


# IRISH COMMUNITY NEWS

 **NE** Irish Network

Issue 11 January 2021

*Connecting Irish People in North East England*



## FAITH IN OUR FUTURE

Officials of the Tyneside Irish Centre are confidently predicting that the club will be back in business this spring. Club secretary, Tony Corcoran said, “We realise there will be no St. Patrick’s celebrations this year but we are making firm preparations to open in June or July at the latest,” he claimed. “The lockdown has cost us a fortune but with the help of our friends and funders we have enough to start trading profitably again.” Details of the centre’s appeal are featured in an inserted page in this issue of the Irish Community News. The secretary explained, “Our membership renewals usually raise close to £10,000 at this time of the year. Hopefully, our appeal might double that. £20,000 is our target and if achieved it would be a marvellous statement of faith in our future.”

Acting Chairman, Vin Wynne mused on the year just gone, “When, as we prepared to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day 2020, it became clear that we would need to lockdown, I don’t believe any of us would have believed it if we’d been told, ‘Oh, and this will go on for a year or more.’ As we strike the days off our calendars, thinking of the great times we might have spent with friends in the Irish Centre, the sports fixtures on the TV, the music, the birthdays, the craic, it seems increasingly likely that the anniversary of Lockdown One will pass before we see anything like normality returning.”

“But those days will return and we know that our community will remain strong. We can see that by the ways in which you have supported one another, kept in touch, called friends who you know might be struggling; it’s these little acts of kindness that make us who we are. We might not have been anywhere, but we’ve loads of stories to share and you’ll always find someone who’ll listen in the bar of the Tyneside Irish Centre!”

“The staff are itching to get back”, remarked Bar Manager Lynn Harrison, “and we are looking forward to seeing all our club members again.”

Sport too has taken a big hit during the pandemic but our GAA teams took to helping out with our Irish food parcel deliveries to elderly members across the North East as Mark Anderson of the Men’s GAA football team explained, “Some of us didn’t get home to see our families this year, but little things like bringing a hamper to the community was a great boost for the Christmas spirit for them and myself and I’m looking forward now to getting our GAA teams back up and running and getting a crew into the Irish Centre for some well overdue team bonding and new recruiting!”

Avid Newcastle fan and PR for the Bobby Robson Foundation Liz Luff summed it up for all of us, “Can’t wait to get back!”

*Continued on page 2*

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Liz added wistfully, “Until this pandemic, I don’t think I realised just how much people mean to me. I’ve really, really missed spending time with people.”

“And not just close family and friends, I mean all the acquaintances I’d occasionally see. And the strangers I’d chat to in a bar queue. Until they were taken away, I had no idea how important all these daft little conversations were to me.”

“My favourite place to do all of these things is the Tyneside Irish Centre and I can’t wait to come back. There’s nowhere else like it in town and I can’t wait for the day when we can all be safely together again.”

## UPDATE

Fáilte Isteach: Welcome to the “Network”.

This will be the first time many of you will have received the Irish Community Newsletter (ICN) though we have been posting it to over 700 senior Irish in North East England since last April. This 11th issue is being mailed to the homes of all our members of the Tyneside Irish Centre also.

ICN is published by North East England Irish Network, a group formed by members of the Tyneside Irish Centre, Teesside Irish Society, Cu Chúllains/Tir na Nóg GAA and Tyneside Irish Cultural Society (TICS) and is led by a group of volunteers and staff from these organisations including: Mark Anderson, Barbara Flynn, Celia Hall, Liam Houghton, Carol Hill, Mary Kelly, Gerry Lynch, Kevin MacAleese and Helen Passman. It is separately funded by a grant from the Government of Ireland to combat social and cultural isolation in the COVID crisis. It DOES NOT use funds from the member organisations. If you are a senior citizen and want us to post you the ICN regularly please contact us.

## GOOD NEWS

Congratulations to Pattie and Jim O’Boyle on their recent Golden Wedding. They are just two of the dozens of volunteers who helped us deliver nearly 600 Christmas parcels. Over the years they have been the driving force behind the Durham Literary Festival and the Colpitts Music session. Jim’s parents Molly and Michael were stalwarts of Irish life on Tyneside where Michael, from Ballycroy, Co. Mayo, was a great fiddle player.

Happy 80th Birthday on the 28th January to Fr. Kevin Cummins.

## SAD NEWS

JOE McCORMAC RIP

Our good friend, Joe, lost his last battle over Christmas in St. Oswald’s Hospice and there was a great turnout for him at a windy Silverhill cemetery on January 11th. From

Belfast, he was able in his modest way to show his great pride in his city and his country. Carol sends thanks to all and promises a great wake in the centre sometime soon we hope.

MICHAEL FINNEGAN RIP

A Sad Story from South Tyneside. On Monday 14th December a funeral service was held for Michael, the son of Mary and the late Joe Finnegan. St Bede’s Church in Jarrow had its allocated congregation of thirty close family members. Friends and neighbours, therefore, gathered outside Mary’s home as Eddie MacIntyre sang the iconic local hymn “From Jarrow’s Tower” at the front gate. Our condolences to Mary and the Finnegans.

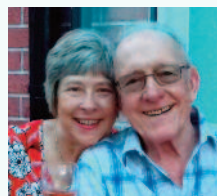
DOREEN IONS RIP

We send our condolences to Adrian and the Ions family in Alnwick on the loss of Doreen. All of us in Irish music who played in the Festival there as Comhaltas did for many years have fond memories of a wonderful lady and a landlady who could conjure a banquet from a few loaves and fishes or whatever was to hand. Happy memories of memorable Alnwick festivals and nights in the Playhouse. Go raibh míle maith agat:

THANKS A MILLION

We received almost 100 cards, letters, texts and calls thanking us for the Christmas bags of hi-calorie Irish fayre. Please forgive us if we can’t acknowledge everyone here but believe me all were greatly appreciated.

First down to Stockton-on-Tees where our famous friend, Longford’s Dermot Hegarty, sent thanks from his friends and neighbours including Nora! Also, lovely cards from Pat B in Redcar who says, “great reading in those books” and more praise for our newsletter from Mrs. White in the Boro. Norma also wrote from Teesside wishing



you all peace and health in 2021 and Annie S said, "The Christmas package brought a wonderful ray of sunshine to my days of lockdown." Thanks to Helen of Teesside Irish Society for her tremendous commitment from June H and Maureen W and another great card from Ann McG in the town liking our "interesting stories which roll back the years" and telling us to "keep the flag flying." That's just what we aim to do Ann.

Good to hear from Hazel and Marie in Sunderland, from Martha in Birtley, from Cliff and Jean in Stanley who sent us a joke we can't print and Arthur and Mary in Consett who tells us he passes the ICN on to his Irish doctor. Thanks also to Bridie near Darlington and from Emily in North Shields who thanks us for our support in 2020. Many of you know Emily, a very spritely lady from Arklow. There was a very interesting letter from Margaret G in East Boldon telling us of her own charitable work and again saying she really enjoys the ICN.

Now as I run out of space thanks for the many who wrote from the Toon and the Heed! Tracey H who liked our Christmas card design, Pat C in Walkergate who thinks our "young ladies" from the GAA are really nice. Norah and Ann in Kingston Park can't wait to get back to the Thursday Club, a sentiment echoed by Catherine and Pat H from Denton Burn. John L C in Denton thanks the people who packed and presented the bags – "ideal" he says. Ann R from Benton loves ICN and says the goodies came "just when she most needed" cheering up and Rose B

just down in Walker says, "it's lovely to know someone is thinking about you". She and Eleanor McA also think the two girls from the GAA are lovely too. Up in West Moor Kevin, Brian and Ann send their appreciation. Anne B and Joan L sent us greetings from Gateshead and Anne says the delivery made her day. From south of the Tyne we also had thanks from "Big" John M from Belmullet and Alice D one of our regular correspondents. Alice has a distinctive cursive style in her handwriting which immediately betrays an Irish schooling; she urges you all to get the vaccine. Finally, on Tyneside we heard from Susan and Paddy from Limavady and our celebrity authoress Mary M who tells me she was one of the first to get the jab.

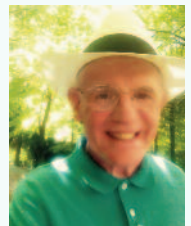
Out of town for our last round up now and starting with a beautifully typed letter from Mary B in Dudley, then 20 miles west to Hexham and a generous donation from Mary O who was born in the shadow of Croagh Patrick, then up into real Northumberland to Wark whence Sheelagh sends a thanks and news of her family in Co. Down. And 25 miles further west to another good friend and regular contributor, Pat N. She sends two cards, one before Christmas and then another one plus a homemade calendar that she makes every year - this time it's lighthouses.

And finally, Sister Deidre sends thanks from the Little Sisters and says the produce would be shared amongst all. She assures me of the grateful prayers of our community. Thanks Sister, I think many of our team could do with a prayer or two.



## Thought for the day from Francie McSherry the Wee Irish Mister

1. A pig says: My name's Bacon, Chris P. Bacon
2. Not saying I live in a rough area but last month I bought a Christmas Advent Calendar and half the windows were boarded up.
3. Thanks for explaining the word "many" to me: It means a lot!
4. Turning Vegan is a missed steak!!
5. I entered what I ate today into my new fitness App and it just sent an ambulance to my house.
6. What did Cinderella say when the photo shop lost her pictures? "One day my Prints will come!!"
7. We went to a restaurant last week and all of us had curried Pelican. Eeee it was a huge bill.
8. I said to my mate: I wouldn't like to be in your shoes tomorrow morning!! He said: Why is that? Cos they wouldn't fit me.
9. I searched round all the men's shops for a pair of camouflage trousers but I never saw any.
10. Why do bees hum? Because they can't remember the words HaHaHa have a nice day.



# How Big Jack put me on the path to an Irish Passport

by *Brian McNally*



AN early morning booze-fuelled conversation with the late Jack Charlton in a New Jersey hotel, not many hours before the Republic of Ireland famously beat Italy at World Cup 1994, gave me the first hint I was entitled to Irish citizenship. Over a substantial sup of Jamieson whiskey we'd discussed everything from his troubled time as Newcastle United boss to our joint support for the miners' strike a decade earlier.

But when I mentioned I'd studied the history of the Border Reivers - lawless Northumbrian bandits - and that his family line of Charltons and Milburns were possible participants, his interest was instant and eager.

Quickly, we moved on to our shared passion for genealogy as the England World Cup winner explained how he first began researching players' Irish roots to boost his under-strength international squad.

As a joking aside, Jack quipped: "Surely you're qualified to play for Ireland with a name like McNally?"

To be honest I'd never even thought about it. I hesitantly replied: "Not sure. My mum's family are all from Gweedore in Donegal, but I'm not sure if she was born there or in Glasgow. My Glaswegian father's folks are from Monaghan..." Before I could explain any further, Jack interrupted: "100 per cent, kidda, you're Irish. You'll do for me."

Big Jack was way ahead of his time in knowing the rules on Irish citizenship and the interpretations

of Uefa and FIFA. (As well as testing their flexibility with the likes of Tony Cascarino's questionable credentials).

But this beloved son of Ashington was smart enough to have unearthed future Irish icons such as Glaswegian Ray Houghton, Scouser John Aldridge and Kent-born skipper Andy Townsend.

Given his expertise on identifying Irishness I'm disappointed it took me almost another quarter of a century to check out my family history and finally act to secure an Irish passport.

It proved far simpler, quicker and cheaper than I'd imagined. From start to finish it took just six months before I could proudly declare myself a citizen of the Republic of Ireland.

It was the looming peril of Brexit and the loss of so many freedoms in Europe that proved the big game-changer for me. My only regret is not doing it far sooner.

Sadly, this awful pandemic has curtailed travelling, but, if you have an Irish parent or grandparent, it's worth exploring your route to an Irish passport.

I will personally answer any questions that you have on Irish passports. Contact me on [bpjmcnally@gmail.com](mailto:bpjmcnally@gmail.com)

In the words of the old Irish saying: "It is better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it."

Sláinte, Jack! For sowing the seed.





# CENSUS ALERT Part One

Every ten years since 1841 there has been a census in this country (and Ireland up to 1911) except for 1941 due to Hitler and Co. (A fire during the war destroyed the records of the 1931 census).

It has always recorded more than your names and addresses: for instance, the Irish records tell us in 1891 who were still Irish speakers.

For the first time in 2001 the Irish in Britain were recorded as an ethnic group. Even though this was the result of a campaign by the Federation of Irish Societies, it was not universally welcomed by our communities.

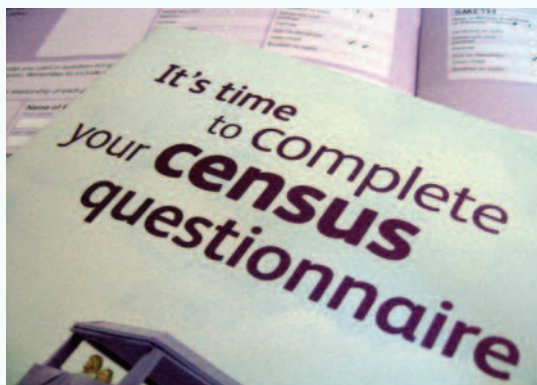
Some thought it would be used against them in the troublesome political times which then prevailed. Others felt denigrated by being classed as an “ethnic minority”: friends said to me, “Aren’t we as good as anyone else?”

The result was that, although the Census mainly recorded the **NATIONALITY** of Irish emigrants accurately it drastically underestimated the **ETHNICITY** of a huge Irish descended population here.

Typically, Irish-born parents identified themselves as Irish Nationality but failed to record their children as of Irish Ethnicity. Less than 8% of children were shown as ethnically Irish and, of course, it was worse for grandchildren.

In 2011 there was a Campaign to tick the Irish box and passport holders were traced for the first time. Although slightly better it was still a drastic distortion of the size of our community.

One amazing result, however, was that Newcastle recorded the biggest increase in the



Irish-born population of any city in the UK. More next month as we count down to April but meanwhile please tell your friends that many more of them can register their Irish **ETHNICITY** whilst also retaining their British **NATIONALITY**. Why? Because ethnicity is defined as simply, ‘Belonging to social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.’

You don’t even need an Irish granny to tick the Irish box.

## Why is this important to us?

The census helps the government understand what our society needs now and what it’s likely to need in the future. The information it collects helps plan and fund services in our area.

This could include transport, education and healthcare. Charities and small groups like ours involved in the NE Irish Network also use census information to help get the funding they need. Businesses use it to decide where to set up, which creates job opportunities.

The questionnaires will be popping through letterboxes in early March and the census day is **Sunday 21st March 2021**

# Tyneside Irish Brigade 27th Battalion Colours

*by Barney Rice*

My interest in the Tyneside Irish Brigade was sparked by the book written by John Sheen, "The History of the Tyneside Irish" published in 1998. Reference was made in the book to the Regimental Colours of the 27th Battalion which were now in storage at Beamish Museum.

As I was chair of Tyne and Wear Museums and a member of the Beamish Museum Management Committee I made enquiries about the Colours and was told they had been entrusted to Newcastle City Council for safekeeping in 1920 and had hung in the council chambers of the Old Town Hall in the Bigg Market. Unfortunately the Colours were forgotten about.

Beamish staff were invited to the Old Town Hall when the council were moving to the new Civic Centre, to salvage furnishings etc. from the old council chamber. I was reliably informed, by a member of the Beamish staff who was present, that the Colours were rescued in the nick of time from a contractor's skip with some other artefacts and sent to Beamish for storage.

I discussed the idea with John O'Shea, a fellow member of the council, and both of us having Irish ancestry felt that Newcastle City Council should honour the memory of the men who served in the Tyneside Irish Brigade and their descendants by re-dedicating the Colours and putting them on public display.

We convened a meeting of interested parties who felt as we did. They were Tony Corcoran, director of the annual Tyneside Irish Festival, Joe O'Neill, chair of the Tyneside Irish Centre, Fr. Michael Campion, administrator of St Mary's Cathedral, the proposed new home of the Colours, Captain Peter Marr, secretary of the Fusiliers Regimental Association, John Sheen, author of the book that inspired the project and John O'Shea and I from the City Council.

A condition of the long-term loan of the Colours was their restoration and conservation. Costs were met by the Irish Club and the Fusiliers Association.



The culmination of the project was a re-dedication at St Mary's Cathedral led by the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle the Rt. Rev. Ambrose Griffiths where the Colours were to be laid up and dedicated and put on display. We invited as many relatives of the Brigade as we could and the Cathedral was packed out.

There had been some publicity in the local press and I received a telephone call out of the blue from my distant relatives Jim and Mary Connor from Willington in county Durham. They both had relatives who fought and died with the Tyneside Irish and we shared the same grandmother, Elizabeth Rice who came from Co. Cavan to settle in Willington. They told me we had a relative who had been entrusted with a set of bagpipes for safekeeping by Father George McBriarty, a former chaplain of the Irish Brigade who was the parish priest of Willington. These pipes had played the Tynesiders over the top in France. The family emigrated to the States in the 30s for a better life and now the recipient's grandson, Vinnie Robinson, played the same pipes in a AOH Pipe Band in Long Island.

Arrangements were made to invite him to the re-dedication ceremony to play the original pipes. This was made possible by Tony Corcoran's great persuasive skills at fundraising from local businesses with an Irish connection.

The Colours are now on display at St Mary's Cathedral. When the president of Ireland, Mary McAleese visited the North East in September 2003 she attended a service and unveiled a plaque about the Colours in St Mary's.

# TYNESIDE IRISH BRIGADE PROJECT



*The Tyneside Irish Brigade consisted of four battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers. Recruitment commenced in October 1914; the Brigade was disbanded in 1918.*

*Members of the Tyneside Irish Cultural Society are embarking on a Project to research and record details of local men who enlisted in the Brigade and the impact this had on the men and their families. We would love to hear from anyone with TIB family connections – including anecdotes handed down orally. We would research the soldier and share our findings with the family. Now is the time to record these memories... as time marches on they could be lost forever.*

*A dedicated website, sharing information online, will keep everyone abreast of the progress of the project.*

*The project will conclude with a travelling exhibition (fingers crossed) displaying uniforms, artefacts and research history of soldiers plus a publication detailing our findings.*

*People are often unaware of their ancestor's involvement in the First World War, or know very few details. If you know of any family connection, no matter how vague, we would love to hear from you. Especially welcome would be any memorabilia such as medals and photographs which could be copied and included in the exhibition.*

*Please contact us on [memories.tyneirishbcs@gmail.com](mailto:memories.tyneirishbcs@gmail.com) or see the other contact details on the back page*



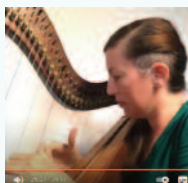
# Cultural Society Add to Online Presence



As opportunities to get together may still be a while away, the Tyneside Irish Cultural Society carry on adding to their online content, which includes podcasts and webinars and can be found on their YouTube channel.

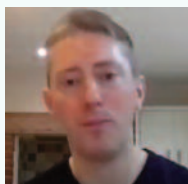


The monthly podcasts, hosted by Michael McNally, have been going from strength to strength, with a range of interesting interviews and performances. So far, guests have included staff and volunteers from the cultural society talking about such things as their adult education classes, their library at the Tyneside Irish Centre, the North East Irish Network, and the forthcoming Tyneside Irish Brigade exhibition.

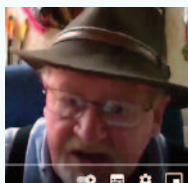


There have been some great performances from artists such as harper Úna ní Fhlannagáin, Celtic Social Club singer and guitarist Dan Donnelly, and flute and whistle player Matthew Dean.

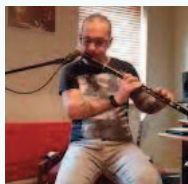
The December podcast included a fascinating interview with Dave Wood, a guitarist and music teacher. Along with a group of fellow musicians, Dave has put together a CD of recordings featuring Newcastle-based fiddler Paul Ruane, who sadly passed away four years ago, aged only 49. Paul was a great friend to the cultural society and taught the Comhaltas class in Newcastle. The CD makes publicly available some of his previously unreleased music. ([www.paulfiddle.com](http://www.paulfiddle.com))



The line-up for January includes Ruairí Cullen from the organisation Irish in Britain, who will give advice on applying for an Irish passport and remind everyone to tick the 'Irish' box in the March census. And there'll be music and chat from Kevin Doonan, a member of the incredible family band The Mighty Doonans. Future podcasts will talk to Irish dance teachers and Lord of the Dance stars Peter Vickers, Kelly Hendry and Roisin O'Donnell. They will share some memories of dancing with Michael Flatley and discuss the local dancing scene.



Webinars, for those unfamiliar with the term, are live on-screen lectures, performances, or discussions that you can watch on your computer, tablet, or smartphone. If watching live, you can submit questions and comments too. Previously, the cultural society have broadcast two webinars. The first was a celebration of the life and work of poet and musician Ciaran Carson; the second, a discussion about the work of poet Seamus Heaney, which featured readings by Line of Duty actor Adrian Dunbar and author Roy Foster. Further webinars are being planned, to be broadcast around St. Patrick's Day, with music concerts and a discussion with Joseph O'Connor, author of international number-one bestseller *Star of the Sea*.



The podcasts and webinars are available to watch anytime. Search YouTube for Tyneside Irish Cultural Society to find the channel.



# Irish Centre's 150th Anniversary *Tony Flynn*

2021 is the 150th Anniversary of the first Irish Centre founded in Newcastle in 1871. The "Irish Club" was given the grand title of the "Irish Literary Institute" and located in Clayton Street opposite the Grainger Market. It occupied three floors of what had been an elegant town house built for wealthy merchants by the Tyneside Classical developer Richard Grainger.



*Bernard McAnulty*

The driving force behind the foundation of the club was Bernard McAnulty who was born in County Down and came to Newcastle in the 1830's, becoming a successful draper living at Dog Leap Stairs, leading down from the castle. He was elected to the Town Council as the first Irish Councillor in the country. He stood for election for the All Saints Ward, where there was a concentration of Irish residents at Sandgate, not for a traditional Political Party but as a Home Ruler.

In 1858 Bernard McAnulty married Mary Milburn at Newcastle's St Mary's Cathedral and they lived at 2, Claremont Place, in the centre of the town for the rest of their lives. Bernard died in 1894 aged 78 years and is buried in Jesmond Cemetery where his grave is marked by a Celtic Cross.

The Irish Club became the first "port of call" for Irish immigrants looking for a warm welcome to the town and seeking welfare advice about employment and housing. Despite the Institute's discreet name, out of fear of reprisals against the Fenians, the club became the centre for political

organisations and meetings giving support for the Land League and Home Rule.

Bernard McAnulty gave loyal support to Newcastle's Member of Parliament, the radical Joseph Cowen, owner of the Chronicle newspaper, and advocate of Irish causes. Michael Davitt, leader of the Land League and Charles Parnell, leader of the Irish Party in Parliament, were regular visitors to the Institute.

Tony Corcoran says in his booklet entitled, Tyneside Irish Heritage Walk, that the Institute's aim was the, "cultivation of Irish literature and the moral improvement of its members ... but don't worry ... it had a bar!"

It is hoped that in the year ahead the Tyneside Irish Cultural Society will find ways of celebrating a hundred and fifty years of the foundation of the Institute and the contribution of the largest ethnic minority to the City's life. It would be wonderful

if the  
City



*Collingwood Hall: home of the Literary Society and the Irish National Club*

Council could place a Heritage plaque on the building in Clayton Street to mark the occasion of the founding of the Institute.

TICS hopes to mark this anniversary in the October Festival and would be glad to receive any info or images on Irish Centres from Clayton Street, Westgate Road, Westmorland Road and Gallowgate.

# A Belfast Upbringing *by Gerry Cushnahan*



*World Champion boxer Sonny Liston visited Sailortown in 1963*

I was born in June 1945 at 61 Pilot Street, Sailortown, Belfast. The sixth of seven children, to my father Stephen Cushnahan and mother Monica (nee Kirwan). My father, nicknamed 'Oscar' by his siblings, was a well-known seaman in the area and indeed Belfast. My mother originated from Galway where Kirwan was a very popular surname. She met my father whilst collecting door-to-door for the S.V.P. Money talks, romance flourished and hence eventually marriage occurred.

Sailortown was a rough and tough communal area to grow up in. The majority of men went to sea or worked on the Docks. The women were traditionally housewives but generally the rulers in their homes.

There were 5 pubs in our street alone and 15 within the Sailortown area. At weekends they were generally 'full' with laughter, gaiety and song. There were the occasional 'rumbles'!! As a young boy, I experienced the diverse races of seamen who traversed our streets. No racism in those days.

Growing up in a strict Catholic family had its ups and downs. I remember vividly the Missions who came to our church (St Josephs) to preach hellfire and damnation, to especially to the menfolk who liked a drink or two. At the end of the Mission, the men would solemnly take the Pledge (to give up the drink). No sooner had the Missionaries gone than drink was back on the agenda!

The Ffyfes banana boat used to dock at the bottom of our street. Lorries taking the produce away would have to stop at the Dock gates before proceeding. Myself and other pals would then sneak around the backs of those lorries and steal

bananas. I did this practice until I told the Parish Priest my misdemeanors. His penance to me: "I'll tell your father about this". Enough said, I never stole another banana again!

On Our Lady's Birthday (15th August) we would have a bonfire in our street to celebrate. For wood, I and others would climb into the timber company at the top of the street and steal wood (for the bonfire I add). Unfortunately on one last occasion I was caught by the police! Taken eventually to the Magistrates Court and fined 10 shillings and also given a caution. My parents were none too pleased. Our Lady, you owe me one....

My primary education was at Earl Street School. Each Friday before school end, the entire cast would belt out 'hail Glory of St Patrick' and Faith of Our Fathers'. Two hymns that no doubt inspired us to be fervent Nationalists....

Secondary education took place in St Patrick's, 'Bearnageeha' Antrim Road. Commonly known as 'Barney' it was the first secondary school built for Belfast working class Catholic boys in Northern Ireland. I entered 'Barney' in 1956 and left in 1963. It was initially a bit like a blackboard jungle institution: hard, tough and survival was a bit of a priority. We were deemed by the Education Authority not to be academic and hence expected to take our place in our socially stratified class order. However, under an inspiring and dynamic headteacher called Willy John Steele ('Wee Steele' as the boys knew him) this changed. Wee Steele cajoled, persuaded and drove us to realise we had potential to achieve professional careers. After 'O' levels and 'A' levels I left Barney for St Joseph's College of Education in Andersonstown to train as a teacher for 3 years. St Josephs (an all male college) was also known as 'Trench House' or 'The Ranch'. Seamus Heaney taught my year group English for one year here. None of us really understood what he was talking about but he was a brilliant and entertaining lecturer.



I successfully completed my Certificate in Education in 1966. My first permanent teaching appointment was at Stella Maris primary school, Rathcoole, Belfast. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there and also the personal life I was experiencing. The Swing Sixties indeed!. My good mates and I avidly would go to ballrooms like the Astor, the Orpheus, the Bellevue to watch the showbands. I can recall the Miami, the Freshmen, the Dixielanders and the Cadets with Eileen Reid as the lead vocalist. She married Pat Jennings (Ireland's greatest ever goalie – sorry, Shay Given!). So many other great bands we pursued. I played football for Star of the Sea amateurs, based down on the Shore Road. It was a very well run club led by Dr Liam Conlon. Good games



*The famous Orpheus ballroom*

and good times were had. We played in Celtic colours and this at times led to a bit of 'Ire' on the field when playing certain teams....

Sadly, Stella Maris school particularly and Star of the Sea were badly affected by the sectarianism that blatantly appeared in Northern Ireland life from 1968 onwards. I myself lost two good male friends during the Troubles. They were innocent victims.

I left Northern Ireland in June 1968 to pursue a career in teaching with the Ministry of Overseas Development and my posting was to Lusaka, Zambia. Was this the young man's dream to see the world as many of my own family had done – another element of the Irish Diaspora abroad?

Another life awaited.....



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# NORTH EAST GREATS IN GREEN

BACK in the day I wrote a 1986 World Cup finals tribute to Northern Ireland's finest footballers entitled "Greats in Green".

The piece took little thinking about as the names flowed effortlessly from my typewriter:

Pat Jennings, Bill McCracken, Mal Donaghy, Danny Blanchflower, Terry Neill Martin O'Neill, Billy Bingham, Jimmy McIlroy, Gerry Armstrong, George Best, Peter McParland.

35 years on my task on paper appeared much simpler: Name the best 11 Norn Iron stars I've seen play for the North East's big three clubs. That clearly excluded the Toon's legendary first Irish cap McCracken, who left in 1923.

It certainly proved a more time-consuming project than my first effort.

Take the goalkeeping spot: Little to choose between Toon pair Willie McFaul and Tommy Wright, but Boro legend Jim Platt just edged it courtesy of some memorable match-winning displays in vital games.



*Jim Platt played 481 games for Boro and won 23 NI caps*

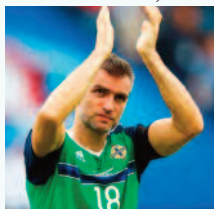


Right back produced another near dead heat involving Magpie David Craig and Sunderland's Jimmy Nicholl. But my vote went to classy Fairs Cup winner Craig. He played

435 games for Newcastle, while Nicholl had just 40 outings for the Wearsiders.

Easier choices were Newcastle's immaculate left back Alf McMichael and another Magpie, 112-times capped Aaron Hughes to anchor central defence.

It would have been great to add former Sunderland



*Aaron Hughes 112 NI caps. Only Steven Davis and Pat Jennings have more.*

loanee Johnny Evans to the rearguard, but I decided to go with only permanent players.

Star-studded Sunderland trio Martin Harvey, Billy Bingham and Johnny Crossan, who also played for Boro, were all easy picks as was Toon terrier David McCreery.

Bingham is the only player to make both my Irish teams and, intriguingly, partners another outstanding Irish boss, Michael O'Neill, on the right side of my attack.

The forward line threw up some dilemmas as there was a scarcity of number nines (I discounted NI record scorer David Healy on the grounds he played only 10 games for Sunderland). Natural left wingers were in short supply too (I didn't rate the inconsistent Ian Stewart during his Newcastle spell).

So I switched Toon "Entertainers" wizard Keith Gillespie to an unusual left-wing berth to partner Tommy Cassidy, one of the Irish heroes in the fairytale 1982 World Cup win over Spain.

This is my side (2-3-5):

**Platt;**  
**Craig, McMichael;**  
**Harvey, Hughes, McCreery;**  
**Bingham, O'Neill, Crossan, Cassidy, Gillespie**



*Johnny Crossan 24 caps, 10 goals*



*Toon schemer Tommy Cassidy*

The fact that there are seven Magpies in my selection is simply down to Newcastle United's long-standing connection with Ulster. It began with McCracken's arrival on Tyneside in the Victorian era and was perpetuated by the excellent Northern Irish scouting network he built up.

**Next month: My North East-based Republic of Ireland All-Star XI**



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# TYNESIDE IRISH CULTURAL SOCIETY



SPRING TERM **On line ZOOM Classes** start week beginning **Monday 28th JAN 2021** (8 week term)



## **MONDAY 25TH Jan**

**IRISH LANGUAGE BEGINNERS** G Hutchinson 6.15 – 7.15pm

**IRISH LANGUAGE INTERMEDIATE** G Hutchinson 7.30 – 8.30pm

## **TUESDAY 26TH Jan**

**BOOK CLUB** starting this term on **ZOOM** 6-7pm 'The Home Place' by Brian Leyden-if you are interested please email [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com) to be put on the class list

## **WEDNESDAY 27TH Jan**

**IRISH LANGUAGE ELEMENTARY** G Hutchinson 6.15 – 7.15pm

**IRISH LANGUAGE POST BEGINNERS** G Hutchinson 7.30-8.30 pm

## **THURSDAY 28TH Jan**

Course 1 **INTRODUCTION TO IRISH HISTORY** The Age of Invasion 12th to 17th centuries 4.30pm- a weekly series of lectures led by David Burke

Course 2 **A HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL IRELAND** Texts & Contexts - Manuscripts to Architecture 5.30pm -a weekly series of lectures by David Burke

**IRISH MUSIC FOR ADULTS INTERMEDIATE** 7.30-8.30pm

A lively session every week led by accordion player Gemma Telfer  
All instruments welcome

## **RETURNING SOON**

**SET DANCING Tuesdays 8pm NOT ON ZOOM**

Returning to the TIC soon

Traditional style, Irish formal dance; beginners always welcome

We would like to run our **Tuesday Creative Writing** classes on **ZOOM**  
please email [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com) to register your interest

Coming soon.... we are planning to set up a **Radio Drama** group.

If you think you might wish to join please register your interest  
at [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com)

Keep an eye on the website **[www. tynesideirish.com](http://www.tynesideirish.com)** and on facebook  
**@TynesideIrishC** for classes returning to the **Tyneside Irish Centre**

**FEES : £35/£30 conc. per 8 week term**

*We are keen to help those who wish to attend, but are prevented from doing so for financial reasons. Enquiries are treated confidentially. Please contact Barbara on [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com) for further details and to register*



# Bosca Poist

Our postbag has been overflowing with your letters of support and thank you cards. Your response is much appreciated by all here at the Irish Community News!

Many thanks for the wonderful gifts and support you have provided for me during 2020. All the best for Christmas and New Year.

Hello you lovely people.  
I just wanted to say  
thank you so much for my Christmas Gift it made my day.  
much appreciated  
Best wishes to you all.



I would like to thank  
for my Christmas bag of food  
who overwhelmed your young idea  
were really nice.  
Merry Christmas - A Happy New Year

A Little Card to Brighten  
Your Day and Thankyou All  
With A Very Grateful Heart  
For Your Wonderful Generosity  
The Christmas Package Brought  
A Wonderful Ray of Sunshine  
To my Days of Lockdown.  
All Gods Blessings to You All



Thank you very much for the  
Lovely Bag of Goodies I  
received this week. I am 84  
and it made me feel so special  
to get this gift from the Irish  
Club. I look forward to the day  
I can meet my friends at the  
Sunday Club.  
God Bless you all for the  
Wonderful work you do at the Club



Dear Tony  
Glad to find words to  
thank you for that lovely bag  
of Christmas cheer.  
I've had a rough day - then  
your gift did the trick. lovely  
with this lovely bag presented me  
the just light of goodness  
it truly is how all someone  
is thinking about you. yet a  
great team, doing such amazing work.  
I've a long gesture. I also  
enjoyed the news broadcast.  
Take you a God Bless you all.



Many thanks for the wonderful  
gifts and support you have  
provided for me during 2020  
All the best for Christmas and New Year!

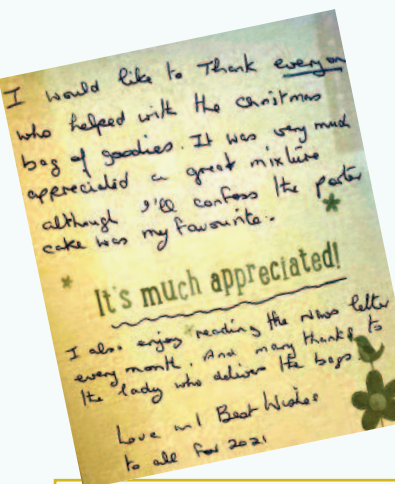
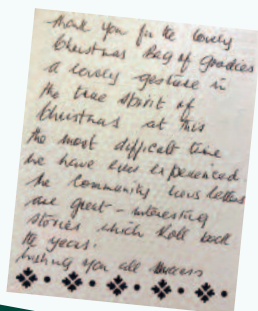




## A painting of a lighthouse situated on a hill. The lighthouse is white with a black spiral pattern around its base. The hill is yellow, and the surrounding landscape is green and yellow. The sky is blue and grey.



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HOPEFULLY IT WILL ALL  
BE OVER SOON -ISH.



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