



February & March 2019

LUTON IRISH FORUM

Providing social opportunities and welfare advice to everyone



This year's Luton St Patrick's Festival is the 20th and we're planning to make it the best yet!

The fun starts with an Afternoon Social for our members on Tuesday 12th March and a 50th Anniversary concert featuring current and former pupils and teachers of Cardinal Newman School the following evening. Two performances of a drama from the group which was so popular last St Patrick's Festival feature on 16th March and

Sunday 17th is parade and music day. As well as entertainment along the parade route, we've got great headline acts on The Main Stage in Market Hill, superb singers and musicians on The Mall Stage plus pupils from several Irish Dancing Schools will be showing off their fancy footwork.

See page 3 for programme headlines or check flyers, posters and online for more detail plus venues and running times.

Celebrating St Brigid & Irish Women

To celebrate Lá Fhéile Bríde (St Brigid's Day) 2019 we organised a super Afternoon Tea event at Putteridge Bury Events Centre on Saturday 2nd February. The Afternoon Tea format follows two previously successful similar events – Mná na hÉireann (Women of Ireland) in 2017 and The Vote last year.

Highlights of this year's afternoon tea included the stories of two women from the local Irish community – Sr Eileen Mahoney and Catherine Martin – as well as interesting presentations, live music and lots of nominations to the shortlist of Significant Irish Women from Ireland and the diaspora over the past 100 years.

From all the nominations which poured in we've compiled a shortlist of 50 Significant Irish women and we want everyone to vote for their favourite.

Photo Left to right: Catherine Martin one of the women whose story was featured; Fiona Martin (no relation), Youth and Heritage Officer LIF and event coordinator; Noelette Hanley, Chief Officer LIF; Sr Antoinette & Sr Kathleen, representing the late Sr Eileen whose story was also featured; and Elleesa Rushby, Volunteer Assistant Organiser.



Cont'd on back page...



Irish Networks Stevenage & LIF Wednesday Club

We were delighted to welcome some 20+ Irish Network Stevenage members to our Wednesday Club at the end of January. Along with LIF members, they enjoyed chicken and chips as well as the usual bread and tea, bingo, a raffle and good company. The club went on later than normal which meant we were able to hear several gifted individuals who sung a variety of tunes for us – thank you!

Students put their skills to good use

Our student placements this year, Shahanza and Vittoria, are busy gaining work experience as part of our Welfare team. Both are currently in the second year of three-year degree courses in Social Work.

Working alongside experienced welfare service staff, the students have been involved in supporting clients to complete benefit applications, to bid for housing association accommodation, to appeal decisions on PIP and ESA and to collect information prior to appeal hearings.

But the pair took on overall responsibility for organising our Christmas Food Appeal on behalf of Luton Foodbank. Thanks to the generosity of LIF members and visitors, they collected a car load of food in just a week.

Following their visit to the Foodbank, Shahanza said “Learning about the desperate need locally has made me really appreciate that we have a secure roof over our head, heating, plenty of food and a warm bed.”

Vittoria added: “It was very rewarding to learn how the Foodbank system operates, how people can get help, and to know that the food collected is going to help people in real need.”



Shahanza (left) and Vittoria (right) with just some of the food kindly donated by LIF members and visitors.

Both are very positive about their time at Luton Irish Forum, although they admit they weren't quite sure what to expect.

Vittoria says: “The service provided here is far beyond what I expected, with welfare and social inclusion in our clubs. I thought it would be a case of just giving advice and people would go on their way, but it's much more supportive and holistic.”

“Both the mix of clients and the range of questions we get asked are much wider than I expected,” says Shahanza. “A challenging but also enjoyable aspect is having to adapt and respond to very different needs while maintaining the usual high standards here. Fortunately, everyone is friendly and approachable, so I don't ever feel hesitation in asking questions.”

We thank both students for their hard work and wish them all the very best in the future.

Luton ST PATRICK'S FESTIVAL

Afternoon Social
Tuesday 12th



12th - 17th March

Please see Festival flyers, posters, online and Luton St Patrick's Festival guide for full details including timings and venues.

Sean O'Riada Mass
Sunday 17th March

Dignitaries Reception
Sunday 17th March

Presentation of Shamrock
Sunday 17th March

Parade
Sunday 17th March



Cardinal Newman 50th Anniversary Concert
Wednesday 13th



The Mall Indoor Stage
Sunday 17th



Market Hill Outdoor Stage
Sunday 17th



Matthew O'Donnell



Rigs & Jeels

Turning Mammy:
Cliffoney Dramatic Society
Saturday 16th



MC: Gerry Byrne



The Kings of Connaught

MC: Jim Carway

**Join in the
St Patrick's
Festival fun!**

Be part of the Parade - or volunteer

Please get in touch if your community organisation, sports group, or similar would like to be part of the parade.

Also, we need volunteer stewards at the event along with help in setting up and clearing away after the finish.

*** Most events are free to attend, check listings for details! ***

Irish Women

Cont'd from front page...

Fiona Martin, Youth and Heritage Officer and event coordinator at Luton Irish Forum said: "You can see the shortlist on our facebook, website and in LIF centre and can vote via our Facebook page, email to me at fiona@lutonirishforum.org or in the Comments Box in LIF reception, until 4pm Wednesday 6th March. The Top 20 Significant Irish Women will be announced to mark International Women's Day on 8th March.

A huge Thank You to the calligraphy and art classes plus friends for the many hours spent creating the huge St Brigid's banner.



Left to right: Jim, Liz and Parveen.

Artist Liz got the ball rolling with a skilfully drawn outline image and Bill, calligraphy group leader, created the beautiful lettering while they and others filled in and worked on the fine detail.

The calligraphy group and art class both run on Fridays and are open to anyone. Expert advice and support is on hand to get you started and to keep you going.

You do not need to apply for 'Settled' or 'Pre-settled Status' to live and work in Britain if you're an Irish Citizen.
<http://www.citizensinformation.ie>

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Contact Ewa, Luton Irish Forum
ewa@lutonirishforum.org T. 01582 720 447

Diary dates

Events held at LIF unless specified.

8th & 22nd February, 8th March 2019,
10am-12 noon

St Patrick's Festival Planning Meetings

15th February & alternate Fridays
10.30-11.30am, Free

Music Workshop - All abilities welcome

19th February 2019, 4.00-6.00pm

Trustees Meeting

March 2019 - to be confirmed

Tuesday/Wednesday club members visit to Leamington Spa Irish Centre

12th-Sunday 17th March

Luton St Patrick's Festival

Various venues - see page 3 for programme highlights and full details on flyers, posters and online.

19th March 2019, 4.00-6.00pm

Trustees Meeting

16th April 2019, Tuesday, 1.30-2.30pm

General Meeting inc. Club Leaders/ Representatives

LUTON IRISH FORUM

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