



CANADIAN CELTIC ARTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Vol. 3 No. 4 Lughnasadh 2012

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Smaointean / Smaointe**

Janice Chan, President

Lúnasa is the modern name for the month of August in Irish, but it comes from the older word *Lughnasadh*, which is the last of the great festivals that define the Celtic year. The name is derived from *Lugh*, or *Lú* if you want to use the modern spelling, and *násad*, the old Irish word for an assembly.

Lugh was either the Celtic sun god, embraced by Victorians and neo-pagans, or the mythical figure Lugh Lámhfhada, known throughout Celtic Europe at one time as one of the three great heroes of the Ulster Cycle, along with Cúchulainn and Fionn mac Cumhaill.

According to myth, the first Lughnasadh festival was held as a funeral feast and games competition to honour Lugh's foster-mother, Tailtiu, who had died of exhaustion after clearing the forest of Brega for planting. The first gathering was held at Tailtin, in modern Teltown, Co. Meath. The festival continued to take place there intermittently from ancient times to as late as about 1770. It was briefly revived as the Teltown Games in the last century, but seems to have died out again.

Tradition tells that before the Games, a truce would be called to end all feuds, quarrels and fighting. People would gather from all over to renew old acquaintances and alliances. Warriors would compete in hurling, horse races, wrestling, running and many other sorts of athletic contests. In addition, there was story-telling, singing, dancing, spinning and weaving as well as competitions for artisans who worked in silver and gold. This will all sound familiar to you if you've ever attended a Highland Games in Ontario in August!

Although sometimes thought of as an autumn harvest festival, Lughnasadh is maybe better thought of as a "getting ready for the harvest" celebration. Like the other Celtic feast days, bonfires were lit on hills and the ashes from these fires would be used to bless the fields, people and livestock. A great communal feast would take place with newly harvested food, including bilberries that had been gathered from the hilltops. *Continued...*



In common with other large gatherings that took place on festival days, the opportunity was often taken by young people to meet, and it was a tradition at Lughnasadh that handfasting took place. These unions came to be known in Ireland as “Teltown marriages”, and could be dissolved after a year and a day at the next Lughnasadh festival.

While we incorporate many of the customs of other Celtic feast days like Samhain and Beltainn in our own celebrations and holidays today, we’re not always as aware of the ways in which we continue to honour Lugh. However, if you’ve ever held a family reunion picnic in August, gone blueberry picking, or driven to the countryside in search of early sweet corn, you’ve embraced the spirit of Lughnasadh.

Further Reading:

MacKillop, James, *Myths and Legends of the Celts*. Penguin: 2005

MacNeill, Màire, *The festival of Lughnasa: a study of the survival of the Celtic festival of the beginning of harvest*. Oxford University Press, 1962

[Co. Meath Tourism](#)

*Smaointean/Smaointe is translated as “Thoughts” from Scottish and Irish Gaelic respectively.

FEATURE

Fraughan (Fraochán) Cake

One of the past Lughnasadh activities would be picking bilberries (*fraochán* in Irish, but also called *fraughan*). The name for Lughnasadh in some parts of Ireland is Bilberry Sunday, since the festival often began on the Sunday closest to August 1.

These small dark purple berries don’t grow

in North America, but blueberries make a good substitute, preferably the smaller wild ones. If you can’t get fresh blueberries, frozen ones will do.

This delicious recipe is taken from the [Historic Hostess](#) website.



Ingredients

2 cups self-rising flour
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
3/4 cup of unsalted butter
1 cup fraughans or wild blueberries
2 eggs, beaten
3 tbsp milk

Fraughan Cream

6 fl. oz whipping cream
1/2 cup fraughans or wild blueberries
1 tbsp granulated sugar

To Make the Cake:

Pre-heat oven to 350°F

Butter a 7-inch round cake pan, or if you don’t have one, use an 8 or 9 inch pan. The cake won’t turn out as thick, but otherwise it will be the same.

Cream together the butter and sugar, until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs one at a time, adding 1 tablespoon of flour with the last of the eggs. Sift the remaining flour and



mix, adding enough milk to produce a stiff mixture. The batter will be VERY thick, but that is as it should be.

Gently stir in the berries, ensuring they are evenly distributed through the mixture. Transfer to the prepared pan and spread the batter around evenly with a spatula being sure to smooth out the surface before placing in the oven. Bake for 1 hour. Remove from the tin. Allow to cool on a rack for 1-2 hours before serving.

To Make the Cream:

Place the berries in a bowl and mash into a juicy pulp.

In a separate bowl whip the cream and sugar until stiff; fold in the berry pulp and chill before serving.

The cake can be sliced and served with a dollop of the berry cream.

Serves 8-10

News from Celtic Studies

By Jean Talman



The annual Day at the Races, organized by The Ireland Fund of Canada took place on June 1. We were not blessed by the weather; sadly the rain poured and the wind blew most of the day, but nevertheless we had a most enjoyable time. Our thanks to all who braved the elements to come to Woodbine, and particularly to Eithne Heffernan and Jane Noonan of the Ireland Fund, along with MC Hugo Straney and the

committee of hard-working volunteers who do so much to make the event a success. The monies raised go to the Celtic Studies Artist-in-Residence Program and we are in process of lining up a writer for the coming year.

Thanks are also due to the Irish Cultural Society for their continuing support of our Speakers Series through a Pot o' Gold grant. In the Fall term, we will welcome Allan Blackstock, historian from the University of Ulster, Michael Vance from Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Liam Kennedy (Queen's University, Belfast), Willeen Keough (Simon Fraser University), and Catriona Crowe (National Archives, Dublin). See the Calendar of Events for details.

Finally, we are delighted that David Wilson was awarded the Canadian Historical Association Political History Group Prize for Volume 2 of his biography of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. He and Jean Talman attended the Canadian Association for Irish Studies annual conference in Ottawa in June. Also a special panel on medieval literature was convened in honour of Ann Dooley at the Canadian Society of Mediaevalists conference at the Congress for the Humanities in Waterloo at the end of May; a fitting tribute by her many students and former students.

Celtic Studies Announcement

The **Celtic Studies Program** at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, is pleased to announce that in January 2013, **Charles Foran** will be teaching a half-course on Irish Literature in the 20th Century. The course is offered to University of Toronto students enrolled in the Celtic Studies Program.





Charlie Foran is the author of 10 books, including *Mordecai: The Life and Times*, a biography of Mordecai Richler, and

The Last House of Ulster, a study of the Troubles. Among his novels are *Carolan's Farewell* and *Kitchen Music*, both set in Ireland. An early graduate of the Celtic Studies program at St. Michael's College, Foran holds a Master's Degree in Irish Literature from University College, Dublin. He has won many awards for his fiction and non-fiction, including the Governor General's Literary Award and the Charles Taylor Prize, and has taught literature at universities in China, Hong Kong, and Canada.

The course description is as follows: Has Irish literature maintained a distinctive identity since Joyce and Yeats? Using Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, Molly Keane, John Banville, Patrick McCabe, and Roddy Doyle, this course explores the unified themes and sensibilities of the major novelists of the last six decades.

Charlie is delighted to be returning to St. Michael's campus, and we know that our students will enjoy the course.

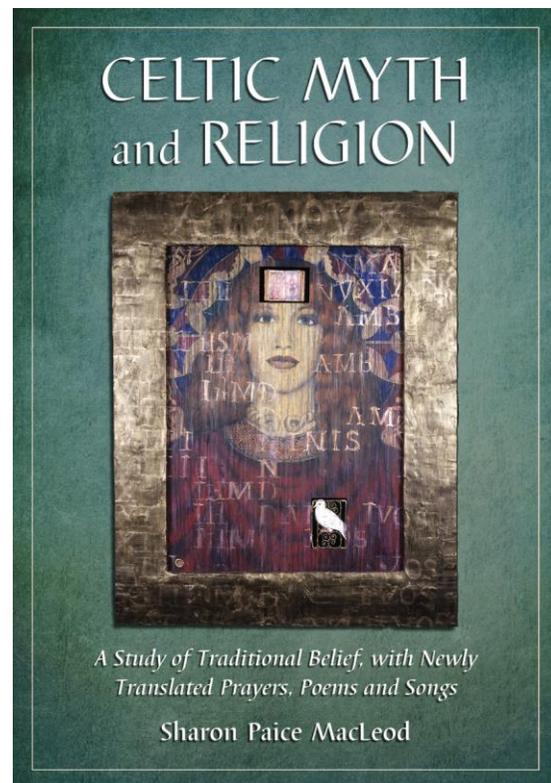
FEATURE

Book release: *Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief*

McFarland Publishers and the Celtic Cultural Heritage Foundation are pleased to

announce the publication of a groundbreaking new book, *Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief* by Celtic scholar and musician Sharon Paice MacLeod.

Never before has information of this kind been collected in a single volume as a compendium of the native wisdom traditions of the Celtic speaking peoples. The book contains twenty-one chapters on a variety of topics, as well as new translations of poems, prayers and songs in the early and modern Celtic Languages.



Cover art by Cynthia von Buhler, originally commissioned by the Celtic Studies program at St. Michaels' College at the University of Toronto.

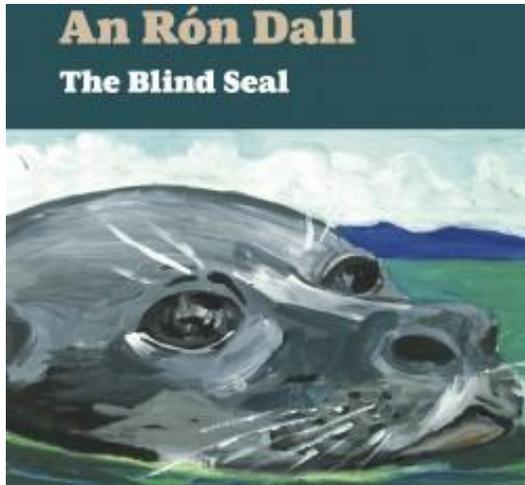
Publications and organizations interested in promoting or reviewing the book, for information on group discounts for university or group study programs, please contact [McFarland Publishers](#). Please visit [McFarland Publishers](#) or [Amazon](#) to order.



FEATURE

The Blind Seal/An Rón Dall

By Leah Morrigan



Fibin is a puppetry and drama company based in Connemara, Galway. Fibin brought their latest touring performance, *The Blind Seal*, to Toronto's Fringe Festival in July.

The troupe blends storytelling with traditional music and live painting. Music from Ireland's West Country accompanied the performance, played on every conceivable Celtic instrument – an acoustic guitar, pipes and flutes, a bodhran, and even uilleann pipes by Steafan Hannigan. The show is the brainchild of visual artist, Dara McGee who puts to use the only set pieces of the show - four blank canvases on easels, and paints the story told in both English by Juliana Erkonnen, and Irish by Darach O Tuairisg.

The unique performance, tells the story from 19th century Ireland, when a domesticated seal is blinded and evicted from a west coast household, because, the owners hold, it is responsible for spreading disease. Seals are thought to be sacred animals and a terrible vengeance is brought on by the banishment of the aquatic creature. The tale draws in witchcraft, superstition, and cruelty, as the

Blind Seal unleashes its destructive force on its owners.

Darach's scenic paintings are brought together like a jigsaw puzzle at the end of the show, revealing a hidden image. The troupe encouraged questions from the audience at the end of the show, discussing the instruments played and the story told. It was unlike anything I'd ever seen before; the hands-on arts performance was a refreshing change in our digital age.

Canadian Celtic Arts Association Events Calendar

**Saturday, September 15 – Saturday,
November 24, 2012**

Saturday Scottish Gaelic classes

Alumni Hall, 121 St. Joseph Street, Toronto, 10 am - 12 pm. Non-credit Scottish Gaelic classes, beginner to advanced. Please see <http://www.torontogaelic.ca> for registration details.

Thursday, September 6, 2012

"Reform, Rebellion and Religion: Irish-Canadian Relations in the 1830s"

Alumni Hall Room 400, St. Michael's College, 121 St. Joseph Street, 6 p.m.
Allan Blackstock, University of Ulster

Thursday, October 4, 2012

"Pioneer Patriarchs: Scots men and women in the Upper Ottawa Valley, 1815-1840"

Charbonnel Lounge, St. Michael's College, 81 St. Mary Street, 6 p.m.
Michael Vance, Saint Mary's University, Halifax

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

(note Tuesday, not our usual Thursday)
"Planter and the Gael: Explorations in Irish Ethnic History"



Charbonnel Lounge, St. Michael's College,
81 St. Mary Street, 6 p.m.
Liam Kennedy, Queen's University, Belfast

Thursday, November 8, 2012
**"Irish Women in Eighteenth-Century
Newfoundland"**

Charbonnel Lounge, St. Michael's College,
81 St. Mary Street, 6 p.m.
Willeen Keough, Simon Fraser University

Thursday, November 22, 2012
**"Broken Down by Age, Sex and Religion:
the Irish Census Online"**

Robert Madden Auditorium, Carr Hall,
St. Michael's College, 100 St. Joseph Street,
6 p.m.
Catriona Crowe, National Archives of
Ireland

For more information on this series, please
contact celtic.studies@utoronto.ca or
416-926-7145. Thanks to the Irish Cultural
Society of Toronto for their sponsorship of
the series.

* All events and dates are subject to change.
Please call the number provided to confirm
any event listed.

To list your Celtic-themed event, email
ruadh@idirect.com with the following
information:

1. Date
2. Event
3. Location
4. Start time and other info
5. Tix/price/contact

Executive Committee

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