



Queensland Irish Association

Newsletter

February 2026



Organisers, dignitaries and VIP guests at the 37th Annual St Brigid's Dinner, including Terry and Carmel Martin of Zephyr Education Ltd, Sam Roberts, Second Secretary, Embassy of Ireland, Canberra, Councillor Vicki Howard, Queensland Rose of Tralee Siobhan Edwards, St Brigid's Dinner Patron Claire Moore, QIA President Jeff Spender and QIA Directors Mary Allen and Mavis Williams. Picture: Goodtimes Network Photography

Saint Brigid's Dinner is a magnificent triumph

The St Brigid's Dinner 2026 was a great success. The convenors of the Dinner, Michelle Fitzpatrick, D.Ua, and Margaret Stacey, D.Ua, and their St Brigid's Dinner Committee delivered another magnificent evening at Royal on the Park hotel.

Guests also enjoyed a two-course dinner while rousing entertainment was provided by Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band, as well as QIA Dancers and guest musicians Glen Court and Dianne Heine.

QIA Director Mavis Williams welcomed guests on arrival by playing the bagpipes.

Gay Jenkinson was Master of

Ceremonies and once again did a magnificent job.

Sam Roberts, Second Secretary at the Embassy of Ireland, Canberra gave us an update on our new Ambassador of Ireland to Australia, HE Fiona Flood.

Carmel Martin, co-founder of Zephyr Education Ltd, a not-for-profit that provides uniforms and other school essentials to children in need, gave an inspiring speech.

You'll find more photographs from the Dinner on pages 3 and 13 of this Newsletter.

Attention now turns to the Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner at Brisbane

City Hall on March 16. If you have not yet booked your spot, get in touch without delay. You'll find the booking form attached to this Newsletter. It is also available to download from our website, www.queenslandirish.com.

Jeff Spender,
President,

Queensland Irish Association.

• *Congratulations to the winners of our Saipan cinema contest which we ran on social media and in our Newsletter. They are: Gerard Sammon, Tara Henry, Eddie Ryan, Dr Matthew Rimmer and John Cleary.*

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



Proudly sponsored by



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.



At the St Brigid's Dinner were QIA President Jeff Spender and his wife Glenice with, top, Terry and Carmel Martin of Zephyr Education Ltd, and, bottom, with Sam Roberts, Second Secretary, Embassy of Ireland, Canberra. Pictures: Goodtimes Network Photography

Calendar

14 February 2026

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

21 February 2026

Queensland Manx Viking Festival inaugural planning meeting, Marine Rescue and Sandgate Water Activities Club, 95 Allpass Parade, Shorncliffe. 12pm to 5pm.

7 March 2026

Queensland Irish Choir St Patrick's Day Concert, Hills Church, Everton Hills, 1.30pm.

14 March 2026

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

15 March 2026

Darling Downs Irish Club Saint Patrick's Day Parade, Toowoomba, 10.30am.

16 March 2026

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

17 March 2026

QIA St Patrick's Day Lunch. Wests Rugby Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong. 12pm.

22 March 2026

QIA Irish Tour of Ipswich Cemetery, Cemetery Road, Ipswich, 10am.

30 April - 3 May 2026

Australian Celtic Festival, Glen Innes, New South Wales.

30 May 2026

Party in the Park, Grenier Park, Acacia Ridge, 12pm to 4pm.

31 May 2026

Celtic Council of Australia Qld Celtic Junior Games, Moorlands Park, Auchenflower, 9am - 12pm.

5 - 8 June 2026

National Celtic Folk Festival, Portarlington, Victoria.

16 June 2026

Bloomsday

First Friday of the month

Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band play at Friday Irish Sessions in Gilhooley's, Brisbane. See www.facebook.com/QIAPB.

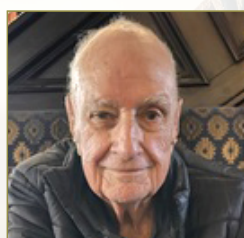
Second Wednesday of the month

Tara Hall Dining Club, The Ship Inn, Sidon Street, South Brisbane. Contact Secretary Roger Thornton 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 or 0403 384 223

*Ar dheis Dé
go raibh a anam*



Patrick James Mulcahy

Vale QIA Senior Member Patrick 'Pat' Mulcahy,
who passed away on
Monday, 19 January 2026 after a short illness.

Pat was immensely proud of his Irish heritage
and he loved all things Irish.
He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.



May he rest in peace



Queensland Irish Association

Irish Tour of Ipswich Cemetery



Queensland Irish Association
in association with Friends of South Brisbane Cemetery
and The Haunts of Brisbane
invites you to

An Irish History Tour of Ipswich General Cemetery

One of Queensland's oldest cemeteries

on Sunday, 22 March 2026 at 10am

Suggested cash donation of \$10 welcome to our tour guides on the day.

RSVP and enquiries to mary@queenslandirish.com.au

This tour will involve two hours of walking/standing. The cemetery is in a flat location. Bring comfortable, enclosed shoes and hat/umbrella for shade. Cemetery Rd and Warwick Road, Ipswich QLD 4505. Meeting point at the cemetery is the gate on Cemetery Road – there is parking on Cemetery Road near the gates. Toilets on site. Thank you to Ipswich City Council.

Discover the Irish stories at Ipswich Cemetery

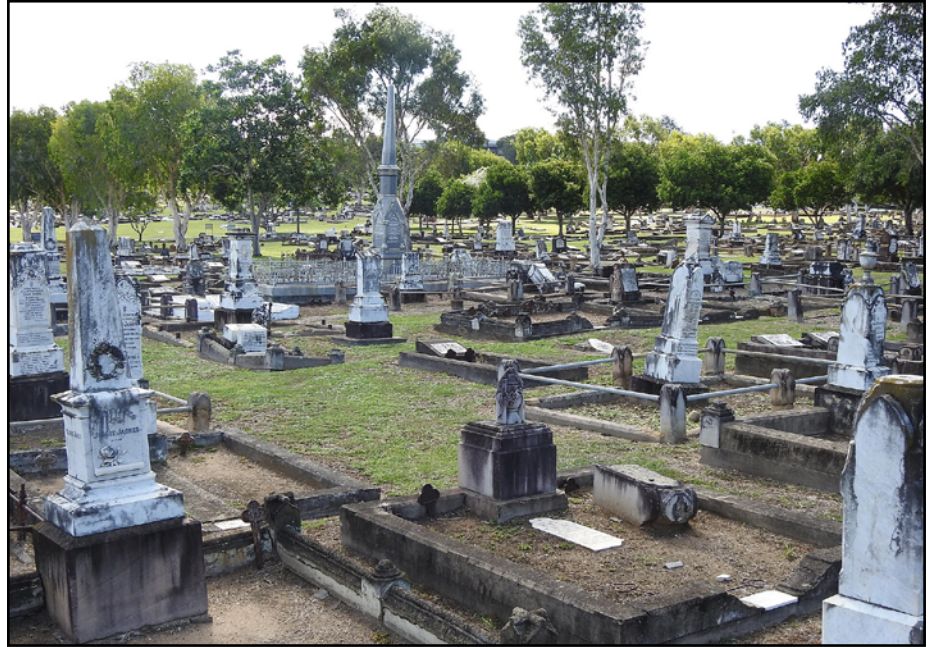
On level ground just west of the old town, Ipswich General Cemetery spreads out quietly, its rows of headstones marking some of the earliest chapters of Irish life in Queensland. Established in 1843, it is one of the state's oldest cemeteries and a place where Irish stories sit side by side with colonial ambition, hardship and legend.

On Sunday 22 March 2026 at 10am, the Queensland Irish Association, together with Friends of South Brisbane Cemetery and The Haunts of Brisbane, invites you to walk among those stories on a guided Irish History Tour.

Here are Irish-born men and women who arrived in the colony in its infancy and helped shape Ipswich as a working town. Among those buried here is John Alexander Bell, born in County Kildare, who became a prominent pastoralist and politician, serving on the Queensland Legislative Council during the 19th century. His grave reflects the rise of Irish migrants into positions of influence in the young colony.

Nearby lies Francis North, born in County Westmeath, another early Irish settler who entered Queensland politics and served as a member of the Legislative Assembly before his death in 1864. His burial here places Irish voices firmly within the foundations of Queensland's parliamentary life.

The cemetery also tells quieter Irish stories — of labourers, families and children — where headstones record lives cut short by disease, accidents and the realities of colonial existence. Names, ages



Congregational graves section at Ipswich General Cemetery, one of the oldest cemeteries in Queensland. Picture: [Q8682 via Wikimedia Commons](#)

and places of birth etched into stone trace a direct line back to Irish counties, reminding visitors how strong the Irish presence was in Ipswich's earliest decades.

Then there is the grave that continues to spark debate. Buried here is James Ryan, the man who late in life claimed he was Dan Kelly, brother of bushranger Ned Kelly. Ryan asserted that he survived the siege at Glenrowan in 1880 and lived for decades under an assumed name in Queensland. Authorities never accepted his claim, yet the story was taken seriously enough to be reported widely in the press, and today his grave carries a memorial acknowledging the mystery. It remains one of Queensland's most curious bushranger footnotes.

This tour offers a chance to walk a flat, unassuming landscape that holds anything but ordinary sto-

ries — of Irish migration, political influence, everyday survival and enduring legend — all written quietly into the stones of Ipswich General Cemetery.

**Mary Allen,
Director, QIA.**

Suggested cash donation of \$10 welcome to our tour guides on the day. This tour will involve two hours of walking/standing. The cemetery is in a flat location. Bring comfortable, enclosed shoes and hat/umbrella for shade. Cemetery Rd and Warwick Road, Ipswich QLD 4305. Meeting point at the cemetery is the gate on Cemetery Road at 10am on Sunday 22 March – there is parking on Cemetery Road near the gates. Toilets on site. Thank you to Ipswich City Council. Enquiries and RSVP to mary@queenslandirish.com.au

A great Saint Brigid's Lunch with Darling Downs Irish Club



The Saint Brigid's Day Lunch at the Irish Club Hotel in Toowoomba. Pictures: Graham Moloney

Over eighty people enjoyed the annual St. Brigid's Day Lunch at the Irish Club Hotel in Toowoomba on Saturday, 31 January.

The event is run by the Darling Downs Irish Club.

Club Secretary and one of the organisers of the event, Deborah Heggs, said "The numbers at the event keep on growing from year to year." Accommodating the growing crowd will become a problem in the future. As Deborah said "It's a good problem to have, fitting more people in."

The entertainment for the day started with the Women in Harmony Choir, singing three songs, ending with a moving version of An Irish Blessing. My cousin, a local school teacher at an Angli-

can school, mentioned that the song is sung at their graduation every year and always moves her to tears.

This was followed by a Seamus Heaney poem presented by one of the members of the Club's committee, Pauline. (Mea culpa, there are two Paulines on the committee and I'm not sure which it was.)

Guest speaker for the lunch was local author, Jane Smith, talking about her book, *One Free Woman: The True Story of Convict Hannah Rigby*. In addition to her original conviction, Hannah was twice sent to the Moreton Bay penal colony for re-offending. A seamstress, most of Hannah's offences seemed to involve the theft of haberdashery.

Jane pointed out that Hannah was not Irish (though she was from Liverpool) but she was a woman, and her experiences give an insight into the lives of female convicts and women settlers in the early colonial period. Hannah was more fortunate than many to be assigned to a surgeon, Dr. Ballow, in Moreton Bay and somehow managed to keep two children with her to the ages of 9 and 13.

The question period following Jane's presentation was very enthusiastic and exposed a thriving literary scene. One of the members in attendance, it was whispered to me, was the author of 23 children's books.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable and

Continued on page 7

A great Saint Brigid's Lunch with Darling Downs Irish Club

Continued from page 6

convivial lunch. I cheerfully add my thanks and appreciation to the organisers for the event, and for the invitation to a representative of the QIA to attend. The links between the two associations have decayed over time as each has had its troubles. There is plenty of goodwill to renew those links and to extend them to others. So we should.

The next major event for the Darling Downs Irish Club is the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday, 15 March. (The Brisbane St. Patrick's Day Parade is Saturday, 14 March.)

Graham Moloney
Vice-President, QIA.



Women in Harmony Choir singing at the Saint Brigid's Day Lunch at the Irish Club Hotel in Toowoomba. Pictures: Graham Moloney

Don't miss the Irish Club Hotel in Toowoomba



If you're going to Toowoomba, or even passing through, don't miss a visit to the Irish Club Hotel on Russel Street, just over the road from the Toowoomba railway station.

The hotel is owned by the Darling Downs Irish Club, who have a room within the hotel, but it operated by a lessee. Anything you eat or drink helps to support the Irish Club in

Toowoomba.

Naturally, the hotel is Irish-themed, with the front bar named for Michael Collins and a portrait of James Joyce on the side wall. Personally, I'd like to meet the men and women who drank the whiskey from the Jameson's bottles that circle the bar more than once.



If the meals for the St. Brigid's lunch this year are any guide, there is a good selection and generous serves delivered promptly.

Check it out in Toowoomba.

Graham Moloney
Vice-President, QIA.

Women's Little Christmas tour at Mt Coot-tha



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





ST Patrick's Day Concert

Queensland Irish Choir
QIA Dancers
Redlands Sporting Club Pipe Band
(Outside 1.20pm – 1.50pm)

Saturday 7 March

2.00pm
Hills Church Auditorium
79 Queens Road, Everton Hills
Doors Open 1.30 pm

Tickets: <https://www.qldirishchoir.org/events>
Adults: Online - \$27 Door Sales - \$30
Children: Free (Under 15 years)

Enquiries
0493 455 487








Irish choir kicking off St Pat's Day celebrations

Queensland Irish Choir

The Celtic Soul

100,000 welcomes we sing, and we mean every word,
At every rehearsal, gentle laughter can always be heard.
Our precious gift is our music sung well with an Irish lilt,
Or even a Scottish air or two along with a swirling kilt!

While from Glen to Glen, the pipes are calling for Danny Boy,
The brown Caileen from County Down is still acting very coy!
and careless old McNamara has misplaced his Band anew,
And he cannot find it anywhere because of the Foggy Dew!

O'Keeffe is our gifted task master, our Musical Director of old,
O' Li is the master accompanist who plays piano well and bold!
And luckily we have O'Connors, O'Learys and just one O'Kane,
O, in such grand company, to be sure, you all will be just fain!

But you don't need an Irish name to be made most welcome here,
Just a love of all things Irish and, perhaps, a taste for Guinness beer, 😊

The worldwide celebration of St Patrick's Day on 17 March reflects not only his relevance to modern day Ireland as their patron Saint and their source of Christian spirituality, but also his role as a cultural cornerstone embodying Irish history, faith and resilience.

To honour that Irish history, faith and resilience, the Choir will perform songs such as Boulavogue, the Rising of the Moon and God Save Ireland to celebrate the memories of those who fought for Irish freedom.

The theme for the 2026 St Patrick's Celebrations throughout Brisbane, including at the St Patrick's Day Parade on 14 March, is the revival of the Irish language. The Choir will sing three songs in the Irish language commencing with the song of welcome, Cead Mile Failte which translates to 100,000 Welcomes (typifying the Irish reputation for hospitality). The Choir will also sing the Irish national anthem in the Irish language, The Soldiers Song. The final Irish language

song is titled Trasna na d'Tonnta about a lonely traveller returning home to Ireland.

The audience will also be treated to traditional Irish folk songs that speak of love of people and love of country such the beautiful ballad Ballinderry, the Leaving of Liverpool and Spancil Hill.

The piece de resistance (to use an Irish term) of the Concert will be the Choir's performance in four-part harmony of Danny Boy, the most beautiful love song ever written.

As always, the concert will be concluded with the Choir's emotional rendition of the incomparable Irish Blessing!

The Queensland Irish Choir would warmly welcome anyone wishing to join us as Choristers in this wonderful celebration of the Icon of Ireland. We are particularly looking for more basses and tenors. So come on lads, stop singing in the shower and give me a call.

Terry O'Connor
0418 751 829

Celebrate the Spirit of St Brigid: Ireland's Festival of Spring



Brigid's Shrine and Well in County Louth. Picture: Gareth Wray

Celebrate spring in Ireland, where ancient Celtic rituals and Christian traditions meet modern festival culture.

In the depths of winter, spring is the light up ahead that offers hope, renewal and abundance, and in Ireland its arrival has been celebrated down through the millennia.

In ancient Ireland each of the four seasons was marked by a great fire festival: Imbolc in February, Bealtaine in May, Lughnasa in August and Samhain in October. Today these ancient festivals have been revived and sit alongside Christian and modern secular celebrations.

St Brigid's Day (1 February) echoes Imbolc and in the Irish Christian calendar marks the arrival of spring. One of the three patron saints of Ireland, St Brigid is known for her work with the poor and is also respected as a trail-

blazing feminist and environmentalist. But her story is entwined with a much older figure. Brigid, a Celtic pagan goddess of healing, fire and poetry, was a key deity in the Tuatha dé Danann, a supernatural race in Irish mythology. Both Brigids are now part of the St Brigid's Day/Imbolc celebrations standing as symbols of nurturing, creativity, renewal, female strength and community spirit.

A tradition renewed for modern times

Across the island of Ireland, regional and national events are reimagining St Brigid's legacy for contemporary audiences. Mixing ritual with arts, music, craft, wellness, and community gatherings, these events joyfully welcome the change of the season.

A central aspect of the celebrations is a focus on storytelling. The age-old

tradition of gathering to share stories has enjoyed renewed popularity in recent years, not just in Ireland but across the world. Seanchóiche, a global storytelling platform that started in Dublin and now runs in over a dozen cities worldwide, is leading the way in reviving this inclusive and community-led activity. Events dedicated to the art of storytelling take place in Ireland across the year.

Where to celebrate St Brigid's Day and the arrival of spring

Ireland's flagship celebration of St Brigid is the Brigid, Spirit of Kildare Festival. It takes place in County Kildare, where Brigid founded a nunnery in around AD 480, the festival presents a stellar programme of performances and cultural experiences

Continued on page 11

Celebrate the Spirit of St Brigid: Ireland's Festival of Spring

Continued from page 10

including concerts, dance, storytelling, fire shows, craft workshops, talks, walks and wellness events. Among the headline shows this year are concerts by Altan – one of Ireland's top trad bands, Jack L, Picture This and internationally acclaimed soprano, Celine Byrne. The Candlelit Tales Awakening Brigid is one of a number of storytelling events that reflect Brigid's enduring legacy as a living cultural force. And on 1 February the festival's fiery procession through the streets of Kildare town marks the end of the darkness of winter.

At the Brigid of Faughart Festival, County Louth, where Brigid was born, the focus is on pilgrimage and craft rituals. Here you can learn to weave the famous St Brigid's Cross that is traditionally displayed in homes to ward off evil. Or you can celebrate Brigid, goddess and saint, and the arrival of spring at a Dancing at Imbolc event. There are also tours of sacred sites and a pilgrimage walk from the Hill of Faughart to Dundalk. Along the way, there will be ritual and ceremony, recounting of Brigid's legends and insights into the history of this storied landscape which is part of Ireland's Ancient East. The festival



Seanchóiche-Dublin event.

connects ancient tradition to today's cultural revival, grounding it in lived heritage.

In Dublin, the St Brigid's Day celebrations are about honouring the contribution of women to Irish culture and society. Brigit: Dublin City Celebrating Women is rooted in the figures of the Celtic goddess

and Christian saint but focuses on contemporary female figures. Across four days, more than 120 events will put the spotlight on women's voices and achievements through a vibrant programme of talks, performances, walks, workshops, music, visual art and shared moments.

Elsewhere across the island, people will mark St Brigid's Day, Imbolc and the arrival of spring in ways as diverse as sunrise yoga, communal meals, meditation, music and workshops connecting ancient rituals and a modern interest in wellbeing, authentic crafts, and sustainability.

The St Brigid's Day celebrations are an example of how Ireland is reclaiming old traditions and ancient festivals that celebrate the seasons and add colour and meaning to the passing of the year. As well as providing first-class festival entertainment, they create a space for reflection and reconnection with community, the natural world and the island's rich heritage.



Brigid's Cathedral in Kildare. Picture: Gareth Wray

Words and pictures:
www.ireland.com

Going Out for One with Gearoid Mccarthy at Lefty's

Gearoid Macarthy is going to need a bigger venue when he comes back to Brisbane next year. Lefty's Music Hall on Caxton Street was packed for his gig on 15 January and the crowd had a great night.

Gearoid and his accompanist, fiddle player and percussionist, Fergal Scahill, played at the frenetic pace of many current performers from the opening song, Bold O'Donohue, and continued for most of the night.

There were belting versions of Grace, Galway Girl, Dirty Old Town and Fields of Athenry across the night. All were memorable and all had the crowd raising the roof. Their only song that I thought was unsuited to that style was Beeswing. Talking about fragility in a robust, up-tempo way just didn't seem to suit. But then I've always liked Christy Moore's version of the song.

One of the highlights of the night for me was the rendition of My Old Man, a tribute to his father. But for the bar in the middle, you could have heard a pin drop as Gearoid sang accompanied by a finger picking Fergal. I had the song on an old vinyl record of the Fureys from maybe 40 years ago and it was a pleasure to hear it sung again and so well – proof of the range of his singing talent.

Another big hit for me was Seven Drunken Nights. I still remember the introduction on an old Dubliners album: "This song is called Seven



Drunken Nights but we're only allowed to sing about five of them". A song about a drunken man and a roving wife, the song progressed from the front door through the house and to the bed. The last two verses were banned from play as being too intimate/graphic/obscene. Times have changed, and all seven verses were sung at Lefty's.

[As a sidebar, the chorus of Seven Drunken Nights always amused me because it started with the words "It's many a day I have travelled a hundred miles or more ...". "Before breakfast, in Australia" is what I always thought, travelling a hundred miles not being the same achievement in Australia as in Ireland.]

Gearoid saved one of his original songs, Going Out for One, for late

in the show. It topped the charts in seven countries and its easy to see why with a chorus like:

"Are we going out for one? Sure, there'll be no harm done.

We're only going for the one."

In short, it was a great night and highly recommended. Keep an eye out for Gearoid's return to Australia.

The warm-up for the night was provided by Mick McHugh. Mick arrived in Australia from Dublin twenty years ago as a polymer engineer. He is now a professional musician, living in Byron Bay, lead singer of The Gathering who play on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane. Keep an eye out for their gigs. I think they'd be worth it.

Graham Moloney
Vice-President, QIA.

Donate your formal clothes to help students

Wondering what to do with your formal gowns and suits that are taking up space in your wardrobe?

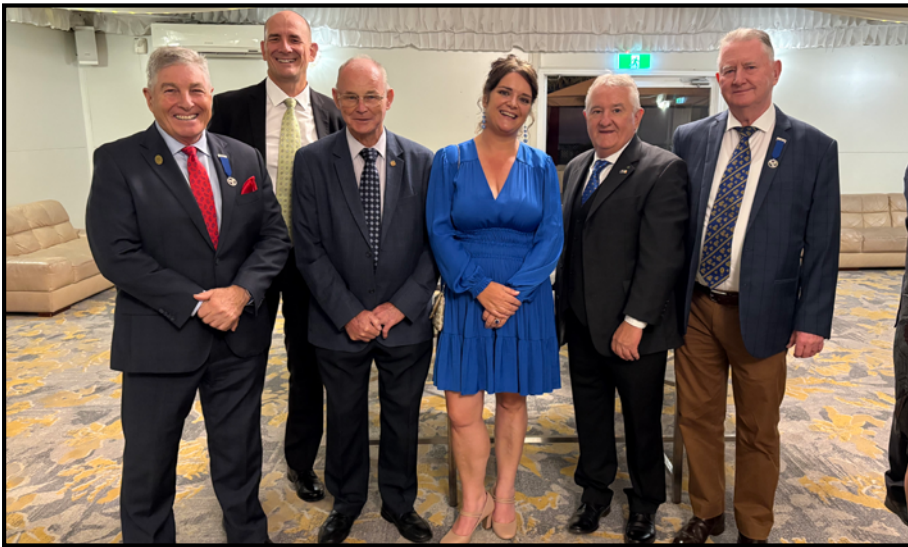
Formally Ever After is a free community program to help students/individuals who are struggling to attend their school formal and special events, by giving them an outfit

of their choice free of charge.

Donated items can be picked up from locations across SE Qld. For more information, contact Tammy on 0401 508 759, email tammyrobinson72@yahoo.com.au. Or go to www.facebook.com/FormallyEverAfter.



Saint Brigid's Dinner 2026 is a triumph!



Top: QIA Dancers performing; Left: QIA Director Paul Hogan, Tony Donegan, President, St Patrick's Day Committee, QIA Director Seamus Sullivan, QIA Director Mary Allen, Dermott Fearon, Chief Marshall, St Patrick's Day Committee, QIA Life Member Garry Burke; Below left: Carmel Martin, Director, Zephyr Education Ltd; Sam Roberts, Second Secretary, Embassy of Ireland, Canberra; Below: Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band performing, and, below, QIA Director Mavis Williams playing pipes and St Brigid's Dinner Patron Claire Moore.



When emigration stories lead back home to Ireland

Our 2026 St Brigid's Celebration film screening will feature the heartfelt and inspiring documentary Burren Girl, a story that resonates deeply with Irish emigrant families — not just here in Australia, but around the world.

Burren Girl follows a Minnesota woman's remarkable journey of discovery as she searches for the place and people her immigrant grandmother left behind in the wind-swept limestone landscape of the Burren in County Clare, Ireland. Through breathtaking cinematography and personal reflection, the film brings to life the connection between family, heritage and homeland, reminding us how the legacy of emigration threads through generations.

Director Rita Davern, whose own family story forms the heart of the film, describes her motivation for making Burren Girl as a yearning to understand her roots and identity. She writes that like many people in the United States with European ancestry, she grew up with little connection to her Irish heritage or the stories that shape a sense of who we are. Encouraged by a friend in her thirties, she began a decades-long search for the people and places her grandmother had left behind — a project that unfolded over forty years with the generous support of distant relatives in the Burren.

Davern says the experience lifted her out of "cultural amnesia" and showed her that the value of connection to people, homeland and culture goes far beyond genealog-



ical facts or a completed family tree. Through interviews, landscape exploration and encounters with local families, Burren Girl celebrates the deep, essential bond between diaspora descendants and their ancestral homeland — a theme that will resonate with anyone who has ever wondered "Who am I? Where do I come from?"

The documentary blends personal narrative with history, archaeology, genealogy and music, painting a vivid portrait of the Burren and those whose lives are still entwined with its fields and traditions. Its warm storytelling and evocative visuals have earned it screenings at international film festivals and connected audiences with the universal experience of searching for home.

Over the past 40 years, Rita Davern has traveled the Burren, birthplace of her grandmother's people in County Clare, Ireland. She will most often be found in the kitchen drinking tea with

friends and distant relations. The conversation often turns to those who stayed and those who left, as the devastation of colonization, hunger and emigration took its toll. Rita knows first hand that, for people with European heritage, reconnecting to our homeland and our cultural history adds huge richness to our lives. A community engagement artist in her work and in her life, Rita believes the greatest find of genealogy is the living relatives.

Rita worked as a communication and leadership consultant to corporate America for twenty years. When her adopted Korean son became ill, she discovered — and now teaches — Parenting-by-Connection, an approach to parenting that builds deep, strong, healing relationships with children through play. She is an experienced project manager, seminar leader, consultant and coach. Rita and colleague Jane Powers were awarded a Forecast

Continued on page 15

When emigration stories lead back home to Ireland

Continued from page 14

Public Art research and development grant in 2009 to work with Indigenous artists to find ways to “map” the history of Dakota people “onto the present day landscape of Minneapolis and St. Paul.”

The theme of connection through history takes center stage in Rita's life. Time at home in her beloved Minnesota also matters deeply to Rita. She can be found dogsled-ding in the north woods or walking the land her great grandfather farmed with her husband, Bob.

The screening will take place at Brigidine College, Cecil Street, Indooroopilly, on Saturday 14 February at 2 pm, and will be followed by a Zoom Q&A with the director — a rare opportunity to hear more about the making of the film and its deeply personal journey. Attendees will also enjoy a light afternoon tea, and tickets are available for \$10 per person.

For full details and to RSVP, contact Honora Gee on 0408 531 636 or email qiahistoricalculturalcommittee@gmail.com.



Having a Function

We can add a whole lot more to your evening

Photo's (6inX8in) printed the same night and returned before the function finishes.
We will do PR photos of the event at no extra cost.
(subject to numbers)
Studio lights if requested will be set up before guests arrive.
There is no additional cost beyond the price of the photo's.
This is a great way to have a memory of the evening.

Good Times Network Photography
Phone 0401450977
www.goodtimesbrisbane.com



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

ENTRANCE AT CECIL STREET - DISABILITY ACCESSIBLE - PARKING IN CENTRAL AVE, INDOOROOPIILLY

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

You can also reach us through our website, 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.

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed by contributors in articles, advertisements or any other published material in Queensland Irish Association Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the Queensland Irish Association Newsletter. The editor reserves the right to accept, reject, edit or amend submitted material in order to make it appropriate or suitable for publication. To gain permission to reprint any material that appears in this newsletter, contact newsletter@queenslandirish.com. Queensland Irish Association Newsletter takes no responsibility for products or services advertised in this newsletter.

The Vikings are coming... And they need volunteers

The call has gone out and it carries the clang of shields and the splash of oars — the Vikings are coming, and Queensland's Celtic community is being invited to help bring them ashore.

Plans are underway for what organisers hope will become a major new cultural celebration, the Queensland Manx Viking Festival, with an inaugural planning meeting set for Saturday 21 February 2026 at the Marine Rescue and Sandgate Water Activities Club (SWAC) at Shorncliffe. Running from midday to 5pm, and complete with a sausage sizzle, the gathering aims to bring together volunteers, historians, performers, boat builders and community groups keen to help shape a festival planned for full launch in 2027.

Among the driving forces behind the initiative is Nigel Jeffares, President of the Queensland Irish Association's Tara Hall Dining Club and President of Queensland Manx Society, reflecting the strong cooperation across Queensland's Celtic organisations.

Nigel explained: "We are looking for people with woodwork skills, and expertise in building boats. If you'd like to be involved in helping us build longboats, currachs and coracles (a lightweight skin-covered boat made out of reeds that can be carried on your back), please contact us. We are interested in anyone with a love of getting Viking boats with young people in them racing in a regatta in 2027. We are also looking for sponsorship to cover the costs of building the



The Viking Rune Stone at Clontarf. Pictures: Supplied

boats and holding the festival. The option is also there to sponsor a rowing team. We also are looking for acoustic musicians and Celtic dancers."

While Vikings are often remembered for raids, their history is closely linked to Ireland and other Celtic nations. Norse settlers founded major Irish coastal cities including Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Cork and Limerick, creating trading centres that connected Ireland with Scandinavia, Britain and mainland Europe. Over time, Norse and Gaelic cultures blended, influencing language, commerce, maritime skills and shipbuilding traditions across

Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man and parts of Wales.

The proposed festival will celebrate Manx, Viking and wider Celtic heritage through both land and water-based activities, including a regatta, historical re-enactments, traditional boat building, music, dance, craft displays and living history camps. The event is intended to be strongly family-focused and community-driven.

The Queensland Manx Society Inc., a not-for-profit organisation with a history spanning more than a century, is spearheading the project. The Society maintains direct links with the Isle of Man

Continued on page 17

The Vikings are coming... and they need volunteers

Continued from page 16

and hopes to draw on those connections to develop authentic boat building projects and regatta formats inspired by events in Douglas and Peel. The Society is affiliated with the Celtic Council of Australia (Queensland) and is working closely with the Brownsea Scout group, SWAC members and Marine Rescue volunteers.

Organisers say interest from Viking and Celtic enthusiasts has already been extraordinary, particularly due to the aquatic focus. While the long-term aim is to establish a major annual event, trial activities or a preview day may take place in 2026.

Clontarf in Moreton Bay is named after Clontarf in Ireland. A Viking rune stone at the Clontarf foreshore is a modern monument symbolically linking Norse heritage with Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man.

Nigel said: "We are going to do the reenactment through that period 800AD to 1250AD, including the Battle of Clontarf in Ireland, through to when the Vikings left the Isle of Man in 1250."

The Battle of Clontarf took place on Good Friday, 23 April 1014, near Dublin. High King Brian Boru defeated a Leinster and Viking alliance but was killed while praying in his tent, traditionally said to have been slain by the Viking warrior Bróðir. Although the battle weakened Viking military power in Ireland, Norse and Gaelic cultures continued blending, particularly in coastal trading towns.

To become involved, join the Queensland Manx Society group at www.facebook.com/groups/queenslandmanx, visit queenslandmanx.org.au (site under construction) or email Nigel at nigel.jeffares@gmail.com.



Marine Rescue and Sandgate Water Activities Club in Shorncliffe.

AFL INTERNATIONAL RULES MATCH 2025 **GAA**

MORNINGSIDE SUPERCATS VS IRISH MASTERS

+ U6, U8, U10 & U12 JUNIOR GAMES
& SNR WOMEN'S GAME

SATURDAY 28 FEB | From 3pm
Jack Esplen Oval, Morningside

Irish Wolfhounds | Irish Pipe & Drum Band
Traditional Irish Band - Munster Bucks will play from 7pm until late

Supporting
This event, now in its 5th year is to raise awareness of mental health by highlighting the importance of community & sport.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS FOR SUPPORTING THIS ANNUAL EVENT

Queensland Manx Gaelic Football | MORNINGSIDE SUPERCATS | IRISH WOLFHOOUNDS | MUNSTER BUCKS | ALLSTAR Infrastructure



Queensland Irish Association

St Patrick's Day Lunch



Queensland Irish Association
invites Members and friends to

St Patrick's Day Lunch

on Tuesday, 17th March from 12pm
at

West's Rugby Club,
65 Sylvan Road, Toowong

- Great food and drinks available to purchase
- Irish entertainment with Tom Kimmet, QIA Dancers and more!
- Lucky door prize • Admission is free

RSVP to Mavis Williams on 3849 8271