



# CANADIAN CELTIC ARTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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<http://canadiancelticarts.ca>

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## Smaointean / Smaointe\*\*

Janice Chan, President

For the Celtic peoples, both summer and the year came to an end on a date corresponding to October 31. Winter and the new year marked Samhain, one of the four fire festivals in the Celtic year, is still the name given to the month of November in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic.

In the 8th century, the Catholic Church moved All Saints Day from the spring to November 1, making the night before All Hallows Eve, or Hallowe'en.

On the new year's eve, Celts believed that the walls between the spirit world and the world of the living were permeable, allowing the souls of the dead to wander roads and villages unhindered. It's thought by some that many of our own Hallowe'en customs might be derived from these beliefs - guising, or dressing up in costume so as not to be recognised by spirits, and leaving out apples and nuts to appease their appetites.

But there are other Samhain customs, especially in Scotland, that aren't usually associated with Hallowe'en these days. With the coming of winter and the work of the harvest behind them, people gathered together for ceremonies and feasting. This was also a time for young people to meet and play games, many of which were supposed to predict their futures.

A good number of these games involved trying to determine future spouses. Two hazelnuts would be placed beside each other in a fire, and each was given a name of a young woman and man present. The nuts would burn, pop, and jump away or toward each other in the fire, and from that it was inferred whether the two were destined to marry or not.

Another game involved placing dishes of salt, flour, and water on a table. A blind-folded young woman would be spun around, then place her hand in one of the dishes. If she chose the dish of salt, her husband would be a fisherman, if she chose the flour, she would marry a farmer, but if



she chose the water, she would be widowed.

One custom that made its way to pioneer Canada is bobbing for apples. Apples were floated in a large tub of water that was placed on the floor, or alternately, hung with a string from the rafters. The first person to grab an apple with just their mouth and teeth would be the first to marry.

Another divination game involved eating *fuarag*, a treat made with oatmeal, cream or water, and perhaps honey. With the edible ingredients, a ring, button, thimble, and a coin were added to the mixture and served in one large, communal bowl to young people who scooped up a large spoonful. The person who got the ring with their portion would be the first of the group to marry, the one who found the coin would become wealthy, but whoever got the button was destined to be poor, and the person who got the thimble would never marry.

Making *fuarag* at Hallowe'en is still a tradition in homes with a Gaelic tradition in Cape Breton. You might try this recipe - and don't forget to leave a wee bit out for the *daoine sìth!*

125 ml fine oatmeal (steel cut)  
315 ml fresh heavy cream  
45 ml honey  
45 ml whisky (optional)  
Ring, button, thimble, coin (wrapped in waxed or parchment paper)

Roast the oatmeal in a heavy frying pan until it is golden brown. Whip the cream until very stiff. Stir the honey, whisky, ring, button, thimble, and coin into the cream. Place layers of cream and toasted oatmeal in a large glass bowl and set in a fridge to cool for an hour. To serve traditionally, give everyone a large wooden spoon and let them dip out a spoonful for themselves. Eat within 3

hours or the oatmeal will become very soft.

\*\* Smaointean/Smaointe is translated as "Thoughts" from Scottish and Irish Gaelic respectively.

## News from Celtic Studies

By Jean Talman

As these notes are being written, Celtic Studies is bidding farewell to our Musicians-in-Residence, Martin Hayes (fiddle) and Dennis Cahill (guitar). What an exciting time it has been to have them on campus, from visits to our Celtic Folklore class and the Wednesday night session at Mullins Pub, to a wonderful talk and presentation to a packed crowd in Charbonnel Lounge. Martin kept us enthralled with his discussions of traditional Irish music, regional variations, West Clare/East Clare, and much more. We could have listened for another hour or more. Saturday night brought more delight at a concert in Alumni Hall, attended by about 200.



Martin Hayes (fiddle) and Dennis Cahill (guitar). Photo credit: Irish Connections Canada and William C. Smith.

In between times, Martin and Dennis held afternoon workshops and discussions, and informal drop-ins for students and the general public alike. Our sincere thanks to The Ireland Fund of Canada whose contribution from the Day at the Races enables us to fund the Artist-in-Residence program.

In September, we welcomed Daithí Ó Ceallacháin,



who comes to us for the year courtesy of The Ireland Canada University Foundation. Daithí is assisting with teaching the introductory and intermediate Irish language classes. This is the third year we have been provided with a teacher of Irish by ICUF and we are very grateful to the Foundation and Professor John Kelly for this initiative.

Classes for the fall term began the week after Labour Day and Celtic Studies faculty and staff have been busy since then. Ann Dooley, Máirín Nic Dhiarmada and David Wilson are teaching their usual complement of courses, including Celtic Cultures through the Ages, the works of Seamus Heaney, Irish Language and Literature, Modern Irish History, and Celtic Folklore and Music. This year's Armstrong Visiting Scholar is Sarah O'Connor who is teaching a course on the literature of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and two courses on Celtic Cinema. David Livingston-Lowe is teaching Scottish Gaelic, and Stephanie Hayes is teaching Celtic Literature and Society 500-1500 AD. After Christmas, we will welcome Sean Conway, former MPP and Provincial Cabinet Minister, who will teach "The Irish and the Scots in Canada".

The launch of David A. Wilson's biography of *Thomas D'Arcy McGee Vol. 2: The Extreme Moderate* will take place at Hugh's Room on November 10 and the book will be available on bookstore shelves. The event will feature a show by David and the McGee Band (James Stephens and Frank Cassidy from Ottawa) that combines the speeches, letters and poems of McGee with original music in traditional style. Please see page 8 for details.

Celtic Studies Speakers Series continues this year, thanks to the generous grant received from The Irish Cultural Society of Toronto. On December 1, John Wilson Foster, Visiting

Research Fellow at Trinity College, Dublin, will present on "Some Reflections on Catastrophe and Irish History". Next term, we will welcome His Excellency Ray Bassett, Irish Ambassador to Canada, who will speak on "Recollections on the Good Friday Agreement" on Thursday, February 16.

For further information on the Celtic Studies Program, visit <http://stmikes.utoronto.ca/celticstudies>

## FEATURE

### Cwn Annwn: A Story from the Dolgellau Area in Wales

By Ken Richards

Cadair Idris is the second highest mountain in Wales and rises to 890 meters above the grey-stone town of Dolgellau. It is said that if you spend the night at the summit of Cadair Idris, you return either mad or as a poet. Locals also say that "Y Gader" resembles a large chair, and that a giant named Idris once used it as a place to rest. It is a place to fear and to respect.

When I was young, people spoke of polecats (*ffwlbart*) that lived in the foothills around Cadair Idris, and we were warned not to stray from lanes and pathways in case we encountered these wild, elusive animals, which we believed, were dangerous.



Autumn is a time when the foothills acquire a more sinister hue as shadows lengthen and stories of polecats and other wild beasts come to the fore as people settle in to a period of long, dark winter nights.

Cadair Idris was a much wilder place many generations ago. In those days, farmers worked land owned by a lord (*pendefig*), and what he said was the law. Some landlords treated their tenants well and are remembered in the poems, while others grasped at any opportunity to increase their wealth and status.

The lord of lands around Cadair Idris, a man known as a threat to women, was out hunting one day and visited one of his farmers for refreshment and was attracted to the man's daughter. The farmer knew about his lord's weakness and his worst fears were realized when the lord demanded that she serve him at his hall (*plas*) several miles away across the Afon Wnion and close to where Nannau is located today. Torn between duty and honour, the farmer agreed but vowed silently that he would seek retribution for what had happened.

A few weeks later, an old woman who was passing by asked him for a cup of buttermilk. Buttermilk was plentiful in those days and a refreshing drink on a long journey. A generous host would also serve you a small oatcake cooked on a griddle to accompany the drink, which is what the farmer provided the old woman. He knew that she possessed special knowledge about sick animals and was often called upon to serve as midwife when children were born. On leaving her host, the old woman looked at his cattle and said, "If you value these fine beasts, make sure that they are protected at night. The coming winter will be hard, and I have heard that a pack of wild dogs is stalking farm animals if they are left in the fields." And with this warning, she continued on her way.

The winter was wild, as the old woman had predicted, and each evening the farmer dutifully brought his cattle into shelter from the fields. On some nights, he also thought that he heard the sound of dogs howling in the distance, but they never seemed to come any closer. It could have been the wind, as there were many gales that winter, but he silently thanked the old woman for her advice each time he heard the sound.

Late one afternoon, his work was interrupted by shouts and the sound of horses as a small hunting party led by the lord emerged from the forest next to his farm. The horsemen dismounted to rest their horses and to water them in the stream that flowed past the farm. The farmer approached the lord to offer hospitality, as was the custom and his duty, and learned that the lord's horse was injured and incapable of keeping up with the hunt.

The huntsmen feared the bad weather and persuaded the lord to stay overnight at the farm to rest his horse, and to join them the following day. The lord reluctantly agreed and ordered one of his servants to stay with him.

The lord did not seem aware of the relationship between the farmer and the young woman he had seduced. Despite his feelings, the farmer was bound by custom to ensure that his lord, his servant and the horse were comfortable and that a meal and space available for the lord to sleep. The weather was getting worse, and the soft rain grew into heavy showers accompanied by strong gusts of wind.

Howling dogs were heard in the distance during a lull in the heavy showers and were getting closer. The lord's servant was tending the horse, restless in the weather and the sound of howling dogs, and ran into the farmhouse with the news. Dismissing the howls as a figment of imagination, the lord rose, put on his cloak and hurried out in the pouring rain to tend the horse himself. The farmer and the lord's servant stayed indoors, fearful of the situation.

What we know about the remainder of that night remains unclear and can only be discerned from the sounds that the farmer and the servant heard from



within the house. The lord was heard comforting the horse as the sound of howling increased and then ebbed to a low growl. The horse then screamed and bolted. The growls turned into snarls and frenzied barking followed by one long scream that seemed neither human nor animal... and then nothing but the sound of pouring rain.

The storm had abated by the next day. Fearing the worst, the farmer and servant emerged to find the horse standing calmly by the stream. Extending their search to the forest, they found what remained of the lord's body in a hollow surrounded by large rocks where it seemed that he had been hounded and savagely attacked by ferocious animals during the night.

This tale is often told to children, especially at the turn of the season when the gales blow and Cadair Idris is hidden by low forbidding cloud.

## FEATURE

### Brigid of the Healing Spring



By Kathryn O'Neill

This Surrealist painting was inspired by numerous Celtic themes: sacred waters, a mystical moon, a lady named Brigid,

constellations, a crow, and Fingals's Cave in the distance.

Celtic springs are often said to have healing properties, both physical and spiritual. The popular Irish figure Brigid (or Brigit) is seen as a goddess of creativity, of artists, healers, poets, and craftspeople. Her name is associated with many springs and rivers. Here a fiery-haired Brigid (she is also associated with divine fire) wades towards an archway, perhaps leading to the Celtic "otherworld".

The massive hexagonal pillars of basalt at "Fingal's Cave" in Scotland are similar to the rocks of the "Giant's Causeway" in the north of Ireland; some say a land bridge once joined the two countries. Most Irish have heard of a mythical hero "Fionn mac Cumhaill" (or "Finn McCool"). One tale tells how the clever wife of Finn the giant helped him trick a Scottish giant, sending him home in a hurry. He smashed the land bridge behind him to prevent pursuers - hence the name "Giant's Causeway".

There are several bird constellations: Cygnus and Aquila fly in the left area. A dark raven flies in bearing a golden ring. Considered messengers from the otherworld by the ancient Celts, Druids believed that certain people could interpret raven's cries and communicate with them.

In the foreground, dragonflies watch. These creatures later became associated with witches and evil, possibly due to the Church's rise to power. In older Ireland, they were associated with fairies; some thought they were their horses.

Why is Brigid at this lake, accompanied by these creatures and signs in the heavens? What has the raven come to tell her? As with all Surrealist art, the exact meaning is ultimately up to the viewer's interpretation.



## FEATURE

# The Sprightly Tailor

By Laura Newland



Saddell Castle dates from the 1300s. Later lost to the Argylls and taken over by the Campbells.

There was once a tailor called the Sprightly Tailor. He was a lively fellow, known for his fine stitches and for making handsome clothing. One day the great Lord MacDonald called the tailor to him as he needed a new pair of trews to wear to a party. He was proud of his figure and wanted to look his best, but he was also a cunning man who drove a hard bargain. "You must sew these trews all in one night in the ruins of the old church nearby. Do this and you will win a handsome reward."

As a sprightly tailor who liked a challenge and wanted the reward, he agreed to this even though he knew that the old ruined church was haunted. So that night with his bundle over his shoulder, he walked up the glen to the old church. He could see there was no roof on the building, most of the walls had fallen down, and the door stood open as if asking him to come in. It was very dark inside the place but he walked across the stone floor and picked out a tombstone for a seat. He took a candle out of his pocket, set it on the stone beside him and then he took a thimble out of another pocket and a needle and thread. From his bundle he took out the plaid from which he had cut

the pattern for the trews. He began to sew the seams with neat even stitches.

He worked steadily for several hours. At midnight the floor started to tremble as if from an earthquake.

The tailor kept working and paid no heed. But soon a huge head appeared out of the floor and a hollow voice roared, "Do ye see this great head of mine?"

Indeed the head was frightening, but the Sprightly Tailor never missed a stitch. He answered, "I see that, but I'll sew this," and he stitched away at the trews. The head rose higher and the monster shoved his great shoulders and chest out of the floor. Again the voice thundered, "Do you see this great chest of mine?" Still the Sprightly Tailor answered, "I see that, but I'll sew this," and he stitched away at the trews. The creature kept rising until it shook its great arms in the tailor's face and shouted angrily, "Do you see these great arms of mine?" "I see those but I'll sew these," the tailor replied.

Now he was stitching faster with longer stitches, for he knew that there was no time to lose. Then the creature moved one great leg out and stamped it on the stones, shaking the place fiercely. It glared and roared at the tailor. "Do ye see this great leg of mine?" "Aye, Aye, I see that, but I'll sew this!" said the tailor, his fingers flew with the needle. He took such long stitches that he almost finished the last seam as the creature began taking up the other leg.

But before it could pull that leg up, the tailor completed the task, blew out his candle and sprang down from his gravestone seat. He ran out of the church with the trews under his arm, the fearsome creature roaring and chasing after him. The Tailor reached the castle and got inside the gate, shutting it behind him just in time.

The creature was so enraged at losing his prey, that he struck the wall above the gate and left there the mark of his five great fingers. The Laird MacDonald was well pleased with the trews. Luckily for the tailor, he did not look too closely at the seams of the trousers, for if he had, he would have discovered that a few of the stitches were somewhat long.

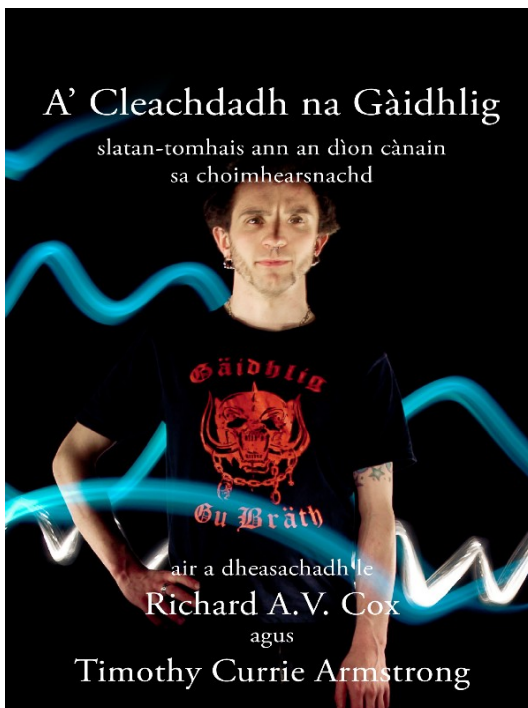


## BOOK REVIEW

### *A' Cleachdadh na Gàidhlig: slatan-tomhais ann an dìon cànan sa choimhearsnachd*

By Donald J. Gillies  
Treasurer  
Canadian Celtic Arts Association

Honorary Professor  
University of the Highlands and Islands



*A' Cleachdadh na Gàidhlig: slatan-tomhais ann an dìon cànan sa choimhearsnachd* [Using Gaelic: criteria in language maintenance in the community], Richard A.V. Cox and Timothy Currie Armstrong, editors, Sleat, Skye: Clò Ostaig, 2011, pp. xxi + 314. ISBN 978-0-9562615-2-6

This book is the proceedings of a conference, Using Gaelic: criteria in language maintenance in the community, held June 23-26, 2009, at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college of the University of the Highlands

and Islands, in Sleat, Skye. It is a handsomely made book. Four of the articles have colour illustrations, each with different degrees of complexity, while others have black-and-white photographs and maps, making for an unusual and welcome format for conference proceedings. These add valuable clarity and significant impact to this important work, another step forward in the drive to maintain Gaelic in small communities, all at the heart of the Gaidhealtachd.

The survival of Gaelic is at risk everywhere. There is great uncertainty about how to maintain this minority language in a practical way in a business, a school or college, or even the family itself – any small group, seen by the organizers as an entity vital to sustaining the use of Gaelic. The conference took on the task of assessing how Gaelic was being used as a medium of communication for small groups of various kinds in various places – anywhere it could be found. To achieve their goal the organizers invited participation from a diverse group of potential contributors: activists, policy-makers, academics and other researchers, and whoever might be working to reform the use of Gaelic. In response, speakers came forward from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Canada, and Germany.

By way of disclosure, I should state that I also spoke at the conference and my paper, Virtual Gaelic Communities, is in the proceedings. Thirty-five papers were presented: 23 in Gaelic and twelve in English. Of these, 13 of the Gaelic papers and 9 of the English papers are published here. Another is in both languages. (It should be said that the presentations and discussion sometimes moved between the two languages since most of the participants were bilingual.)

The papers dealt with these themes and patterns:

- Language laws and plans
- Language shrinkage in Skye and the Western Isles
- Gaelic in the home
- Early childhood and elementary school Gaelic
- Animated Gaelic films for children
- Teenagers and Gaelic-speaking
- The Internet and Gaelic
- The Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o' Riches project



Examples of specific and practical community initiatives:

- The cost of Gaelic initiatives in Scotland
- Comparisons of the status of Irish and Welsh with Gaelic
- Gaelic and Welsh in the workplace
- Renewing Gaelic in Nova Scotia

There were also several workshop sessions. The themes and questions for discussion are included in the proceedings, all in Gaelic:

- Gaelic in the community
- Creating a Gaelic plan for an organization
- Gaelic-medium education
- Hiring Gaelic-speaking workers and developing Gaelic skills among an organization's workers

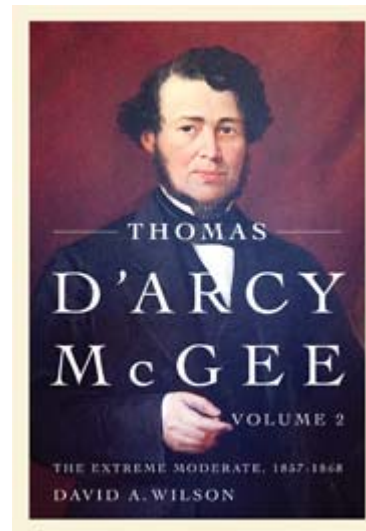
I was a member of this last workshop, along with the late Sir Iain Noble, who was planning to hire only Gaelic speakers for his distillery to be built in Skye because, he claimed, it would make the whisky better. (CCAA members will recall Sir Iain's engaging talk to us in 2006 supplemented with a sample of his unique whisky, Té Bheag.)

The book's combination of Gaelic and English will be useful to scholars and more advanced students of Gaelic but a challenge to learners and non-Gaelic speakers. The editors' position on this limitation of content accessibility can be deduced from their view that "this book contributes to the corpus of Gaelic academic writing and although it is still slight, it is continuing to grow, and we hope this book will be useful in teaching and shaping language policy at the university level." That is to say, if their hope is realized, university teachers and researchers will incorporate the findings of this book in their writing and courses, most likely in both languages, and so lead to their dissemination in teaching and learning. The papers vary in style and format: some are anecdotal, others are descriptive, and many are presented in formal or academic

structures. This may be seen as adding to the potential reaching out of the book to different audiences, some with immediate needs for action plans and others with longer-term research projects requiring comparative data as bases for advancing the discipline. Although many of the papers are prescriptive, it has not yet been possible to determine if they have borne fruit.

I thank Janice Chan, President of the Canadian Celtic Arts Association, for her translations of central elements of the book.

### Book launch



David A. Wilson (Celtic Studies) and the McGee Band present the launch of *Thomas D'Arcy McGee Volume 2: The Extreme Moderate*, Thursday, November 10, 2011.

Venue: Hugh's Room, 2261 Dundas Street West, Toronto. Reservations with Hugh's Room 416-531-6604 or <http://hughsroom.com> are recommended. Dinner (not included in price of admission) is available before the show.

Admission: \$20 advance / \$22 at the door.

The recipient of the University of Toronto's Outstanding Teaching Award, and a Professor in the Celtic Studies Program and History Department at the University of Toronto, David A. Wilson has completed a two-volume biography of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the brilliant Irish Canadian politician and Father of Confederation who was assassinated in 1868 at the age of forty-two. The first volume won two major awards; Volume 2 has been described in



an advance review as "one of the great historical biographies of our time."

The accompanying McGee Band will play a blend of Irish, Scottish, and Québécois music, and have recorded a CD of original music in traditional style "In Honour of the Life and Times of Thomas D'Arcy McGee," written, recorded and produced by James Stephens and Frank Cassidy in Ottawa.

"It's a rare enough event to hear so excellently performed a recording of music in the traditional vein, but when it succeeds in weaving a creative melodious tapestry of the 'folk' and the ingeniously newly composed, it is an altogether unexpected delight," comments Aidan O'Hara on RTE.

Together, David A. Wilson and the McGee Band put on a show that combines the speeches, letters and poems of McGee with original music in traditional style.

For more information on the book or to order a copy:

<http://mqup.mcgill.ca/book.php?bookid=2730>

For more information on the McGee Band:

[www.mcgeemusic.ca](http://www.mcgeemusic.ca)

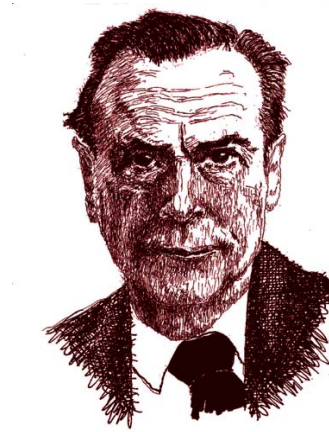
For more information on Celtic Studies:

<http://stmikes.utoronto.ca/celticstudies> or

email [celtic.studies@utoronto.ca](mailto:celtic.studies@utoronto.ca).

## EVENTS

### Celebrating Marshall McLuhan at the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto



Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) was Canada's most famous and controversial communications scholar and one of the Arts and Letters Club's most distinguished members. We celebrate the centenary year of his

birth with a panel of McLuhan experts, discussing "Marshall McLuhan: Sound, Space, Music, and Acoustic Ecology".

Sunday, November 6.

Bar open at 2:30. Panel discussion 3:00 - 5:00.

Reception to follow.

This event is open to the public. Admission: \$12, students \$8. Reservations required: 416-597-0223 x ext. 2 or [membership@artsandlettersclub.ca](mailto:membership@artsandlettersclub.ca).

## Canadian Celtic Arts Association Events Calendar

### November 2011

Saturday November 12, 2011, 2 pm

Canadian Celtic Arts Association, Carr Hall, Father Madden Hall, 100 St. Joseph Street, Toronto.

The CCAA Invites you to an afternoon talk by Deborah Livingston-Lowe, graduate student, Dept. of Scottish Studies, University of Guelph, about Scottish Weaver, John Campbell: Life and Loom in Ontario.

Members: \$12 / Non-members: \$15. Please join us after the talk for tea and conversation.



## December 2011

Thursday, December 1, 2011, 6 pm  
Celtic Studies Speakers Series, Charbonnel  
Lounge, St. Michael's College, 81 St. Mary  
Street.

Professor John Wilson Foster, Visiting  
Research Fellow, Trinity College, Dublin  
"Some Reflections on Catastrophe and Irish  
History". Free admission. All welcome. For  
more information see:  
<http://stmikes.utoronto.ca/celticstudies>  
(This series is made possible by the  
generosity of a grant from The Irish Cultural  
Society of Toronto).

Saturday, December 10, 2011, 7:30 pm –  
10:30 pm  
Toronto Scottish Country Dance Association  
Family Christmas Dance, Crescent School,  
2365 Bayview Ave.  
Music by the Scottish Accent.  
Members: \$22 / Non-Members: \$28 / Student  
Members: \$10 / Youth & Spectators: \$5  
For more information, see  
<http://www.rscdstoronto.org/>

## January 2012

January 12 and 13, 2012, 8:30 pm  
Enter the Haggis  
Hugh's Room, 2261 Dundas St. W.  
Tickets \$20 Advance / \$22.50 Door

Saturday January 14, 2012, 8 pm - 10:30 pm  
Toronto Scottish Country Dance Association  
January Dance, Crescent School, 2365  
Bayview Ave.  
Music by the Scottish Accent.  
For more information, see  
<http://www.rscdstoronto.org/>

\*All events and dates are subject to change.  
Please confirm events with contacts  
provided.

To list your Celtic-themed event, email  
[ruadh@idirect.com](mailto:ruadh@idirect.com) with the following  
information:

- date and time
- location with address
- admission cost, if applicable
- contact telephone number or email address

For further information, please visit  
<http://www.canadiancelticarts.ca/>

## CCAA Executive Committee

Past President  
Jean Talman

President  
Janice Chan  
[president@canadiancelticarts.ca](mailto:president@canadiancelticarts.ca)

Vice President  
Position Vacant

Treasurer  
Donald Gillies  
[treasurer@canadiancelticarts.ca](mailto:treasurer@canadiancelticarts.ca)

Membership Secretary  
Jean Talman  
[membership@canadiancelticarts.ca](mailto:membership@canadiancelticarts.ca)

Recording Secretary  
Maggie McGregor

Webmaster  
Janice Chan  
[webmaster@canadiancelticarts.ca](mailto:webmaster@canadiancelticarts.ca)

Newsletter  
Leah Murrigan  
[editor@canadiancelticarts.ca](mailto:editor@canadiancelticarts.ca)

Programme Committee  
Position Vacant

We are currently looking for volunteers to fill the  
above positions. If interested, please contact Janice  
Chan at [president@canadiancelticarts.ca](mailto:president@canadiancelticarts.ca).

