



August-September 2022

LUTON IRISH FORUM

WELFARE, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

St Patrick's Festival film launched



The documentary 'Paint The Town Green' was launched to great acclaim on 10th August with two screenings in Luton Town Hall.

We were delighted to welcome Irish Ambassador to the UK Adrian O'Neill; Isobel O'Connor, Irish Community and Cultural Section; MP Rachel Hopkins; Luton Mayor Sameera Saleem and Cllr Hazel Simmons alongside film participants, LIF Members and friends.

Cultural Calendar that it is today. This year the Festival was listed in the "Top 20 Things To Do in Bedfordshire"!

Adrian O'Neill, at his last official engagement as Ambassador, said he had been privileged to see a wonderful film that reflects so many themes and different people. But, he added, it was about much more than just the Festival; it showed the strength of community, not just the Luton Irish but also the power of reaching out to other communities in Luton.

Paint The Town Green is about Luton St Patrick's Festival and some of the people who have made the event into the highlight of Luton's

Tom Scanlon Chair of Trustees, presented Adrian with a poem written out in beautiful calligraph script by Gill Grant, Trustee. *Cont'd on page 3...*



Photos clockwise from top left. MP Rachel Hopkins and Ambassador Adrian O'Neill. Film participants, audience members and families enjoying the film launch. Above: Director William Walsh in his new boater in front of LIF trustees and staff.

Welcome to friends old and new

Last issue we reported that two new Trustees were voted to the LIF Board, Dave Crean and Siobhan Rooney, and this issue we find out a little more about them and also Eamonn Cunniss in a new volunteer role of Diversity Champion and new staff, Cultural Officer Lisa Mannion.

Welcome to new LIF Trustee **Dave Crean MBE**. Dave is a familiar face to many of us through his role as a long-term volunteer at Luton St Patrick's Festival and other LIF events where he can be spotted helping in lots of ways, whether that's erecting and dismantling gazebos, moving equipment, or welcoming visitors. Dave also volunteers for other organisations in the town and is a paid Community Development worker with LBC.

Leaving his native Co Cork as a young man in the late 1980s, Dave came to England and settled in Luton where he soon became an intrinsic part of his local community.

On being appointed as a LIF Trustee, Dave says: "I am delighted to join a team of fantastic people. I will do my best for my community, and by 'community' I mean all the people of Luton, who have been so good to me."

We also welcome back another familiar face back to the board, **Siobhan Rooney**, who served as a Trustee for us from 2013 to 2020. Siobhan stepped down in 2020 when her fourth child, Chester was born, although she has continued providing her expertise as volunteer legal advisor to the Board since then.

Siobhan says: "I am a second-generation Irish girl from Luton, and a partner at Pictons Solicitors. Having already been a trustee, I have some understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing LIF. I am passionate about promoting Irish culture and community in Luton, and using my own and professional networks to advance the interests of the Luton Irish Forum."

Siobhan is especially keen to support our plans to get more second and third-generation Irish locals involved in Irish cultural activities. Siobhan has four boys and is keen to teach them as much as possible about their Irish heritage. Siobhan believes that the Forum is a fantastic place to go to meet other like minded second generation Irish people and connect their families through cultural events and the St Patrick's Day Parade.

Born and bred in "lovely Galway City", **Eamonn Cunniss** discovered Luton Irish Forum when he moved to Luton half a dozen years ago and didn't know anyone locally.

A short time later, he started dance classes in the Forum which quickly became very popular. As well as being a dance teacher, Eamonn also performs as a drag artiste, in the persona of Twirley Chassie, and has been a great success entertaining guests at several of our socials.

When Covid lockdowns struck and Eamonn wasn't able to continue teaching or performing at venues around and about, he decided to perform at home and live stream the performances as fundraisers for charity. The idea was a hit and Eamonn donated a hefty £900 each for both Luton Irish Forum and the Alzheimer's Society.

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Membership time!

Join the LIF Family and you can save money on LIF trips and events, and more! Starting from only £5 a year per person or £10 for a whole family living at one address, LIF Membership is terrific value.

But for only £10 per person is Extra Membership which, as well as the benefits of Standard Membership, also includes discounts at the following companies.

- Active Luton
- Considine Motors
- Gerry Taylor Irish Butcher & Grocer
- Old Skool Pantry
- Orbital Trampoline Park
- Pictons Solicitors

See separate Membership information, on our website and available in the Forum.

Welcome *...Cont'd from page 2.*

Eamonn explains why he's taken up the volunteer role as Diversity Champion with us: "LIF is a great community organisation and an outlet for everyone. It really helped me when I came to Luton, but not enough people know about us and this is a fantastic opportunity to offer my services.

"I share my ideas to help bring Irish culture to a wider range of people and to get members out and about more, so they're not sitting at home on their own."

Lisa Mannion, our new Cultural Officer, has a background in theatre and production and most recently worked for Arts In Action at Galway University where she organised events and ran a mentor programme. She has also been a Curator with the Town Hall Theatre in Galway as part of their Young Curators Programme for the past two years.

Lisa moved to Luton in May 2022 to develop her career and says: "I'm really enjoying it at LIF. Everyone is so lovely and made me feel welcome."

One of her priorities is in the organising of Luton St Patrick's Festival 2023 where she will be using her contacts as part of the local youth network to get younger generations of Irish people involved in both planning and attending Festival events.

"If you're a promising young Irish act that wants to perform locally – or you want to help create events and attractions for a younger following, please get in touch, I want to hear from you," says Lisa.

Paint the town

...Cont'd from page 1

Tom also presented the film's Director William Walsh with a special straw boater, in memory of Luton's history as a leading hat-making town.



Keen interest from audience members at the launch and an image from the opening sequence of the film Paint The Town Green.



Left to right, top to bottom: New Trustees Siobhan Rooney and Dave Crean MBE, Diversity Champion Eamonn Cunniss and Cultural Officer Lisa Mannion.

One of her first successes was the recent launch screenings of the Paint The Town Green film. Currently Lisa is busy finalising arrangements for the music and dance performances in Wardown Park's Bandstand on 17th September and also planning additional cultural events.

Welcome to you one and all! I'm sure our members will introduce themselves when you pop into the clubs or they spot you in the forum and at events.

Noelette Hanley, CEO of LIF, added: "Our hope is that Paint The Town Green will inspire our next generations to carry on its legacy, whether it is walking behind their county flag, dancing a jig in the Mall or performing on Market Hill Stage! And while they're doing that, they will share the same sense of pride in their Irishness that we feel on our favourite day of the year."

Huge thanks go to the Irish Government, Heritage Lottery fund and Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation whose funding made the film possible.

More screenings of Paint The Town Green will be held in LIF on 22nd September, See Diary on page 4.

Diary

This programme may be subject to change. Please refer to our What's On for activities run by external organisations. Events take place in the Forum unless stated. Suggested donation for attending LIF social groups is £1-2 per session, including refreshments.

Events

Tea Dance in Hammersmith

Thursday 15th September

Depart LIF 11:30am, Tea Dance 1:30-4:30pm

Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith, W6 9DT

Cost to be advised, including coach, entrance and refreshments. Register interest with LIF Reception.

Music & Irish Dancing Showcase

Saturday 17th September Afternoon, time TBC

Bandstand, Wardown Park, Luton, LU3 1LH

Free. No booking required.

Paint The Town Green film

Thursday 22nd September 10:30am & 7:00pm

Book with LIF Reception for daytime screening, and via Eventbrite for evening show.

Autumn Social

Wednesday 5th October 12:00-3:00pm

Celtic Club, Cobham Street, Luton, LU1 3BS

£5 LIF Members, £6 Non-members

Advance bookings only, via LIF

Tea Dance in Hammersmith

Thursday 20th October

Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith, W6 9DT

Cost to be advised, including coach, entrance and refreshments. Register interest with LIF Reception.

Fairytale of New York

Monday 21st November 7:30pm

The Grove Theatre, Dunstable, LU5 4GP

LIF Members discount at £23.50 + free programme (worth £5!). Expressions of Interest to LIF Reception

Christmas Shopping in MK

Thursday 24th November

Depart LIF 9:30am, depart Milton Keynes 5:30pm

Cost to be advised.

Expressions of interest to LIF Reception.

Ashridge House Illuminations

Sunday 4th December, Depart LIF 3:30pm t.b.c

Ashridge House, Berkhamsted, HP4 1NS

Cost to be advised, includes coach and entrance to illuminations and festive food & drinks market.

Expressions of interest to LIF Reception.

Christmas Social

Wednesday 8th December, 12:00-4:00pm

Celtic Club, Cobham Street, Luton, LU1 3BS

LIF Members £6.00, non Members £8.00.

Advance booking via LIF essential.

Clubs & Activities

Wednesday 14th September 2:00-3:00pm

Clubs Volunteers Meeting

**** All Clubs Volunteers - please attend! ****

Tuesdays 10:00am-2:00pm

Art Class by Zoom

Tuesdays 11:00am-1:00pm

Tuesday Club inc bingo

Tuesdays 7:00-8:00pm (term time only)

Irish Language Chat via Zoom

Wednesdays 11:00am-12:45pm

Wednesday Club including bingo

Wednesdays 1:00-2:00pm

Gentle Exercise

Wednesdays 7:00-8:00pm/8:00-9:00pm (term time)

Trad Irish Music Classes - Beginners/Intermediate

£7.50 per session, bookable in term blocks

Thursdays 10:00-11:30am

Tea and Chat including occasional speakers

Fridays 09:30-11:30am (term time only)

Baby and Toddler Group

Fridays 12:00-2:00pm (10am-2pm in August)

Art Class

Fridays 2:30-4:30pm (last Friday of month)

Calligraphy Class by Zoom

Saturdays 10:00am-11:00am (term time)

Irish Dancing Classes - Beginners from 3 years old

First lesson free! Details from Finbarr 07930 563258

Sundays 11:00am-1:00pm

Pipe Band Practice



LUTON IRISH FORUM

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