

Newsletter

Irish South African Association - Gauteng Chapter
Issue 2 | September 2021



Well hello there!

Welcome to the second edition of the revamped Irish South African Association (ISAA)– Gauteng Chapter newsletter.

Put together by the wonderful ISAA-Gauteng committee, our newsletter serves to keep you connected to all things Irish happening in Gauteng and beyond.

A lot has happened since our first edition in June. Many of us are still reeling from the civil unrest and the devastation of the COVID-19 3rd wave. The Irish community lost a dear friend, historian and author Michael Connolly, and we include a tribute to him in this edition.

However, as the saying goes - the darkest hour is just before dawn, and we are definitely starting to see some rays of light emerging. It's getting warmer, COVID restrictions are gradually lifting and ISAA–Gauteng has a busy events itinerary planned from now until November!

So read on friends; stay curious, stay connected and we look forward to seeing you in person at an upcoming event!

Beir bua agus beannacht,

The committee

ISAA-Gauteng Chapter



Embassy Update

H.E. Fionnuala Gilsenan, Irish Ambassador to South Africa

A chairde Gael agus cairde na hÉireann,

I'm delighted to introduce our new team at the Embassy and bid farewell to colleagues who moved to pastures new. Tim Reilly is our new Deputy Head of Mission and replaces Paula Molloy, who has moved with her husband Dáire to our Embassy in Madrid. Vicky Dillon replaces Paula Nolan, who has moved to Maputo. Tim and Vicky are here with their daughters Eleanor, aged 5, and Marianne, almost aged 2. At the end of the month, we look forward to welcoming Louisa Heneghan's replacement, Paul Deane, his wife Julianne Ahern and their newborn, Míoda. Louisa returned to Headquarters on promotion in August. We wish them all well in their new positions.

South Africa was removed from Ireland's list of designated states on 28 August, which enabled travel to open up for vaccinated travellers. See the Irish government's latest [travel advice](#) for more information. It has been a tough time for many in the Irish community who have not been able to visit family and friends over the last 18 months. The vaccination programme in South Africa has gathered considerable pace and the Embassy encourages everyone in the community to vaccinate. It reduces your risk of severe illness and death and contributes to recovery efforts in South Africa, especially in the tourism industry, which needs some positive news.

I am looking forward to in-person gatherings in the coming months. Though we need to remain vigilant, we should take advantage of outdoor gatherings and events in well-ventilated spaces in a bid to return to a form of normality.



I attended the Kader Asmal Human Rights Lecture on 14 September given by Professor Salim Abdool Karim on the impact of the Coronavirus on human rights and equity. The lecture was live-streamed on [CASAC - YouTube](#) and is available for viewing.

The Embassy celebrates Kader Asmal's legacy and contribution to Ireland and South Africa annually through supporting this lecture and by sending graduate students to Ireland under the Kader Asmal Fellowship Programme. On Saturday, 11 September, the Kader Asmal Alumni Association, in cooperation with the Embassy, bid farewell to this year's fellows.

The [European Film Festival in South Africa](#) is gearing up for its 8th edition from 14 to 24 October. Following the success of last year's virtual festival, the 2021 edition will also take place predominantly online. This year's Irish film, [The Bright Side](#), will feature as part of 18 European films exploring themes linked to healing and revival. I encourage you all to catch the film during the festival. All films will be available free of charge.

I'm pleased to announce that RTE will air the Irish missionaries in South Africa documentary *Poverty Chastity and (dis)Obedience* on September 30 at 11.20 on RTE 1. I'm sure that friends and family in Ireland will enjoy the opportunity to see it, so please spread the word.

We are working on a number of cultural initiatives for later this year and early 2022. I look forward to telling you more about these in my next letter. In the meantime, stay safe and I hope to see some of you at events over the coming months. Please stay in touch via our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.



Upcoming ISAA – Gauteng events at a glance...

19 September 2021 Annual Mick Kenealy Cup
Irish Family Bowls Day
Pirates Bowls Club, Johannesburg

October 2021 Annual Quiz Night
Date tbc Dunkeld Bowls Club, Johannesburg

31 October 2021 Halloween Family Cycle
& Tuk-Tuk Tour of Soweto
Lebo's Soweto backpackers

18 November 2021 ISAA–Gauteng AGM
Parkview Golf Club, Johannesburg



ANNUAL MICK KENEALY CUP

IRISH FAMILY BOWLS DAY



**Sunday
19th September**

REGISTRATION

10am

FORMAT

3 players per Team (Trips)

KIDS FUN ACTIVITIES

Face Painting, Swing Ball,
Soccer, Cricket, Water Balloons

Pirates Bowls Club, Greenside, Randburg



COST

R150 P/P - INCL GREEN FEES, BOWLS HIRE & LUNCH

NON PLAYERS R80 P/P - INCL LUNCH & KIDS ACTIVITIES

Contact Breda to book and register your teams in advance

 082 588 5432

 bkenealy@mweb.co.za

 www.ireland.co.za



*To celebrate Halloween,
ISAA-Gauteng invites you to our*

Family Cycle and Tuk-Tuk Tour of Soweto

31 October 2021

Arrival time: 10:00

Our team will welcome you to **Lebo's Soweto** and give you an overview of the day.

Soweto Tour: 10.15 - 12.30

Get ready as we get on bikes or Tuk-Tuks to explore Soweto! Our guides will take you around the various communities and famous historical sites.

We start by reaching the top of 'Leboland'. Surrounded by the community garden's pumpkin fields and the greenery of our campsite, you will view Soweto at a 360-degree angle. The guides will introduce you to both our history and what we are doing today to take our community forward.

The guides will then take you through **Mzhimhlope hostel** – known for housing mineworkers during the gold rush years; **Meadowlands** – formed after the forced removals from Sophiatown in the 1950's; **Orlando West** – home to many of our political leaders and icons. We will then visit the **Hector Pieterse Memorial** - commemorating the Students Uprisings on June 16, 1976 and we will cycle/drive down **Vilakazi Street** – the only street in the world that is home to two Nobel Peace Prize winners.

On return to Lebo's Soweto, we gather in our African Kraal for a traditional drink ceremony. Our guides will take you through some of our African customs and traditions and everyone is offered a taste of our home brewed sorghum beer *Umqhombothi* as well as our traditional (non-alcoholic) Maize drink *Mageu*.

Lunch: 13:00:

We will introduce you to our Potjiekos buffet where you will all be served a delicious lunch; we cater for special dietary requirements but please order beforehand! Drinks can be purchased from our cash bar.

Community immersion: After lunch

Bring some sports equipment (soccer balls etc.) and play some sports with the children out in our community park. As it is a Halloween Tour please feel free to bring some sweets and goodies for some trick or treating! There is also an option to donate and plant seeds in our vegetable garden together with the women involved in this project.

Tickets:

Adults: R450 (regular price R695)

Children under 12: Half price

Children up to 4: Free of charge

**To book your place, contact Breda Kenealy on
082 588 5432 or bkenealy@mweb.co.za**



Did you know...

The ancient Irish origins of Halloween

Halloween's origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago in the area that is now Ireland, celebrated their New Year on November 1.

This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with death. Celts believed that on 31 October, the night before the New Year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred and the ghosts of the dead returned to earth.

On this night, they celebrated Samhain.

In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts believed that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an important source of comfort and direction during the long, dark winter.

To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn crops and animals as sacrifices to the Celtic deities. During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins, and attempted to tell each other's fortunes.

When the celebration was over, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening, from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter.

During the eighth century, the Catholic Church designated the first day of November as 'All Saints Day' ('All Hallows') - a day of commemoration for those Saints that did not have a specific day of remembrance. The night before was known as 'All Hallows Eve' which, over time, became known as Halloween.



Here are the most notable Irish Halloween Traditions:

Colcannon for Dinner: Boiled potato, curly kale (a cabbage) and raw onions are provided as the traditional Irish Halloween dinner. Clean coins are wrapped in baking paper and placed in the potato for children to find and keep.

Barmbrack: The traditional Halloween cake in Ireland is barmbrack which is a fruit bread. Each member of the family gets a slice. Great interest is taken in the outcome as there is a ring in each cake. Getting the ring is a sure sign of impending romance or continued happiness.

The Pumpkin: Carving Pumpkins dates back to the eighteenth century and to an Irish blacksmith named Jack who colluded with the Devil and was denied entry to Heaven. He was condemned to wander the earth but asked the Devil for some light. He was given a burning coal ember which he placed inside a turnip that he had gouged out.

The tradition of Jack O'Lanterns was born: the bearer being the wandering blacksmith - a damned soul. Villagers in Ireland hoped that the lantern in their window would keep the wanderer away. When the Irish emigrated in millions to America, there was not a great supply of turnips so pumpkins were used instead.

Halloween Costumes: On Halloween night children would dress up in scary costumes and go house to house. 'Help the Halloween Party' and 'Trick or Treat' were the cries to be heard at each door. This tradition of wearing costumes also dates back to Celtic times. On the special night when the living and the dead were at their closest, the Celtic Druids would dress up in elaborate costumes to disguise themselves as spirits and devils in case they encountered other devils and spirits during the night. By disguising, they hoped that they would be able to avoid being carried away at the end of the night. This explains why witches, goblins and ghosts remain the most popular choices for the costumes.

Bobbing for apples: After the visits to the neighbours, the Halloween games begin, the most popular of which is Bobbing for Apples. An apple is suspended from a string and children are blindfolded. The first child to get a decent bite of the apple gets to keep the prize. The same game can be played by placing apples in a basin of water and trying to get a bite out of an apple without too much mess!

The Bonfire: Halloween was one of the Celtic 'fire' celebrations.

Kevin McEvoy

**Wishing you a Happy Halloween
on 31 October from the ISAA-Gauteng
Committee!**



GAA Update



With the SA Gaels

It's that time of year again, one of the highlights of the Irish Calendar rolls around, the All-Ireland GAA Finals!

In the Men's hurling final Cork were no match for a rampant Limerick side who ran out 3-32 to 1-22. It was then the turn of the ladies footballers with Meath ladies pulling off a famous victory over Dublin ladies by 2 points with a score of 1-11 to 12 points.

In the Men's football final Tyrone overcame a good Mayo start to prevail 2-14 to 15 points and finally it was the turn of the Camogie final where the Galway ladies overcame the Cork ladies winning 1-15 to 1-12. Not a good year for Cork!

The Irish community were out in force to watch some of the games at the Milk Bar at Sandton Sports club in Parkmore. The club has welcomed the Irish community with open arms every time we have an event even going so far as to get Guinness on tap! The SA Gaels facilitate screening of these games and we are delighted when we get a big turn out as we did for the football

Yours in sport,
SA Gaels



A Tribute to Michael Connolly

Our dear friend Michael Connolly passed away on 15 July 2021.
Michael touched the lives of many and will be sadly missed.

Michael Connolly was born in Dublin in 1936 and lived at 62 Shelmartin Avenue, Fairview as a child and young man, and subsequently at 49 Sutton Grove, Bayside, Dublin.

He was educated at St. Joseph's, CBS Marino and at the College of Technology, Bolton Street, Dublin.

He initially worked in a variety of sales positions with assorted office equipment companies in Ireland. Eventually he joined Penguin Books and operated as their Irish representative for many years.

Michael emigrated from Ireland to South Africa in the mid 80's and set up his own sales company supplying equipment to the Printing and Manufacturing Industries throughout Africa.

He was the father of two sons, Michael and Seán; one living in the Cape with his wife and one daughter; and the other living in Ireland with his wife and three daughters.

Always interested in writing as a hobby, Michael was Chairman of Writers 2000 for a number of years, an association of authors based in Johannesburg. He had also been a regular contributor to a number of magazines; mostly short stories and humorous pieces.

Michael was actively involved with the Irish South African Association and gave talks on the Easter Rising and Irish history to the three chapters in South Africa.

He hailed from a long line of rebels and was an invited guest to the 2016 Centenary Celebrations in Ireland because of the Connolly family's active involvement in the 1916 Easter Rising.

Although he was born long after the 1916 events and the "troubles", he spent a lot of time with the surviving aunts and uncles and thus became privy to a lot of stories and anecdotes.

His youngest uncle Mattie bequeathed him his handwritten journals and wanted the stories to be told; it thus formed the basis of "*A Nest of Irish Rebels*" which was published in 2017.

His other hobbies consisted of reading, mostly non-fiction, art, painting watercolors, esoteric studies and travelling.

Michael travelled extensively in Europe, North America and the Middle East.

His other interests included music, art, literature, architecture, sailing and walking.

Following quadruple bypass surgery a few years ago, he decided to road test his re-conditioned heart by undertaking and successfully walking a portion of the Camino de Compostela in Spain.

In his position as patriarch of the Connolly Clan, he did his best to keep the far-flung younger members in touch with each other across 3 continents.

His sudden passing from covid-19 on 15 July 2021 left his family, friends and associates bereft of this much loved chef, drinks pourer, story-teller and all-round advisor on matters that he claimed an octogenarian would know best!



Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis

A Tribute to Michael Connolly

We asked some ISAA-Gauteng committee members - past and present - to share their memories of Michael:

Michael was always dressed in a suit and cravat. Very dapper indeed. He really came into his own during our celebration of the 1916 Centenary in 2016. He entertained us royally with his knowledge of the events and the characters, some of whom were his family and are well documented in his book *A Nest of Irish Rebels*.

- **Lorraine Keenan**

Michael was an authority Irish history, especially the 1916 Rising. One of my fondest memories of Michael is "he could talk for Ireland". Very quick witted and did not suffer fools. His sudden death was a blow and he will be sorely missed by the Irish society.

- **Breda Kenealy**

I found Michael to be a friendly face in the crowd, an engaging person who always saw the glass half full.

- **John Murphy**

Michael arrived in South Africa in his 70th year and soon afterwards met his sweetheart Shireen at the Linder Auditorium, They became inseparable and had mutual cultural interests. Michael told Shireen that he could promise her 15 years of companionship and he fulfilled his promised albeit 3 weeks shorts of his 85th birthday!

Michael made an indelible mark on the Irish community; he was a true gentleman and was loved by all of us in the ISAA.

- **Claire Sullivan**

Michael was absolutely fantastic company, full of wit and dry humour. He was a real Dub and chatting to him reassuringly felt like being back at home. His cheeky smile would light up any room. Michael was an absolute legend in Park Run circles, I remember the day he completed his 100th run, my husband Johnny and I went out to cheer him on, getting up at the *ungodly* hour of 8am on this particular Saturday morning - it was pre-kids - unfortunately we went to the wrong venue and missed witnessing his incredible achievement!!

Michael was a wealth of knowledge on Irish history and had us absolutely enthralled each time we met - he was an incredibly entertaining guest at our *Masi Jabuleni* Bloomsday virtual event in June 2020.

Michael you were an absolute gent. Rest in peace dear friend.

- **Helen Greene**



Irish Dance Update

Sue Theron, Chairman, Irish Dance (South Africa)

The annual South African Irish Dancing Championships will take place from the 1st to 3rd of October 2021 at Redwood College in La Lucia, Kwa-Zulu Natal. The South African Irish Dancing fraternity has certainly not been exempt from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns which followed in 2020, which meant that SA Irish Championships and almost every other Irish Dancing competition was unable to take place last year.

However, 2021 has thankfully seen a number of small, strictly managed competitions take place (from a Covid-19 perspective) and dancers are now working hard in anticipation of the premier event of the Irish Dancing calendar – the SA Irish Championships, showcasing the very best dancers and dancing standard in South Africa.

Highly experienced and accredited adjudicators from the United States of America have been invited to judge the dancing which ranges from beginners to advanced.

Dancers participating in the South Africa's Croabh Comortas & World Qualifiers will have an opportunity to qualify for the 50th World Championships being held in Belfast in April 2022.

Irish Dancing in South Africa is a true celebration of Irish culture and this is a great opportunity for Irish companies to sponsor either prize money or money to run this competition.

Please contact the Irish Dancing Association of South Africa should you be able to assist with any sponsorships for the event. Contact Sue Theron on +27 82 903 9785 or email sueirish@mweb.co.za

A promotional poster for the South African Irish Dancing Championships. The background is a dark, low-angle shot of a dancer's legs in white socks and black dance shoes. The text is centered and reads: "SOUTH AFRICAN IRISH DANCING CHAMPIONSHIPS" in white, "OIREACHTAS RINCE" in large yellow letters, and "aFRaic tHeas" in yellow. Below this is a diamond-shaped logo with the South African flag and the words "SOUTH AFRICA". At the bottom, it says "1 - 3 OCTOBER 2021" and "REDWOOD COLLEGE, LA LUCIA, KWA-ZULU NATAL". A footer bar contains the text "Follow us on Facebook and Instagram #SAIrishChamps2021" flanked by two circular icons.

The culture round up with Claire...

In this edition we feature Cannon House B&B in Simon's Town

I'm Barbara Bullock, born and bred in Co. Dublin and delighted to have this opportunity to chat a little about what I'm up to in this extraordinary country I've been in for so many years! How did I end up here? Well...while living in London all those moons ago I met this dishy South African who wooed, won me.....and my fate was sealed!

After a couple of decades in Joburg we moved to the Cape, ensconcing ourselves in the fascinating, charming and ever so quaint coastal Victorian village of Simon's Town. Keeping in touch with my Irish roots and getting back to Ireland as often as i can has become a very expensive exercise so to make this possible I quickly got my act together and started a wee Bed and Breakfast business, Cannon House, named after the genuine historic cannon which graces the entrance and where I offer truly lovely SEA FACING en suite accommodation with fabulous uninterrupted sea views overlooking the harbour, False Bay and majestic surrounding mountains on the basis of Bed and Breakfast or Accommodation Only - at very reasonable rates. That's it in a nutshell, come and see for yourself.... I promise you won't be disappointed!

www.cannonhouse.co.za



An interview with Bridget Mc Nulty, author of *The Grief Handbook*,

Hi Bridget! Congratulations on your book, The Grief Handbook. Can you tell us a little about how it all came about?

When my mom died very suddenly in 2019, I looked for a book to help me through my grief. I'm a writer and a reader, and books have always helped me through difficult times... I read everything I could find, but it was either too densely philosophical, or too religious - neither of which I wanted. I just wanted something kind and empathetic to guide me through the hardest days. Something that gave me a space to vent, and to process my feelings, and some guidance on how to do that. I couldn't find it, so I wrote it: *The Grief Handbook: A guide through the worst days of your life*.



It's available on Takealot and in independent bookstores, and will soon be sold in Exclusive Books and Bargain Books. It costs R190, and R10 from every copy sold on Takealot goes to HPCA (the Hospices Association of South Africa) because they were such a help when my mom was dying. There's a full list of stockists on www.griefhandbook.com.

Could this book be useful for those not necessarily suffering from bereavement, but from grief in other ways?

I've had readers say it helped them through other experiences of loss, from miscarriage to divorce, but the focus is quite strongly on losing a loved one. I think many of the activities could be useful for anyone living through loss.

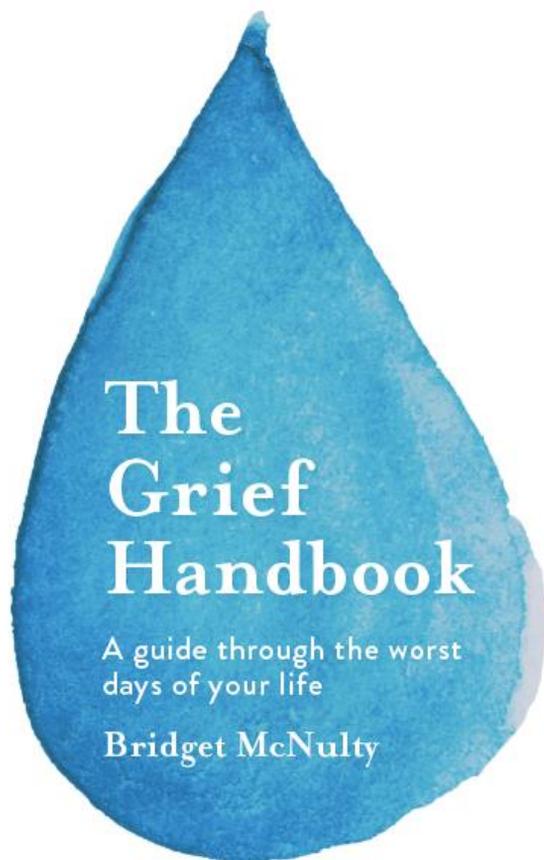
Are there any plans for a sequel?

Yes! The Loss Handbook. We all live through so many different kinds of loss - divorce and miscarriage, as I mentioned, but also retrenchment, losing a pet, emigration... This would be a guide through the hardest experiences of life. Similarly warm and empathetic, and interactive.

Tell us a little bit more about yourself Bridget..

I'm a writer, content strategist and co-founder of Sweet Life Diabetes Community (www.sweetlife.org.za), South Africa's largest online diabetes community. I'm also the mom of two lovely kids - my son is 7 and my daughter is 5. We live in Cape Town, near the sea, and I love gardening and reading and long walks and drinking tea.

My dad, Raymond McNulty, is the president of the Durban Irish Society and the best grandpa on earth! He tells my kids stories about growing up in Killalla, County Mayo on a farm, and all about Johnny McGory, the resident leprechaun. He still has an Irish accent, after living in South Africa longer than he ever lived in Ireland, and has brought so much Irish charm and tradition into our lives. Soda bread is a daily staple in our home!



Find out more:

WWW.GRIEFHANDBOOK.COM

Contact Bridget:

hello@bridgetmcnulty.com

[IG: @emsbridgetmcnulty](https://www.instagram.com/emsbridgetmcnulty)

[FB / LI : Bridget McNulty](https://www.facebook.com/bridgetmcnulty)

[Tw: @bridgetmcnulty](https://twitter.com/bridgetmcnulty)

Irish Language Zoom Classes

Learn a *cupla focail* in the comfort of your own home.
Free of charge, everyone welcome!

Classes are on Wednesday evenings;
please contact Louisa Mostert for more information:
louiemostert@gmail.com

A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a gravel road that curves to the left. To the right of the road is a field of tall green grass. In the middle ground, a few sheep are grazing. In the background, there are rolling green hills under a cloudy sky.

You had me at *Día dhúit!*



5 Tips to Reduce Stress When Buying a House

KEZA RYAN

Purchasing a house is a complicated process involving strong emotions – it's a home, after all – and what may be the biggest financial investment of your life.

Know What You Want

A real estate agent can't read your mind, and if you don't know what you want, you're going to spend a lot of time looking at houses that just don't match your needs.

Be Flexible

If you have a detailed checklist of exactly what you want in your perfect house, know now that there simply is no such thing as a perfect house – unless you have the money to design and construct one from the ground up.

Get Pre-Approved for a Mortgage Loan

It's always advantageous to get pre-approved for a mortgage before bidding on houses. If you were to fall in love with a property only to learn you're ineligible for financing, it could leave you with a pretty sour feeling.

Listen to Your Real Estate Agent

A real estate agent knows a lot more than you in the process of buying a property. You chose this person to help you find a house, thus it only makes sense that you listen to the advice you're given.

Save Enough Cash

This is by far one of the most expensive transactions you're ever going to make, so be sure you understand the cost of buying a house before taking the leap.

Final Word

Yes, you can expect a measure of anxiety when buying a house, but don't lose sight of the fact that this is supposed to be an exciting time – not an occasion to lose sleep and have panic attacks.

Keza Ryan

Source: Money Crashers

For all your real estate needs, rentals & sales, contact Keza Ryan on 078 575 3267

Before we go...

A huge GO RAIBH MILE MAITH AGAIBH to everyone who contributed to this edition of our newsletter!

We would love your feedback! If you would like to tell us what you think, or input into our next edition, please reach out to us on: members.jhb@Ireland.co.za . We'd love to hear from you!

Want to get involved & join the ISAA-Gauteng committee? Our AGM is coming up on 18 November, where we will elect our new committee. Can't wait till then?! Send us a mail and get involved today!

*There are only two kinds of people in the world,
The Irish, and those who wish they were.*

