



## The Richmond Claddagh

JANUARY 2011

<http://richmondias.org/>

The Richmond Irish American Society

[Click for the Calendar of Events](#)

### A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO YOU!

Athbhliain faoi mhaise duit (singular)  
(ah-vleen fwee wash-eh gwich (singular)  
Athbhliain faoi mhaise dhíbh (plural)  
(ah-vleen fwee wash-eh yeev\_ (plural)

### Wherever your ‘Cottage’ is – Your IAS Officers and Board members – send you this wish for the New Year.

May you be blessed  
With warmth in your home,  
Love in your heart,  
Peace in your soul  
And joy in your life.



Wouldn't this be an awesome place to be... right now!

**The IAS 2010 Christmas Party** was possibly our best turnout and the most fun in recent memory. Our **Wonderful** members – went above and beyond for the Silent Auction. The items this year were particularly nice and many a member took home a treasure! Thanks to all of you for the donations of items and services for the auctions. I must also offer a word about the “Dish To Pass” – Good grief – we must have the corner on good cooks! Again – you all outdid yourselves – and know that you are most appreciated.

Special Thanks to Helen & Pat Burke and Tom & Sara Rupnik – both had planned to offer their Irish cottages for the auction – but circumstances prevented. Please know how much we appreciate your efforts.

Our members voted **The 2010 MVP Award** to Vice President and Program Chairman - Dan Begley. This is surely in recognition of the great variety of programs offered this and years past to enhance our knowledge of our Irish history and heritage. Good for you Dan!

**In response** to our many requests for Saturday meetings to accommodate members who can't come on Thursday nights or those members who are not comfortable driving at night – Dan has arranged the next two monthly meeting on Saturdays during daylight hours. Make an effort to get to the afternoon meetings to let us know that this arrangement is helpful for you.

### **JANUARY IAS MEETING** – Bon Air Library - **An Irish Documentary** – “Man of Aran”.

This meeting is the presentation of the Irish classic “Man of Aran” a 1934 documentary about living in the Aran Islands. For the last 200 years the Aran Islands have exercised a powerfully romantic fascination on the outside world that is without equal anywhere else in the country. The islands were believed to contain the essence of the ancient Irish life, represented by a pure uncorrupted peasant existence centered on the struggle between man and his hostile but magnificent surroundings. This myth, strengthened by the writings of Yeats and especially Synge was hugely expanded by the release in 1934 of “Man of Aran”, a documentary on the life of the Island people.

**NOTE THIS IS A SATURDAY AFTERNOON EVENT** - Starting at 1:00 – Bon Air Library, 9103 Rattlesnake Road (just off Buford Rd., Richmond 23235. Plenty of parking. PH 804-320-2461

**February 19<sup>th</sup> IAS Meeting** – Mark your calendars for another Saturday session coming up in February. Mary Smith and John Robison will present “Winter Music” – “With an Irish Twist. You know these folks always have a wonderful show” for us. So come on out and meet at Dumbarton Library, 6800 Staples Mill Road, Henrico, VA 23228. PH: 804-290-9400

It's January and that means we need to start thinking about elections for this year. We need some help – can you lend a hand?

**From Karon Bell** – Many thanks for all the set up and take down volunteers at the Christmas Party. Your help was SO welcome and so appreciated. Also through our members' generosity – The IAS donated over 100 lbs of non-perishable food to our local food bank. Take a bow everyone; you helped make somebody's Christmas a lot better. (You guys.-.you ARE the best.



From <http://www.goireland.com/> Ireland is renowned for traditions and superstitions – many of which have surrounded the New Year's celebrations.

Long ago in Ireland it was customary to begin a new year with a clean house, so houses were thoroughly cleaned as it was thought that a spotless house was to be good omen for the year ahead.

Even after all the Christmas festivities, the Irish liked to have their houses full with provisions and the cellar filled with coals on New Year's Eve. This was done in the hope that the coming year would be equally as plentiful. The family sat around the table and enjoyed a big meal and counted in the New Year together.

Another Irish tradition that was carried out to bring in the New Year, involved banging on the doors and walls of the house with the Christmas bread! It sounds daft, but this custom was thought to chase the bad luck out and bring good spirits to the household. It was also thought that this ritual was done in the hope of having enough bread for the New Year.

In the olden days, on New Year's night they'd remember those in the family who'd passed on the year before. They did this by setting a place at the table and leaving the door unlatched.

Who would be the first person to pass over the threshold of your home in the New Year? If it was a tall dark and handsome man it was said to bring luck, but how they prayed that it wouldn't be a young red haired girl who'd bring nothing but hardship and grief!

And although we don't know if it brought anyone any luck – many young women put a little bit of mistletoe under their pillow before they slept on New Years Eve in the hope that the love of their life would come along in the next year! All around the world people celebrate the coming of a New Year.

To celebrate the New Year in Ireland today, some have parties, some head to dinner with friends, some go to black tie balls and some just head down to the local for a few pints.

Favorite Irish Quote ---The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me. *Flannery O'Connor*

**IRISH CLASS** - IAS member Colleen Callahan passes along this information on an upcoming opportunity to learn more about our Irish Heritage –

Dr. Ken Ostrand, one of the instructors in the University of Richmond School of Continuing Studies will present a lecture on Irish Christianity on Tuesday evening, March 1, 2011, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. The cost of the lecture is \$35 and it will be held on the campus of UR.

Before there was Roman Catholic Ireland there was Irish Catholic Ireland! Join us as we explore the birth, life and death of this fascinating Celtic branch of early Christianity! In the beginning there were many varieties of Christianity, with the Irish developing their own liturgy, ritual and saints. Then slowly, under the pressures of Roman Christianity, the Irish gave way, merging until they became one. How, when, and why it happened is the fascinating journey! Along the way award-winning historian Ken Ostrand will lead the journey to discover Irish Christianity before Saint Patrick, investigate this 'other' Christianity, introduce us to a variety of Irish saints--some with amazing power-- and take us to the end of this thriving faith.

That's all the info I have, but will continue to try and get more for the next newsletter.

**Learning how to “Do” a Black & Tan.** You know sometimes just talking about your Irish background opens doors, starts conversations, etc. How you ask? I was chatting with one of our clients in Quebec – who happens to be Chinese - and the subject came up when he teased me about my pronunciation of a French word. I told him that he couldn't expect perfection from my Irish background. He said, “Me too! I have a little bit of Irish in me on my Grandmothers side and I occasionally find a reddish strand in my hair! And that just might be why I love to make and drink “Black and Tans”. More conversation ensued – including telling him about my newsletter duties with our Richmond IAS. So he gave me his recipe for making Black and Tan so that he could share it with all our members and wish you all a Happy New Year!

**From Calvin Chan... Montreal OE - Black & Tan recipe**

1 part GOOD Pale Ale

1 part [Guinness® stout](#)

Fill stein half full with Ale. Next pour Guinness over a spoon slowly until glass is full. If done correctly the Guinness will stay on top and the Ale on bottom--hence the name Black & Tan. (Have no idea if it's good or correct – I just love that I got the recipe from Calvin Chan!

## IRISH TREASURES

### New Grange - A Passage to the Afterworld



**New Grange - A Passage to the Afterworld** New Grange is arguably one of the finest monuments of European pre-history. Dating to circa 3200 B.C., it was built during the Neolithic or New Stone Age by a wealthy farming community that prospered on the rich lands of the Boyne Valley. Archaeologists classify New Grange as a passage tomb, but for its builders, New Grange was much more than simply a place of burial. It housed the spirits of their ancestors, providing a link for the living community to the world of their deities and serving as a focal point for ritual and celebration.

Passage tombs, as the name implies, consist of a passage leading to a chamber where the remains of the dead (usually cremated) were placed. The passage and chamber are covered by a large mound of stones and earth, retained at the base by large kerbstones. The amount of time and labor invested in their construction tells us much about the well-organized societies and specialized groups responsible for different aspects of their construction.

New Grange is part of a large complex of monuments built along a bend of the River Boyne known collectively as Brú na Bóinne. The other two principal monuments are Knowth (the largest) and Dowth, but throughout the region there are as many as 35 smaller passage-tombs and many other sites of great archaeological importance and interest.

Excavations conducted beginning in 1962 revealed Knowth to be a complicated multi-period site. There are 18 smaller tombs around the great mound, at least two of which are even older than it is. Knowth was a focal point for ritual activity until the early Bronze Age. After that there is a gap in the story until about the time of Christ, when the mound was transformed into a fortified dwelling. Settlement continued at Knowth, and by 800 A.D. it was the residence of the Kings of Northern Brega, one of whom became High King of Ireland. Though these settlements are

significant, it is as a passage tomb cemetery that its fame and intrigue lay.

Dowth is the least well known of the three great tombs of the Boyne Valley. It has not yet been excavated, but initial investigations reveal two passage tombs within the mound. Of the three main passage tombs in the Boyne Valley, New Grange has always attracted the most attention. For, although it may not be unique in Western Europe, its mound contained a secret that remained hidden for hundreds of years.

**The New Grange Passage** The passageway within New Grange is just less than 60 feet long and leads into a chamber with three side recesses. This chamber is roofed by a corbelled vault, which has remained intact and watertight without any conservation or repair. The cairn (stone mound) that covers the chamber is estimated to weigh 200,000 tons and is retained at its base by 97 massive kerbstones. As is typical of Irish passage tombs, the recess on the right as one enters is the largest and most ornate. On the floor of this recess lie two stone basins, one inside the other. The outer basin is a superb example of the skill of its Neolithic makers, having been shaped from solid granite, as opposed to the other two recesses, which were carved from sandstone. Archaeologists believe that these stone basins once held the remains of the dead.

Because the chamber was disturbed before proper excavation, it is not known how many people were originally interred at New Grange. The remains of five bodies were recovered inside, though the original number was probably much higher. Most of the bones found had been cremated, with only small amounts left unburned. The artifacts remaining in the grave at the time of its excavation were beads made of bone as well as pendants and polished stone balls. Undoubtedly, these objects held a special significance in the burial ritual. It is possible that more spectacular objects were originally present but were removed without having been recorded.

**Chronology** The chamber at New Grange has been accessible in modern times since 1699. Before then it appeared merely as a large, overgrown mound much as Dowth appears today. Curiously, even though it was recognized as a man-made feature, it lay undisturbed for centuries, most likely due to superstition and out of respect for the dead. In Celtic mythology, New Grange (or Si An Bhru as it was once known) was the home of the greatest of the Celtic gods, the Dagda Mor and his son Aongus. And throughout most of history, New Grange was revered as a sacred place.

**A New Age, with New Pottery Around 2000 B.C.**, new people and/or new ideas reached Ireland. This era is called the Beaker period and is characterized by a distinctive type of pottery. Although stone tools

continued to be used at this time, they were gradually replaced during the rise of metalworking. When the Beaker people were living beside it, New Grange, as a monument, had fallen into disuse.

Its entrance was completely blocked by the collapsing cairn. That is not to say, however, that New Grange played no part in the daily lives of the Beaker people. The monument continued to be a focal point for ritual gathering. Within 30 feet of the passage-tomb, they constructed a massive circular enclosure now called a woodhenge or pit circle. Excavations have shown it to be a large double circle of wooden posts (about 300 feet in diameter) inside which animals were cremated and buried in pits. It seems that the woodhenge served as a religious center as important in its day as the huge passage tomb had been.

**Stone Circle** A circle of 12 menhirs (upright boulders) surrounds New Grange. Originally, there may have been more, but if so, they were dislodged long ago. Following the excavation of the woodhenge, it became apparent that the stone circle was erected sometime after 2000 B.C. The purpose of the stone circle is unclear, but research indicates that it could have had an astronomical function. In any case, it was the final stage of building at New Grange.

With the coming of the Celts, New Grange was transformed into a house for their deities. Brú na Bóinne is featured in many of the great Celtic myths. As a dwelling place of the deities, it was revered even by visitors from Roman Britain as late as 400 A.D. Their votive offerings of coins and jewelry were recovered from the top of the mound during excavations.

After the establishment of the Cistercians at Mellifont Abbey in 1142, the land around the monument was acquired by the Order. It became a new grange (outlying farm) of the abbey, thus giving the passage tomb and the surrounding town land its modern name.

After 1699, when the chamber was opened, New Grange became a place of interest to antiquarians. It was not until 1962, however, that the first major excavation of the site began. After the excavation, the interior passage was straightened and enclosed by a second passage (now unseen) in order to relieve the pressure from the weight of the mound. The original facade of sparkling white quartz was rebuilt using stone found at the site. The height and angle of the facade match the original and were calculated by measurements taken from the collapsed retaining wall.

**Going in Circles:** At New Grange, many of the stones display a dramatic sense of composition, the designs deeply carved and relating closely to the natural shape of the rocks. The entrance stone is generally regarded as one of the finest achievements of European Neolithic art.



Knowth has an even greater collection of art, with inscriptions on more than 300 of the stones. At New Grange and Knowth, the art on many of the stones continues beyond the visible area. During the excavations it was found that many stones were carved on their undersides and on the sides that are turned inwards toward the Cairns. Whatever the art meant to the builders of these enigmatic monuments, perhaps it was not necessarily intended to be seen by the living. It is also possible that the builders re-used stones that had been part of earlier monuments.

Many attempts have been made to interpret passage tomb art. There are some who say that the art looks like a series of maps of the area, maps of the stars, or maps of the afterworld. Some see the art as a meditation device or argue that it represents images induced by hallucinogens. Others argue that it is music. The most popular theory is that the forms represent the changing seasons, the passage tomb builders' preoccupation with time and with marking major solar events like the solstices and the equinoxes. Perhaps the changing and cyclical nature of the seasons was bound in the people's minds with their own lives. Perhaps from their observations of the natural world they hoped that just as winter was followed by spring, new life followed death.

**Winter Solstice:** Above the entrance to the passage at New Grange there is a window-like opening called a roof-box. This baffling orifice held a great surprise for those who unearthed it. Its purpose is to allow sunlight to penetrate the chamber on the shortest days of the year, around December 21, the winter solstice.

At dawn, from December 19th to 23rd, a narrow beam of light penetrates the roof-box and reaches the floor of the chamber, gradually extending to the rear of the passage. As the sun rises higher, the beam widens within the chamber so that the whole room becomes dramatically illuminated. This event lasts for 17 minutes, from roughly 8:58 a.m. until 9:15 a.m.

New Grange's accuracy as a time-telling device is remarkable when one considers that it was built 500 years before the Great Pyramids and more than 1,000 years before Stonehenge. The intent of its builders was undoubtedly to mark the beginning of the new year. In addition, it may have served as a powerful symbol of the victory of life over death.

Each year the winter solstice event attracts much attention at New Grange. Many gather at the ancient tomb to wait for dawn, as people did 5,000 years ago. So great is the demand to be one of the few inside the chamber during the solstice that there is a free annual lottery (application forms are available at the Visitor Centre). Unfortunately, as with many Irish events that depend upon sunshine, if the skies are overcast, there is not much to be seen. Yet all agree that it is an extraordinary feeling to wait in the darkness, as people did so long ago, for the longest night of the year to end.

New Grange is open to the public year-round. Knowth is open from May to October. Visitors must begin at the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, on the opposite side of the River Boyne, where they will be transported to the sites by bus. The number of people who can visit each day is limited, and visitors during high season should be prepared for long delays. Access is not always guaranteed.

**Editor's note** – I know - this is a pretty long article – but it has so many interesting points on our early Irish ancestors and their oft-unheralded contributions to the world – read it at your leisure and learn about their accomplishments and know that the Irish were tracking the phases of the heavens, before the Egyptians buried their first Pharaoh! Many thanks to our IAS Board Member and Sunshine Chairman, Kathryn O'Meara for sharing this article with us. Please remember - all members are welcome and encouraged to contribute to the newsletter.

(Acknowledgement: content based on an article by Clare Tuffy first published in *The World Of Hibernia* magazine. (Sadly, the magazine is no longer published).

#### **BITS OF IRISH WISDOM:**

- An Irishman has an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustains him through temporary periods of joy.
- You can accomplish more with a kind word and a shillelagh than you can with just a kind word.
- Good as drink is, it ends in thirst
- May you be poor in misfortune, rich in blessings, slow to make enemies and quick to make friends. And may you know nothing but happiness from this day forward

I found these items about the early Irish in MA. My ancestors arrived in Boston in 1835s and surely faced this kind of discrimination and some of these barriers.

#### **"Micks", "Paddys" & "Bridgets"-The Facts**

- During the Great Famine of the 1840's in Ireland, thousands fled for America
- Many fled to Boston, and in one year Boston's Irish population jumped from 30,000-100,000
- Looking for labor many Irish turned to servitude. 70% of servants in Boston were Irish immigrants
- Bostonians believed that the Irish were a servant race
- Bostonians called their Irish female servants the "bridgets" or "biddys" and the males "paddys". Many Irish named their children after the two popular Catholic saints however the names carried derisive connotations in America and many tried to erase that legacy.
- Bostonians derisively monikered potatoes "murphies"
- Of the 70% of Irish that were servants, two thirds were Irish women.
- Irish servants were noted to be full of melancholy and loneliness
- Irish women suffered from high levels of mental illness
- As a result, by 1908, there were more Irish than there were any other nationality in a mental hospital
- The Know-Nothing Party-a political party in the late 19th century--developed with "native" Americans who hated the immigrant influx particularly the Irish.
- Established working class America resented the Irish laborers who would work for anything
- Employers would place signs with NINA scrawled across the front. NINA spelled out is No Irish Need Apply; this would often be seen next to the No Dogs Allowed signs.
- In the 1870's & 80's, Irishman were portrayed on stage and in cartoons penned by famous cartoonist Thomas Nast, RF Outcault and other cartoonists as bumbling, idiots, erratic, pugnacious drunks

(From the website <http://xroads.virginia.edu>)

	<p><b>-MARK YOUR CALENDARS</b> And ALWAYS click the link directly below to get the latest updates on upcoming events</p> <p><a href="http://richmondias.org/index.php?content=upcoming">http://richmondias.org/index.php?content=upcoming</a></p>
<p>January 15, 2011 IAS Monthly Meeting</p>	<p>On 1/15/11 we will meet at the Bon Air Library to watch "Man of Aran" a 1934 documentary about living in the Aran Islands</p>
<p><b>Feb 25<sup>th</sup> &amp; 26<sup>th</sup></b> Williamsburg Library Coyote Run – Concert \$15</p>	<p><b>Coyote Run - The Thinking Person's Celtic Rock Band</b> - A powerful and compelling blend of Celtic legend, literature and song. "Coyote Run is one of the hottest bands on the Celtic music circuit today" - <a href="http://www.coyoterun.com/">http://www.coyoterun.com/</a></p>
<p><b>March 1<sup>st</sup></b> U of Richmond Dr. Ken Ostrand “Irish Christianity”</p>	<p><b>IRISH CLASS</b> - Dr. Ken Ostrand, one of the instructors in the University of Richmond School of Continuing Studies will present a lecture on Irish Christianity on Tuesday evening, March 1, 2011, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. The cost of the lecture is \$35 and it will be held on the campus of UR. Main Number (804) 289-8000.</p>
<p><b>March 1<sup>st</sup> –</b> <b>THE IRISH ROVERS</b> March 1<sup>st</sup> – 7:30 pm</p> <p>TICKET PRICES: VIP \$44 / \$39 / \$34 / \$29</p>	<p>For more than four decades, The Irish Rovers have charmed and entertained audiences around the world with their exciting stage shows. These international ambassadors of Irish music, have maintained their timeless ability to deliver a rollicking, rousing performance of good cheer—one that will soon have you singing and clapping along. Like the Unicorn, the Rovers are legendary and magical, and a good time is guaranteed for all. Christopher Newport University's Ferguson Center for the Arts - 1 University Place Newport News, Virginia 23606 Christopher Newport University's Ferguson Center for the Arts1 University Place Newport News, Virginia 23606 <a href="http://fergusoncenter.cnu.edu/visitors.htm">http://fergusoncenter.cnu.edu/visitors.htm</a> (Click for directions)</p>
<p><b><u>March 2, 2011 – 7 pm</u></b> Williamsburg Library Celtic Film Series “<b>BOXED</b>”</p> <p><b>Free Admission</b></p>	<p><b><u>Boxed (2002, not rated)</u></b> Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland Street This powerful drama set in Northern Ireland centers on a young Catholic priest fresh from seminary, full of idealistic beliefs and faith. He is mistakenly taken to an isolated house where an IRA group is holding a suspected informer awaiting execution. The priest is expected to hear the informer's last confession but refuses to go along with this and locks himself in a room with the victim, threatening to expose the IRA members. The terrorists are now faced with the possibility of having to kill a priest, a decision none of them can make.</p>
<p><b>March 4 2011</b> Cultural Arts Center Glen Allen VA.</p>	<p>“<b>Celtic Night!</b>” 2nd Stage - An Evening of Celtic Music Featuring John Turner, Scottish Fiddler and Friends. 10-time winner of US National Scottish Fiddling Championship. Food and beverage available for sale. General admission seating. Time: 7pm Admission: \$10 advance; \$12 door Box Office: 804-261-ARTS (2787) or online at <a href="http://www.artsglenallen.com">www.artsglenallen.com</a></p>
<p><b><u>April 6, 2011 – 7 pm</u></b> Williamsburg Library Celtic Film Series FREE</p>	<p><b><u>Black Irish</u></b> (2007, rated R) Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland Street. In South Boston, where Irish roots run deep and Catholic tradition reigns, two brothers face similar hardships but lead far different lives.</p>
<p><b>May 4, 2011 – 7 pm</b> Williamsburg Library Celtic Film Series <b>FREE</b></p>	<p><b><u>A Love Divided</u></b> (1999, not rated) Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland Street Based on a true story this is the moving and dramatic love story of a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant in 1950s Ireland.</p>
<p><b>May 21, 2011</b> Richmond Folk Music Congregation Or Ami 9400 Huguenot Road Richmond, VA Tickets \$12 \$15 804-647-7856</p>	<p><b>The Living Tradition – Tom Martin and Mary Smith</b> – Tom originally from Belfast Ireland - draws his inspiration not only from his Celtic roots, but from traditional American folk, country blues, and the song poets of the sixties - Visit Tom's website at <a href="http://www.tommartinmusic.com/">http://www.tommartinmusic.com/</a> Our own IAS member, Mary Smith has performed and researched the traditional ballads of Britain, Ireland and America for many years. She is a popular performer at festivals, coffeehouses and concert venues in Virginia and Washington, DC, and has toured in the UK as well. She also gives educational presentations and workshops on traditional ballads. Visit Mary's website at <a href="http://www.marysmith.com">www.marysmith.com</a> . Together they will present a program of traditional songs and ballads, along with some of Tom's original compositions - showing how traditional music has come full circle and is being integrated and adapted to reflect an ever-changing global village.</p>

<b>June 1, 2011 – 7pm</b> Williamsburg Library <b>FREE Celtic Film Series</b>	<b>Bloom</b> (2004, rated R) Williamsburg Library Theatre, 515 Scotland Street On the morning of the 16th June, 1904, Leopold Bloom (Stephen Rea) set out on a journey that was to become one of the greatest tales of the 20th century.
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### IAS OFFICERS & BOARD

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