

IRISH POST AWARDS



FAMILY TRADITION: Niamh Cusack, above, receives her Irish Post Award from Ambassador Andrew O'Rourke. Her father, Cyril Cusack, and her sister, Sinead, previously received Irish Post Awards.



SERIOUS BUSINESS: Novelist Jerry O'Neill speaking, above, after being presented with his award.



CONGRATULATIONS: Sculptor John Gibbons, above on left, receives his award from Ambassador Andrew O'Rourke.



WARM SMILES: Belinda and Jane O'Duffy, above, were enjoying the evening. They are married to Michael O'Duffy's sons, respectively, Paul and Rowan.



ENJOYING THEMSELVES: Helen Larkin, on left, and Winifred Murphy after they had received their Irish Post Awards at a gala occasion in the Royal Garden Hotel in London's Kensington.

AS ALWAYS, the annual Irish Post Awards presentation dinner proved to be a gala occasion. The venue was the Royal Garden Hotel in London's Kensington and the awards were presented by the new Irish Ambassador, Andrew O'Rourke.

It was the eleventh such occasion and as always too there were ten awards to salute

personal achievements and community service by Irish people and organisations in Britain. Down the years, the awards have been availed of to display excellence in Irish art. Many of Ireland's leading artists and craftsmen had produced the awards, which have been in bronze, stone, glass, silver and stoneware.

This year's awards are most unusual in that they are in bog oak and bog deal — wood at least 10,000 years old, pre-Ice Age and, of course, pre-human settlement in Ireland. They are the work of American-born sculptor Wayne Harlow, who for many years has lived near Westport, Co. Mayo, and who is married to an O'Malley. His work has latterly attracted much attention in Ireland and abroad.

The awards are not sculptures. Wayne Harlow seeks out interesting pieces of bog oak or bog deal. The wood itself dictates the final shape — the artist simply allowing what is within to emerge. Each award is unique.

The award recipients were:

● Actress **Niamh Cusack**, who in four years has moved from being a distinguished flautist to become a leading actress with the Royal Shakespeare Company playing Desdemona to Ben Kingsley's Othello and, more recently, Juliet in Michael Bogdanov's innovative Romeo and Juliet.

● Irish dancing teacher **Ted Kavanagh**, who gracefully bowed out just before Christmas having for a quarter of a century run one of the most successful schools in the history of Irish dance. It won the senior figure dancing championship of Britain on 21 consecutive years, in addition to all-Ireland and world titles.

● Playwright, actor and award-winning short-story and screen writer **Shane Connaughton**, who is also the founder of The Irish Company, which specialises in putting on plays dealing with the Irish in Britain.

● **The Irish in Britain History Group**, which, within a matter of two years, has managed to establish in London a splendid archive dealing with the history of the Irish in Britain — in addition to publishing a most valuable bibliography of the Irish in Britain.

● **Michael O'Duffy**, who, for about 40 years, has been one of the finest singers of Irish songs and who brought those songs to all corners of the world. He even had an LP issued in Japan.

● **Winifred Murphy**, who single-handedly restored the graves of Katharine Parnell (Kitty O'Shea) in Littlehampton, Anna Parnell in Ilfracombe, and baby Sophie O'Shea (of whom Parnell was the father) in Chislehurst. Thanks to Mrs. Murphy, those neglected graves are now fitted to survive another century.

● **John Gibbons**, the London-based, Co. Clare-born sculptor who, at the age of 37, has already acquired a considerable international reputation. He currently has a one-man exhibition in Cologne.

● Photographer **John Minihan**, whose photographic studies of Samuel Beckett toured the world last year — being exhibited at universities and in galleries which marked the Irish literary giant's 80th birthday.

● **Helen Larkin**, who, despite being confined to a wheelchair, raised in the region of £100,000 to provide the city of Manchester with its first cancer laser unit, as well as ancillary equipment. The unit has been installed in the city's Royal Infirmary.

● **Jerry O'Neill**, who, during the past year, produced two highly acclaimed novels, *Open Cut* and *Duffy is Dead* — both published in London by William Heinemann Ltd. His third novel is en route from the same publisher.

Our photographers were **BRENDAN FARRELL**, **MEL** and **MALCOLM McNALLY**.



O'DUFFY CLAN: Singer Michael O'Duffy, above, centre, photographed with his sons, from left, Alan, Cormac, Rowan and Paul.

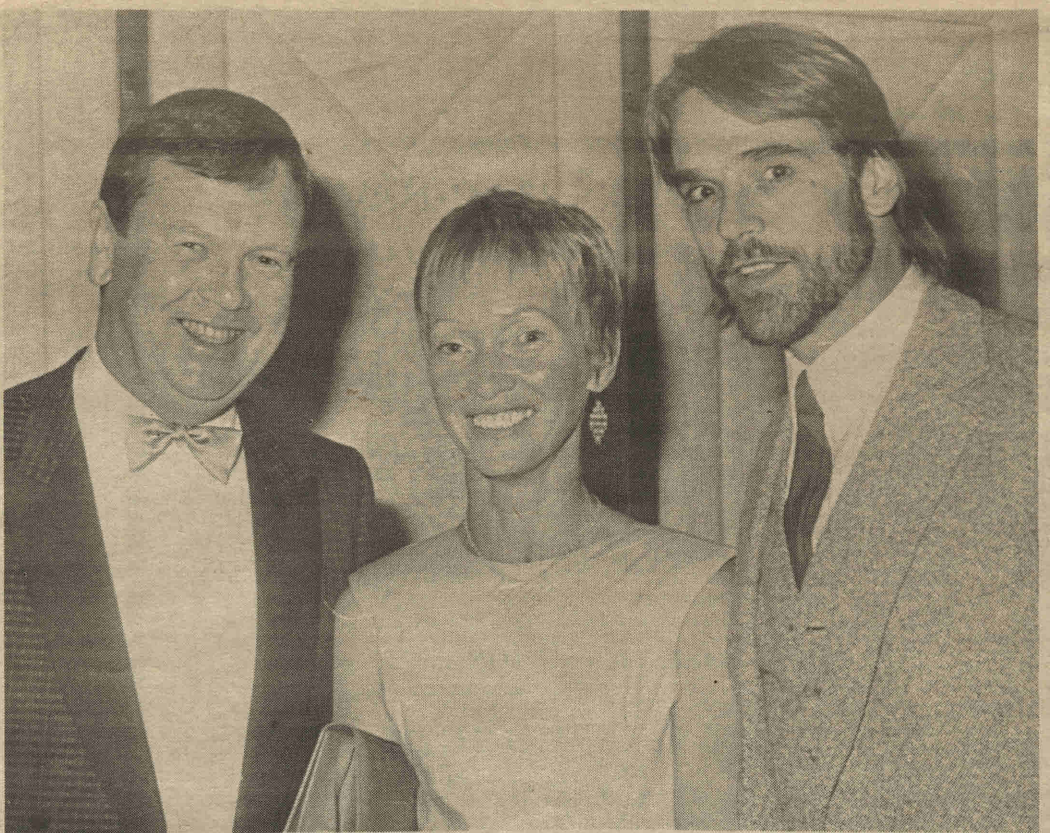
DANCE AWARD: Ted Kavanagh, below centre, with Una and Anna Toland, and Michael Wall.



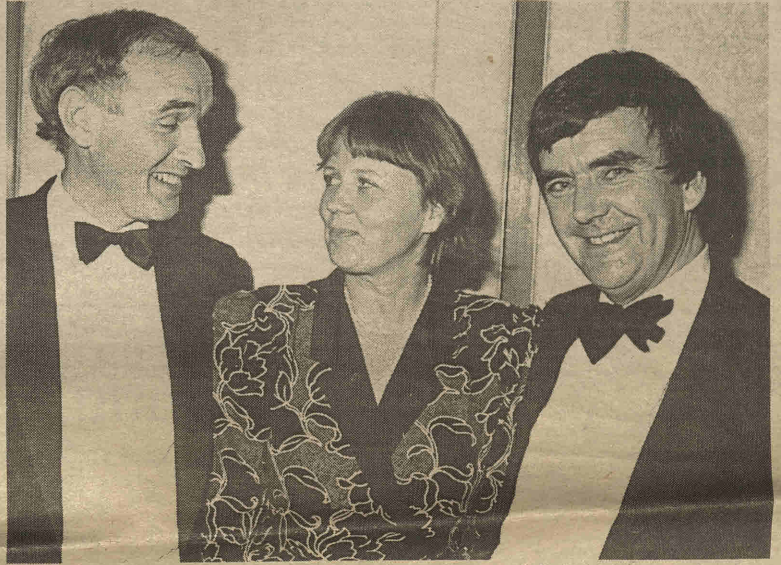


IN SUPPORT: Sisters Grainne O'Neill and Orla Roberts, above, were both present to see their dad, Jerry O'Neill, receive his Irish Post Award.

TRIO: Peter and Liz Webster were in conversation, right, with film actor Jeremy Irons, who is, of course, the husband of Sinéad Cusack.



WELL DESERVED: Photographer John Minihan, above, after receiving his award. With him are his wife, Sonia, on right and her sister, Seda Avanes.

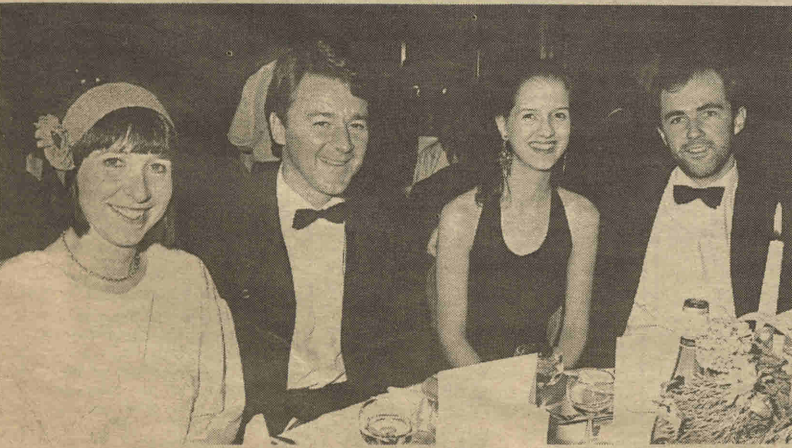


CAVAN IN STRENGTH: Shane Connaughton, above on left, being congratulated by Lisa and Eddie McElhinny, after he received his award. Shane and Eddie are both from Redhills, Co. Cavan. Lisa was born in Finland.



HISTORY FOLK: The Irish in Britain History Group was represented by, above from left, Cass Breen, Mary Hickman, Kerry Hamilton and Maureen Hartigan. With them is the Irish Ambassador, Andrew O'Rourke.

ANN ON HER OWN: Ann Connaughton, below, accompanied her husband, Shane, to the awards evening. He was one of the ten recipients.



RELAXING: Enjoying the evening were, above, Margaret Martin and Paul Cusack of RTE, Paul's sister, Catherine, and Lorcan Cranitch.

IN CONVERSATION: Sporting legend Ronnie Delany, on left in picture right, and singer Brendan O'Dowda, on right, were conversing with Ambassador O'Rourke and his wife, Hanne, who was born in Denmark.

