

# The Richmond Claddagh

Newsletter of the Richmond Irish American Society



March, 2007

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

[www.RichmondIAS.org](http://www.RichmondIAS.org)

<b>March 17</b>	Modlin Center U of R – Boys of the Lough – Traditional Celtic
<b>March 17</b>	St. Pat's Parade Fredericksburg, VA contact Ed Mayers - 379-5577
<b>March 24 &amp; 25</b>	St. Patrick's Day Parade & Festival Weekend, Church Hill
<b>April 3, 10, 17, 24</b>	Irish Gaelic Class - Beginner /Tourist Level – see newsletter for info
<b>April 14</b>	Strawberry Hill Races -call Gloria 233-2113 - see newsletter for info
<b>April 18, 25 &amp; May 2</b>	Irish Film Course U of R; pre-register <a href="http://www.richmond.edu/scs/osher">www.richmond.edu/scs/osher</a>
<b>April 15</b>	IAS Board Meeting
<b>April 21</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party at Columbian Center! Sonya Moore 272-4138
<b>April 21<sup>st</sup></b>	Folk in the Grove – Irish Traditional Music – After the Anniversary party! Make it an “All Day – All Irish Saturday!” 804-647-7856

## Beannachtai na Feile Padraig

(bann/ockt/tee nih fail/eh pawd/rig)

### Happy Saint Patrick's Day!

**President's Letter:** We are fortunate to have so many energetic people on the IAS Board working to put together events that are both fun and culturally stimulating for the members. For example, the upcoming Gaelic lessons – such a great opportunity for the membership.

Also, our IAS booth will be open for business at the St. Patrick's Festival on March 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. Please stop by the booth and meet your Board members and our other member volunteers. For every IAS member taking the time to introduce themselves to a Board member – we'll have a wee little Irish gift for you. I'm looking forward to meeting you - Dan

**The February IAS Meeting** was held Feb. 22 at the Tuckahoe Library. More than 20 members enjoyed the Irish movie, "Hear My Song." To say it was so funny that there was rolling in the aisles might be a bit of an overstatement, but...You see, there was this incident with a cow, at an old well, with a length of chain and a board... (Trust me; you should have been there...) Be sure and join us for the next IAS Movie Night or monthly meeting to join in the fun too.

**Everybody Loves a Parade!** Especially when that parade is part of the Richmond St. Patrick's Festival on Church Hill on March 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. The parade is Saturday at 10:00 am. If you are marching with the IAS, please be there by 9:00. The IAS booth will be set up for the festival and up ready to talk Irish heritage and sign up new members! If you can, we'd love to have you come and work the booth with us. Please call Gloria Cahen at 233-2113 – it's fun and you can pick your own day and time to help out.

## Get active in IAS or “Have We Got a Deal For You!!!”

This is an election year for IAS and there are several open slots. As you all know, our dear friend and President, Chris Garrett passed away last year and fortunately for us, Dan Begley stepped in and has done a masterful job of filling the big shoes of Chris in providing great leadership for the Society. In the upcoming year, Dan prefers to run for re-election in the position of Vice-President, so IAS will be voting to fill the spots of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Our Secretary, Gloria Cahen, will be giving up that post to run for the office of President. Our Treasurer, Colleen Callahan has been in the office for many years and feels a bit ready for a change. As is the case with the natural rotation of the Board of Directors panel, there will also be a few openings on the Board. If you are interested in filling an office for IAS, please call our Nomination Committee members, Joyce Blunt 677-6560 or Darlene Curtis at 306-1469 on or before April 21.

Please consider running for one of our open offices, the demand for your time is limited – the Board meets only once a month – but the returns for your effort will greatly benefit the society. If you would like some information on the duties of one of the officers or those of a Board member, please feel free to contact these current office holders with any questions:

Dan Begley                      President – 740-5631  
Gloria Cahen                    Secretary – 233-2113  
Colleen Callahan                Treasurer 261-4998

We are also in need of a Newsletter Editor to replace Bonnie Atwood who will be stepping down due to increased work responsibilities. While I'm just subbing this month, we express many thanks to Bonnie for her efforts – in bringing us all the news that's fit to print! ☺

**FREE: Beginning/Tourist Level Irish Gaelic April 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th:** Interest in an Irish language class was very high and class arrangements are now set. Our instructor is IAS member Denis Maguire. All classes will be at the Midlothian Library, Chesterfield County – 521 Coalfield Road, Midlothian, VA 23114 804-794-7907 – You can ‘google’ the address or call for directions- the library is very accessible from 288 or the Powhite expressway

**Time:** Starting promptly at 7:00 - each is a 90-minute class (with a break in the middle)

**Supplies Needed:** None at this time. Denis will provide what you need -if you have a beginner's book, feel free to bring it.

**Registration:** As soon as possible, please no later than **March 24<sup>th</sup>** so we can get supplies and nametags set up. (And as you know... you will get email reminders ☺)

Please call Dan Begley at 740-5631 or reply by email to [bearfan@earthlink.net](mailto:bearfan@earthlink.net) with the names of those who will attend the class. If you sent emails earlier - that was just to let us know the amount of interest in the class - Now we will need registration information to prepare supplies and all. This is a great opportunity for our members and we really thank Denis for volunteering to do this highly requested activity for the IAS members.

**Off to the Races!** Once again Strawberry Hill has graciously offered IAS the use of a skybox for the races on April 14 at Colonial Downs. The cost per person is \$35.00 and includes: Shuttle bus to and from Colonial Downs (from at least a couple of locations in Richmond - and there are several departure times so you can leave and return on your own schedule You are dropped directly at the gate - so no long walks to get inside. Also included; admission to the race and entry into the IAS Skybox. The air-conditioned skybox has a bathroom & fridge. So, you are free to bring a cooler of foods and beverages and it is a BYOB event. Call Gloria at 233-2113 if you would like tickets.

**Irish Film Course. At the University of Richmond:** "Irish History in Film". Wednesdays - April 18th through May 2nd. 6:00 to 9:00. Instructor, Dan Begley. Fees Schedule: You must be a paid Osher member to attend & there is an additional fee for the class. For information, please contact: Jane Dowrick, Program Coordinator Phone: 804-287-6344 or Email: [jdowrick@richmond.edu](mailto:jdowrick@richmond.edu)

**The Membership Corner:** IAS welcomes our newest member, Mildred Kladdde who joined at the February program at Tuckahoe. Mildred is from Ireland and her counties of ancestry are Donegal and Louth. It's great to have you with us; Mildred and we look forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

**Richmond Irish American Society – 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party – April 21st!** To celebrate this momentous occasion, the IAS is hosting a party to celebrate our 15<sup>th</sup> birthday! You will find your invitation tucked in this newsletter. It is a great opportunity to mingle with other members, hear some of the wonderful stories from the beginning and throughout the 15 years of the Society. There are lots of fun surprises in store, Irish music by Mary Smith and John Robison and of course great food and drink. Your cost of admission is just an appetizer type dish to share. It is a BYOB affair, but beer will be on tap and set-ups available for purchase. Although the party is from 4-7, it might be best if we kept it for adults only. Our planning committee has really worked hard to make this a great party for everyone – **SO DON'T MISS OUT ON THE FUN!**

Volunteers will be need for both the set up and also for the “take down” after the party. Everything needs to emptied and cleaned up so that IAS gets it's deposit back. Please call Sonya Moore at 804-272-4138 to donate a little bit of prep time or clean up time. If we all pitch in – it won't take any time at all.

.....**AND**..... after the party...continue reading below for more Irish fun.

**Irish Artists at Richmond Folk Music – April 21st:** Continue your Irish celebration after the Anniversary party by attending the concert of Cleek Schrey and Sean McComiskey – Traditional Irish musicians. This concert is presented by Richmond Folk Music at the Congregation Or Ami at 9400 West Huguenot Road, Richmond. Mary Smith and John Robison will be the opening act of the concert. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. Please call 804-647-7856 for more information or directions or to order tickets over the phone. To order your tickets on line, visit the website: [www.richmondfolkmusic.org](http://www.richmondfolkmusic.org)

**Do We Have Any Photographers Out There?** Another note about the IAS Anniversary Party... If anyone would be interested – or - willing to take photos for us at the party, even perhaps making a video of the festivities – please contact Dan Begley. You can reach him at 804-740-5631 or you can email him at [dbegley55@hotmail.com](mailto:dbegley55@hotmail.com) - Help us Save The Memories!

**The Corner Pub Review: February:** Twenty five Greater Richmond IAS members gathered for a great time at one of the best Irish Pubs in the country. The owner, Dublin's own, Andy Jennings has done himself proud in establishing a true Irish Pub right here in Richmond.

The food at Rare Olde Times is very good, with a good variety of Pub Fare, and traditional Irish dishes such as Shepherd's Pie, Corned Beef and Cabbage, Fish & Chips, and more that make your mouth water. There is also a traditional salad and sandwich menu to add to your choices. The dinner specials are right from an Irish mother's kitchen. There are always great deserts and some nights you can even get homemade bread pudding that is to die for. Prices are very reasonable and the quantity of food is more than enough to fill you up. The wait staff is second to none. They are very friendly and timely.

One of the highlights at Rare Olde Times is the music. There seems to be a never-ending flow of good Irish music: from Richmond's own Uisce Beatha every Thursday night to Andy, Cindy and Then Some on Friday and Saturday night. The quality of the musicians and singers is some of the best you will ever see. Rare Olde times has also established itself as one of the place to be on St. Patrick's Day. If you have never been to Rare Olde Times, it is one place that you really need to put on your calendar to visit. You won't be disappointed. It's located at 10608 Patterson Ave., Richmond, Virginia, 23238. Call 804-750-1346 for directions or reservations.

Next Social Night - Friday March 30<sup>th</sup> O'Toole's 4800 Forest Hill Ave. Richmond, VA 23225. Phone 804-233-1781 with questions or for directions. Time 6:30 pm – so mark your calendars and plan to join us. Submitted by Ed Mayers

**EVERYONE PLAN AHEAD!** On April 19<sup>th</sup> – The IAS is invited to participate in a joint meeting with the Richmond Scottish Society. Margaret Duckworth, of the University of Richmond, will give a presentation on **The Book of Kells** at the Trinity United Methodist Church on Forest Avenue. More information as the event is finalized. – Mark your calendar now -you don't want to miss this!

#### **Did You Know**

In 1926, "The Soldier's Song" was adopted as the Irish National Anthem and replaced the earlier Fenian anthem, "God Save Ireland

#### **Last Month's Trivia Question -**

Who founded Dublin in 988 A.D.?  
The Vikings? The Celts?  
The Normans? Henry 11 of England?

#### **Answer:**

That would be those pesky rascals; The Vikings

#### **Just Cuz I Think This Is Cute:**

Paddy was trapped in a bog and seemed a goner when Big Mick O'Reilly wandered by. "Help!" Paddy shouted, "Oi'm sinkin'!" Don't worry," assured Mick. "Next to the Strong Muldoon, Oi'm the strongest man in Erin, and Oi'll pull ye right out o'there." Mick leaned out and grabbed Paddy's hand and pulled and pulled to no avail. After two more unsuccessful attempts, Mick said to Paddy, "Shure, an' Oi can't do it. The Strong Muldoon could do it alone, mebbe, but Oi'll have to get some help." As Mick was leaving, Paddy called "Mick! Mick! D'ye thinks it will help if Oi pull me feet out of the stirrups?"

#### **"Luck of the Irish" Refers to the Abundance of Good Fortune Long Enjoyed by the Irish.**

Really? What sort of luck is it that brings about 1,000 years of invasion, colonization, exploitation, starvation and mass emigration? In truth, this term has a happier, if not altogether positive, American origin. During the gold and silver rush years in the second half of the 19th century, a number of the most famous and successful miners were of Irish and Irish American birth. For example, James Fair, James Flood, William O'Brien and John Mackay were collectively known as the "Silver Kings" after they hit the famed Comstock Lode. Over time this association of the Irish with mining fortunes led to the expression "luck of the Irish." Of course, it carried with it a certain tone of derision, as if to say, only by sheer luck, as opposed to brains, could these fools succeed. (Edward T. O'Donnell)

**An Irish Life:** Within this newsletter, you will find an article that was mailed to IAS regarding the attempt to establish a new Internet Community portal on the internet. It seems that it is an attempt to record Irish family stories and memoirs for posterity. The full article is reprinted for your review. IAS neither condones nor promotes the activity – but wanted to pass it on to the members. The website is posted in the article so that everyone is able to get more information on the project.

**IAS Authors, Contributors, Etc.** Everyone knows that the Irish are masters of the spoken and written word -so how about sharing some of that talent. The newsletter could use your input – an Irish book review, an interesting Irish themed article that you've read; a report on an Irish event that you attended; a humorous/sad/interesting story from a trip to Ireland; a neat place to stop/shop in Ireland for future traveler's reference. Any and all contributions gratefully accepted with a promise to use the item in a future edition. You can send them to [bearfan@earthlink.net](mailto:bearfan@earthlink.net) and I'll be glad to edit them for a future issue. Thanks.

## LITTLE BITS ABOUT ST. PATRICK



### **What were the forces that shaped Patrick in his youth?**

Patrick was a Roman citizen, the scion of a landed family in the province of Britain. At the age of 16 he was abducted by Irish pirates and sold into slavery, a woeful, horrible, six-year experience that turned him into a very different person than he otherwise would have become. During that period, he became a holy man, a saint, if you like. But a very unusual saint, a rough, tough character who endured many extreme experiences -- he was a slave, a fugitive, and then a wanderer for a very long time before he finally returned home to Britain. By the time he got home, he couldn't settle down, he no longer fit in the same society. He was a kind of permanent refugee. His parents still loved him, apparently, but it doesn't seem as if he was ever comfortable again in that setting. Which is understandable -- the Romans were snobs at best. Here was a young man who had missed a lot of his schooling and who had been toughened by experiences he couldn't really explain to people. Finally he went off to a monastery, and after studying for a time, was ordained a priest and bishop. And then in middle age, in his 40s, he went back to Ireland.

### **A very brave thing to do, given what he knew of the Irish.**

Yes, the Irish were a fierce and horrible people, who practiced human sacrifice and were the great slave traders of their day. They warred constantly and stole one another's cattle. They just weren't the kind of people you would want to sit down and have a cup of tea with. So it did take an enormous amount of courage for Patrick to return there. He knew what he was facing; he had no illusions about that.

But he was extremely insightful and in many ways ahead of his time. He was the first missionary to go to barbarians beyond the reach of Roman law -- and this was five centuries into the Christian era. More than that, in going to them, he had to figure out how he was going to, in the words of today, enculturate the values of the Gospel into this alien society. What he does is jettison all the folderol of the Greco-Roman world, all of its social norms and mores, and just gives them what he believes to be the values of the Gospel -- peace and love and human kindness.

### **How did he win over such a barbarian race?**

I think because Patrick himself was so impressive. He wasn't afraid of them -- and they had never met anyone like that before. He didn't have a sword. He shocked them completely by being so different from them but at the same time embodying their most important virtue -- courage. If there was any other virtue that came close to courage for them, it was generosity. And that he had in abundance. It soon became clear to them that he was going to stay there, that he was going to give them his life. In fact, they rolled over quickly and accepted Christianity into their lives. It was the first country where Christianity was introduced without bloodshed. Given how bloody the Irish were, that is extraordinary.

### **Why do you think Patrick's brand of Christianity fit so well into Ireland?**

The Romans and the Greeks were a very rational people and very pessimistic, about the world, about life, about matter, about the human body. They were basically Platonists who thought this world was evil, and there might be one that would be better. The Irish, on the other hand, were mystics. They believed that the world was magical; they also thought that it was frightening. Patrick's Christianity largely took the fear out of their world, took away the gods who demanded human sacrifice and turned them into far less frightening gargoyles -- demons who were no longer of any great account. But Patrick kept the sense of the world being magical, stressed it, and encouraged the Irish to think of the world as God's creation -- not something frightening or full of temptations, as his older contemporary St. Augustine would have seen it.

So it was a very vibrant form of Christianity and a very hopeful one -- it almost hops off the pages of the early Irish literature, it's so celebratory and so full of light and joy. And it was quite unlike anything the world had seen up to that point. This Irish ingredient makes for the real difference between the classical age and the medieval one. When you put the two ages against one another, you see how formal and stately and almost brittle the classical age is compared to the medieval one, which has an awful lot more jokes in it, for one thing. There are the jesters and the gargoyles and the Feast of Fools, there's a much more playful spirit.

**You write that you can see this Irish playfulness in the way they used language and the way that Irish monks would copy the great texts.**

Yes, they got a big kick out of words, even before they knew how to write them down. They were a childlike people. To use our modern jargon, the Irish thought that texts should be interactive. They shouldn't just lie there on the page. They would try to put between the covers of a book not just one text, but many texts. In fact, many of these books are a smorgasbord of every kind of literature known to the scribe -- they throw together a poem by Horace and maybe an ancient medical treatise, something by Aristotle on ethics, some natural history, some love poetry by Catullus and some mythology from Ovid. The Irish also decorated these books with visual ideas, new ways of looking at these things. Then they begin to make their own comments in the margins; often these comments are quite elaborate and sometimes have nothing to do whatsoever with the text. The scribe has decided to stick in a little verse, and that's the beginnings of Irish literature. Very often this marginalia is full of wit; they're so sprightly, they reflect a kind of springtime of literature and this whole new spirit of early Irish Christianity.

**Separate myth from fact about Patrick. For instance, how did the myth about Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland arise?**

That's a typical example of what anthropologists call "retrojection" -- "What do you know, Seamus, there don't seem to be any snakes here, why is that?" And then they leap to the conclusion that well, it must have been good St. Patrick, who in the end had everything attributed to him. The truth is that Ireland, like Australia, has its own geographical peculiarities because it was unlinked from the continent at an early stage of geographical evolution, so that not all of the flora and fauna of the continent or even of Britain appear in Ireland. And that's why there are no snakes.

What we do know for sure about Patrick is that he was an extremely large moral figure. He is the first person in history to condemn slavery as unequivocally immoral. No one had ever thought that before -- slavery was simply accepted. Both Peter and Paul, in fact, in their letters in the New Testament, urge slaves to be obedient to their masters. Part of it, of course, has to do with Patrick's own experience as a slave. But no one does that again, condemns slavery as he does, until the Anabaptists toward the end of the 17th century. In Ireland, either within his lifetime or very shortly after, the slave trade comes to an end, human sacrifice is abolished. And though the Irish never stop warring on each other, that inter-tribal violence is greatly reduced.

**Does Patrick still resonate as a major force in today's Ireland?**

I think he's been lost sight of; there's been such an overlay of pious drivel that you can't see the man. You see a kind of stern-looking bishop cursing snakes or something like that, wearing his miter and all the vestments of a high medieval bishop. Patrick didn't look anything like that. He was a tough character; he didn't go waltzing around in a miter. If you had seen him, you might have thought he was a dockworker. Both his toughness and his tenderness have been lost. The Irish don't really have any idea of who he was - he's just become another Plaster of Paris saint.

**Patrick at the Judgment**

There is no question that Patrick taught us by his example that all life is, indeed, precious. Yet it's hard to imagine that there isn't a soft spot in his heart reserved just for the Irish. In fact, there is an old legend that promises that on the last day, though Christ will judge all the other nations, it will be St. Patrick sitting in judgment on the Irish. When asked whether that spelled good news or bad news for the Irish, the author, Thomas Cahill remarks with a laugh, "That's great news for the Irish,"



I wish a very Happy Saint Patrick's Day to each of you. I hope you enjoy the holiday and also hope that this little tribute, an interview with the author Thomas Cahill, has provided a little more insight into our dearest symbol of Ireland. (The article was "gently" borrowed from the pages of Salon magazine)



**See you at the St. Patrick's Festival and Parade on Church Hill!**



*For each petal on the shamrock  
This brings a wish your way  
Good health, good luck, and happiness  
For today and every day.*

## To All Members of The Richmond Irish American Society –

Tuesday, 06 March 2007

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you to invite your participation in an important new Irish Community Project that will span the world. "Irish Diaspora" is a term commonly used to refer to Irish emigrants and their descendants, 40 million of which are in the USA. **An Irish Life** is a new Internet community portal, which has been designed to provide an opportunity for all Irish people to record their life experiences for posterity and to become part of an important Irish historical archive.

This archive is to be located at [www.anirishlife.com](http://www.anirishlife.com) and will feature stories about Irish people, both here in Ireland, and also from the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia, indeed anywhere around the globe. The archive will feature collections of life stories, memoirs, family journals, obituaries, short biographies and tributes. All articles submitted to the site are to be stored online *as* a permanent Irish historical archive, accessible from anywhere in the world. This archive will be unique because the content is not written by historians, but by ordinary Irish people themselves.

We invite submissions from anyone of Irish descent to submit articles and memoirs about themselves, their families or friends. The unique material and photography collected will subsequently be published in a series of books on the Irish Diaspora. An Irish Life will provide a unique insight into the lives and the history of a nation scattered across the world.

### Your Support

An Irish Life would like to enlist your society's support, as one of a number of pilot groups to begin posting the first articles to the site. As an active and proud American Irish society we would value your input to this exciting new project. We are inviting several key Irish American groups throughout the United States to participate. Irish

American groups such as yours are uniquely placed to gather material from communities that would otherwise be very difficult to record. We would be delighted to receive contributions from your members and their extended families.

We would like you to help us reach as many Irish Americans as possible and to encourage them to take part in this grand experiment and important historical archive. Please spread the word through your membership and also mention us in your newsletters. If you are able to include a link to [www.anirishlife.com](http://www.anirishlife.com) on your website, we will place a link to your website on ours. Please also invite your parade participants, affiliated Irish groups or organizations that you know of to participate. You might also consider organizing projects within your society to research stories about relatives, grandparents, or other local characters and encourage them to post memoirs, biographies, tales, tributes and obituaries to the site. The life stories of ordinary Irish people are seldom told, and almost never recorded in print. [www.anirishlife.com](http://www.anirishlife.com) now provides the means to bring together the life stories of Irish people from communities all over the world and to record their life experiences for posterity, before they are lost forever. Celebrate your Irish identity and take this opportunity to record your Irish life in the history books.

### Other Groups

We are also seeking the participation of Irish community groups from other countries, including Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and South America. The site will also be publicized generally on the Internet for use by anyone of Irish descent to post articles, and to record their life stories.

### Registering and submitting articles

Each contributor needs to register on the site as an Author and will

require an email address. Registered Authors may then create their own articles, submit text and images and revise their stories until they are happy to publish the article on the site for the world to see. The site includes a fully featured interactive word processor, including help and tips for writing a good biography, and a private photo library for each author. Contributions can be made in Irish or English.

### Our Privacy Policy

Our privacy policy and terms of use are very strict and all site content is continually vetted with any inappropriate content disqualified and removed. Offenders are barred from submitting any further material. Full terms and conditions are available on the website.

### Contact Information

Further information is available from our website [www.anirishlife.com](http://www.anirishlife.com). If you have any immediate questions please do contact us directly.

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[www.anirishlife.com](http://www.anirishlife.com) is set to become an important historical record of a worldwide community linked by a common history and a shared identity. We would very much welcome your valued contributions as we launch this exciting new project.

Yours truly,  
**Jason Stubbs**

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