



JULY 2026

Stay in the Know

Aug. 3: Annual Celtic Cross Ceremony
Civic Holiday

Aug. 8: Ambassador Jim Kelly Memorial
Tournament

Sep. 16: Annual General Meeting

Almonte Celtfest, July 3 – 5, 2026

On Saturday, July 4, the Irish Seniors Social Group of Ottawa chartered a bus and headed to Almonte's Gemmill Park to attend the annual Celtfest. What a great day! Founded in 1997 by Brian O'Connell, Dan O'Connell, and Terry Currie, the Almonte Celtfest has spent nearly three decades turning the natural amphitheatre of Gemmill Park into one of the Ottawa Valley's best-loved

summer weekends. This year, 2026, marks the 30th anniversary, and the festival marked it in the most fitting way possible. For this year only, all three days of programming — including the usually-ticketed Friday night concert — were by donation at the gate.

The lineup matched the occasion. Celtic family band Leahy headlined alongside PEI singer-songwriter Lennie Gallant, singer Ailíse, Cecilia, and Celtic rockers the Derina Harvey Band, with a supporting bill running from Québécois folk to bluegrass to Irish traditional music. True to its roots, Celtfest also keeps a strong local presence on the bill, with area favourites like the Barley Shakers, the Almonte Legion Pipe Band, Graham Lindsey, as well as Ellen MacIsaac and the Ottawa Celtic Choir.



The festival also featured Gaelic sports with the Ottawa Gaels, children's entertainment in the Little Celts Area, the new Celtic Market vendor feature, returning Youth Showcase, music and cultural workshops, and much more.

Another special event of Celtfest is the Danny O'Connell Memorial Award, created in 2004, which honours Dan O'Connell's son, Danny, who was an avid local fiddler. The \$1,000 bursary presented annually at the Almonte Celtfest supports a talented musician under the age of 25 years. Nominees must be fiddlers from the Ottawa Valley and surrounding areas who demonstrate extraordinary musical talent alongside financial need.



In 1916, Ottawa's Marley Mullan, of Triple Trouble, was the winner of the Danny O'Connell Memorial Award. She was sponsored as a candidate by the Irish Society of the National Capital Region. The award was presented to her by our own Bryan Daly ISNCR President (2019), and Colleen O'Connell, Danny's sister.



Clare O'Connell Noon





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The ANNUAL CELTIC CROSS CEREMONY

The annual Celtic Cross Ceremony commemorates the estimated 1,000 workers and their families who died while building the Rideau Canal.

“It’s important because of the recognition our Rideau Canal has, not just to those in our city, whether it’s during the summer, or in the winter months as the world’s largest skating rink but also to the tourists as well. It’s a vision of beauty and splendor,” says Sean McKenny, president of the Ottawa & District Labour Council.

Workers suffered injury from explosions, accidents, and malaria. Many workers were buried in unmarked graves.

The monument is found near Lock #1, below Major’s Hill Park and the Château Laurier Hotel



Itinerary

1:45 pm/13h45, participants gather at the north end of Musée Bytown Museum

2:00 pm/14h00, participants follow Piper Bethany Basillion and the three flag bearers in a procession down the walkway to Lock 2 and cross over the canal to the east side to the Rideau Canal Celtic Cross Memorial.

2:05 pm/14H05, Ceremony begins

2:45 pm/14h45. Piper Bethany Basillion will play a lament to close the ceremony.



Hope to see you there!



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“Bloomsday in Song and Story”

Around the world, June 16 is celebrated by Irish communities as “Bloomsday”

– the day in the life of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Daedalus in James Joyce’s modernist masterpiece, *Ulysses*.

Thanks to the James Joyce Association of Ottawa (JJAO) in partnership with the Ottawa Celtic Choir (OCC), Bloomsday came early this year: Saturday, June 13 in St. Brigid’s Centre for the Arts.

The chair of the JJAO, Rosemary O’Brien, pointed out that June 13 is the birthday of W.B. Yeats. The Director of The Ottawa Celtic Choir, Ellen MacIsaac, added that in 1988, Dublin’s Millennium proclaimed June 13 as “Molly Malone Day”.

MacIsaac conducted the choir and audience in a rousing rendition of “Cockles and Mussels”, followed by Sharon Labelle reading “The Parable of the Plums” from *Ulysses*. This was the beginning of a wonderful evening of songs and prose.

Joyce himself was an accomplished singer, and he loved music of all kinds - opera arias, nursery rhymes, songs written for the parlour room and songs written for church.

Often there was an obvious connection between the prose and the songs. The choral version of “The Lass of Aughrim,” for example, was followed by a scene from “The Dead” where Greta (Niamh O’Brien) tearfully tells her husband Gabriel Conroy (Dermot Guinnane) about Michael Furey who used to sing that song.

Other songs were lifted directly from Joyce’s writing. The lyrics of “I Rush Into Your Arms” were taken from the closing passage of *Finnegans Wake*. Ellen MacIsaac arranged the piece for the choir. The song evokes the River Liffey flowing into the Irish Sea.

In a reading of the *Dubliners* story Clay, “Marble Halls” was quoted at length by Nora Pat Marshall. The choir sang the song which was an aria from the *Bohemian Girl* opera. The choir’s repertoire ranged from melancholy to rambunctious. Thomas Moore’s “The Last Rose of Summer” was paired with the Nausicaa episode, read by Mary Comerston. It was followed by a rollicking arrangement for choir of “The Rocky Road to Dublin.”

The program had something for everyone from the Joyce aficionados to those who didn’t know Joyce’s writing. And for those who could use a quick summary of a long book, “The Ballad of Bloom and Stephen,” was soloed. The song managed to shrink the entire plot of *Ulysses* into 18 rhyming couplets.

“Loves Old Sweet Song” is perhaps the best-known song from *Ulysses*. It is the piece that Molly Bloom is to sing in her upcoming concert tour. The choir’s rendition was paired with a passage from the Penelope episode, read by Erica O’Reilly. Blazes Boylan – Molly’s manager and, on that day, her lover – was represented by a spirited version of “Those Lovely Seaside Girls”.

To mark Yeats’ birthday, the choir sang one of his beloved poems: “Down By the Salley Gardens.”

To wrap up the evening, Philip O’Brien’s reading from the Ithaca episode was followed by a contemporary evocation of the city Joyce loved so well, “Dublin in the Rare Old Times.”

Fifteen songs and eight readings: it was a wonderful way to celebrate Bloomsday!

Paula McCann

(Paula sings with the OCC and is secretary of the JJAO.)





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Ambassador Jim Kelly Memorial Tournament, August 8, 2026

EVENT DETAILS:

 Saturday, August 8, 2026 | 10am–4pm

 Twin Elm Rugby Club, 4075 Twin Elm Road.

 Hurling and Gaelic Football games.

 Live Irish music & dancing featured during the day.

 FREE admission + FREE parking.

 Indoor washrooms

 cash bar, BBQ, food on-site.

 All Welcome – A Special Day for the Ottawa Irish Community 

Irish Communities of Ottawa (ICO) donated \$2500 to member Eire Og Hurling Club to support, for many years to come, the Ambassador Jim Kelly Memorial Tournament. This marks a major community milestone.

All are invited to attend this magnificent cultural and sporting celebration on Saturday August 8, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Twin Elm Rugby Club, near the town of Richmond.

The event is free. The parking is plentiful, and it's free too. Onsite indoor washrooms, cash bar, non-alcoholic drinks, and hot food (BBQ), will be available in the large clubhouse.

ICO member organisations are encouraged to promote their own activities and are welcome to set up a table, distribute brochures, or engage in other activities to promote their organisation.

We will be honoured to have Anne Martin, Jim's widow, in attendance, who many may fondly remember. We will also be honoured to have either the Ambassador or other high-ranking official from the Irish Embassy diplomatic staff in attendance to award the tournament trophy.

The Eire Og organising committee is working on having some live Irish music and fun field activities for the kids.



Ambassador Jim Kelly and wife Anne Martin.



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The 4th Line Theatre Stage Presents
Wild Irish Geese

A story of Irish settlers and their journey to the Peterborough region. Peter Robinson was the architect of an 1820s emigration plan which saw thousands of Irish families come to Canada to escape the brutal poverty which they were facing in Ireland.

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DMsU7MjoiK8/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

Box Office: 705-932-4445

SAVE THE DATE

Sept 16, 2026

Irish Society

Annual General Meeting

St. Patrick Basilica

**A chance to meet the Board,
voice your ideas and get
involved.**



(Details to follow.)

FRIENDS of the Parade

James Joyce Association

Irish Film Festival Ottawa

Irish Seniors Social Group

of Ottawa

Ormond Murphy

Francis Tierney

The Irish Ten Commandments

Thou shalt be loyal to family, friends and faith.

Thou shalt keep thy Irish eyes a-smilin'.

Thou shalt shy away from blarney.

Thou shalt honor thy motherland.

Thou shalt see the Trinity in every shamrock.

Thou shalt halve each potato out of love.

Thou shalt be kind to wee ones everywhere.

Thou shalt be generous with blessings, song and stories.

Thou shalt follow every rainbow.

Thou shalt rest easy in the hollow of God's hand.

(Source: An Irish Sense of Humor's Post on Facebook)



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IRISH SETTLEMENTS in the OTTAWA VALLEY and AREA

Stop 2 – QUYON: From Lumber to Hospitality

In 1848, Ottawa Valley lumber baron John Egan, founded the village of Quyon – across the Ottawa River from Fitzroy Harbour. Like Fitzroy Harbour, Quyon was settled by those who had left Ireland to escape the devastating Great Irish Famine (1845 – 1852).

The village is named after the Quyon River, the primary waterway whereby logs were floated to sawmills and pulp mills downstream. Originally spelled “Quio,” from the Algonquin word *kweia* (“smaller river” or “sandy bottom river”), it was later changed to “Quyon,” for ease of pronunciation.



Logs were not the only items transported along the Ottawa River. Even today, 100 years later, passengers are ferried between Fitzroy Harbour and Quyon in a large electric boat, the busiest on the river; it can accommodate 90 passengers and 21 cars per trip. As the website (<https://www.quyonferry.com/default.aspx>) says, **“If it can go on the road, we can cross you!”** During the busy season a ferry leaves a dock every ten minutes.

Sailing across the water to Quyon, one is treated to the scenic and historic view that is St. Mary’s Church. In 1837, Catholic missionaries travelled from Montreal to minister to the settlers and establish churches along the river. In 1848, the parish was formally recognized and the first church, a structure of wood and brick, was ready by 1877. The new church, which opened in 1915, continues to be a cornerstone of local heritage and a reflection of the community’s abiding faith and perseverance.

This year is the eightieth anniversary of the landmark **“Gateway to the Pontiac” (aka Gavan’s Hotel)**. This celebrated establishment is proud of its role as “proud



ambassador of the region’s rich music, food and culture.” Within is the *Shamrock Lounge* where one can find Ottawa Valley artists perform traditional Irish music and step-dancing. Gavan’s, family-owned since 1946, maintains a tradition of hospitality to those who gather for food and drink, entertainment, camaraderie and community.

For our next snapshot of Irish settlements along the Ottawa River, we travel a bit north to the town (now the city) of Pembroke.

Mary Catharine Carroll



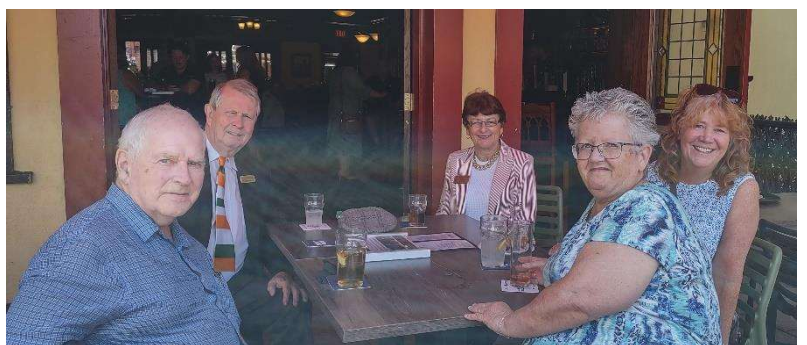


Thank You for your Support and restoring Ottawa's History



"May your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow and may trouble avoid you wherever you go."

"Go raibh míle maith agat!"





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EVER BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR FAMILY TRADITIONS? WHAT ABOUT THE IRISH WAKE?

In Ireland - Mary Garry

The observances and traditions that followed a death, an Irish wake, was deeply rooted in culture, tradition, and religious practices. It was essentially a gathering of mourners to watch over the deceased from the time of death until the funeral. In the past, people often died at home. Once a death was announced, neighbours were alerted and the wake began. For about an hour, after death the deceased was usually left in solemn peace to allow the soul to pass peacefully to heaven. The priest and doctor would attend and then the ritual for the wake and funeral would begin.

Historically, the body was cleansed and prepared, dressed in a shroud, hands joined in prayer with rosary beads and laid out in a bedroom or reception room. This preparation was carried out with great respect by a trusted community member, usually a local woman, knowledgeable and experienced in these practices, aided by a family member. Until about 40 years ago, clocks were stopped at the time of death and mirrors and pictures were covered as a mark of respect, some believed to prevent interference with the spirit. Curtains were drawn but some windows left open to aid passage of the soul on its journey. When all was prepared visitors were then welcome at the wake house to view the deceased and pay their respects.

At one time it was customary to kiss the forehead or touch the hands of the deceased while filing past and commiserating with one or more family members who traditionally sat close by. The deceased might be laid out in bed or on a large table and later transferred to their coffin, a particularly difficult moment for the bereaved.

Having paid their respects visitors then enjoyed tea and sandwiches provided and served by local women who miraculously appear at a wake house no matter what the hour, staying hours or days depending on the length of the wake. Traditionally, local men act swiftly to make access possible to often remote locations, turning fields into car parks and directing traffic. In generations gone by, whiskey, Guinness and other alcoholic beverages were also served while the mourners shared memories about the deceased, prayed, told stories, sometimes sang and played music. Today tea and cake and sandwiches remain ubiquitous though alcohol plays a much smaller part. It is increasingly rare to hearing singing or music being played.



Irishurns.com

The wake is a fusion of grief and joy, to commemorate the life of the deceased and to comfort the bereaved, most especially the family and close friends. It is not unusual to have some of those present shedding tears of great sadness while others are crying with laughter. The wake remains a very important and respected part of Irish life though some things have changed reflecting the modernisation of Irish society. For example, the deceased is no longer dressed in shroud.

In the past 30 years or so funeral homes have replaced the family home as the place where the deceased is prepared for the wake and may also be where visitors come to pay their respects. The wake may be private or open to the community for specific times only. The death of a child or death in sudden tragic circumstances; reflecting that the bereaved family may not feel comforted by some practices such as public viewing, discussion of the deceased and shaking hands with possibly hundreds of people over two to three days. Such requests which specify a change to traditional norms are



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carefully observed and respected. The aim, as always, is to bring comfort and support to those closest to the deceased.

Today when someone dies the arrangements for the wake and funeral are posted on a national website: <https://rip.ie>

Death notices are announced daily on local radio stations and printed in community and national newspapers. At one time all family members and close friends sent flowers and wreaths; today it is the norm for only the family to send flowers only and to instead suggest a donation to a charity or cause associated with the deceased.

The Irish wake is fabled and famous the world over, some of it is fact and some fiction. What is very real and true is that it is a beautiful part of Irish

life and it invariably brings great comfort and healing and purpose to grieving families and communities throughout the island of Ireland.

In My Part of the Ottawa Valley – Lorraine O'Reilly

After reading Mary's article and talking with a friend who had gone to Ireland to bury his father, I realized the many things my large family did could be traced back to Ireland.

When I was growing up, we always joked about attending Irish wakes and Polish weddings. Both were going to be large family gatherings, probably lasting several days. At the funeral, my brother would point out what he called the "professional mourners", who seemed to attend every funeral.

What I found was much of what I experienced came from Ireland:

What my brother called "professional mourners," were known as keeners in Ireland.

Neighbours and family would show up with food as soon as they heard and stay 'til the wee hours of the morning if a shoulder was needed.

Gatherings often lead to storytelling and laughter and could go on for hours.

These lighthearted times did not diminish the sadness. They acknowledged it while also reminding everyone of the happiness that the deceased's life once provided. My friend told me that he learned more about his dad in twenty-minutes of listening to stories from his dad's friends than in 25 years.

There were always prayer or memorial cards.

Part way through an evening wake, a few women would come in and lead in the saying of the rosary.

After the loved one was laid to rest people gathered for refreshments and more storytelling.

What I remember the most growing up is that we gathered to say goodbye to a loved-one and to celebrate a life well-lived.

