



UCB Celtic Studies
Newsletter

Samhain 2015

Samhain

by Eddie Stack

Growing up in West Clare, Samhain came with mystery and a strong sense of the Otherworld. The old people used to say,

“Tá siad go léir amuigh anocht.” They (fairies, spirits) are all out tonight.

Unlike the other great Celtic feasts, Samhain was a family affair rather than a community event. Families had an evening meal of colcannon—mash potatoes, cabbage and onions, topped with cheese—and then a slice or two of barm brack and tea. The brack was a divination cake with currants and included a ring, a pea, piece of cloth and a little stick. The person who got the ring was set to marry, the pea indicated singlehood, cloth meant poverty and the stick signified emigration. After that, children played games of snap apple and bobbin’ apples in a basin of water.

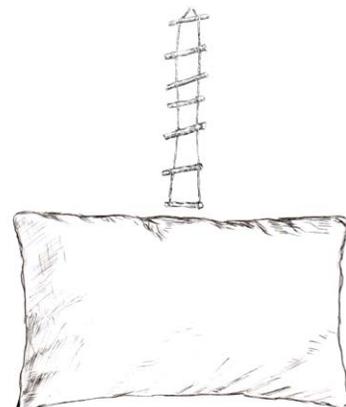
A divination carried out by youths consisted of three saucers on a table, one containing a ring, another some clay and the third had water. The diviner was blindfolded and the saucers were swapped around. The saucer they picked indicated their fate. Ring, marriage; water, emigration; clay, an early grave.

There were several rituals for the love-lorn, which were carried out in the privacy of the bedroom. They mostly called for a potential lover to come into the lonely one’s dreams. To facilitate entry, little ladders made from yarn and twigs were hung over the pillow.

Go to bed with a wet face and the lover appears with a towel, sprinkle salt around the bed and they will stay in the dream until morning.

People didn’t go outside after dark in case they met fairies or dead relatives. When it was necessary to venture out, disguise was advised. Some wouldn’t go beyond the door without a darning needle. If they met a stranger, a jab of the needle would tell whether they were human or spirit.

One reason for venturing into the Samhain night was to tap the power of the Otherworld and attain great talent for music, healing, or whatever was your ambition. The initiate performed rituals in graveyards and haunted places and for the ‘gift’ a price was paid. Samhain rituals and traditions lingered in West Clare until the 1980s. By the time ‘Trick or Treat’ came home from America, we were no longer afraid to go outside on the Night.





Photography by Andrea M Eberle

Two Weeks in Brittany

by *Andrea M Eberle*

When most people think of France, the first things that come to mind are fancy cafes, decadent desserts and, of course, the French people's undying love for their language. Students travel to France to perfect their French all the time, but what most people don't realize is that there is in fact another beautiful language hiding just under the radar in the northwestern corner of France: Breton.

As part of what I can only describe as an insatiable desire to learn as many Celtic languages as possible, I enrolled in a two-week Breton language summer program through the Université de Bretagne Occidentale near Quimper, an incredibly scenic town with a population of roughly 60,000.

Nothing could have prepared me for the breathtaking beauty of this quaint medieval town or for the incredibly exhausting challenge of undertaking what essentially amounted to a double language program— Breton in the classroom and French in the surrounding area— with no previous formal instruction in either language. With that said, it was shocking how much I and my fellow classmates were able to learn in the span of two short weeks.

While none of us attained anything close to fluency, most of us could probably struggle through a very brief conversation about weather and food— which, let's face it, is the stuff that really matters. As one of the six Celtic languages currently in existence, Breton falls into a

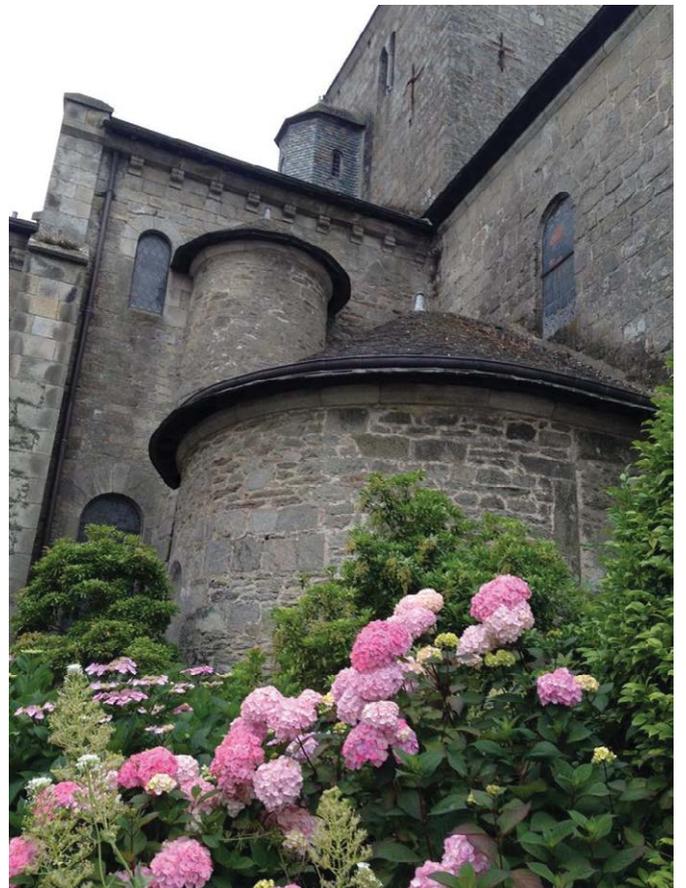


subgroup with Welsh and Cornish vocabulary.

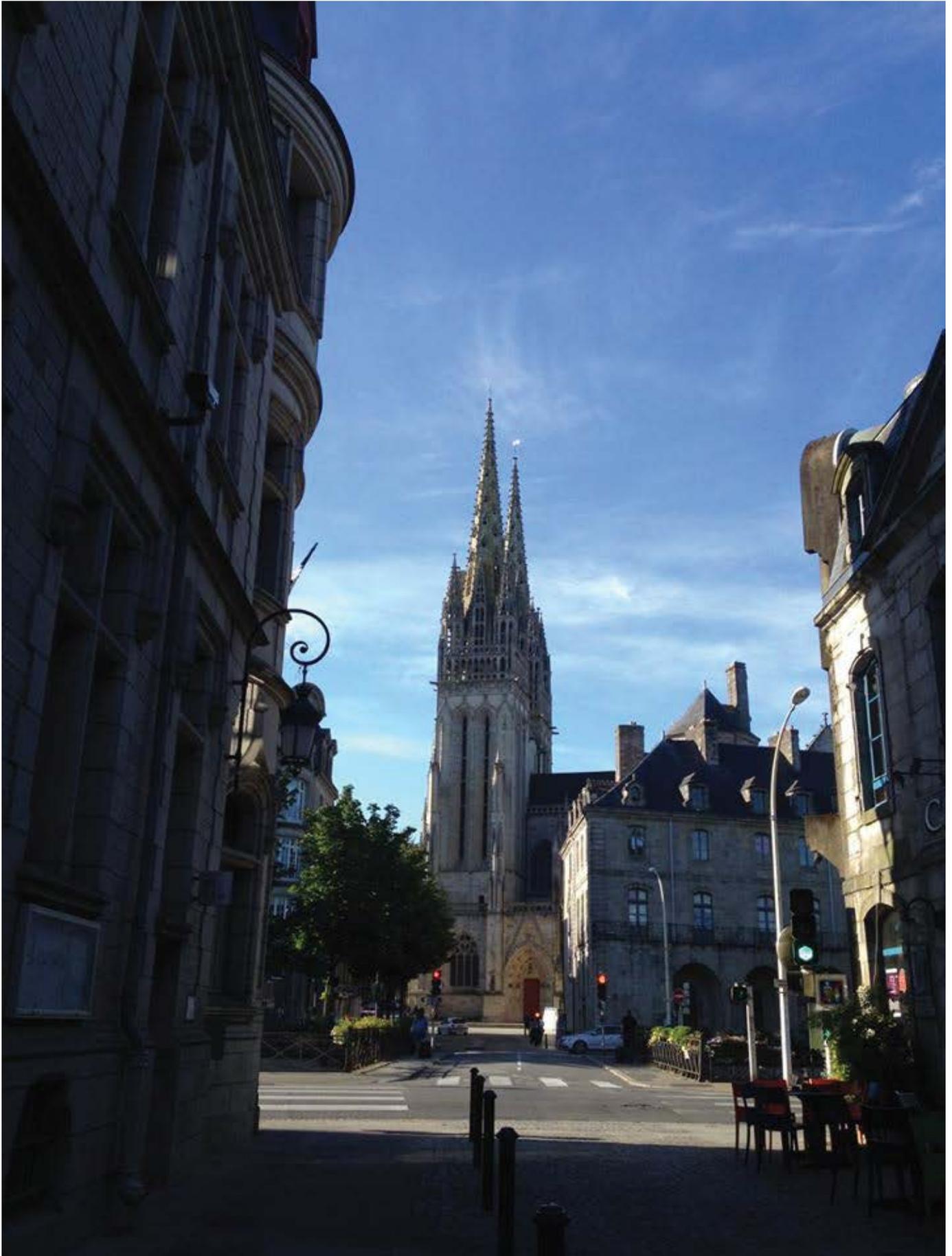
As grueling as the grammar and conversation classes could often be, we were also taught Breton children and folk songs, which was definitely one of the highlights of the course.

For me, learning songs in any language gives it an emotional context and allows for greater understanding and comprehension of a language's natural sound and flow.

So if you ever have the chance to study this wonderful language, take it. It's a lovely hybrid between the enticing sounds of French and the fascinating, intricate dance that is Celtic grammar. And if you don't believe grammar can be a dance, take a Celtic language— any one of them— and you'll see what I mean.



Photography by Andrea M Eberle



Photography by Andrea M Eberle

International Congress of Celtic Studies

by Elizabeth Gipson

It isn't the Olympics, but for Celtic Studies scholars and enthusiasts, the International Congress of Celtic Studies may be the next best thing. Meeting only once every four years, the Congress is the largest conference of its kind, with representatives from over a hundred universities. The 15th Congress was held this July in Glasgow, where attendees got the chance to soak up a little summer rain instead of the more typical summer sun.



The Congress ran for a week, with panels held on material culture, linguistics, literature, law, music, and more. One of the great strengths of Celtic Studies is its interdisciplinary nature, but this strength can often make trying to come to terms with the field as a whole a little overwhelming, particularly for beginners. Attending the Congress helped to show how the pieces all fit together, and what avenues are open for future research.

But it wasn't all work- conference-goers also had the opportunity to explore the surrounding countryside, with a variety of excursions on offer mid-week. I'd like to think that on one of these excursions (hopefully one of the ones offering a whisky tasting) the seeds were sown for some future great advance in the field as scholars who normally spend their time hundreds or thousands of miles apart were given the chance to compare notes and theorize freely.

Dara Hellman, who presented at the conference, describes the Celtic Studies community as being like a small town. At Berkeley, we're lucky to have our own little neighborhood in this town, with a dedicated Celtic Studies department full of professors happy to share their knowledge and expertise. None of us are left to fend for ourselves miles from civilization and a decent authority on how best to translate a section of obscure Welsh poetry. Still, despite how lucky we are to have these resources, there was no denying the thrill of excitement I felt at walking a University of Glasgow utterly overrun by Celtic scholars. This was the town square – this was where members of the community old and new met to catch up, to exchange ideas, and ultimately, to celebrate the wonderful, strange little place we all call home.



Photography by Elizabeth Gipson

An Cheathrú Rua

by Heather Newton

Two summers ago, I had the opportunity to travel to an intensive Irish language course in Co. Galway, Ireland, where students are immersed in the language both at school and in the homes in which they stay. We met at the NUIG campus in Galway proper and took a bus to the small Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge campus in An Cheathrú Rua in the Conamara Gaeltacht. After a short introduction and orientation, we were taken to local Irish-speaking houses, where we met our host family and settle in for a month in the gaeltacht.

Students can choose to join one of four levels: beginners, improvers, intermediate, or advanced. I took the intermediate course, and was initially intimidated because I had fewer years of Irish instruction than many of my classmates, but my instructor was friendly and engaging, and the class was challenging, but enjoyable. The course itself helped me to greatly improve my Irish vocabulary and grammar, but what really improved my conversation was speaking it at home. The family was very patient and friendly, and my bean an tí's granddaughters often came over to visit. Speaking with children who use Irish as their primary language is a lot of fun, and can be less intimidating than speaking with adults at first, even though their Irish is far superior to yours.

My bean an tí was very funny and an amazingly kind and caring woman, but she treated us very much like family and would regularly tease us and joke with us, which made it a very comfortable environment and helped to take away some of the initial unease my housemates and I felt at relying heavily on a second language to communicate. She became like a surrogate mother to us, making sure that we ate far more than a human should be physically able to consume on a regular basis, and admonishing us when we went unprepared for a beach day and came home sunburnt.

It is in your house that the Irish immersion really takes place: the households consist of a bean an tí and a fear an tí, who are responsible for your main daily meals throughout the duration of the course. The host families speak primarily Irish in the household, so in addition to several hours a day of instruction, you are exposed to the language in your daily life; some students are lucky enough to be placed in a house with children, who will

gladly chat all day in Irish, providing plenty of practice. The housing accommodations create a sense of family, not only with the host family, but also among your fellow students.

Although the classes had excellent instructors and I learned a lot at the school, some of the most important and long-lasting benefits I gained from the program were the connections and relationships I cultivated while there. I am still in contact with my instructor and housemates, which gives me a wider network of both learners and native speakers of varying levels, with whom I can discuss the language and share resources. This course allowed my personal connection to the language to grow a lot in the past year, and it was by far one of the best experiences I have had.

Llwyau Garu

By Éilish Cullen

Charlie Brown is always thinking about the little red-haired girl.

“I think I’ll go over and introduce myself to that little red-haired girl.

“I think I’ll introduce myself, and then I’ll ask her to come over and sit next to me...”

“I think I’ll ask her to sit next to me here, and then I think I’ll tell her how much I’ve always admired her...”

“I think I’ll flap my arms, and fly to the moon...”

The little red-haired girl symbolizes unrequited love for Charlie Brown. Representing all that could be! Just out of reach, seemingly.

But then, how could the red-haired girl possibly know that Charlie Brown loves her so much? He never figures out how best to approach her and express his feelings.

Things have gotten even more complicated since the early days of Peanuts. You can text someone an emoji in lieu of saying “Hello,” swipe their picture on Tinder, choose them as your noontime Bagel on Coffee Meets Bagel, or like their most recent Instagram post.

Comedian Aziz Ansari shares his observations on courting in the modern age as well as anecdotes from his own life in a book called “Modern Romance: An Investigation.” He talks about all of the choices that people face today and how the number of choices and technology, rather than simplifying courtship, make it a significantly more difficult process to navigate. There is no longer a clear path for meeting someone and sharing your feelings with them openly.

Reading it, I remembered an early stand up recording that Aziz Ansari performed about M.I.A., the rapper from Sri Lanka. He prepared a phrase in Tamil for her after a concert to impress her. “Very, very good songs,” was the rough translation of the phrase he prepared and spoke to her. Then, “she smiled, got in her car and left,” he said to a laughing audience. He shared three different imagined scenarios about what he would have liked to have happen instead of what actually happened. It was a sweet and funny story about having an impossible crush but in a way it captured the same feelings of inevitable futility that Charlie Brown always expressed in his ramblings to Snoopy. How do you tell someone that you care?

What if—instead of pouring over a profile picture or a text, shouting a random phrase in another language, or philosophizing with your dog, Snoopy—you presented a potential sweetheart with a hand-crafted love spoon as the Welsh once did?

Welsh love spoons or *llwyau garu* are hand made wooden spoons full of the carver’s imagination and presented as a gift to show their intentions toward a particular person. Many of the spoons contained elaborate symbols including hearts, dragons, chains, diamonds, and flowers. The practice can be dated back to the mid 1600’s. “*Llwy*” or ‘spoon’ in Welsh first make an appearance in the work of Taliesin, the 6th century Welsh poet, suggesting that the utensil and possibly the practice of love spoons occurred much earlier. For the Welsh Medievalists among us: can you locate the verse?

One of the many wonderful things about this practice and what it can teach us today, is the importance of making a declarative gesture that is clearly understood

by both recipient and declarer. How rewarding to receive as well as create something tangible that is both simple and beautifully complex; a love spoon suggests a kind of earthiness or groundedness, a relationship to the everyday, to being fed or nurtured in addition to symbolizing the hopes and warm wishes for a future together.

Welsh love spoons were popular throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and interestingly, just as there has been a resurgence in the Welsh Language over the past 40 odd years, there has also been a renewed interest in this traditional custom. Love spoons are given as gifts and have taken new contemporary forms such as the design work of Gwyn Williams, who has flattened their shapes into silhouettes for a series of prints and objects and the artist Clare Goddard, who recreates spoons and other everyday utilitarian tableware out of paper, wood, string, and recycled tea bags in reference to the materials’ and objects’ unique identity and history.

Love spoons can be found in other parts of the world, too, but the intricate design work and attention to detail are specific to Wales. It is thought that the earliest spoons were carved by young men marked by a kind of shyness and would have been a way for them to convey their feelings or emotions.

I wonder what a love spoon carved by Charlie Brown’s fine hand would look like? Perhaps, the little red-haired girl wonders, too.



President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins visits UC Berkeley

By Éilish Cullen and Elizabeth Gipson

On Monday, October 26, 2015, U.C. Berkeley hosted His Excellency Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland. President Higgins spoke at the Chevron Auditorium in the International House and presented his talk entitled, “Ending Global Hunger and Eliminating Poverty: Is it Possible?”

The speech is available online on the President’s [website](#).

The talk was followed by a lively Q & A session with students and a reception in the Morrison Room of the Doe Library where he was warmly introduced by Eddie Stack. It was at this reception that the President announced Ireland’s gift of a \$40,000 grant to UC Berkeley, earmarked to help fund a new Irish Studies Centre. The President spoke of the relationship between UC Berkeley and Ireland, noting particularly how moving he found the opportunity to view documents at the Bancroft Library including manuscripts from Seamus Heaney and W.B. Yeats.

Students in the Celtic Studies Department had the opportunity to introduce themselves to both President Higgins and his wife, Sabina Higgins. Many of us were busily practicing our Irish greetings beforehand in anticipation of the opportunity. In Irish, one may address the president as ‘A Uachtarán’, ‘A Dhuine Uasal’, or ‘A Shoilse’ (your Excellency). This address is followed by ‘Is onóir bualadh leat.’ (It’s an honour to meet you.)



Photography by Elizabeth Gipson

On Wednesday, October 28th, the President attended a reception for first responders, medical staff, and volunteers who were involved in the Berkeley tragedy in June, which caused the death and injury to Irish and Irish American students. The President and Mayor of Berkeley, Tom Bates planted a tree at the Martin Luther King Civic Centre in memory of those who died in the tragedy. In his remarks, the President quoted Seamus Heaney, a “poet of Ireland and of Berkeley”:

“No bit of the natural world is more valuable or more vulnerable than the tree bit.”

“Nothing is more like ourselves, standing upright, caught between heaven and earth, frail at the extremities yet strong at the central trunk; and nothing is closer to us at the beginning and at the end.”



Recent and Forthcoming Publications

Doolin: people, place & culture
by Eddie Stack

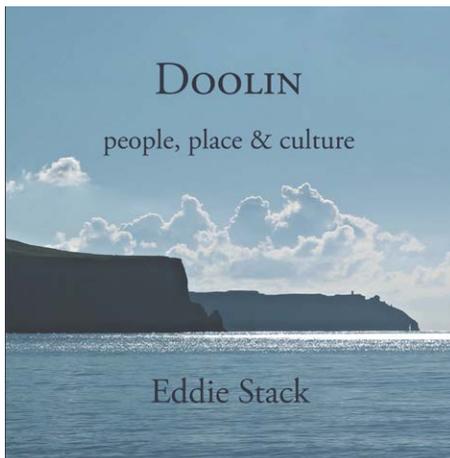
“I know of nobody better than Eddie Stack to write this book.” Martin Hayes

“Personal, Poignant, Powerful.” Sherry Perkins, Louisa-na Writers Society

Doolin is a unique book about the place, its people and culture. An area rich in folklore, traditional arts and history, it nests between the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher in West Clare, Ireland. This collection of essays and conversations features local tradition-bearers who were renowned for their music, songs, dance and storytelling. Folk art and traditions run through the book, which has chapters on the music of the Russell Brothers and the Killougherys; reminiscences of the last Doolin native Irish speaker, Paddy Pharaic Mhichil Shannon; the gentle art of storytelling with Stiofáin Uí Ealaoire, Seán Ó’Carún and others. Also featured are Botious MacClancy and Francis MacNamara, local gentry who made Doolin famous in the 16th century and the 20th century.

Doolin is illustrated with photographs, music, songs, maps and journal excerpts. It is an essential work for anyone wishing to know the background of this magical place. Published in Ireland in July, 2015, *Doolin* is now available at www.amazon.com/author/eddiestack

Eddie Stack grew up in the West Clare *Breac-Ghaeltacht*. He played music and collected tunes, folklore, songs and stories from Doolin tradition-bearers between 1969 and 1985. He is the author of four collections of short stories, a novel and three novellas. He teaches in the Celtic Studies Program, UC Berkeley, California.



Leabhar na hAthghabhála
POEMS OF REPOSSESSION

Edited by Louis De Paor
Irish-English Bilingual Edition

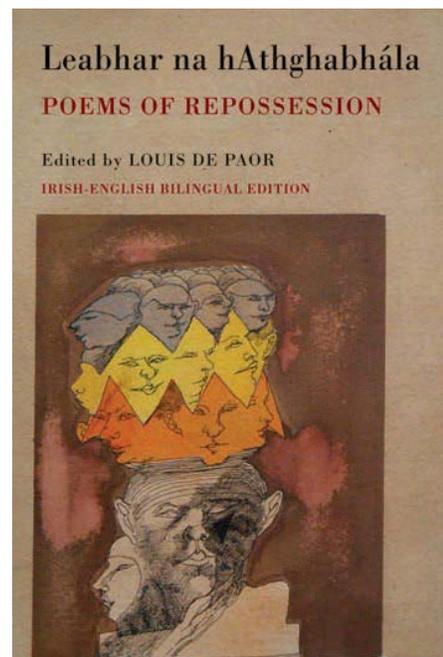
To be published in April, 2016, Louis worked on this project while he was a Fulbright Scholar in the Celtic Studies Program in 2013. This is the first comprehensive critical anthology of modern poetry in Irish with English translations. It forms a sequel to Seán Ó Tuama and Thomas Kinsella’s pioneering anthology, *An Duanaire 1600-1900 / Poems of the Dispossessed* (1981), but features many more poems in covering the work of 26 poets from the past century.

In addition to presenting some of the best poetry in Irish written since 1900, the anthology challenges the extent to which writing in Irish has been underrepresented in collections of modern and contemporary Irish poetry.

Louis De Paor has been Director of the Centre for Irish Studies at NUI Galway since 2000. He is a highly acclaimed poet and one of the few writing in both Irish and English. He is the author of several collections of poetry.

28 April 2016

A Bloodaxe Books Co-publication with Cló Iar-Chonachta



Celtic Studies UC Berkeley

Awardees

2015

Fulbright Gaeltacht awards:

Dylan Cooper
Andrea Eberle
Alassandra Moyer

NUIG Scholarships:

Tim Hill
Tony Coyle

FLAS Award:
Elizabeth Gilbert

2014

Fulbright Gaeltacht awards:

Heather Newton
Andrea Eberle

NUIG Scholarship

Maggie Bonsey
Dylan Cooper

FLAS AWARD

Dylan Cooper

2013

Fulbright Gaeltacht awards:

Maggie Bonsey

Faculty

Dara Hellman

Gary Holland

Kathryn Klar

Daniel F. Melia

Annalee C. Rejhon

Eddie Stack

Eve Sweetser

Thomas Walsh

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Treibh is an online journal published by students of the Celtic Studies Program, UC Berkeley.

It will be published at Samhain, Imbolc and Bealtaine.

Treibh is an Irish word for tribe or race of people.

Editor: Tom Walsh

Production: Eddie Stack

Design & artwork: Éilish Cullen

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Éilish Cullen
Heather Newton
Andrea Eberle

Submissions:

Treibh publishes features relating to Celtic culture, arts, language, history and politics. We are interested in both the contemporary Celtic world and the ancient world.

At this time submissions should not be more than 500 words. Send us a query if you have a longer piece that you think will rock us. Submissions in any Celtic language are especially welcome.

We are also interested in flash fiction and poetry that has a distinct Celtic flavour.
Flash fiction: max 500 words. Poetry: max 16 lines. We encourage pieces in any Celtic language.

Submissions for the Imbolc issue are open Dec 1, 2015 to Jan 20, 2016. We are unable to pay for submissions at present.

treibhucb@gmail.com

