and probably a factor in the popularity of the music.

In terms of the band and the professional music world, there has been plenty of innovation: probably more creative use of rhythm sections, more self-composition and less old melodies in the bands. I suppose with a few other acts of that era, Lúnasa probably influenced band tune-writing - the idea that the harmony was as important as the melody in forming the set and writing and selecting tune sets. The use of the bass lines in forming the arrangements was a big factor, too.

Some of the current young bands employ very contemporary influences in their sound, and there's a lot of technology use - with pedals and beats and computers on the stage - and it can get to the point where it's very much a fusion. It's played by trad musicians and can sound great, but it's obviously debatable what the music should be called when sometimes there's little melody and the dominant feature is the technology. I'm not into over-labelling music, so it's never bothered me as long as it sounds good and doesn't just become mediocre pop music.

Passim lists first recipients of O'Donovan Legacy Fund grants

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

Cambridge nonprofit Passim recently announced the full round of inaugural recipients of the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund grants, which support Celtic music and dance artists. The \$2,500 awards go to funding live shows and tours in New England, with one grant earmarked for bringing an act to Passim's Boston Celtic Music Festival (BCMFest).

The fund, established by the O'Donovan family, honors the longtime host of the GBH radio show "A Celtic Sojourn" for his significant contributions to Passim and the New England Celtic music community.

Last fall, Rakish – the Boston-based duo of Maura Shawn Scanlin and Conor Hearn, who met while attending college in the area – received a grant and appeared at the 22nd annual BCMFest (held Jan. 16-19) as the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Artist.

Some of the other grant recipients also have past or present ties to Greater Boston and New England:

Eight Feet Tall is the quartet of Irish dance performers Jackie O'Riley and Rebecca McGowan, accordionist Dan Accardi, and fiddler/vocalist Armand Aromin, all of whom have long been active in Boston's Celtic music scene. The group is known for its in-depth exploration of the relationship between



Eight Feet Tall (L-R, Dan Accardi, Jackie O'Riley, Rebecca McGowan, Armand Aromin) is among the first cohort of Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund awardees. Dylan Ladds photo

music and dance, featuring complex sonic textures and vibrant visual interplay which sit firmly within the bounds of tradition while continually testing those bounds.

San Miguel Fraser is the duo of fiddlers Galen Fraser – a graduate of the Berklee College of Music – and María San Miguel, whose sound and style represents a dynamic fusion of Castilian and Celtic traditions.

Reverie Road features two members of the recently revived supergroup Solas, Winifred Horan (fiddle) and John Williams (accordion) as well as ex-Gaelic Storm fiddler Katie Grennan and pianist

Utsav Lal, who collaborated with local Celtic musicians while studying at New England Conservatory. The quartet leavens its strong traditional Irish character with influences from France, Shetland and chamber music, among others.

Brenda Castles, a concertina and whistle player from Co. Meath, has performed in the Boston area, including at the Christmas and St. Patrick's Day "Celtic Sojourn" productions and the Boston College Gaelic Roots series. Born into a musical family, she earned All-Ireland Fleadh titles in solo and group competitions, has two albums to

her credit, and even produced a short film, "Plight of the Bumblebee," for which she composed a traditionally inspired soundtrack.

Canadian band Kavaz derives its name from a Breton word meaning "junction," which speaks to the union of their respective geographical and cultural backgrounds – Isaac Beaudet Lefebvre, violin (Quebec); Everest Witman, guitar, bass, accordion (Vermont); François-Xavier Dueymes, flutes (Brittany) – combined with a mutual love of Irish music.

The recipients were announced at the BCMFest Nightcap finale concert in Somerville Theatre on Jan. 18. Headlined by the Celtic group Dervish, the evening included a special tribute to O'Donovan from his wife Lindsay, Rakish, fiddler Hanneke Cassel, and other members of the music community.

"We're thrilled to continue Brian O'Donovan's legacy of uplifting artists and celebrating the rich traditions of Celtic music through these grants," said Passim Club Manager Abby Altman in a press release announcing the grant winners. "Through this fund, we support artists who continue to share and evolve the music he loved so dearly. We are happy to fund their work and foster opportunities like BCMFest."

More information about the Brian O'Donovan Legacy Fund is available at the Passim website.

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For Boston's Colm Gannon, a 'Great Connection' leads to a long-awaited album with Seán Gavin

By SEAN SMITH

BOSTON IRISH CONTRIBUTOR

As flutist and uilleann piper Seán Gavin recalls, he first met accordionist/melodeonist Colm Gannon – a Boston native and now once-again resident – some 15 years ago, during the nearly two-decade period when Gannon lived in Connemara. It was a memorable introduction.

"We had a great session at his house that lasted nearly until sunrise. Though we hadn't met or played together at that point, we had many mutual close friends," says Gavin, "so it felt like meeting an old friend."

During the years that followed, the two new/old friends managed to squeeze in a few tours here and there, and now and then talked about making an album. And gradually things began to fall into place, especially when Gannon moved back to Boston. Although the pandemic intervened, Gannon flew out to Detroit a couple of years ago and over the course of three days sat in a recording studio with Gavin to finally put their partnership on record – literally.

The result is "The Boys of 25," the 13-track album they released last fall with an accompanying tour that included a December performance at The Burren's Brian O'Donovan Legacy Series – a long-awaited new capture of Gannon's superb box playing which, along with his breezy, friendly humor, is on full display regularly at area sessions, notably The Druid (Cambridge) and The Red Rose (Weymouth).

Accordion is a family tradition for Gannon: He learned the Connemara style from his father John and late brother Sean, and when John wasn't playing, he would have the boys listen to legendary musicians like Kevin Coyne, Finbarr Dwyer, Joe Burke, and Martin McMahon. To Colm, taking up



Colm Gannon, right, with Seán Gavin.

Chris Wieber photo

accordion was no chore.

"From a young age, I just knew it was it was something I'd get into; I'd practically chase Dad down until he'd play accordion for me," he recalls. "From the start, I knew playing music was going to be a big part of my life. And it's meant a lot to carry on this tradition that's been so important for my family."

Gannon went on to become an All-Ireland champion, tour extensively with "Riverdance," and was fortunate to have opportunities to fill in with bands like Dervish and De Dannan; he also earned a master's degree in Traditional Music Performance at the University of Limerick. He recorded the solo albums "Return to Droim" and "The Rights of Man" (the latter featuring De Dannan colleagues Alec Finn and Johnny "Ringo" McDonagh), "Trasna Na dTonnta" with John, and "The Ewe with the Crooked Horn" with Jesse Smith and John Blake; and he has collaborated on other recordings

with the likes of Harry Bradley, Mick Conneely, and Martin Meehan, among others.

"The Boys of 25" is split almost equally between accordion/melodeon and flute or pipes duets, with backing from Gavin's brother Michael (bouzouki), John Blake (piano, guitar), and Cecil Morton (tambourine). The arrangements are straightforward, all in unison, and make plain that the Gannon-Gavin pairing is an interplay not just of raw skill and ability, but a mutual affinity for certain subtleties of traditional Irish music.

"Colm and I have many shared influences as far as friends and recordings that we love," agrees Gavin. "In particular, Colm has a great knowledge of the old pipers whose music I cherish as well: You can hear it in his articulation, ornamentation, and phrasing. He understands the old piping music better than most pipers, in fact."

"We just had this great connection from the start," says Gannon. "Seán is

into the old 78 records I listen to, and he really gets the phrasing in the older music. I think it's important for an accordionist to know and appreciate the way pipers play the tunes, so everything just clicked for us."

Things certainly click on a pair of well-known hornpipes, "The Peacock's Feather/Bantry Bay," which sound fresh and buoyant, as well as the accordion-pipes combo for "Barndance for Nia," composed by former Altan accordionist Dermot Byrne. Sets like "Cuz Teahan's/The Bird," associated with Kerry melodeon player Terry "Cuz" Teahan, and the reels "Castle Kelly/Lad O'Beirne's" from, respectively, Finbarr Dwyer and James "Lad" O'Beirne, underscore Gannon and Gavin's respect for musicians who were foundational for the Irish tradition.

The two also show their talent for adaptation and shrewd blending of tunes. "Judy Hynes" – a robust D-mixolydian jig from early American piper Patsy Touhey – is paired with "Billy the Butcherer," Gannon's setting of "Connie the Soldier," and the result is one of the album's more intense tracks. Gavin's rendition of "Maude Millar's" is based on the version by Donegal fiddler Con Cassidy and follows "The Leitrim Reel," sourced from a recording of radio broadcast with Sligo musicians Paddy Killoran (fiddle) and Jim McGowan (flute).

The accordion-flute tracks are ear-catching in any case simply because the two instruments might seem an improbable combination: one rich, reedy, and muscular; the other softer and soulful. But they are equal partners here.

"I suppose it's an unusual duo in the sense that it hasn't been recorded much," says Gavin. "Because of that, there was plenty of space for us to develop our own kind of sound through the tunes we like to play. Of course, flute and box have been played together in informal settings for a long time, so it wasn't uncharted territory either."

"I just think of it as an 'old sound' that perhaps was quite common but just wasn't captured when recordings first began," agrees Gannon. "Although it's true the accordion and flute have quite different voices, they really do go together very well."

Recording an album and touring are all well and good for Gannon, but he's perfectly happy making the rounds of Boston-area sessions, whether in pubs or in living rooms.

"The music scene here is just thriving, as strong and vibrant as I've ever seen in any community," he says. "It's a special time for traditional music in Boston: Everyone in the scene can feel the electricity, definitely reinvigorating. So many good young musicians around, too, who are really invested in the tradition, like Joe De Georgeo and Seamus Noonan. Just a great place to be."

"The Boys of 25" is available at seangavinmusic.bandcamp.com/album/the-boys-of-25

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Eight years later, Solas is back on the road

BY SEAN SMITH

BOSTONIRISH CONTRIBUTOR

After an eight-year hiatus, groundbreaking Irish-American band Solas is headed back out on the road again, with a major American tour that includes a couple of stops near Boston and the release of a limited-edition live album.

Original members Seamus Egan (flute, low whistle, mandolin, banjo, nylon-string guitar), Winifred Horan (fiddle) and John Williams (accordion) will be joined by new recruits Nuala Kennedy (flute, whistle) and Alan Murray (guitar, bouzouki); vocalist Moira Smiley, who was part of the band in the mid-2010s, also will appear on selected dates.

Moira Smiley also will appear during the Solas tour.

Solas will perform at the River Club Music Hall in Scituate on Feb. 25 and at Groton Hill Music Center on March 1.

Solas's debut in the mid-1990s heralded the arrival of a new generation of performers in the Irish/Celtic music revival that had taken root three decades before, as well as an increasing interest in exploring commonalities across musical genres. Irish music aficionados and casual listeners were struck by the group's power and drive, its ambitious, forward-thinking arrangements, as well as an increasingly diverse repertoire that included elements of American folk, contemporary singer-songwriters, along with their own compositions – and most of all, the sheer excellence of its members: the melodic heft of Horan, Egan and Williams; the enchanting, expressive voice of Karan Casey; the pulsating guitar presence of John Doyle.

Over time, the roster changed, but the band's high-level ability and vision quality remained steadfast, thanks to musicians such as Donal Clancy, Mick McAuley, Eamon McElholm and Johnny B. Connolly and vocalists Deirdre Scanlan, Mairead Phelan, Niamh Varian-Barry and Noriana Kennedy, as well as Smiley.

There's some symmetry at work here: Solas had announced its break shortly after marking its 20th-anniversary year – "It is time to hit the reset button and rest, write, teach, be with family and loved ones, and just breathe," the band announced on its Facebook page in early 2017, prior to what would be its last tour. "This isn't goodbye forever, necessarily, but it is goodbye for a while" – and now its reemergence comes on the occasion of the band's 30th.

But no, says Egan, that hadn't been the plan all along.

"When we decided that it was time for a break, a 'reset,' we didn't discuss it as permanent or temporary; we left it completely undefined. There wasn't any animosity or hard feelings. We'd reached a very significant milestone as a band, and the time just seemed right to pull back.

"I was happy to leave things undefined. I held to the idea that one day, whenever it might be, we would perhaps be ready to think about playing together again."



The Solas line-up: (L-R) Nuala Kennedy, John Williams, Seamus Egan, Alan Murray and Winifred Horan. *Anna Colliton photo*

For Egan, the impetus came on gradually, when the band's former soundman began sending along recordings from the band's live shows over the years. Egan had never made a habit of listening to past work, but as he gradually went through the audio files, he started feeling that the time might be ripe to get Solas up and running again.

"It seemed to me that these tracks – some from back in 2004, others more recent – captured some special moments of the band's career," he says. "When you're on the road all the time, moving from one album to the next, or one project to the next, you don't have the time to really reflect on what you've done. We're different people now, with different interests than when we first put this music together. So, the idea here is to go back to the beginning, focus on stuff we haven't played in years, maybe even forgotten about – but which feels to us like new."

A sampling of those tracks comprise the band's first live album, which will be available only at concerts during the upcoming tour.

Egan says it's best not to think of this as a "reunion tour": Rather than trying to get as many former Solas members involved ("We didn't sound out everyone"), he explains, the focus "was more about seeing what would work." Having three band co-founders involved, along with Smiley, was a positive outcome, as was bringing in two musicians for whom they have great respect: Kennedy's innovative



Moira Smiley also will appear during the Solas tour.

interpretations of Irish and Scottish music, along with her own fine work, have been spotlighted on her three acclaimed solo albums and in her various collaborations (one of which is the trio The Alt, which includes John Doyle); Murray, who lived in Boston for a few years, has been much in demand as an accompanist – including with performers such as John Carty, Eileen Ivers, Colin Farrell and Niall and Cillian Vallely – and is an accomplished singer as well.

Reflecting on the early years of Solas, Egan says that he and the other members had no agenda nor clearly defined aspiration for what they wanted to accomplish artistically or otherwise. "Well, we were all in our 20s, we didn't know anything; we were blessed with

a profound amount of ignorance," he quips. "Our approach didn't have a great deal of thought – 'Oh, we should have this or that kind of sound' – and all that happened was what was going on in the room at that time.

"We knew what it felt like to play and to try out new ideas, and what it felt like when it worked. But there was no sense as to what that meant. We didn't even have a name at first. The reaction was so positive early on, and then we put out that first album [in 1996], but we had no plan past the album.

"At one time, we were all more or less based in New York, and there was such a vibrant scene there – not just for Irish music – so I think we drew a lot of inspiration from what was going on there. But for us, the big thing was we had to feel a real connection to the material, whether within the tradition or not. Whatever choices we made had to come from a place where we connected."

It's an inevitable question, and Egan has undoubtedly heard it a lot already: Will this tour be a one-off, or will Solas stay together for a longer run?

"I think the best answer is 'never say never,'" he says. "For now, we're just really looking forward to this year, and this tour specifically. We haven't been on the road like this for some time, and things are going to be quite busy. We'll see what we'll see."

For updates on Solas, see solastheband.com

‘A Man of No Importance’: Bringing the streets of Dublin to SpeakEasy Stage

By R.J. DONOVAN
SPECIAL TO BOSTONIRISH

Creating a new theater company is a daunting undertaking. It’s an uphill battle of financing, programming, management, facility, staffing, and more. Some theater companies last; some don’t. It’s a huge accomplishment if they thrive and succeed.

That said, in the winter of 1992, Paul Daigneault (born in Marlborough, raised in Sandwich) gathered a few fellow alums from his days at Boston College to start up a theater group. It would be called SpeakEasy Stage Company. Happily, it would go on to enormous success and respect.

Under Paul’s artistic leadership, SpeakEasy Stage has offered up more than 160 productions, including 6 world premieres and more than 60 musicals, regularly earning some of Boston’s top theatre awards.

As well, critics have praised SpeakEasy not only for the company’s high production values, but also for its commitment to local artists and to works that center on community, equality and social justice.

Now, after serving as the company’s Producing Artistic Director for more than three decades, Paul has decided to step down from his leadership role at the end of the current season on June 30.

For his farewell production, he has chosen to direct the Irish musical “A Man of No Importance,” which he first produced in the BCA’s tiny Black Box Theatre in 2003. This time, its home will be the Roberts Theater at the Calderwood Pavilion, running from Feb. 21 to March 22.

Paul has made it an essential part of his life’s work to provide opportunities for young artists, whether they dream of being actors, directors, designers, playwrights, administrators, or crew.

As part of that commitment to nurturing the next generation, his work as a teacher has brought him to Boston College, the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Emerson College, and the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Among his many honors and awards, he is the recipient of the prestigious Elliot Norton Prize for Sustained Excellence.

“A Man of No Importance” is set in Dublin in the 1960s and tells the poignant tale of bus conductor Alfie Byrne, who has two joys in life: the poetry of Oscar Wilde and staging amateur productions with his local theatre troupe, the St. Imelda Players.

Alfie’s life is thrown into turmoil when church officials object to the content of his production of Wilde’s “Salome” and try to shut it down. He then finds himself confronting the forces of bigotry – and his own shame – over “the love that dare not speak its name.”

The show’s music is by Stephen Flaherty with lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and a book by Terrence McNally, the same trio that created “Ragtime” and “Anastasia.”

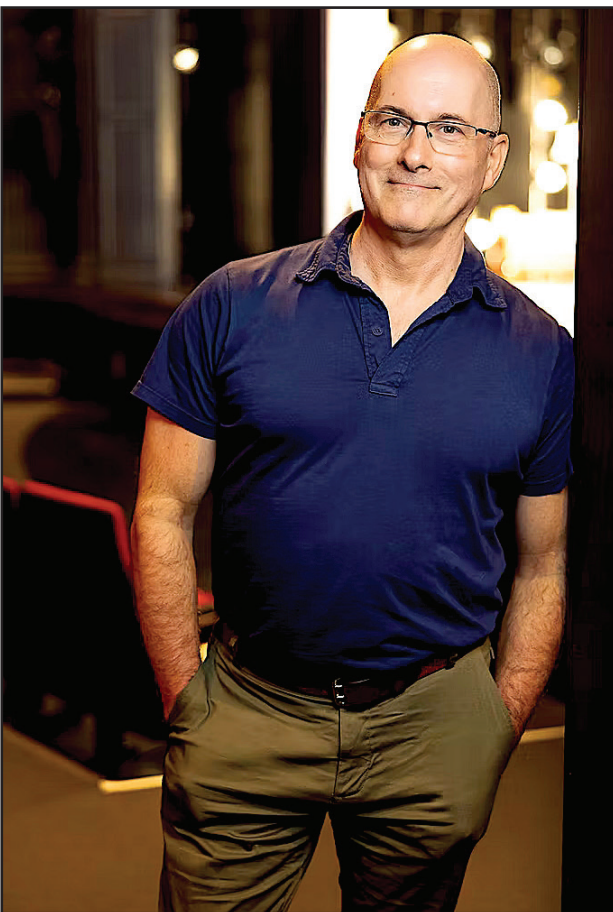
Said Paul recently to Boston Irish, “I chose ‘A Man of No Importance’ as my final show at SpeakEasy in part for its celebration of theatre as community, and also for the opportunity to make art one more time with some of my good friends and cherished colleagues. The play also resonates with my own life, my interest in plays that center on LGBTQIA+ stories, and my great admiration for Terrence McNally, who has been the most produced playwright at SpeakEasy over the past three decades.”

He added, “I couldn’t be more thrilled about the cast for this show, which features some amazing young talent alongside such Boston favorites as Aimee Doherty, Kerry A. Dowling, Jennifer Ellis, Will McGarrahan, Sam Simahk, and Kathy St. George.

“I am particularly thrilled to be working again with Billy Meleady, who was a part of the production of ‘A Man of No Importance’ I directed back in 2003. Besides his immense talent, musical ability, and great charm, Billy also lends an air of authenticity to the piece, as he is a native of Dublin. In fact, Billy is



Billy Meleady is Baldy in “A Man of No Importance”



Paul Daigneault, Producing Artistic Director, SpeakEasy Stage Company

doubling as dialect coach for this production, helping his fellow castmates master the various regionalisms and vernacular in the script.”

Billy Meleady’s award-winning presence in the Boston theatre community is also legendary. In addition to appearing in SpeakEasy’s productions of the aforementioned, “Man of No Importance” and the Irish musical “Once,” he also appeared in the company’s acclaimed production of “The Seafarer” by Conor McPherson.

He was an integral part of the lauded Sугan Theater, working with Artistic Director Carmel O’Reilly for a full decade of productions. Some of his other credits include “The Weir,” “Moon for the Misbegotten,” “Lonesome West,” Ronan Noone’s “The Smuggler,”

and Tir Na’s praised production of “Trad,” sharing the stage with Colin Hamel and Nancy E. Carroll.

I spoke with Billy recently about the show and more. Here’s a condensed look at our conversation.

Q. In “A Man of No Importance,” a lot of the action is set on the No. 5 bus in Dublin. I understand you actually rode that bus growing up. I doubt very many productions of the show can boast that kind of connection with a cast member. Having lived there during those days, how do you find Terrence McNally’s script in creating an authenticity?

A. He nailed it. He absolutely nails it. To me, it’s so extraordinary . . . he must have emersed himself there and asked a lot of questions, all the subtleties, he just absolutely captured it . . . even like these smokey dens that the men went to. Left their wives and they’d be drinking till the wee hours of the morning. It’s almost like speakeasys – no pun intended there.

Q. Paul is doing the new, reimaged version of the show, without an intermission. And you’re back playing the character of Baldy. Is there an element of the show you look forward to sharing with audiences again.

A. The moment I’m looking forward to having another attempt at singing “The Cuddles Mary Gave” (about Baldy’s late wife). It’s beautifully written and I love the oddity of the big sturdy woman and the little skinny fella. Because I’ve seen so of it much in Dublin. You think somebody’s like a mismatch, but it turns out they’re just made for each other. I think the imagery in that song is absolutely beautiful as he talks about them, how they’d walk down the street, and all the women would be standing on the stoops, with their arms folded . . . with curlers in their hair, [saying] “Jaaaasus, would ya look at them!”

Q. What do you think about one of my favorite songs in the show, “The Streets of Dublin?”

A. “The Streets of Dublin” is so beautifully penned . . . All the lamps being lit in Phoenix Park, the gas lamps. And Mad John Maher with a face like hammered meat, but when he [sings] he could bring a man to tears . . . It really nails Dublin of the ‘60s and early ‘70s.

Q. SpeakEasy’s original production of “Man” in 2003, which was then a coproduction with Sугan, still stands out for a lot of people. What was special for you about that first production?

A. I auditioned for a woman called Jeannie Monroe. She was the musical director. I was actually in Dublin by telephone, and she was on her way back from New York to Boston. She pulled over. I sang on the phone to her while my niece was banging on the door-- my niece is from Scotland. “Billy, I want to hear you singin’ your song.” I was sweating because I really wanted to get the role.

That’s when I met Paul and honest to God, the way Paul directed that show. I didn’t see it coming, how imaginative and creative that man is. He’s absolutely outstanding . . . Paul’s vision was just beautiful . . . The legacy that he’s going to leave behind! I have never seen anything other than an outstanding production at SpeakEasy. I feel honored and delighted that Paul chose a Dublin play as his last offering.

•••

Once “A Man of No Importance” concludes its run, Billy says he’ll be putting theatre aside to concentrate on developing his own one-man variety show. He has been researching some wonderful songs from the ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s. For this new show, he’ll be playing the guitar, singing, dancing, sampling some Shakespeare, lip-synching, adding audience involvement and more. It’s a work in progress that he hopes to have ready to launch in a residency by the end of the summer. “I get to call the shots,” he said jokingly. So, stay tuned.

In the meantime, catch Billy and some of Boston’s finest [and favorite] talents in “A Man of No Importance” at SpeakEasy Stage.

For tickets, visit speakeasystage.com.

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Stage is set for Dermot Kennedy's 2-day 'Misneach' fest in Boston

At sold-out Brighton Music Hall and TD Garden March 18-19

Dermot Kennedy's global Irish music festival comes to Boston for a two-day turn on March 18-19. The Co. Dublin native's "emerging artist showcase" at the Brighton Music Hall on March 18 is already sold out. But there are some seats still available for his headlining show the next night at TD Garden. The 32-year-old singer and songwriter will launch the music fest a few days before in Sydney, Australia.

Kennedy sat with *Boston Irish* last fall to talk about the inaugural festival, which he sees as a re-invention of the St. Patrick's Day celebrations that he has seen elsewhere. The name "Misneach," (pronounced mish-nyach) means "courage."

"I think in Ireland, we're so proud of our music and our heritage and our culture," he said, name-checking artists like Van Morrison, Sinéad O'Connor, and Thin Lizzy. "And so just on that celebration around St. Patrick Day, I wanted to make sure that's what we're celebrating. I think there's so many artists at home that people might not be aware of that are so talented and so special and just deserve to be heard. So, it's a lovely thing to put together, honestly."

He added: "We're so proud of that culture that still exists and there's still so much excitement in Irish music, but it just seems like a good opportunity to celebrate it. And, even if Boston and Sydney is just the beginning, like to have a global celebration of Irish music



Dermot Kennedy discussed his "Misneach" Irish music festival plans with *The Reporter* last November at The Abbey, the Brookline pub and restaurant owned by Damien Dowling. *Seth Daniel photo*

and culture — there's a big opportunity there."

Tickets for the March 19 TD Garden concert featuring Dermot Kennedy, *The Swell Season*, *Ye Vagabonds*, and *Nell Mesca* start at \$49.50. Go to misneachfestival.com to buy tickets.



Lá Fhéile Pádraig sona duit!

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

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What's Happening Onstage This Spring

By R. J. DONOVAN
SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH



Paddy Cullivan's "I Can't Believe It's Not Ireland"
March 8, Irish Cultural Centre
Paddy Cullivan is an acclaimed Irish entertainer renowned for his versatility in music, comedy, and historical storytelling. His visionary one-man hit show offers an optimistic vision of a future United Ireland, combining humor and hope to inspire and educate. Paddy continues to be a dynamic, creative force in Irish culture. irishculture.org

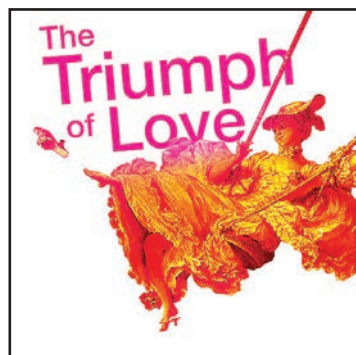


"The Irish and How They Got That Way"
Through March 16, Greater Boston Stage Company
From the pen of Frank McCourt, "The Irish and How They Got That Way" celebrates the vibrant history and indomitable spirit of the Irish through a captivating blend of music and humor. From traditional folk tunes to contemporary hits, expect an evening of unforgettable melodies, heartfelt stories and plenty of Irish charm. greaterbostonstage.org



"A Man of No Importance"
Through March 22, SpeakEasy Stage
Dublin in the '60s comes alive in the poignant tale of bus conductor Alfie Byrne who has two joys in life: the poetry of Oscar Wilde and staging

amateur productions with his local theatre troupe, the St. Imelda Players. Alfie's life is thrown into turmoil when church officials object to the content of his production of Wilde's "Salome" and try to shut it down. However, the redemptive power of theatre changes his life. speakeasystage.com



"The Triumph of Love"
March 7 - April 6, The Huntington Theatre
In this classic French comedy by 18th century playwright Marivaux, a clever princess finds herself smitten. However, to win her handsome prince, she must woo him - in disguise. Mistaken identities, surprising complications and deeply felt desires collide as surprising romantic entanglements ensue. huntingtontheatre.org



"The Magic of Ireland: A St. Patrick's Day Concert"
March 8-9, Reagle Music Theater
Reagle's rousing annual celebration of Irish music, comedy, and dance returns featuring: internationally acclaimed Irish tenor and Broadway star Ciarán Sheehan; Tony Award nominee Maureen Brennan; Broadway veteran and Boston native Erica Spyrès; Rick Sherburne; fiddler Heather Swanson; bodhrán player Ryan Douglas; choreography by Liam Harney of the Harney Academy of Irish Dancing and more. reaglemusictheatre.org

"Parade"
March 11-23, Emerson Colonial Theatre
Leo and Lucille Frank are a newlywed Jewish couple



struggling to make a life in the red hills of Georgia. When Leo is accused of an unspeakable crime, it propels them into an unimaginable test of faith, humanity, justice, and devotion. Based on a true story, "Parade" received the 2023 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical. emersoncolonialtheatre.com



Foil Arms and Hog
March 21, Shubert Theatre
The lads are back! With an infectious mix of sketch comedy, audience participation and improvisation, Foil Arms and Hog have become one of the world's most renowned comedy teams. They've sold out shows from the London Palladium to New York Town Hall and the Sydney Opera House, because this Irish trio (Sean Finegan, Conor McKenna, Sean Flanagan) speaks the universal language. bochcenter.org



"The Addams Family"
March 21 - 23, The Wang Theatre
And you think your family is wacky? This devilishly macabre musical features everyone's favorite, creepy, finger-snapping kooks. Wednesday Addams is all grown up and has fallen hard for a boy from a respectable family. They all come together on one fateful night when Gomez, Morticia, Uncle Fester and company host an intimate family dinner for the "normal" boyfriend and his parents. Bon Appetite! bochcenter.org

"The Play That Goes Wrong"
March 28 - April 19, Greater Boston Stage Company
Welcome to a comedy of catalytic catastrophes. It's opening night of "The Murder at Haversham Manor," where everything that can go wrong does. There's an unconscious leading lady, a corpse that won't stay dead, actors tripping over their lines, and chaos all around. It's a comical disaster for the Monty Python, Clue and Sherlock Holmes crowd. greaterbostonstage.org



David Sedaris
April 6, Symphony Hall
Our bodies age and our families change while politics and society swirl in a confusing mess. The more things change, the more we need playwright, humorist, radio contributor, and bestselling essayist David Sedaris. He slices through the murkiness with spot-on observations, incisive wit, and, somehow, a humane and relatable point of view. Share a knowing smirk with fellow fans as Sedaris returns to Symphony Hall to read new and unpublished material that you'll only hear live and in-person. celebrityseries.org



"Riverdance 30 - The New Generation"
April 8 - 13, Wang Theatre
Since "Riverdance" first burst onto the world stage, its fusion of Irish and international dance and music has captured the hearts of millions of fans worldwide. In celebration of its 30th year milestone, "Riverdance" rejuvenates the much-loved original show with a new generation of dancers, innovative choreography, dynamic costumes, state of the art lighting and stunning video graphics. bochcenter.org

"Shucked"
April 8 - 20, Opera House



In isolated Cobb County, life thrives because of its livelihood - corn. But what happens when the crop starts to rot? In search of a solution to the disaster, Maizy ventures out into the real world. But con men await! This farm-to-fable, corn-fed, corn-bred Tony Award-winning musical is literally turning musical theater on its, ummm, ear. The Wall Street Journal calls it "flat out hilarious!" Happy Harvest! boston.broadway.com



Jimmy Tingle: Humor & Hope for Humanity
April 19, Spire Center for the Performing Arts
Three time "Best of Boston" winning comedian Jimmy Tingle takes audiences on a very funny, soul-searching journey addressing the challenges of the world with comedic insight, compassion and common sense. Clean, funny and hopeful, Jimmy is the surgeon general of American humor. spirecenter.org



Harry Potter: The Exhibition
Through April 27, CambridgeSide
Go behind the scenes for a close up look at Harry Potter's magic, props, costumes and iconic movie moments. Immerse yourself in the enchanted world of the young Wizard to plop yourself down in Hagrid's giant chair, squeeze into the Cupboard Under The Stairs, practice your Quidditch skills and more. Expecto Patronum! harrypotterexhibition.com

Football legend Liam Brady makes the rounds in Boston



Liam Brady poured a pint at McGonagle's pub in Dorchester on Mon., Feb. 24.

Bill Forry photo

Liam Brady, the renowned footballer, coach, and sports analyst, made a whirlwind visit to Boston in late February to greet fans of his former team, Arsenal, in a series of events across the city. He was the guest of the Boston Gooners, the local affiliate of the Arsenal club's international supporters.

The 69-year-old legend joined a watch party for the team's Feb. 22 match against West Ham at Clery's in Boston's Back Bay. The next day, "Chippy" was a guest of honor at the Boston Celtics game against the NY Knicks and met Celtics star Jayson Tatum afterwards, before pulling pints behind the bar at the North Station's famous Sullivan's Tap.

The Dublin native was also spotted pulling proper pints of plain at Dorchester's newest hot-spot, McGonagle's, on Feb. 24.

-BILL FORRY



Liam Brady greeted Boston Celtics star Jayson Tatum after the Celts stomped the NY Knicks at TD Garden on Feb. 23.

George Deveney, Sr. photo



Boston College Professor Mary C. Murphy, left, engages with Ambassador Claire Cronin in the Irish American Partnership's welcome home event for her in January. IAP photo

Irish American Partnership hails Ambassador Cronin's leadership

Outgoing US Ambassador to Ireland Claire Cronin was feted as a 2025 inductee to a fellowship that includes luminaries like former Irish President Mary McAleese, former US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, Editor in Chief of Glamour magazine, Samantha Barry, and playwright, producer, and showrunner of "Derry Girls," Lisa McGee.

The Irish American Partnership reimagines the old-world tradition of Nollaig na mBan [women's Christmas] while remaining true to the heart of the Jan. 6 holiday — an enthusiastic celebration of women, their strengths, their dedication, and their leadership.

Said Partnership President and CEO Mary Sugrue, "We have proudly reclaimed Nollaig na mBan as an opportunity to recognize women's leadership and its indelible impact in our communities and our world."

"We are honored to welcome home Ambassador Claire Cronin as our diplomatic vanguard of women's leadership. Her distinguished career highlights her

exceptional ability to lead and her unwavering dedication to public service," Sugrue continued.

After warm remarks welcoming the ambassador back to Massachusetts by Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll and former Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III, Cronin met with an enthusiastic and warm reception for the assembled audience, which included many members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

In a wide-ranging discussion with Professor Mary C. Murphy of the Irish Institute at Boston College, the 2025 Nollaig na mBan honoree spoke warmly about the people of Ireland, reflected on her extraordinary career, and congratulated the Partnership on its impactful work at the grassroots level, supporting education across the island of Ireland.

In honor of her achievements, the Irish American Partnership made a grant to the Virgin Mary Boston National School in Ballymun, Dublin, where the ambassador was hosted in 2023.

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BOSTON IRISH NEWS IN BRIEF

Sligo Assn. plans 15th annual St Patrick's Banquet

The County Sligo Association of Boston will host its annual Corned Beef & Cabbage Banquet and Scholarship Drawing on Sat., March 8, at Florian Hall in Dorchester. Reception at 6 p.m., dinner at 7, with music by Mossie Coughlan. Tickets \$60 adults, \$20 students & children 6-16. For ticket & table reservations, call 617-293-4069.

Rian names new executive director

Kevin Mawe, who has been serving as interim Executive Director of Rian Immigrant Center has been named the organization's executive director on a permanent basis. "Kevin has made a tremendous difference in the short time he has been in the role," Rian chair Kim Borman said in a letter announcing the hire. "Kevin's knowledge of Rian from his many years on the board as well as a volunteer in Rian's legal clinics, plus his thoughtful and caring manner, has helped the organization find a path for its clients in this new political environment. Rian is lucky to have him in charge."

BC's Burns Library to host panel on Irish folklore

Burns Library at Boston College will sponsor a panel discussion on engagements with Irish folklore on Wed., March 12, at 4 p.m. The panel will include Guy Beiner, Sullivan Chair of Irish Studies at BC, Ray Cashman of Indiana University, Bloomington, and Hilary Joyce Bishop, Liverpool University. Topics include: Looking at Irish wakes, funerals, and undertakers; and the social habits, traditions, and stories of Irish American communities in the New York Tri-State area.

Southie Library screens Inishowen traditional music film

Award-winning Irish director, writer, and filmmaker Bob Gallagher will present his music documentary "It's a Fine Thing to Sing" about the Inishowen Traditional Singers' Circle, at the South Boston Branch Library on Thurs., March 13, at 6 p.m. Framed within the stunning landscape of north Donegal, the film features a vast collection of local singers and songs, documented over 40 years, and features new performances, atmospheric archival recordings, and interviews with key community figures, demonstrating how songs pass from singer to singer, while also asking the question of why we sing. More details at tinyurl.com/tpj2bxbm

Holyoke AOH hosts pre-parade Mass, breakfast

The Hibernians of Hampden/Hampshire Counties have invited the public to its annual communion breakfast on Sun., March 16, 2025, with an 8 a.m. Mass at St Jerome's Church followed by breakfast at Wyckoff Country Club. Owen Donohue will receive the Hibernian Christian Charity Award, and the guest speaker will be Emmy award winner Teri Schindler, a founding member of WNBA and the spouse of Boston Celtics legendary broadcaster Mike Gorman. For reservations call 413-534-0445.

Jerry York is guest speaker at Watertown AOH breakfast

The Watertown Hibernians (AOH) will host a communion breakfast on April 27 at 11:30 a.m. with a full Irish breakfast and a performance by the O'Shea Chaplin School of Dance. Former Boston College hockey coach Jerry York will be guest speaker. The event will be held at Hibernian Hall, 151 Watertown Street and is open to the public. For more information, call 860-867-7866, or email President.AOHDiv14@gmail.com

A hockey adventure in divided Belfast makes me want to tear down walls

BY TARYN DANIEL

SPECIAL TO BOSTON IRISH

The dozens of Peace Walls in Belfast, Northern Ireland, make up a series of barriers that separate predominantly Catholic neighborhoods from the Protestant neighborhoods. They are not for the most part what they once were - attempts to prevent violence between the neighbors - but they stand as reminders of the Troubles, a 30-year period beginning in the late 1960s during which few were physically safe when crossing to the other side. Another reminder: The gates are still locked at night.

These communities fought a deadly fight over a mix of religion and politics until the so-called Good Friday Agreement of 1998 led to a calming of the violence and new government policies.

As I stood in front of a Peace Wall in Belfast last November seeing it in person, I began to realize how neighbors can be separated even without walls because of their views on how life should be and on the faiths that give them strength.

I was there because I had the privilege of being chosen for The Boston to Belfast hockey cultural exchange program run by a non-profit headed up by Steve Burke. It's an initiative that takes youth from all over Boston to historic Belfast, teaches them leadership skills, and exposes them to a different culture as they form bonds with Belfast teens via the game of hockey.

We had a personal meeting with the Lord Mayor of Belfast, and we visited many landmarks in the city, including The Peace Walls, the US Consulate, the Titanic Museum, the Belfast Soccer Stadium, and Giant's Causeway. We attended some of the college hockey games played in the Friendship Four Tournament between Boston University, Harvard, Notre Dame, and Merrimack. We even got to skate between periods of the Harvard-Notre Dame game.

We also competed in a hockey tournament with Belfast kids and teens. The way we were split into many different teams meant we got to meet many different Belfast kids and to take the role of leading our own teams.

From what we learned before going to Northern Ireland, hurling and Gaelic football were only



Members of the Boston to Belfast delegation, including program director Steve Burke (far left), met with Belfast Lord Mayor Mickey Murray, who represents the Balmoral area of the city. The author, Taryn Daniel, stands behind his right shoulder. *Courtesy photo*

played in the Catholic communities, and rugby was played only in Protestant communities. Even their games were divided. But hockey was considered a neutral sport by both Catholics and Protestants. The sports brought all of us kids and teens together no matter who anyone was, what they looked like, or how well they played.

Set up that way, the hockey was great. But I couldn't stop thinking about the Peace Walls, some of which are 45 feet tall.

Being in front of such a barrier, I felt small, and I felt what it meant for people to be separated. Our tour guide, a Catholic who fought during the Troubles, said he couldn't go to the Protestant memorial because it still hurts too much.

Many times, we can travel and look at things like the Peace Walls and make harsh judgments, not seeing how we do the same things in different ways. For me, I find there are invisible walls in Boston separating the different people here. I feel that they separate me from the suburban kids I know who have been privileged their whole

life. There are different experiences and exposures that I have, and they don't. Sometimes they see this as a threat, and many of them aren't even allowed to travel into my community and go through the "invisible walls" here.

I also see walls dividing our city of Boston into different parts instead of all of us being a part of one city. Belfast is the same. But their walls are out in the open, and they seem to be trying to break them down in ways that maybe we aren't.

My trip to Belfast taught me how to see things from other perspectives better. I saw that it was not only about what people believe, but for some it was all they knew. I'm not sure how to go about doing anything about these new feelings yet, but I am resolved to do something good and get involved in something good to break down barriers so that real walls or invisible walls don't separate people anymore.

Taryn Daniel is 15 years-old. A Dorchester resident, she attends Archbishop Williams High School and plays hockey in Dorchester.

BOSTON IRISH

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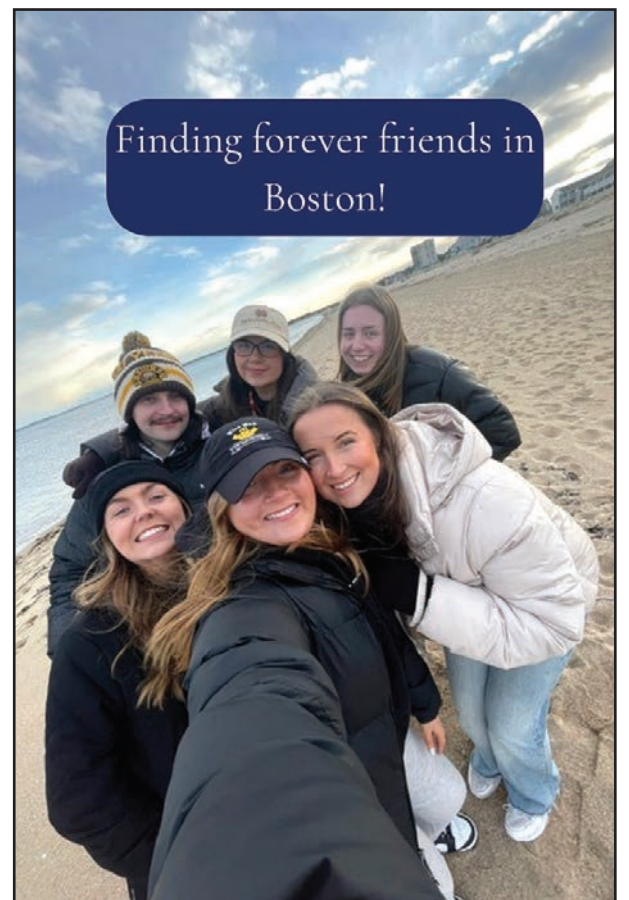
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Finding home in Boston: Ali Quinn's unforgettable J-1 story



For Ali Quinn, moving to Boston on Rian's J-1 visa was meant to be a temporary adventure, but it quickly turned into one of the most meaningful experiences of her life. Living in South Boston and working in the Financial

District, Ali found a deep appreciation for both the city of Boston and the people she has met along the way.

Back last fall, Rian J-1 had the opportunity to chat with Ali just as she was about to finish her visa term.

She and fellow Rian J-1 alum Emma Stokes came into our office to film some content for our social media. We filmed videos about what they missed about Ireland and what they would miss about Boston, walking around some of Boston's most famous landmarks.

Ali's J-1 experience became much more than just a job. She worked at a company in the diamond industry, something she never expected to be part of but quickly found fascinating. Working under the vice president of finance, she was involved in budgeting and special projects, gaining insights into retail and luxury markets that she had never learned about before. She adapted to the American work culture, though it initially shocked her, but the experience built her confidence and proved her ability to thrive in new environments. Ali's team was incredibly supportive, even offering her opportunities to take courses to expand her skills further.

Outside of work, Ali settled into life in Southie, a neighborhood she quickly fell in love with. After working her 9-5, her routine included taking the bus home from work, heading to a Pilates class, and spending time with her roommates, often sharing dinner and going for walks. She describes her life in Boston and these small moments as "wholesome" and it felt "like a dream sometimes".

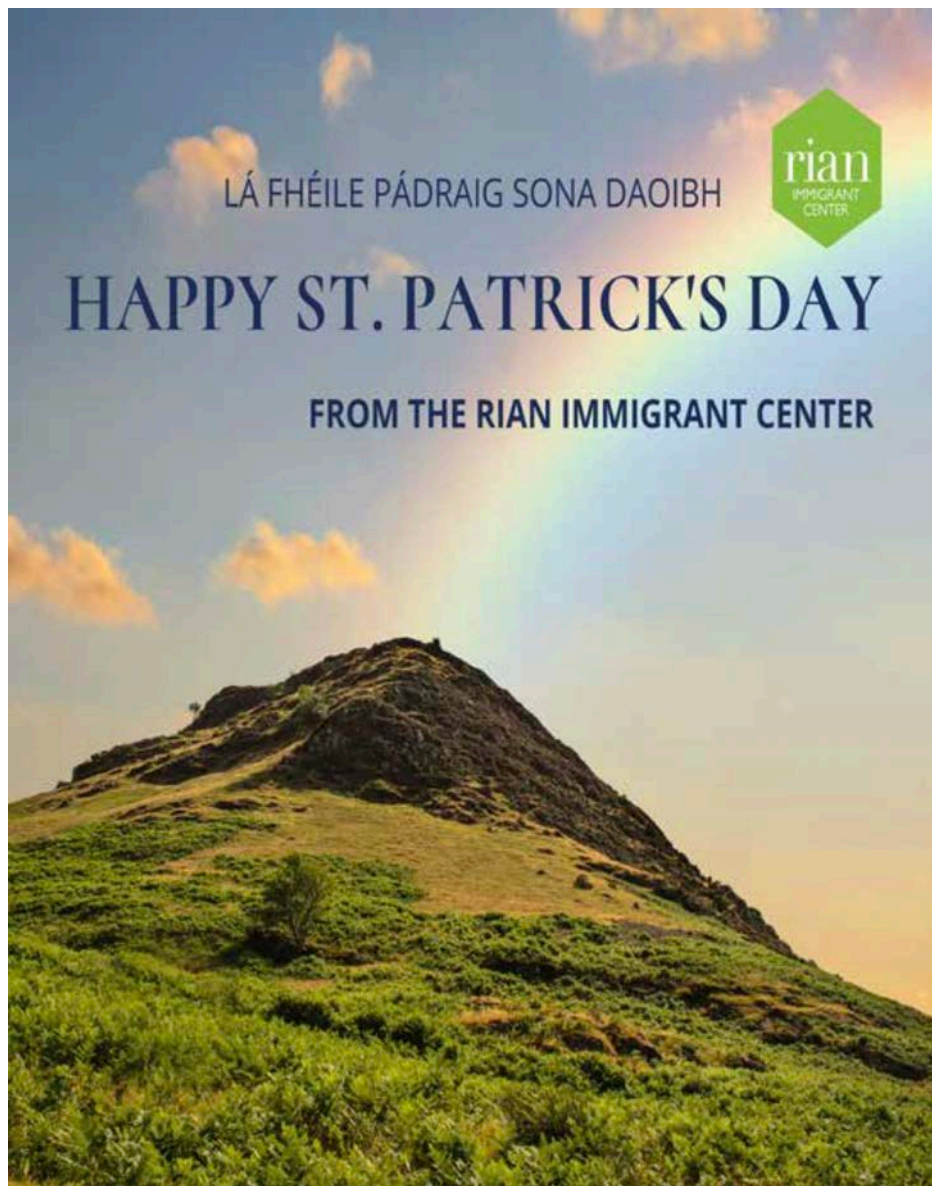
Originally, Ali had planned to move to New York, but as the decision got closer, she felt nervous about her upcoming move. Boston, on the other hand, calmed these nerves and surprised her with its warmth. The strong Irish connection in the city made her feel at home almost instantly, and she was struck by how welcoming everyone was. That day, she told us that she never wants to leave.

Ali definitely made the most out of her time in the US, taking every opportunity to not only enjoy all that Boston has to offer but also to travel. Weekends were spent in places like Nashville, Newport, and the Cape. She organized a trip to Portland, Maine, with fellow J-1s, spent the 4th of July at a lake house in New Hampshire, and spent Christmas in New York with her family. One of her most exciting plans was a two-week trip to Hawaii with Emma, which was something she never imagined she would get the chance to do.

For anyone considering a J-1 in Boston, Ali's advice is simple: Just go for it. "Boston is such an amazing city with so much to offer," she told us. "From the vibrant neighborhoods to the rich history, you'll find endless adventures." She advises future J-1s to not waste time on any "what ifs, asking what if this year turns out to be the best time of your life? Get out there," she says, "Embrace everything Boston has to offer, and make the most of every opportunity."

Additionally, Rian's office is located in Boston, which is just another positive. Ali comments that the support from Rian made a huge difference in her journey. Through events and gatherings, she formed some of her closest friendships. The sense of community and the fun they had together – the 'craic' as she puts it – was a major highlight of choosing Boston.

As her J-1 year came to an end, Ali reflected on how much she had grown, both personally and professionally. While she has already headed back home, she knows that this chapter of her life will stay with her forever. Boston has left its mark, and no matter where she goes next, she will always be grateful for her Rian J-1 experience in this city.



Peter O'Malley's busy life is relived at 70th birthday fete

By SETH DANIEL
NEWS EDITOR

Peter O'Malley's journey, his son Joe records, "started in a small farmhouse in Ireland, trudged through much uncertainty, and eventually led him to solid ground in Dorchester." Last Saturday, his family and friends took note of that odyssey at a surprise 70th birthday party for Peter at an overflowing Florian Hall.

O'Malley is described by most as a man who knows how to keep moving, whether it's running marathons, exercising daily, or making his rounds across Dorchester and South Boston. Most agreed on Saturday that at 70, his life story is testament to the power of perseverance, community, and grit.

A long-time union laborer in Local 223, a father, grandfather, and friend to many in the recovery community, O'Malley was unprepared for what greeted him as he stepped into the hall on Saturday; many who know him well suggested beforehand that "he's probably going to turn around, walk out, and drive away."

But O'Malley didn't do that. After the initial shock, it was all smiles and happy memories.

"As a first-generation American father, I often reflect on how far we've come," said Peter's son Joe, who wrote a personal tribute to his dad from which some of the narrative in this story is taken.

"Thanks to the sacrific-

es and hard work of those who came before us - in Local 223, the immigrant communities, and most importantly in recovery - we've been able to start life on first base," said Joe, "giving our children the chance to start on second or third base. That's what my father's life reminds me: none of us get here alone.

He added: "His life reminds us that even in uncertain and divided times, good people like him keep trudging forward, turning mud into solid ground and creating lives filled with love, laughter, and meaning."

His dad was born in 1955 in the Gaelic-speaking region of Roskeeda in County Galway, the only boy among seven siblings in a small farmhouse without indoor plumbing. He came to America speaking very little English, and settled with his sister, Mary, and her husband, John Walsh. Just another young Irish immigrant at the time, he found strength in his community and joined the Laborers Union Local 223, which John Walsh's family had helped to establish.

"My father benefitted from that legacy, joining the union himself, securing job stability, and building a life where he could support a family, send us to parochial schools, and provide opportunities that wouldn't have been possible otherwise," said son Joe. "Today, the Walsh family legacy continues with the third genera-



Peter O'Malley and his immediate family, including Heather Campisano, Joe O'Malley, Peter, Owen O'Malley, Ollie Walsh, Sadie Walsh, Meghan Walsh and little George Walsh. Seth Daniel photos

tion now in leadership positions throughout the Boston Building Trades and beyond."

Peter retired from the union about 15 years ago but during his working years he had owned Deeney O'Malley's Pub in South Boston with his late friend, Phil Deeney, for many years. The business was sold after Deeney passed tragically following surgery.

Family connections lived on, though, and that included former Boston mayor and US Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, who is Peter's nephew. However, Marty, now the executive director of the NHL Players Association, "was just another nephew who battled life-threatening cancer, being shot, and alcoholism," said Joe

O'Malley, "a nephew that could count on his uncle for unconditional love and support. My father's steadfast commitment to family mirrors his larger role in the community, where he's always been a pillar of support - the kind of guy you can count on, no matter what."

Having battled alcoholism himself, Peter also helped many friends get and stay sober "one day at a time."

He is often found at Peter Welch's Gym in South Boston, or at the Irish Pastoral Centre in Adams Village - not to mention his regular time at the Boston Athletic Association (BAA), where he trained and completed numerous marathons that he has run minus the toes on his right foot, which he

lost earlier in life during an accident at a paper mill. Peter was told he would never walk again, but he persevered and not only walked, but ran, completing marathons completed below the 3:10 mark.

Only occasionally will anyone find him at his Hinckley Street home in Dorchester, due to the busy schedule he keeps.

On Saturday, smiles swelled across the room from the guests, a group that included three city councillors, former Councillor Frank Baker, the actor Kevin Chapman, Marty Walsh, and scores of family and friends.

The Forbes School of Irish Dance in Quincy gave a special performance, with Peter's granddaughter perform-

ing a solo dance. It was a tribute to his life's journey, one his son said has recently transitioned from an active exercise and social life to more of a doting grandfather who is there for his grandchildren every day.

Yet, everyone in Florian Hall commented that he hasn't ceased to be there for any of them, either. That, they said, was why so many showed up at the surprise party on Saturday - in the same way that Peter had shown up for them over and over when it wasn't convenient for him.

"He's the kind of man who never says no to someone in need, even if it might cost him," said son Joe.



Peter O'Malley with his good friend, Will Onuoha - who incidentally is running for councillor at-large.



City leaders and former city leaders presented a certificate, including (l-r) Kim Thai, Pat Brophy, Peter O'Malley, Councillors Erin Murphy and Ed Flynn, and Aisha Miller.

St. Patrick's Day: Beyond the Parades

For many, St. Patrick's Day is about parades, music, and celebrations, but in Ireland, it's also an opportunity to explore the landscapes and history connected to Ireland's patron saint.

- Croagh Patrick, Mayo – Take a pilgrimage up Ireland's holy mountain, where St. Patrick is said to have fasted for 40 days. Spring is a great time to climb before the summer crowds.
- Armagh's Home of St. Patrick Festival (March 2025) – Just across the border from Fermanagh, this festival dives into St. Patrick's legacy with historical tours, concerts, and talks.
- Strandhill, Sligo – Celebrate in an off-the-beaten-path pub with a lively trad session after a brisk spring walk along the Atlantic coast.
- Tyrone's St. Patrick's Day in the Sperrins – Take in a scenic drive through the Sperrin Mountains, stopping at Beaghmore Stone Circles, a site tied to Ireland's ancient past.



Spring Festivals Off the Beaten Path

For those looking to experience Ireland in a unique way this spring, here are some hidden gem festivals in our twinning regions:

- Wild Atlantic Shanty Festival (Mayo) – May 2025
 - o A celebration of maritime heritage in Kilalla, featuring traditional sea shanties, local seafood, and coastal walks.
- Sligo Festival of Surfing (April 2025)
- Enjoy the best of Sligo's waves in Strandhill, with competitions, surf lessons, and live music.
- Fermanagh's Lough Erne Food Festival (March-April 2025)
- A fantastic showcase of local food, whiskey, and island-hopping culinary experiences.
- Red Hand Festival (Tyrone) – March 2025
- A deep dive into Tyrone's cultural history, featuring storytelling, music, and reenactments celebrating the legendary Red Hand of Ulster.



Spring is Perfect Time to Visit Ireland

Spring is an ideal season for Irish travel—fewer crowds, lower prices, and nature at its best.

- Explore Ireland's Wildflower Season – Visit Lough Key (near Sligo), the Burren, and the Murlough Bay dunes (Down) to see vibrant spring blooms.
- Lambing Season in Mayo & Sligo – Rural Ireland is full of life in spring, making it a great time for countryside visits and farm experiences.
- Epic Road Trips – Take in the stunning Atlantic Drive (Achill Island, Mayo), the Lough Erne Scenic Route (Fermanagh), or the Sperrin Mountain Pass (Tyrone).

Text & photos provided to Boston Irish Magazine by Tourism Ireland



Tourism Ireland sets its sights on a strong year for tourism to the island of Ireland from the United



Fill your heart with
Ireland

2025 is an important year for golf, as Northern Ireland hosts The Open at Royal Portrush in July and we prepare for the Ryder Cup in Adare in 2027.

Partnerships with leading US golf media will be rolled out to leverage the tourism potential of these prestigious sporting events.

Katy Best, Belfast City Airport and Tourism Ireland board member; Bill Byrne, Aer Lingus; Michael Londra, Irish tenor and host of TV show 'Ireland with Michael' and Alison Metcalfe, Tourism Ireland, at the launch of Tourism Ireland's 2025 marketing plans in New York.

Tourism Ireland launches 2025 marketing plans in New York

Tourism Ireland in the United States launched its marketing plans for 2025 on Feb 11 at an event in New York attended by leading US tour operators, airlines and journalists from the tri-State area.

The US is the island of Ireland's second-largest source of overseas tourism revenue (27% of all tourism revenue). Tourism Ireland will prioritize the United States once again in 2025, as a market which offers a strong return on investment, in terms of holiday visitors and expenditure.

Tourism Ireland will invest in an extensive and targeted program of activity in the United States throughout 2025. Sustainable development is at the core of Tourism Ireland's plans for the year ahead, so there will be continued focus on attracting tourists who have 'value adding tourism traits' – people who are likely to see more, do more, enjoy more and therefore spend more when they visit.

New for 2025 is 'Slow Tourism Month', in June. Tourism Ireland will enable more exploration, with trip ideas that allow for dwell time in communities and scenery and that can be enjoyed by rail, bus or with tour partners, winning overnight stays across regions. Tourism Ireland's 'Fill your heart with Ireland' campaign will deliver an estimated 289 million opportunities to see in the US in 2025. The campaign is running on multiple channels, including on TV in key gateway cities, Connected TV (including Amazon and, Disney+), as well as on social and digital.

Sporting moments present key opportunities: 2025 is an important year for golf, as Northern Ireland hosts The Open at Royal Portrush in July and Ireland prepares for the Ryder Cup at Adare Manor in 2027. Partnerships with leading US golf media will be rolled out to leverage the tourism potential of these prestigious sporting events.

The Aer Lingus College Football Classic will take place once again in Dublin in August – this time between Kansas State and Iowa State – delivering an estimated €100 million to the economy. And just last

week it was announced that Ireland is also set to host the Pittsburgh Steelers

for a regular season NFL game with for the first time in autumn 2025.

Tourism Ireland's focus is on increasing the value of overseas tourism, sustainably supporting economies, communities and the environment – by inspiring potential US visitors and strengthening strategic partnerships.

Speaking at the launch in New York, Alison Metcalfe, Tourism Ireland's Head of North America, said:

"Looking to the year ahead, we have an ambitious marketing programme to support a healthy tourism industry through the regional and season spread of visitors. This year, there are direct flights from 22 different US gateways, including new services from Detroit, Indianapolis and Nashville, which will certainly help drive growth."

"We will be launching a new campaign this year to elevate 'brand Ireland' and win hearts, minds and trips. We will be collaborating with our valued airline partners to support demand for routes to Ireland. With 80% of visitors researching and booking trips online, we will be sharing daily inspiration with our followers on social media and supporting deep research visits on our website, increasingly optimized for AI. Working with US broadcasters, we look forward to TV and streaming shows featuring reasons to visit that will air to key audiences. Sporting moments like The Open at Royal Portrush and the Aer Lingus College Football Classic present key opportunities, with promotional programs already under way. Festivals create additional moments to spotlight, as we win holidays from overseas visitors to grow the benefits of tourism across the year."

Below are some highlights of Tourism Ireland's activity to inspire US holidaymakers to visit the island of Ireland in 2025.

Tourism Ireland will create 289 million advertising 'opportunities to see'. A new 'Fill your heart with Ireland' campaign will be developed which will

ensure high levels of awareness to grow interest and ultimately bookings.

- Tourism Ireland's publicity activity will create 770 million 'opportunities to see' messages about the island of Ireland in tier one media outlets such as PBS, NBC, National Geographic, Condé Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure magazine, with a focus on stories showcasing the magic of our regions.

- Tourism Ireland will continue to co-produce high quality broadcast shows which benefit tourism. Upcoming opportunities include shows like Barefeet with Mickela Mallozzi, Joseph Rosendo's Steppin' Out and Canvassing The World, which will air on PBS.

- Tourism Ireland will be partnering with airlines – including Aer Lingus, Delta Airlines, United, American Airlines and JetBlue – to inspire demand for services to Ireland.

- 2025 is an important year for golf, as Northern Ireland hosts The Open at Royal Portrush in July and we prepare for the Ryder Cup at Adare Manor in 2027. Partnerships with leading US golf media will be rolled out to leverage the tourism potential of these prestigious sporting events.

- A strong focus on driving more business to our regions will include a 'twinning' initiative – with each of our key overseas markets 'twinning' with, and placing a greater focus on, a specific region or area of Ireland. The United States will twin with Fermanagh, Tyrone, Mayo and Sligo.

- Seasonal themes and events will deliver the message that the island of Ireland offers a world-class product all year round. This will include particular emphasis on St Patrick's Day and Halloween, as well as event-based opportunities like TradFest.

- Tourism Ireland will continue to connect tourism operators across the island of Ireland with US travel trade and consumers – via sales missions, co-operative campaigns and Business Events promotions like IMEX America.



What
fills my
heart?

*every route is
the scenic
route!*

Fill your heart with Ireland

Ireland's heart and soul are found in life's unhurried moments. Take time to wander the quiet trails of the Sperrins, listen to the lapping waves on Strandhill Beach, or lose yourself in the stillness of Lough Erne.

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