

**Connecting Irish People in North East England**

## MARY R.C. KELLY RIP

### Mary's message: Don't Mourn...Organise!

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Mary in these pages.

This very magazine is part of her legacy as she served as treasurer of the Tyneside Irish Cultural Society that produces it.

However, this is a mere trifle in the huge amount she gave to the Irish community.

She was born Mary Shanley to a family from County Leitrim and raised in Heaton on the eastern edge of Newcastle city centre near to St. Dominic's Church.

She was schooled in the parish and at the Convent of the Sacred Heart and maintained her devotion to that church right to the end.

Her burning desire for social justice owed much to her friend Father Herbert McCabe who established the Young Christian Workers (YCW) there in the 1950's.

By then she was a worker at the Ministry of Pensions in Longbenton but she was also an



Irish dancer. Her love of Ireland came especially from her father who she was fond of quoting:

"Ireland was Ireland when England was a pup, and Ireland will be Ireland when England's all done up!"

Irish dancing was to remain Mary's passion for over 70 years: she competed with distinction as a girl, she met her husband, Peter, at the feis, toured Europe with the Tyneside Irish troupe on

many occasions and even won prizes at the Welsh Eistedfodd.

She ran her own dance school at St. Teresa's in Heaton and qualified as an adjudicator. She was a tireless worker and organiser with St. Patrick's Feis and the North East Council of the Dance Commission (CLRG).

Her work there led inevitably to her election to the Commission in Dublin and to international trips to World Championships and Feisanna in weird and wonderful places.

**Continued on Page 3**

# UPDATE

## News from the Irish Centre

### Membership Renewals

- You can renew your card in person or online.
- The fee is £12 or £6 for over 65's.
  - New members are £20 and £10 for seniors.
  - New loyalty/discount cards are £10.00

The office will be open for memberships on SATURDAYS from 6.30 pm – 8.00 pm during December and at other times as advised on the website.

### Thursday Club and Tara Lunch

The Thursday Club Christmas Party is from 12 noon on 14th December, and we hope to have another special birthday party for one of its much-loved members on the 21st.

Tara Lunch is as usual on the FIRST FRIDAY which is 1st December, with Dermot Hegarty, fresh from his broadcast on RTE, providing entertainment. With a top-class hot meal as well! Just turn up but let us know if you have a friend coming.

### Entertainment at the Irish Centre

We have some fantastic acts lined up in December. Top attraction must be Belfast's ten-piece band, the Raparees, with their tribute to the Pogues. Also in December, fans of folk and jazz or just a cracking night out should also catch the amazing Tim Edey on the 1st. Details of all these are in later pages. Our 'Rambling House' on the last Friday of the month is going well. Feel free to call in, sing a song or play a tune with us. There's a free drink for performers!

### RIP Sue Baines

Just as we go to print, we heard of Sue's rather sudden death. Her funeral is at St Teresa's, Heaton on Friday, 24th November at 11.30. Our sincere condolences to David and family.

### Farewell to Frank O'Brien

I journeyed down to Warrington to say goodbye to my good friend Frank O'Brien who was chair of the Irish Club there and of the Lancashire IDL. He coped with some very difficult moments for the Irish community in his town and the respect in which he was held was evident from the massive turnout. It was a great celebration of a life well lived as he departed in style. Ar dheir Dé go ruibh a anam



### Price Increases

		Normal price	With Discount	Weekend Price
The Centre has been advised by the stock taker to make a modest increase in prices.	Guinness	4.20	3.88	4.90 / 4.53
	John Smiths	3.70	3.42	4.00 / 3.70
	Coors	3.80	3.51	4.20 / 3.88
New prices for some of our most popular lines are as follows:	Madri	4.00	3.70	4.50 / 4.16
	Carling	3.50	3.24	4.00 / 3.70

**Still excellent value for money!**

# MARY R.C. KELLY RIP

Continued from  
front page

## Mary's message: Don't Mourn...Organise!

Somehow Mary found time to raise a wonderful and loving family – Tara, Sineád and Peter. She was equally proud of them all and of her grandchildren too.

Aislinn was an heroic help to her grandmother in her last days at home and Mary marvelled at Ceolúm's mastery of languages...even Chinese!

She must have been especially happy when one of them, Caoimhe, became a champion dancer.

Later in life she became school secretary at Wharrier Street Primary in Walker where Margaret Carter was the esteemed headteacher and a doughty campaigner in the NUT union for equal opportunities in education.

Always keen to fly to foreign parts, she had visited Asia and the USA with Peter before he passed away. Now, as she and Margaret became firm friends the lure of far horizons was irresistible.

Together they travelled to the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Egypt and Syria. Not for them Benidorm or Majorca: they were explorers not tourists.

This gave Mary something of an advantage when discussing foreign affairs. For example, if you mentioned Aleppo she could simply enquire: Have you been there?

Mary's last regular job was a difficult one in Newcastle Council's "recovery team". Faced with so many problem cases her social conscience kicked in again. Instead of sending in the bailiffs immediately to evict or collect the

hated "poll tax" she formed an effective network with good Samaritans especially the legendary Fr. Tom Cass to save people's houses and rescue them from debt and despair.

Just a final note on her contribution to Irish music on Tyneside. Her husband, Peter, was founder and lead singer with the Beggarmen who played all over the region in the 1973 to 1995 era. He was renowned for his vast repertoire of Irish folk and songs of the republican struggle. The band recorded, performed on regional TV and even won the band contest at the Rose of Tralee festival in Kerry. Peter learned most of his material from his wife!

Mary worked on right to the end when the dreaded cancer returned. A fortnight before she died, she was still signing cheques and questioning expenditure. She faced death with equanimity but raged against it because she had so much more to do. With your help, Mary, your friends will rally round to see your mission is fulfilled.

Mary's crowning glory must be three days in September 2003 when Mary MacAleese became the first President of Ireland to visit her beloved city. With Margaret Carter, Lord Mayor, she as Lady Mayoress was able to welcome her to the Cathedral, the Mansion House and the Irish Centre of course. A sort of poetic justice for an Irish woman who never compromised her principles.

"I hope you're dancing in the sky  
And I hope you're singing in the angels' choir  
I'll bet it's so nice up in Heaven since you arrived"

Dani and Lizzy song 2015



These photographs were taken around 1959...Mary is second from the left in both photos

**Tony Corcoran**



*Enjoying the entertainment at the Irish Centre with President Mary McAleese and Newcastle Lord Mayor Margaret Carter*



*With Margaret Carter and the Rugby World Cup trophy*



*President Mary McAleese signs the visitor's book at the Lord Mayor's Mansion House in September 2003*



*With Margaret Carter and England and Newcastle Falcons Rugby World Cup hero Jonny Wilkinson in 2003*



# A TRIBUTE TO IRENE

## RIP Irene Little 1929-2023

We acknowledged Irene's passing in our last issue: she gave up her long and active life on the 6th of October. We made our last sad farewells on 7th November. After the service at St Michael's Elswick – the church where she was baptised and married- a small group saw her interment at Holywood Cemetery in Gosforth.

She was born Irene McGivena in an Irish Catholic community in Newcastle's West End and grew up in the hard years of the 1930's and war and rationing in the 40's. The lessons learned then stayed all her life: Don't waste money, plan your life choices, prepare for the worst but hope for the best.

She had a good education at St. Anne's Convent school but had to earn a wage as soon as she could leave school.



She became a clippie on the Newcastle trolley buses and you can be sure there would not be a penny short at the end of her shift. It seems she liked a uniform because she then served five years in the Women's Royal Army Corps before she married husband Alexander in 1955.

Later after bringing three sons into the world, she was appointed bursar at Kirkley Hall Agricultural College in Northumberland.

This was a job which perfectly suited the organisational skills acquired in her early life and it was those same attributes she displayed when she joined the committee of the Irish Centre on which she served for the best part of thirty years.

In 1988 she was the main mover with the late Kitty Brock in founding the Thursday Club for Irish elders which continues to thrive today. They were two utterly contrasting characters

but formed a dynamic partnership.

Without doubt Irene was the best fundraiser we ever had and if a job was to be done, she would plan it to the last detail and drive everyone forward to complete it.

She was a strong woman with a strong faith and true to her own principles. I visited her shortly before she was forced to move into sheltered accommodation in 2021 and was surprised to find her house was still owned by the council: it was the only one in the street that hadn't been bought by the tenants.

Although a "conservative" by nature she thought it wrong to sell off the houses and although she could have afforded it would not abandon her principles for monetary gain.

Just to underline the point her home was conspicuous when you approached. The garden was beautifully tended, the paintwork smart and the windows gleaming.

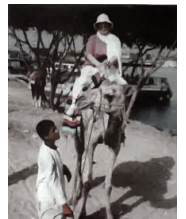
Inside was the same - all domestic perfection – the best house in the road. How she did it and kept it like that when she was so ill, I do not know but that was Irene to a tee.

I was sad to leave her that day and I knew that behind her brave exterior she was heartbroken to leave her home.



Irene was a truly remarkable woman and a person of principle and courage.

May she Rest in Peace.



# Down Our Way...

**Regular contributor Gerry Cushnahan reflects on growing up in the Docks area of Belfast...and the race to leave it for a better life across the globe**



Our street, Pilot Street, was the only street in the working class enclave of Sailortown that ran directly into the Docks.



At the bottom lay the Clarendon Dock; just before it were the Dock Gates which opened early morning and closed whenever Dock traffic ceased. Beside the gates was the Bulkies Hut - the grand office of the Harbour police who were usually big strong country men, hence their nickname "Bulkies".



The Clarendon Dock was the gateway to the Liverpool and Heysham boats plus the Isle of Man ferry. Many a man and woman passed through those gates en route to work in England and even further afield, seeking a better life.

Pilot Street in the late 40s, 50s and 60s consisted of 33 dwellings including both domestic and business premises.

The occupations of those residing or working in them varied in style, class and money, all thrown together for no rhyme or reason.

We had, in no specific order, rented homes for dock labourers, general labourers, boatmen and seamen and none of these listed could ever afford to buy their home.

There were 5 pubs, a flooring company, a stevedoring business, a coal depot, 2 engineering companies, and an animal feeds company called Clow's Mills - which directly faced our house.

Finally, there was the Priests House consisting of 7 bedrooms, in direct contrast to domestic houses which normally had 2 bedrooms.

My home, number 61, fortunately had 3 bedrooms, plus a parlour. Having a parlour felt a step up the social order!

Having such crammed together dwellings produced hustle, bustle, noise, smells - of traffic, manufacturing and people.



No thought was given by our Belfast City Fathers to environmental health issues. In time they did eventually destroy my street and Sailortown to build the monstrous "concrete jungle" Ring Road. They called it economic development; we, the residents, called it vandalism.

People emigrated from our street in my time living there, leaving it in expectation and indeed yearning for a "better life".

What was their rationale for doing so? In blunt terms there was poverty, unemployment and yes, sadly, religious discrimination. Features of the Irish Diaspora emerging once again.

This next section names those who left Pilot Street and where they emigrated to. Here are some of their stories.....



My own elder, college-educated sister Mona Cushman left Pilot Street aged 17 to work as an au pair in New York. Her life over there was very similar to that of Eilis Lacey in Colm Toibin's novel (and the film) "Brooklyn".

Mona met and married an Italian American, Joe Favuzza, and in time brought him home to visit her family in Belfast. Everybody thought he was so dark and handsome and that he looked like Elvis Presley.

Joe was very bemused by our home in Pilot Street, especially by the outside loo! Mona and Joe adopted two boys, Danny and Shaun in The States. Tragically Mona died of cancer in New York aged 43.

I had three male cousins - Jim, Stevie and Patsy Killen - who lived next door to us. All of them emigrated to Adelaide Australia and none ever returned to Pilot Street or Belfast.

Another cousin, Stephen Cushman, residing at 49 Pilot Street, took the "£10 Pommie" ticket to Melbourne. Initially as a joiner he worked for McAlpine in Victoria (slavery work, he called it) and New South Wales.

Stephen later involved himself in property development, became a millionaire and was still working in his late 80s.

Tommy Mullen from up the street left Harland and Wolff shipyard due

to bigotry and sectarianism. A qualified draughtsman, Tommy emigrated to Houston Texas to work in the oil industry.

Joe Brunton from 51 Pilot Street, a qualified electrician, left to settle in New Jersey. Joe always believed that as a Catholic he found work in Northern Ireland hard to come by.

Frank Quinn at the top end of our street was a labourer who left to become a Pastor in Texas. From a Catholic family to preaching Christian fundamentalism; nobody knows where his conversion came from! Shades of St Paul on the road to Damascus maybe?

I left Belfast in 1968 to work as a teacher for British Overseas Development in Lusaka, Zambia. My family back home always said I had done the right thing to leave when I did! On then leaving Lusaka in 1977 I made my home with my own young family in North East England, where I still live.

From a small street so many young and talented men and women left. Only one of those mentioned returned to Belfast to live; the rest now lie in some far off field or churchyard,

adding to the vast numbers of Irish emigrants who never returned to their homeland.

They enriched their adopted countries, who are often proud of them. Proud of their Irishness - and shouldn't we all be?

***I am certain many of our readers have similar stories to tell of emigration from their Street, Village, Town, City - fancy sharing them with us?***



# IRISH HERITAGE IS EVERYWHERE IN NEWCASTLE!

In 2014 a booklet written by Tony Corcoran and entitled 'Tyneside Irish Heritage Walk' was published as a guide to a walk that outlined areas of significant Irish involvement in Newcastle through the years. An intrepid band re-traced the walk...**Bridie Lowery** put on her trainers and went in search of the Irish...

As part of a TICS Library project, we are researching the history of the Irish Centre, and of the Irish within Newcastle. To this end, a small group of us were privileged to be given a tour of Newcastle around places that were important to the Irish.

Our guide was Tommy McClements who designed the booklet. His easy lecture style, happy disposition, and impartial but searching questioning led us to make up our own minds about the importance of the Irish presence and contribution through many years.



We (Mary, Susan and I) enjoyed an eye-opening, historically relevant journey around iconic Irish locations including the Bridge Hotel, Central Station, the Tyne Theatre & Opera House, the

Joseph Cowen statue and the Irish Literary Institute in Clayton Street.

These places deserve their own dedicated article, but today I give you a whistle-stop tour.

## THE HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE (built 1846-49)

Although there was already an Irish presence in Newcastle and Gateshead, many more were attracted to the North East from 1846 to work on the construction of Robert Stephenson's bridge and to escape the harsh punishment of the famine.

A Scotsman, James Hill, composed the High Level Hornpipe which became a favourite of Irish fiddle players.



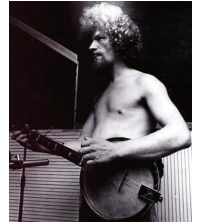
## THE BRIDGE HOTEL

was originally built in the 1870s and called The Bridge Inn, it was rebuilt in 1899 for John Fitzgerald (1857-1930), from Tipperary.

In March 1915, Fitzgerald, as Newcastle Mayor, supported the Great War regiment of the Tyneside Irish Brigade. Sadly in 1916, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, his son (Gerald Fitzgerald) was one of the many fatalities.

In later years, the pub became the headquarters for meetings of the Tyneside Irish Brigade Veterans.

In 1948 Pat Foley (from Dungarvan) took over as manager, encouraging traditional folk music as well as many political meetings. The Bridge Folk Cub hosted Irish names such as Luke Kelly, Christy Moore, Dominic Behan and many others. The resident band was The High Level Ranters.



In 1972 the first meeting of Tyneside Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann was held in the Bridge.

Note: we owe many thanks to Sean for allowing us to explore the Bridge Hotel and for sharing what history he knows.



## CENTRAL STATION

opened in 1850, replacing three earlier stations. Tim Healy (1855-1931) came from Bantry in 1871 to

Newcastle to work as a railway clerk for the North Eastern Railway.

His interest in, and involvement with, Irish politics led to him being instrumental in the founding of the Newcastle Home Rule League, based at Newcastle Irish Literary Institute.

Eventually, following an active, varied career in politics, which started at Newcastle Central Station, Healy became the first Governor-General of Ireland based in Dublin Castle.





Famed Irish who travelled to/from Newcastle include: Oscar Wilde who in July 1883 visited the Lit & Phil as part of a lecture tour, which included Sunderland, and travelled to the Tyne Theatre in 1885 to lecture on Fashion.

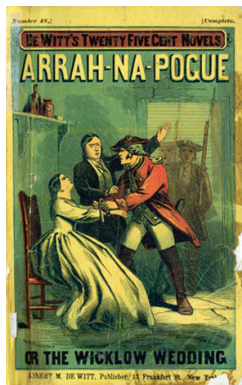
Michael Davitt visited in 1893 and spoke at the Durham Miners Gala. And Eamonn De Valera who addressed the Anti-Partition League at the City Hall in 1949.

## THE TYNE THEATRE & OPERA HOUSE

In 1867 Joseph Cowen (1829-1900) "radical free thinker, industrialist and politician" opened the Theatre on Westgate Road.

Designed by William B Parnell it was intended to be a theatre for the working classes. Cowen's money to finance the venture came from the family business, Blaydon Brickworks near Newcastle. Following his University education, Joseph became interested in revolutionary political movements and workers' rights.

Using his newspaper, The Newcastle Daily Chronicle, he promoted workers' rights, votes for all, the abolition of slavery, Home Rule for Ireland, as well as other worthy political causes.



The first production in the Theatre was the Gaelic-titled 'Arrah-na-Pogue' (The Wicklow Wedding) by Dion Bouccicault, which was set during the 1798 rebellion, portraying the struggle for Irish independence and introduced the song The Wearing of The Green.

## THE IRISH LITERARY INSTITUTE

(Clayton Street)

Aims: "the cultivation of Irish literature and the moral and social improvement of its members"

Bernard McNulty (1816-1894) was born in County Down, moving to Newcastle in the 1830s and developing a drapery business. Over the years he chaired many local groups with Irish interests and following a rally on the Town Moor for the release of Fenian prisoners, McNulty and other speakers went on to found the Irish Literary Institute in April 1871.



The Institute was within a former merchant's townhouse, taking up a couple of floors.

Close by was the Connaught Hall, a popular music venue which held an Anti-Internment meeting

in the early 1970's, Bernadette Devlin was the guest speaker. In 1908, The Irish Literary Institute closed down and reopened as the Irish National Club.

*To sum up* - this article may be large in its wordiness but it doesn't quite cover the history nor the sheer enjoyment that this small group of Irish hunters enjoyed that day!

I've cut the history down to bare bones – but what is astounding is the wealth of Irish heritage that adorns this fair city, if you look for it. Irishness is everywhere!

If you're interested in helping us to research the history of the Irish Centre, please just get in touch.

**Bridie Lowery** TICS Library

07724 2020 27 library.tyneirishcs@gmail.com

**Library: Thursdays 11am - 4pm**

**Liz Little** TICS Genealogy

07960 409 003 memories.tyneirish@gmail.com

**Genealogy: Thursdays 1pm - 4pm**

# Great Grandad fought with the Tyneside Irish

*The Tyneside Irish Brigade World War One project, based at the centre that bears it's name, regularly receives requests for information about family members who fought in that brutal, often attritional war. The family of John Dovey, a private in the 25th battalion of the TIB, were keen to find out more about him and contacted the project. Elizabeth Liddle takes up the story...*

The family were able to supply me with some information about John which was a big help as a starting point.

He had joined up with the Tyneside Irish and had fought and survived the Battle of the Somme having had gunshots to his leg...he was one of the lucky ones because his battalion was decimated, losing three-quarters of it's strength within 3 hours of the attack.

He would go on to have a much more serious injury in 1918...but more of that later.

John was born in 1886 in Newcastle upon Tyne, the second son of James Dovey, a Railway Engine Driver who was originally from Shropshire and his wife Mary Baxter Robson who was born in Carlisle.

According to the 1891 census, John was living with his family in Westgate, Newcastle. After attending St. John's Church of England School in Shildon, he was living with the family in Walker in 1901 and working in the local shipyard at the age of 15 as a Marker for the Platers.

He marries local girl Margaret Grahamslaw in January 1909 at Byker Parish Church and by 1920 they have 5 children although Robert dies in 1917 after only 11 days.



In 1911 the family are living in Swalwell and John is

working as a hewer at the coalface in the local colliery. His parents are still living in Walker where his father is now employed as a farm labourer.

When war comes, with early losses heavy, John signs up on 18 November 1914 at Hoppers Lane in Swalwell, and is allocated to the 25th battalion, his service number being 25/167.

Sometime in 1915, during his training, he is 'Confined to Barracks' for two days for overstaying his pass...no doubt with pay deducted and made to undertake some onerous duties...it was a common occurrence among the soldiers at the time, After training he is allotted to 'C' Company and goes off to France in January 1916...he takes part in the tragedy of the Somme, where he sustains gunshot wounds to the leg...injured enough to earn him a return to 'Blighty' to recover.

He returned to the UK on 8 September 1916 and is transferred to Depot (Alnwick Command) the following day.

The records show that he gets transferred to the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment in November 1917.

This battalion had the distinction of being one of the first units to land in France in August 1914 so when John joined them they were already battle hardened. They went on to take a prominent role in World War Two.





The family believe he was injured when driving a Gun Limber with the Royal Garrison

Artillery. He was discharged on 23 July 1919 "no longer physically fit for active service". He had served for 4 years 248 days. Pension was awarded, initially 100% disability, reduced to 30%, which amounted to 27 shillings and 6d per week. I've been in touch several times with the South Staffs Regimental Museum to find out more about his time with the Midlands regiment but I'm still awaiting a reply...one of the many frustrations that can occur when carrying out research!

Again frustratingly, although there is a substantial amount of information available, I have been unable to answer John's great grandson's questions...I cannot confirm for example that he was injured on 1 July 1916, although he was wounded but didn't return to the UK until September 1916. I also haven't been able to find

anything more about his accident in 1918 nor can I confirm he joined the Royal Garrison Artillery.

Many records were lost because of a direct hit on the archives during the Blitz and often accurate records weren't kept during the 'fog of war'.

He had earned a British War Medal & the Victory Medal, as well as a Silver War Badge. His discharge papers described him as being of "Very Good Character".

In the 1921 census we find John, his wife and their 4 children living in Swalwell. John is employed by Garesfield Colliery as a Colliery Lampman, working above ground.

By the time of the 1939 census, taken on the verge of another world war, he is living in Whickham with his wife Margaret...his daughter Edith aged 19, is described as "incapacitated". Edith died in 1942 aged 21. There is also a James Dovey, at school, born 17 October 1930...was he a grandson?

John spent the rest of his working life employed as a General Labourer by the Council.

Margaret died towards the end of 1958. John died in 1961 aged 75 years.



## TYNESIDE IRISH CENTRE



We also have the Thursday Lunch Club 12.30 – 2.30 pm in the Concert Room

Tara Club on the First Friday of the Month with Live Music 12.30-3pm

Live Music in the Bar on Fridays and Saturdays starting at 8pm

# Top Class Entertainment @ Tyneside Irish Centre

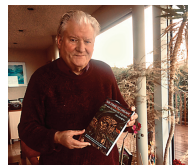
## 'Dare to Dream ... Of An Island of Equals'

### An Evening with **Des Geraghty**

(A talk arranged with the Tyneside Branch of the Historical Association)

**Thursday 30th November 2023 7.30**

Des has participated in the making of many Irish TV and radio documentaries. He is the author of *Luke Kelly: A Memoir* (1994); and, with photographer Liam Blake, *40 Shades of Green* (2007). He also co-authored a book which was used on SIPTU Education courses, *European Works Councils: Information and Consultation Rights* (1997). His most recent publication is *We Dare to Dream... of an Island of Equals* (2021).



### **Tim Edey** returns to Tyneside Irish Centre on **Friday 1st December 7.30**

Anyone who had the pleasure of catching Tim on his last visit to Newcastle will know what a magical evening this is going to be. He has toured the world, recording with most of the major names in Celtic and Contemporary roots music including The Chieftains and Christy Moore. Originally from Broadstairs in Kent and of Irish descent, Tim honed his guitar style by listening to the likes of Django Reinhardt, Ed Boyd and Steve Cooney.

**Tickets are £10 from Eventbrite, [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com) or 0191 261 0385**

## **The Raparees are Back!**

We are delighted to be hosting the Raparees 'Fairytale of the Pogues' for the second year in a row. They will be here at Tyneside Irish Centre on **Saturday 9th December at 7.30**

The show sees the Belfast 5-piece group expand to a 12 piece with the full brass section many remember from the raucous Pogues live shows of the late 80s & early 90s. Sold out performances in Belfast have seen the band take the show on the road to Germany, Switzerland & Luxembourg.

**Tickets are £25 from Eventbrite, [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com) or 0191 261 0385**



## **IRISH COMMUNITY NEWS**

### Contact us:

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**Support Hotline: 0751 948 8805 [tyneirishcs@gmail.com](mailto:tyneirishcs@gmail.com)**

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