

St. Patrick's Day in Richmond



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March 14, 2019

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Patricia Keenan offers a portrait of Ireland in the Middle Ages

By Nick Fonda

Patricia Keenan is a member of the committee organizing Richmond's month-long Irish Festival, and on Tuesday afternoon she spoke to a dozen or so people gathered at Richmond's Community Learning Centre about Ireland in the Middle Ages, the period between the end of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Renaissance, from approximately 500 AD to 1500 AD.

Her talk, she warned the audience, would be similar to one she gave last year at the St. Patrick Day's banquet, an event that had a medieval theme and recreated a feast from the Middle Ages.

She began by commenting on the fact that the history of settlement in the Eastern Townships goes back some two centuries, while that of Ireland goes back several thousand years.

Finding itself in the North Atlantic, at the outer fringes of the Roman Empire, Ireland experienced very little of the social and economic upheaval that affected most of Europe when the Roman Empire collapsed. On the contrary, Ireland entered a period of growth and prosperity and became a repository of Western civilization.

Christianity, in a distinctive Irish form, had been introduced to the Emerald Isle during the Roman period. As well, the Roman presence had left two written languages: Latin and Gaelic. After the Empire's collapse, Catholicism flourished and numerous monasteries were built, drawing adherents and scholars from across Europe. In turn, Irish monks went to Britain and to Europe and founded new centres of learning. Gallius, for example, was an Irish monk who founded a monastery in Switzerland in 608 AD where one of Europe's most important medieval libraries still exists.

During the Middle Ages Irish society was hierarchical. At the top were kings (seven kingdoms shared the island at the beginning of this period). Below them, in descending order, were seers (priests, historians and law holders), bards (poets

and storytellers employed to sing the praises of kings, both current and ancient), musicians (harpists and pipers), and artists (blacksmiths and metal workers). Yet the society was relatively egalitarian.

The greatest part of the population (estimated at half a million in the early Middle Ages) eked out a living on the land, growing crops and raising livestock. Cattle were especially prized, and cattle raiding was the most frequent cause of conflict.

Life expectancy was short, on average 31 years, largely because infant mortality rates were high. Boys had a 50% chance of living to the age of ten. Girls had a 60% chance of survival till they reach childbearing age, after which the survival rate dropped steeply.

There were hardy souls as well. Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was born in 1122, had a long and remarkable life. She bore two children to the king of France before having the marriage annulled, permitting her to wed Henry II of England with whom she had eight more children, three of whom would become kings (Richard Lionheart, Henry the Younger, and King John of the Magna Carta). She died at 82, predeceased by her husbands and all but two of her children.

Life was good or hard, as dictated by crops that might yield bountifully or be lost to poor weather or to local wars. To be kept for later consumption, food had to be pickled, dried or salted. A good herbalist or a good midwife improved life expectancy. Beside cutting hair, the village barber set bones, pulled teeth, and used wine to disinfect wounds. People died of malnutrition, anemia, tuberculosis, pneumonia, abscessed teeth and, of course, childbirth.

Around the year 1000 Ireland became the target of Viking raiders who arrived in shallow bottomed boats that could navigate up rivers and sometimes far inland. Vikings established Ireland's first two cities: Dublin and Waterford. During this period, Dublin had the largest slave market in Europe. Over time,



Vikings became settlers and merged into the Irish population.

The bubonic plague reached Ireland in 1348 through the port towns, carried along trade routes, probably from Russia where it was endemic in rodents. The Viking and Anglo-Irish, because they lived in crowded towns were much more seriously affected than the Gaelic Irish who were more thinly spread in the countryside.

Next to water, the most common liquid consumed was mead, the oldest of alcoholic beverages and made of honey, water, and yeast. Milk was also drunk, as cattle had been raised in Ireland since the Bronze Age.

When famine was not knocking at the door, foods included beef, pork, lamb, goose, duck, swan, peacock, pigeon, eels, salmon, herring, and oysters. Vegetables available included onions, leek, cabbages, beets, cucumbers, and

turnips. Barley, oats, flax, rye, and wheat were grown, as well as herbs including ginger, mustard, parsley, chives, sage, and thyme, among others.

This changed dramatically after 1492 when numerous new crops started being introduced from the Americas; these included, among others, peppers, beans, pumpkins, squash, blueberries, tomatoes, and Ireland's blessing and curse, potatoes.

Patricia Keenan finished her talk by stressing that she and others of Irish heritage in the Townships are the descendants of those who lived through the good times and bad of those eras. They are the descendants of Celts, Vikings, Normans, and Anglos; descendants of those who ate enough, wrote, sang, told stories, made music and lived to moved to the Eastern Townships.

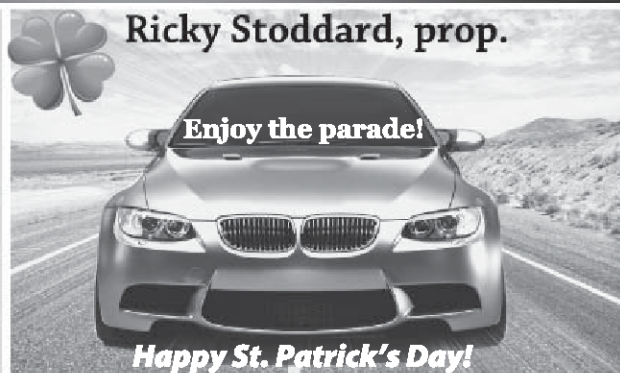
"Let us," she said, "raise our tea cups to them."



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Ricky Stoddard, prop.

Enjoy the parade!

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Happy

ST. PATRICK'S

day

The origins of the leprechaun myth

The tricolor flag. A pint of Guinness. Bagpipes. Each of these things are symbols of St. Patrick's Day, which celebrates the patron saint of Ireland every year on March 17.

While each of the aforementioned symbols is tangible, one popular image has proven a little more elusive. Leprechaun imagery is ubiquitous during St. Patrick's Day celebrations, but even the most ardent Paddy's Day revelers may know little about these mythical creatures.

Now widely depicted as tiny, bearded and mischievous men clad in coats and hats, leprechauns have been traced to

ancient Ireland. The precise etymology of the word "leprechaun" is unknown, though many scholars believe the word we use today is derived from the old Irish "Lú Chorpáin," which means "small body." Some scholars point to the 8th century word "luchorpán," meaning "sprite" or "pygmy," as the origins of the word leprechaun. Another word, "lubrican," which first appeared in the English language in a 1604 play written by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, also has been linked to the modern word leprechaun.

Some historians believe the myth of the leprechaun has origins in ancient

Ireland, when people believed the tiny creatures were among the various inhabitants of fairy forts and fairy rings throughout the Emerald Isle.

Another take on the source of the leprechaun myth is that these tiny creatures were modern incarnations of the Euro-Celtic god Lugh, who was the sun god as well as the patron of arts and crafts.

Manuscripts from the 12th to 15th centuries suggest leprechauns lived underwater and were not all male (modern leprechaun depictions are all male). In fact, the resource Ancient-Origins.net states that female leprechauns were de-

picted during this time as figures devoted to luring human men away for various adventures.

While 21st century celebrants of St. Patrick's Day might be hard pressed to find images of leprechauns not dressed in green, that wasn't always the case. Prior to the 20th century, leprechauns were described in various depictions as wearing red.

The images of leprechauns can be seen everywhere on and around St. Patrick's Day, and those images have evolved considerably over the centuries. (Source: Metro Creative)

Who was St. Patrick?

Perhaps because the day celebrating him is so widely associated with revelry, St. Patrick is arguably among the world's most popular saints. But as much as people may look forward to St. Patrick's Day, few celebrants may know the story of St. Patrick.

Though St. Patrick is widely associated with Ireland, he was born in Britain in the fourth century. In fact, Patrick's first encounter with Ireland was not the result of his desire to visit the Emerald Isle. At age 16, Patrick was actually captured by Irish raiders and brought to Ireland as a slave, ultimately spending more than half a decade as a herdsman.

Captivity may cause some to question or outright deny their faith, but Patrick's faith strengthened during his time in slavery. Patrick was inspired to escape slavery by a dream in which he was told by God to head for the coast, where a ship took him back to his native land after he successfully persuaded the ship's captain to allow him aboard.

Upon returning to Britain, Patrick, along with others from the ship, would struggle his way through the wilderness before ultimately reuniting with his family. Now a young but nonetheless grown man, Patrick, the son of a Christian deacon, continued to study Chris-

tianity.

Patrick's studies led him to pursue the priesthood, and he was eventually ordained a priest by the Bishop of Auxerre. Patrick would later be ordained a bishop, and was ultimately sent back to Ireland as a Christian missionary.

The details of Patrick's return to Ireland are hard to confirm, but it's likely he landed in County Wicklow on the eastern coast of Ireland before heading north to spread the Gospel.

In his autobiographical text "Confessio," which is widely accepted as having been written by Patrick, he is largely vague about his work as a missionary.

But he is believed to have converted thousands of native Irish to Christianity, all the while building churches and ordaining priests and bishops.

Throughout the decades he spent traveling around the country as a Christian missionary, Patrick lived in poverty, enduring many hardships. The dates of his life are difficult to confirm, but St. Patrick's Day is celebrated each year on March 17th because that is the day he is believed to have died in 461.

(Source: Metro Creative)

Enjoy corned beef and cabbage this St. Patrick's Day

Corned beef and cabbage might not be a part of many people's diet regimens throughout the year. But come March 17, it's not uncommon to find people from all walks of life indulging in this beloved meal.

March 17 marks the celebration of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Over the years, the day has also become a celebration of the Emerald Isle. Such celebrations tend to feature corned beef and cabbage, even though the dish may have little to do with Ireland (and even less to do with St. Patrick). The precise origins of the link between corned beef and St. Patrick's Day remain a topic of debate, but some historians say the corned beef enjoyed today can be traced to New York City's Irish immigrant population in the 19th and 20th centuries, who popularized a salted meat made from brisket that was then sold by Jewish butchers.

Regardless of the authenticity of its link to Ireland, corned beef is delicious and many modern Paddy's Day celebrants wouldn't think of going without it on March 17. Those who want to cook up their own can try this recipe for

"Corned Beef and Cabbage" from Arthur Schwartz's "New York City Food" (Stewart, Tabori & Chang).

Corned Beef and Cabbage
Serves 6 to 8

Cook a whole brisket with both sections together with all its fat. (You can trim off the fat after the meat is cooked.) Whole brisket and second-cut corned beef brisket are hard to find, but your supermarket should have first-cut corned beef vacuum-packed in plastic. Choose the fattiest piece in the case and treat it gently.

You can cook the cabbage and potatoes in the same water as the corned beef. Because the other vegetables need to be cooked in water that simmers more than the meat, scoop out water from the corned beef pot and cook the vegetables in a separate pot or pots.

1	4- to 5-pound corned beef brisket
1	teaspoon pickling spices
1	head cabbage
2	pounds boiling potatoes
6	to 8 small carrots (optional)

Parsnips (optional)
Turnips (optional)

Place the corned beef in a pot that holds at least 5 quarts of water. Cover completely with cold water. Place over high heat and bring to a simmer.

As soon as bubbles start to break on the surface of the water, adjust the heat so the water simmers very, very gently. With a slotted spoon, skim off the residue that accumulates on the surface. When the residue stops coming to the surface, add the pickling spices.

Continue to cook, with bubbles just gently breaking on the surface, for 3 to 4 hours, until fork tender.

The meat can be safely held in its water for about 2 hours; reheat gently.

Cook the vegetables until fork tender in separate pots of boiling fresh water or, especially for the cabbage, use some of the water in which the corned beef was cooked.

Slice the corned beef and serve with mustard and/or horseradish on a platter, surrounded with some of the vegetables or with vegetables in a separate bowl. (Source: Metro Creative)



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St. Patrick's Day Parade will begin at 2 p.m. with live music along the green-lined route. There will be many groups and individuals making

PARADE ROUTE: The starting point begins at Craig's Lane on Principale North street on the right. Continue up the Fairmount street. The parade ends after crossing Adam street.

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r street to the right. Then turn right on Gouin



St. Patrick's Society
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*To all our Leprechaun friends,
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Richmond Irish Heritage Festival

Submitted by St. Pat's Society
of Richmond & Vicinity

The month-long Irish Heritage Festival, organized by the St. Patrick's Society of Richmond and Vicinity with the support of partners, is well underway, with key events, including the Irish Kitchen Party and the St. Patrick's Parade, taking place this weekend. The Festival, launched on March 2, is about building community and celebrating the community's Irish heritage in music, dance and story with local musicians, artists and story-tellers.

St. Patrick's Society – Then and now

The St. Patrick's Society, founded in 1877, has a broad mission – its official title was the St. Patrick's Literary and Benevolent Society of Richmond and Vicinity. Peter Southam notes in Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley (2012) that the objectives of the Society were cultural, progressive, humanitarian and philanthropic. The Society organized lectures,

concerts and plays in its cultural role, picnics and excursions for social engagement, and provided assistance to those in need. St. Patrick's was celebrated every year, usually with a parade and an Irish music concert. Tradition lives on!

Membership dues were \$3 – in today's dollars that would be the equivalent of \$70. Today's membership dues at \$10 for a single membership and \$20 for a family membership are a bargain! The Society relies on membership dues to carry out its activities, including St. Patrick's celebrations.

Then, members were men from the Richmond, Melbourne, Windsor and Danville areas who were Irish or of Irish descent. Now men, women, and children from many different ethnic backgrounds are members. The majority is from the Eastern Townships, but there are also members from the Montreal area, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Georgia, and Singapore. Then, as now, the community as a whole and not just those who were Irish or of Irish descent

attended the Society's cultural and literary activities.

Next year's festival

Planning for next year's Irish Heritage Festival starts in April, with a focus on building community through local arts and heritage. Ideas for next year, including nominations for local artists, musicians, and heritage performers, and volunteers interested in contributing are

warmly welcomed – please contact the Festival committee at www.richmondstpats.org. Everyone is welcome – whether celebrating Irish roots or wishing for them!

The St. Patrick's Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of its partners, especially the Government of Canada, as well as the municipalities of Cleveland, Melbourne and Richmond.



RECORD ARCHIVES

Introduction to Irish dance

Dancing is an expression of emotion that can be perfectly matched to the tonality and sentiments of the musical accompaniment. Modern dancers interpret music and lyrics in ways that can evoke joy or sadness, anguish or contentment. Some of the more vibrant and intoxicating dances to behold are those of Celtic origins.

Irish dance steps and cadences have endured through the years. Today, dance studios around the world specialize in various types of Irish dance. There are a number of notable styles of Irish dance, each boasting its own unique components.

Stepdancing

Irish stepdance is a solo dance, although it can be performed by several soloists in unison. It is characterized by a generally stiff, immobile upper body and quick, precise movements of the feet. It is among the most common dances performed in a competition called a Feis. Males and females can per-

form, but it is predominantly female-oriented. Many dancers wear traditional costumes, curled wigs and poodle socks.

Sean-nós dancing

Sean-nós is another traditional form of solo Irish dancing. Unlike stepdance, sean-nós is a casual dance form. The name means "old style." Dancers perform low-to-the-ground footwork, improvised steps and free movement of the arms. This loose style of percussive dance is performed by individuals to their own rhythm – most often by men.

Set dancing

Set dancing is a fresh and vibrant style of dance based on dancing Quadrilles, which originated in France. The Irish modified the dance to make it energetic, rhythmic and fun. It has similar roots to American square dancing, although the Irish sets have a more disciplined structure defined by the music.

Céilí dancing

Céilí dancing is made up of different forms, but also hails from French and English dances of the past. It is a form of old folk dancing in Ireland, and features various pairs of dancers in facing lines. The steps are similar to stepdancing, with dancers traveling sideways, with movement progression and partner switching. These dances are very social and fun in nature. Unlike set dancing, céilí dances are performed on the balls of the feet with pointed toes instead of flat feet.

Traditional Irish dancing takes on many forms. It is lively to watch and often great fun for participants.

(Source: Metro Creative)

Moulée Vallée Feed

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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St. Patrick's Society of Richmond Irish Heritage Festival

Thursday, March 14
2 p.m. – Story-telling with Tales and Sayings at Wales Home

Story-telling with Tales and Sayings at Wales Home with Kathleen Lynch and Bev Taber Smith. Come and bring your favourite sayings! Free admission.

Saturday, March 16
1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Couvent Mont Saint-Patrice (Art Center)

140 rue du Couvent, Richmond. Drumming Workshop for Richmond St.

Patrick's Parade with Bernard Riche. Contact:brichedrum@gmail.com Free admission.

Sunday, March 17
9:30 a.m. - St. Pat's mass
At Ste. Bibiane Church, 970 Principale N., Richmond.

2 p.m. - St. Patrick's Day Parade
Start at 2 p.m. from 7th Ave. along the green-lined route. There will be bands, horsemen, floats, groups, and individu-

als making a fun-filled event. All are welcome to be part of the parade and for information, contact Julie O'Donnell at 819-826-2535. You can also visit our website www.richmondstpats.org to get more information for the parade (route, directions, rules, etc.). You can pre-register for the parade at the Richmond Hardware 819-826-2535.

4 p.m. - Contra-dance with Donald Dubuc and traditional musicians
Ste. Famille Centre, 155 Craig E., Richmond. Contact@donalddubuc.com. Special St. Pat's admission. \$10.

Saturday, March 23
Richmond 4H Dance
Richmond 4H Dance with Slightly Haggard, Ste. Famille Centre, 155 Craig E. Richmond.

Sunday, March 24
9 a.m. to noon - St. Patrick's Brunch
Richmond Legion, 235 College N., Richmond. Everyone is welcome to an exquisite breakfast prepared by our famous St. Pat's cooks. Pictures of the parade will be given to participants. Everyone is welcome. \$8.

Thursday/Friday, March 28/29
7 p.m. - Play at RRHS
At Richmond Regional High School auditorium, 375 Armstrong St., Rich-

mond. The Countess Cathleen O'Shea is an Irish folk tale retold by Julie Miller. This bilingual play is performed by the young actors of le Théâtre Ça Prend Tout un Village/It Takes a Village Theatre. The play is about the Murphy cousins who meet up in Richmond on the occasion of their Granny's 92nd birthday. As is the family tradition, Granny tells them an old Irish folktale that her grandmother used to tell her, "The Countess Cathleen O'Shea." The good-hearted Cathleen O'Shea has only just come out of mourning for her parents, and decides to venture beyond the walls of her domain to meet her tenants for the first time. Three mysterious strangers arrive in the small Irish village, and the villagers are forced to make difficult decisions when confronted with a series of misfortunes. This folktale was collected by William Butler Yeats in 1888, and it is still relevant today. \$12 adult/special - under 12 years.

(Source: Richmond St. Patrick's Society)

Celtic Kitchen Party

Saturday, March 16
7 p.m. Kitchen Party at Melbourne / Richmond Golf Club
75 Belmont, Richmond with Irish finger foods and Celtic Music by local musicians: The Waterboys / The Rutherfords / Matt McCully. Reserve at 819-826-3929, email bev2000@primus.ca or at the Richmond Hardware (220 Principale N.) 819-826-2535. For the Irish and all those who wish to be! \$20.



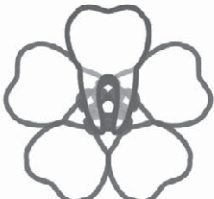
The Waterboys - A trio of multi-talented musicians, Alex Kehler, Nicholas Williams, and Andrew Wells-Oberegger hail from the Eastern Townships. All three musicians are singers and multi-instrumentalists, and their concert features the fiddle, Irish flute, tin whistle, bouzouki, guitar, accordion, bodhrán, nyckelharpa, sackpipa, bombard, and more!



Matthew McCully is a singer songwriter living in Sherbrooke, Quebec. His lyric driven songs are rooted in the folk tradition, but through his appreciation of world music and his choices of instrumentation, his unique sound is a challenge to define.

Amy and Andrew Rutherford - This brother and sister team are both alumni of Richmond Regional High School. They are passionate about music and have played many shows together. Not one particular style can define them, as they play many different styles; from Irish folk music to punk and heavy metal!

**Happy St. Patrick's Day!**

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at the parade.*



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day**

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and attendees a
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enfold you!"**

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