



Queensland Irish Association

# Newsletter

January 2026



A group of 23 people came along to our Women's Little Christmas walk and cafe visit in Mount Coot-tha Botanic Gardens on 4 January. There were plenty of new faces among the group.

## Book now for our two signature QIA events

It is vitally important for Members and friends to get behind and support the two pre-eminent signature events of the Queensland Irish Association: The Saint Brigid's Dinner and the St Patrick's Eve Dinner.

The first of these, the St Brigid's Dinner, will be held on Royal on the Park on 7 February commencing at 7.15pm and it is expected that a bumper crowd will attend. Very few places are left so you'll need to book and pay for your place IMMEDIATELY. Contact details are on the flyer on page 4 of this Newsletter.

The second signature function is the Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner 2026. On page 2 is a flyer and attached is a booking form for the Dinner. We

hope it will be another sell-out success and the best Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner of the modern era.

Please arrange to complete the booking form, even if you are a solo member or a couple, please fill it out and pay the admission for the Dinner, and the organisers will arrange for you to be placed at a compatible table.

The booking form is also available to download from our website at [www.queenslandirish.com](http://www.queenslandirish.com).

The Dinner will once again be held in the Main Auditorium of Brisbane City Hall. Tickets cost \$160 per person. Join distinguished guests and Irish and Queensland representatives to continue our

128-year-old tradition of celebrating Irish heritage and culture in Queensland.

It's been a busy start to the new year here at QIA. On New Year's Eve, we held a well-attended preview screening of *The Choral* in The Tara Room at Elizabeth Picture House. Attendees particularly enjoyed hearing a rendition of *It's A Long Way to Tipperary* in the film. Thank you to Five Star Cinemas, we look forward to our continued friendship in 2026. Film screenings always prove popular with our Members.

Then we had a group of 23 people attend our second Women's

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**Queensland Irish Association**  
since 1898

# **St Patrick's Eve Dinner 2026**

**Brisbane City Hall Main Auditorium**

**Monday  
16 March 2026  
6.00 for 6.45 pm**

**Join Distinguished Guests, Irish and  
Queensland representatives to continue  
a 128 year old tradition of celebrating  
Irish heritage & culture in Queensland.**

**\$1,600.00 per table of 10  
(\$160 per person)**

**Bookings close 2/3/2026**

**(unless sold out prior)**

**Booking forms/enquiries to:**

***stpatricksevedinner@hotmail.com***



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*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

***Terms and conditions and Government health directives apply. No Refunds. Please do not attend if you are unwell. You may nominate a replacement to attend in your place.***



# Book now for our two signature QIA events

*Continued from page 1*

Little Christmas celebration on January 4.

The group included many new faces who reported that they thoroughly enjoyed themselves and plan to attend future QIA events. Facebook is proving to be a successful way to draw new people to our events.

As well as the Temperate Garden, where Mary Allen pointed out the many plants that also grow in Ireland, the water lilies, which were in full bloom in the ponds, were also a big hit. The tour was followed by lunch or coffee and a chat at the cafe, where tables had been reserved and decked out in Christmas decorations.

Thanks to our History and Culture Committee for their help in



We were joined by young families for Women's Little Christmas. organising this wonderful day out.

*Jeff Spender,*  
*President,*

*Queensland Irish Association.*

## Calendar

**7 February 2026**

*St Brigid's Dinner, Royal on the Park, Alice Street, Brisbane.*

**14 February 2026**

*QIA St Brigid's Celebration film screening and afternoon tea at Bridgeline College, Indooroopilly, 2pm.*

**7 March 2026**

*Queensland Irish Choir St Patrick's Day Concert, Hills Church, Everton Hills, 1.30pm. Details: [www.qldirishchoir.org](http://www.qldirishchoir.org)*

**14 March 2026**

*St Patrick's Day Parade, Brisbane CBD, 10.30am.*

**16 March 2026**

*QIA St Patrick's Eve Dinner, Brisbane City Hall, 6pm.*

**17 March 2026**

*QIA St Patrick's Day Lunch. Details TBA.*

**Second Wednesday of the month**

*Tara Hall Dining Club, The Ship Inn, Sidon Street, South Brisbane. Contact Secretary Roger Thornton [rjthornton8@bigpond.com](mailto:rjthornton8@bigpond.com) or 0408 878 938*

**Last Saturday of the month**

*Tigh Gaelach luncheon at Easts Leagues Club, Coorparoo between February and November at 11am. Contact President Michelle FitzPatrick on [mitchfitzpatrick@hotmail.com](mailto:mitchfitzpatrick@hotmail.com) or 0403 384 223*

## Contact us

We welcome content from Members and friends in this newsletter.

If you have news or an article you would like to see included, email the editor, our public relations officer Mary Allen, at [mary@queenslandirish.com.au](mailto:mary@queenslandirish.com.au)

You can also reach us through our website, [www.queenslandirish.com.au](http://www.queenslandirish.com.au), and on our social media pages.

Another great way to interact with QIA is by joining our Facebook [group](#), Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters.

Editor and designer: Mary Allen.

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*Ar dheis Dé  
go raibh a anam*



**Charlie Russell**

Vale long-standing QIA Member Charlie Russell.

Late of Rostrevor, Ireland and Brisbane.

Passed away 14th January 2026. Aged 98 years.

Funeral Mass for Charlie will take place on Friday 23rd January at 11am and can be viewed live on webcam (see [meanultyfuneraldirectors.com](http://meanultyfuneraldirectors.com)), with his Ashes returning to Ireland at a later date.



*May he rest in peace*





## Join us as we celebrate St Brigid's Day 2026

with Guest Speaker

**Carmel Martin**

Co-Founder  
Zephyr Education Limited



**Saturday 7 February | 6:45 pm arrival for 7:15 pm start**

Royal on the Park, 152 Alice Street, Brisbane | \$85 | Dress: Cocktail

Enjoy a two-course dinner and special performance by QIA dancers and the QIA pipe band.



**Raffle tickets and St Brigid's souvenirs for sale on the evening.**

**For bookings, please contact**

**ST. BRIGID'S DINNER COMMITTEE QUEENSLAND**

Margaret Stacey  
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Michelle Fitzpatrick  
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# Kerry shares his racing expertise with diners

This is a photo of Kerry James Woodlock. He is one of our new Members, who has recently joined the Association.

Kerry is a mainstay of the Tara Hall Dining Club which meets on the second Wednesday of every month, currently at The Ship Inn in South Brisbane.

He is the quiz master for the club and provides a monthly story for the entertainment of members. His subjects include prominent politicians, sporting heroes, and, most importantly, stories connected with thoroughbred racing in Australia.

Kerry has an encyclopedic memory of thoroughbred racing in Australia. He can name the winners, place getters, trainers and jockeys of almost all of the classic races



in Australia since Archer won the first Melbourne Cup in 1861.

Kerry is descended from convict

Michael Woodlock who was transported to Australia from County Tipperary. He arrived in Australia in 1832, he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for the offence of coining.

The Tara Hall Dining Club currently is presided over by Nigel Jeffares, and the secretary is Roger Thornton, who is an extremely capable and energetic secretary, whose only fault is that he is a passionate and one-eyed supporter of South Sydney Rugby League Club, the Rabbitohs.

Kerry Woodlock is a fine addition to the growing membership of the QIA and we congratulate him for his sterling contributions to the Tara Hall Dining Club.

*by Jeff Spender, President, QIA*

## Tigh Gaelach Ladies dine in style at Easts

The Tigh Gaelach Dining Club held their Christmas Lunch at Easts Leagues Club on December 13 and it was a wonderful occasion.

The Lady Members thank their President, Michelle FitzPatrick, for organising this lovely gathering.

The club celebrates a long history of enjoying good food, wine, and wonderful company. The inaugural dinner was held in June 1987 and was organised by very active female members of the Queensland Irish Association.

Tigh Gaelach members meet regularly to enjoy meals with drinks.

Bookings can be made by contacting Michelle Fitzpatrick on 0403 384 223 or by email at mitchfitzpatrick@hotmail.com.



**The Christmas Lunch of the Tigh Gaelach Dining Club was held at Easts Leagues Club on December 13. The Lady Members thank our President, Michelle FitzPatrick, for her organisation of this wonderful gathering. Picture: Glenice Spender**

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# How Irish!: The foundation of Queensland Irish Association

The first time I heard the story of the foundation of the QIA from my father, Leo, about 30 or more years ago now, I remember thinking how “Irish” I thought it was.

And I wasn’t thinking “Irish” in the sense of those dreadful Irish jokes once told to put the Irish down.

The government of the day thought it could dictate to members of the Queensland Irish Volunteers (QIV) who their commander would be. The volunteers, having none of it, resigned en masse. Then, missing the camaraderie and social interaction of the QIV, they met the following year and formed the QIA.

This was Irishness to be proud of – standing on principle and solidarity.

It’s history worth knowing.

## Queensland Irish Volunteers

From 1863, self-governing British colonies like Queensland were expected to undertake the main responsibility for their own internal order and defence.

In Queensland, this led to the establishment of a permanent defence force, supplemented by volunteers, rather than a conscripted militia. Even then in the young colony, there was strong sentiment against conscription.

Following a re-organisation of the defence force in 1885 and the successful formation of the Scottish Volunteer Corp, an offer to form an Irish Volunteer Corp was circulated by Stephen Richard O’Sullivan, the Secretary of the Brisbane Hurling Club. The document, dated 18 February, 1887, was signed by 78 “residents of Brisbane of Irish birth or extraction” and was forwarded by the Commandant of the Volunteer Force through military and government channels to the Governor for approval.

Its approval was not a foregone



**Queensland Irish Volunteers in 1897. Captain & Adjutant P.J. Stephens is seated in the second row from the front, third from the left.**

conclusion.

Years earlier, in 1862, a meeting held to form a “Royal Irish Volunteer Corps” drew twenty enlistments but their offer of service was refused.

As D.H. Johnson explained in his history of the colonial Queensland Defence Force, “Volunteers at Heart”:

“Any attempt to form an Irish institution [in 1862] would have been unlikely to go unchallenged, for there was a considerable body of anti-Irish opinion in the colony. The papers consistently held the nationals of that country [Ireland] up to ridicule. On 14 October 1862, for example, there was a half column article satirizing the Irish in the columns of the *Guardian* (“A Foine Pig”), and on 23 October an accusation that the Queensland Emigration (sic) Society was a move by the Roman Catholic bishop, Quinn, to create a “Rome in the south”. The large nonconformist population was doggedly anti-Papist, and the activities of the Fenians did not endear the Irish to their British fellow-colonists.” (1975: pp 44-5).

Rod and Robin Sullivan also noted

this phenomenon in their history of the QIA, “A Hundred Thousand Welcomes”:

“As with other colonial institutions, sectarian undercurrents were never far beneath the surface. Irishmen, bearing arms under the command of their compatriots, could be unsettling in a British colony where their loyalty was periodically questioned.” (2023: p8).

## A.J. Thynne

The approval of the Queensland Irish Volunteer Corps is likely due in no small part to Andrew Joseph Thynne.

Born in Ennistymon, Clare, in 1847, he migrated to Queensland with his parents in 1864. He was admitted as a solicitor in Queensland in 1873.

Thynne joined the volunteers as a private in 1867. By 1887, he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was Commandant of all Queensland volunteer forces. He was moreover a Member of the Legislative Council,

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# How Irish!: The Foundation of Queensland Irish Association

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serving from his appointment in 1882 till the abolition of the Legislative Council in 1922. In 1888-90, he was Minister for Justice in the Queensland government.

The Commandant of the Queensland Defence Force, Colonel French, himself an Irishman, had tangled with Thynne before (and would again later). Despite his disdain for volunteers, he forwarded a recommendation for the QIV's formation to the Governor.

## Enlisting the Volunteers

As Rod and Robin Sullivan (2023; 8-9) have noted, if others were wary of arming the Irish, "... Irish volunteers had no qualms about contributing to the defence of a colony which, unlike their homeland, had won majority rule and self-governing institutions."

A special Government Gazette on Saturday, 26 February announced the formation of the QIV Corps. The first notice of a meeting on the following Monday to form the new Corp, to be chaired by Thynne, was only published on the Saturday evening. Expectations of attendance were low.

Instead, the "Australian" newspaper reported a "modest estimate" of 300 young men present, overflowing the venue, the School of Arts in Ann Street. After 2 hours and 85 enrolled, the meeting was adjourned for a week to the larger Town Hall. Approval was eventually requested, and given, for three companies rather than the original one – a total of 300 men.

[There was a much longer delay (18 months) in the formation of the fourth company in Gympie. Leo Moloney in his unpublished history of QIV speculates that this is because the offer came from a convicted Fenian, John Flood, who had been transported to Western Australia on the last convict ship to Australia!]

## Turbulent history

The history of the Queensland Irish Volunteer Corps was not a quiet one.

As well as sectarian issues, The



**Andrew Joseph Thynne. Picture:** [WA.gov.au](http://WA.gov.au)

Volunteer Corps as a whole faced on-going antipathy from the permanent defence force and particularly their commanders against part-time citizen soldiers. In addition, the attention and funding available, particularly to the volunteers, waxed and waned according to perceptions of threats to security, both internal and external, and the economic circumstances of the State.

French's final report when he retired as commandant of the Queensland Defence Force in June 1891 was highly critical of the Volunteer Corps as a whole, but particularly the "National Corps" of Irish and Scottish volunteers.

One of French's criticisms concerned the Gympie Company of the Queensland Irish Volunteer Company where only four men had responded to a special parade, called with only one day's notice ... on St. Patrick's Day! (The local paper reported all the officers and 13 men had paraded even as the St. Patrick's Day sports proceeded!)

## The final straw

One of the curiosities of the volunteer forces was the election of their own officers, subject to a power of veto by the government.

In 1896, Thynne resigned as commandant of the southern district of the Queensland Volunteer Force to pursue his other (many) interests. On 13 March, 1897, the government appointed Lt. Colonel Keith Hutchison from the Land Defence Force as commandant of the volunteers, without consultation with the officers of the Force, and over the claims of two apparently qualified Volunteer officers, one a QIV officer.

On 4 May, 1897, the acting commandant of the QIV, Captain P.J. Stephens, resigned command over the issue and requested transfer to the unattached list. This was refused and his commission cancelled, ending his service in the Volunteers.

In what Johnson (1975: 195) described as "an outburst of Volunteer democracy", he was followed by most of the officers and NCOs of the QIV and the Queensland Irish Volunteer Corps effectively ceased to exist.

## From the ashes: Formation of the QIA

Rod and Robin Sullivan (2023: 9) write about the non-sectarian nature of the QIV based on Andrew Thynne's promotion of "an inclusive Irishness", and the camaraderie of the volunteers in many social occasions and re-unions.

At a testimonial dinner for P.J. Stephens on 25 October, 1897, some at least discussed the creation of a new organisation to maintain what they'd enjoyed of the QIV.

On 23 March, 1898, in response to a notice published that day by P.J. Stephens as Secretary pro tem, over 150 people attended a meeting that established a "Queensland Irish Association of a non-sectarian and non-political character", approved a constitution and on 28 March, elected its first Executive.

Here we are 128 years later.

*by Graham Moloney,  
Vice President, QIA.*

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# Help sought in piecing together Eliza's tragic tale

A little-known tragedy from Brisbane's colonial past is being revisited as the basis for a new stage or screen play by Irish-Australian academic and QIA Member, Dr John Cokley.

The story centres on Eliza Coffey, an Irish immigrant from County Roscommon who died in Brisbane in 1863 after suffering fatal burns in a kitchen fire at Annerley. Her burial was identified more than two decades ago during archaeological excavations at the former North Brisbane Burial Ground, on the present-day site of Lang Park (Suncorp Stadium).

Those excavations, carried out in the early 2000s during redevelopment of the stadium, uncovered nearly 400 graves dating from 1843 to 1875. Most remains were badly degraded by flooding, soil conditions and later disturbance, making individual identification extremely difficult. In Eliza Coffey's case, however, small fragments of preserved textile, buttons and coffin fittings survived, allowing researchers at the time to link the burial to documentary records of her death.

That identification has long been part of the archaeological record. What is new is the attempt to recover the human story behind it.

Dr John Cokley is now developing Eliza Coffey's life and death as the basis for a screenplay or stage play, drawing on coronial records, immigration history and the social world of Irish women in colonial Brisbane. The project focuses on Eliza's brief life in Queensland, her arrival as an immigrant, her employment, and the incident that led to her death.

Eliza Coffey arrived in Queensland at a time when thousands of Irish immigrants were disembarking at Queen's Wharf and passing through the Immigration Depot at South Brisbane. During 1862–1863, that depot was overseen by Irish Matron Sophia



**This property at 11 Young Street, Annerley, had a 76-year association with members of the Cockerill family from 1865 to 1941. The family had grazing properties and butchering businesses in South Brisbane and built this house in 1905.**

Morphy, the government-appointed official responsible for the welfare and placement of immigrant women. Descendants of Sophia, nee Wilson, who had married Lieutenant Arthur Herbert Morphy, may hold family material relating to her work.

At the time of her death, Eliza Coffey was employed by Brisbane butcher John Cockerill, a prominent Irish settler whose activities are well documented in colonial newspapers. While the family home still standing today was built decades later, the Cockerills' presence in Brisbane at the time is firmly established.

Dr Cokley says: "Prominent Irish butcher John Cockerill and his family were Eliza's employers and witnessed her death at Annerley in 1863. We have the complete coroner's handwritten case notes and verdict but we'd really like to know whether this story has been told down through the family to the present day and

how that storytelling goes. I haven't been able to find any local descendants of the butcher John Cockerill but he's well recorded in Trove\*, so there are probably some around. The Cockerill family home is public knowledge but this building (built in 1905) post-dates Eliza's death."

As part of this work, Dr Cokley is seeking contact with anyone who may have information relating to Eliza Coffey, the Cockerill family, Sophia Morphy, or Irish immigrant life in Brisbane during the early 1860s. Family papers, letters, diaries or passed-down stories may help place Eliza Coffey back into a fuller historical and cultural context and shed light on this 163-year old story.

If you have information that may help, contact [johncokley59@gmail.com](mailto:johncokley59@gmail.com).

\*Trove is an online Australian historic newspaper library.

*by Mary Allen, Director, QIA.*



# Learn to speak Irish with Gaeilge Brisbane group

*Gaeilge, the native language of Ireland, is enjoying a fresh surge of interest well beyond Irish shores — including right here in Brisbane. As more people reconnect with their heritage and curiosity about Irish culture grows, learning Gaeilge is becoming a lively way to engage with Ireland's past and present. In Brisbane, Irish language classes are helping locals bring the sounds of Gaeilge to life, offering a welcoming space to learn, connect and be part of this wider cultural revival.*

Tommy Fogarty of Gaeilge Brisbane writes: We are a small but busy group in South East Queensland of about forty members.

We have a full spectrum of Gaeilgeoiri from beginners through to native speakers. We also have a full range of dialects and both Irish and Australian members. We try to run things so that new learners or less confident speakers are not intimidated and the more fluent speakers are not bored.

We run Ciorcail Comhrá every second Wednesday night at the IASAQ centre at Woolloongabba in



Gaeilge Brisbane group members at Pop Up Gaeltacht meet-ups in Gilhooley's Irish Pub. Pictures: Gaeilge Brisbane

Brisbane. We officially start at 6:30pm and go through to 8:30pm but there are usually a couple of waifs and strays there from 5:30pm.

Everything is informal and relaxed and anyone with an interest in using their cuid Gaeilge or starting to learn is welcome.

We also have a Pop up Gaeltacht every last Sunday of the month in

Gilhooley's pub in Brisbane. It goes from 12pm lunchtime to 2pm and is followed by a trad session that is put on by Gilhooleys.

We have a [Facebook](#) page called Gaeilge Brisbane on which we post updates on our activities and any interesting or funny thing that pops up in the Irish and Gaeilge sphere on social media.

Some of our members are associated with Conradh na Gaeilge through the Conradh na Gaeilge Queensland group.

We usually have a summer break for the month of January but anyone interested in getting involved or have any queries can contact myself through the messenger function on there.

If anyone is visiting Brisbane and fancies speaking Irish they are more than welcome to any of our meetings. We will continue with our Pop Ups in the New year. Keep an eye on the Gaeilge Brisbane page and I can be contacted through Messenger for details and to answer aon ceisteanna.



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# Experience the Irish language revival first-hand



Explore the Gaeltacht (Irish speaking area) in Gweedore, County Donegal. Picture: Courtesy Martin Fleming

*Gaeilge, the language native to the island of Ireland, is undergoing an exhilarating revival. From vibrant theatres and trendy pubs to a variety of bilingual visitor experiences, Gaeilge is at the heart of a cultural resurgence that's inviting locals and visitors alike to connect with Ireland's unique heritage.*

The beautiful, lyrical sound of the Irish language isn't just pleasing to the ear, it's also rich in history; according to many scholars, it's the oldest written vernacular language in western Europe, dating back over 2,500 years.

Under British rule, Gaeilge became a minority language in Ireland, yet it was never allowed to die out and over the centuries, Ireland's mother tongue was kept alive by people all over the island, with certain areas remaining predominantly Irish speaking.

In 1922, in a bid to ensure all citizens could speak their native language, many schools across the country began teaching all subjects 'as Gaeilge' (in Irish). But for many students, learning a language they wouldn't use in everyday life was seen as a chore and they approached the ancient tongue of their ancestors with something akin to boredom.

## A modern revival

However, the Irish language is not just surviving, it is thriving and enjoying a vibrant cultural moment. Once confined to the classroom, Gaeilge is enjoying a creative renaissance. A new generation proudly weaves their mother tongue into music, arts, fashion, and everyday life.

Artists like Hozier and The Mary Wallopers blend Irish Gaelic lyrics with folk, electro, and pop, proving

Irish is as fresh and dynamic as any modern language. Festivals such as Other Voices and TradFest showcase Irish-language acts to eager audiences.

In fashion, brands like Pellador FC, De Búrca, and BEIR BUA boldly bring Gaeilge into streetwear and knitwear. Pellador's retro Celtic jumpers fuse Irish sporting heritage with modern design, De Búrca features Gaeilge slogans and Irish proverbs in bold styles, and BEIR BUA's recent collaboration with Beamish, a retro sports jersey in Cork red and Antrim gold, sold out instantly, capturing Ireland's cultural revival.

Gaelic typography is also on the rise, featured in branding for An Post, Beamish, Jameson, and more, turning heritage motifs into striking symbols of Irish pride.

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# Experience the Irish language revival first-hand

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This is not cultural nostalgia. For visitors, Gaeilge today is a living, expressive identity found in music, fashion, festivals, podcasts, and local meet-ups. Learning a cúpla focal (a few words) connects you to a creative, confident Irish community.

Across the island, there are waiting lists for the hundreds of Gaelscoils (schools where the curriculum is taught through Gaelic), and almost 70,000 students are currently learning all of their subjects through Irish.

In addition, every summer countless teenagers attend Irish-language summer camps. The much-loved tradition, which has become a rite of passage, sees the youngsters enjoy several weeks of sport, traditional music, dance and more, while living with a 'Bean an Tí' (woman of the house) and her family and speaking only Irish for the duration of their stay.

But it's not just young people who are actively enjoying the revival of our native tongue. Adults both from Ireland and abroad are now signing up for activities and events or even one-off occasions where they can learn a 'cúpla focal' (a few words) of our unique language, while having fun and making new friends.

Máiréad Folan from Galway is one such person. She joined An Taibhdhearc – the National Irish Language Theatre in Galway city in a bid to learn more about the language through the medium of drama, a subject she is deeply interested in.

"What excites me most today is the way Irish-language theatre is reaching new audiences and finding renewed relevance," she said. "Younger generations are connecting with the language and it's a powerful thing to watch stories rooted in our culture come to life in ways which feel urgent, fresh and deeply human."

"I believe that for visitors to Ireland, Irish-language theatre offers something you won't find anywhere else. It's an immersion into a different way



**Beir Bua x Beamish Collaboration. Picture: Kate Donaldson Photography**

of seeing, hearing and feeling a story. It invites you into a connection with language and place that's uniquely Irish and deeply moving."

As an Irish native, Máiréad already had an understanding of the language, but An Taibhdhearc welcomes everyone into the fold regardless of whether they're a fluent Irish speaker or have no knowledge of it at all. Various shows 'as Gaeilge' run throughout the year, with English-language audio access for people who want to follow what's going on, and a café for anyone wishing to pop in and immerse themselves in an Irish-speaking environment.

## **Irish-language experiences**

In 2026, Ireland celebrates 100 years since the formal recognition of the Gaeltacht regions - vibrant Irish-speaking communities dedicated to preserving and promoting

the Irish language and culture. For anyone eager to experience the Ireland of old, a visit to these Gaeltacht areas is essential. They include the Aran Islands off the west coast, parts of Donegal, Galway, Kerry, and Mayo, as well as smaller regions in Cork, Waterford, Meath, and west Belfast.

Gaeilge & Fáilte is a project to promote tourism in these Irish-speaking regions. From the Croithlí Whiskey Distillery Experience in Donegal and Criostal na Rinne glassware studio tours in Waterford to the Tonn Nua Surf School in Mayo, these activities are captivating ways to experience the Irish language on a visit.

Anyone wishing to develop a better understanding of Gaeilge can enjoy an immersive holiday with Oideas Gael in Donegal, which offers language courses and cultural breaks

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# Experience the Irish language revival first-hand



Oideas Gael, County Donegal. Picture: Oideas Gael

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in the stunning environs of one of Ireland's most breath-taking counties. People can also choose to explore different areas of the country with Find my Ireland – these trips are perfect for beginners looking to improve their Irish in a welcoming space.

But visitors may just want to enjoy a night out or even an afternoon activity. Fortunately, there are many options available. PEIG holds conversation, walking and sports groups across Ireland, Club Áras na nGael is an Irish language-speaking pub in Galway, while Hynes Bar in the hip Stoneybatter neighbourhood of Dublin offers a discount on drinks ordered through Irish, so it's a great incentive to practice. In the west, Connemara Pub Tours stops by Irish-speaking bars for trad music sessions and storytelling, with conversational Gaeilge flowing alongside pints of Guinness.

Some people will prefer the formal environment of a classroom, and Gael Linn offers courses in Irish language and culture for adults, designed for

learners with no prior knowledge. In Belfast, Cultúrlann has something for everyone, from classes and music gigs to poetry readings and visual arts.

## A final 'cúpla focal'

Having no experience of the language, but an interest in learning is something that Liz Walsh can relate to. With family roots in Ireland, the Boston woman always wanted to learn a few words, so on her last visit to the west coast, she decided to see what she could soak up.

"I love the whole idea of Gaelic – firstly because it's such a beautiful and old language, but also because my ancestors would have spoken it," she said. "I have been to Ireland on several occasions and once we unintentionally ended up in an Irish-speaking part of Kerry, which I found fascinating. So, last year, my husband and I went to the island of Inis Mór so we could stay where people spoke the language regularly. We also enrolled in a class and learned some of the basics: 'please', 'thank

you', 'hello', 'goodbye' and other pleasantries.

"We are planning to go back to Ireland next year and for sure, I'll be doing another class somewhere. So many people don't know that the Irish language is still in existence – but it is very much alive, and understanding a few words is very doable and so rewarding – it made me feel very proud of myself and I'm looking forward to learning more."

To speak even a few words of Irish is to brush against the soul of the island – to echo the sounds of its ancient landscape, its myths, and its people. For those seeking a deeper connection to Ireland, Gaeilge is more than a language; it's a thread that ties them to a living tradition, still resonating through its mountains, coastlines, and centuries."

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"We are planning to go back to

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## Experience the Irish language revival first-hand

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Tonn Nua Surf School, Glosch Beach, Belmullet Peninsula, County Mayo. Picture: Courtesy Fáilte Ireland

*Continued from page 12*

Ireland next year and for sure, I'll be doing another class somewhere. So many people don't know that the Irish language is still in existence - but it is very much alive, and understanding a few words is very doable and so rewarding – it made me feel very proud of myself and I'm looking forward to learning more."

To speak even a few words of Irish is to brush against the soul of the island - to echo the sounds of its ancient landscape, its myths, and its people. For those seeking a deeper connection to Ireland, Gaeilge is more than a language; it's a thread that ties them to a living tradition, still resonating through its mountains, coastlines, and centuries."



Connemara Pub Tours, Keane's Bar, Maum, Connemara, County Galway. Picture: Courtesy Fáilte Ireland

Words and pictures: [Tourism Ireland](#)



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# Saipan brings Irish soccer saga to the big screen



*From the creators of the smash box office hit Kneecap comes Saipan, the unforgettable and hilarious story of Roy Keane vs Mick McCarthy, Ireland's 2002 World Cup divided. Steve Coogan leads in this riveting, witty, and utterly unmissable tale of clashes, egos, and football frenzy.*

Saipan explores the explosive clash between soccer star Roy Keane and manager Mick McCarthy before the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Their feud, rooted in clashing standards and personalities, erupted on the island of Saipan, shaking the Irish team and nation. As Keane walked out, McCarthy faced chaos. This gripping true story goes beyond sport, it's a dramatic, often comic tale of leadership, loyalty, and a rivalry that captured global attention.

In 2002, Roy Keane was at the

peak of his powers as a world-class midfielder, captaining both Manchester United to glory and the Irish national team towards the World Cup.

Leading up to the World Cup, the Republic of Ireland's football team travels to the Pacific Island of Saipan for pre-tournament training and preparations. Upon arrival, however, it becomes clear that the facilities and amenities present aren't suitable for the players. Championing a voice for his team, Cork-born captain Roy Keane sparks a heated feud with the Irish manager Mick McCarthy.

Keane, played by Cork actor Éanna Hardwicke, and McCarthy, played by Steve Coogan, saw their internal rivalry bubble over onto

the global stage in epic fashion. This was a feud between two people that transcended the game and gripped an entire nation and the sporting world in the lead up to the FIFA World Cup Finals.

Keane's headline-grabbing eleventh hour departure from Ireland's squad briefly transformed the tiny western Pacific Island of Saipan into one of the most famous places on Earth. It left a weakened McCarthy to hold together a crumbling situation without his team's talisman amidst a wealth of negativity from press and fans alike. It divided a nation, prompting the Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) to offer his services as a mediator. On the surface it was all about standards,

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# Saipan brings Irish soccer saga to the big screen

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but deep down it was a hugely emotive story of two men whose rivalry and contempt came to surpass the sport they loved.

An epic real-life drama realized through a dark comedic, Saipan is the definitive account of one of the most fractious fallings-out in the history of sport.

Paul Fraser's remarkable screen-play tells the story of that infamous moment in recent Irish history, when the fate of the 2002 World Cup team hung in the balance. On a tiny island near Japan, the tension between the two men escalates towards an explosive confrontation that risks destroying the dreams of both and dividing friends and families - an entire nation - back home. For a few short, all-consuming days, it feels like the fate and morale of modern Ireland rest in the hands of one brilliant, irascible Irishman - and his stubborn nemesis.

Saipan brings together an outstanding ensemble of established and emerging filmmaking and acting talent from Ireland highlighting Irish homegrown talent involved in the film. The movie is a testament to the exceptional quality of Ireland's film professionals.

Saipan opens in cinemas across Australia on 5 February. You can watch the trailer [here](#).

*Thanks to our friends at the Irish Film Festival and [Kismet Movies](#), we have five double passes to give away to see Saipan in Brisbane. To enter, send us an email to [mary@queenslandirish.com.au](mailto:mary@queenslandirish.com.au), stating which Irish city Roy Keane comes from. Entries must be in by noon on Friday, 30 January. The winners will be drawn from a hat and contacted via email.*





# Queensland Irish Association

## *Saint Brigid Celebration*



Join us on 14 February at 2.00pm at

The Brigid Centre,  
Brigidine College, Indooroopilly

Film screening of *Burren Girl*  
before a Q&A with the director

The search for an Irish clan and its legacy

Followed by light afternoon tea  
Cost: \$10 per person

*RSVP and further information:  
Honora Gee on 0408 531 636 or  
email [qiahistoricalculturalcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:qiahistoricalculturalcommittee@gmail.com)*

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