

"It's a really famous book of literature from one of the first monasteries," he says.

"I like to find symbols and artifacts that I can incorporate into rings and pendants."

Bellchamber's knotwork includes symbols that he says are visible in patterns in art and music — sets of threes, for example.

"The number three means good luck, and a spiral design may repeat every three steps," he says. "The spiral design was historically inspired by iron — the iron age, and waves and patterns that were symmetrical."

He added that wings, hearts, hands and the resulting Claddagh — are all symbols of good luck — something we all want to see on a ring, especially a wedding ring.

Nature, he adds, is another inspiration, and animals are popular graphics in history for varying reasons. The Irish wolfhound, for instance, dates back thousands of years. The large animals are known for loyalty, strength and intelligence, and they have a presence in some of his designs.

Some birds, he says, mate for life, and they offer obvious choices as graphic elements

in design, but Bellchamber is fascinated for another reason. "Birds often appear together," he says. "When you see one, you'll see the other. One acts as the eyes, and the other the ears."

Nature's trees and branches are another cultural image that has spanned generations and artwork.

"In Canada, it's the maple leaf while in the U.S. and England the oak tree is more familiar. In China, it's a plum tree and Japan, cherry blossoms."

He works bird motifs, wings, trees and abstract patterns into his Celtic designs and they are something to behold. It's a craft he's been perfecting as a goldsmith since 1990. He started as a hobbyist in wax carvings and silver. He took his art up a notch and learned to make rings — from casting to molding and the works. He apprenticed in galleries and at R. G. Huxley Jewellers in London. By 1995, he had built his own line of Celtic wedding rings and pendants, and later started exhibiting on consignment in galleries and at Celtic festivals all across the U.S. and Canada. He often wore a kilt. He opened his own shop

"The number three means good luck, and a spiral design may repeat every three steps. The spiral design was historically inspired by iron — the iron age, and waves and patterns that were symmetrical."

below: BASED ON THE EARLY CELTIC TRISKELE LOVE KNOT, THIS PENDANT'S TRISKELE PATTERN OF TRIANGLES REPEATS EVERY THREE STEPS AND REPRESENTS ETERNITY AND GOOD LUCK. THE TRISKELE IS A CELTIC MOTIF THAT REPRESENTS THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.



in London in 2002 and established his Web site in 2005.

The festivals might be the crazy part of this artist's life.

"In Chicago, there were more than 120,000 people at a festival," he says.

That may have topped the charts, but he added that Georgia and Louisiana fests were almost as impressive. Right now, Bellchamber is at home in London for the time being.

"Festival season begins in May — Victoria Day starts it up for us," he says. ■

CELTIC FESTS NEAR AND DEAR TO LAKE ERIE

Cleveland

July 24-26
www.clevelandirish.org

Dublin, OH

July 31, August 1-2
www.dublinirishfestival.org

Milwaukee

August 13-16
www.irishfest.com

Buffalo

August 28-30
www.shannonpub.com/irishfestival

Pittsburgh

September TBA
www.pghirishfest.org

Erie

September TBA
www.erieirishfestival.com

Baltimore

November TBA
www.irishfestival.com/index

FOR MORE INFORMATION

In addition to the festivals, Bellchamber's jewelry can be found online, at fine jewelry stores across Canada and at his own shop:

Bellchambers Goldsmiths

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Unit 17, 1st Floor
London, Ontario
Canada, N6A 5P3
Phone: 519-432-1558
For a full listing, visit www.bellchamber.net